

La Comédiathèque

REALITY SHOW

Jean-Pierre Martinez



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Reality Show

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The host of an obscure cable TV channel is tasked with promoting a politician.
But the interview won't go as planned...

Characters

Maximilian (or Victoria): President of TV2

Donald (or Daisy): Vice-President of TV2

Bob: Technician (male or female)

Mike: Technician (male or female)

Brian: Host

Diana: Assistant

Charles: Politician

Chris: Guest

Alex: Guest

Cassandra: Guest

Ramirez: Detective (male or female)

Sanchez: Inspector (male or female)

Samantha: Intern

Pat: Audience member (male or female)

14 characters – 8 to 14 actors or actresses.

One actor (or actress) can play multiple roles:

The President and Vice-President can also play Ramirez and Sanchez.

The two technicians can play the three guests and the spectator.

Most of these roles can be performed by either men or women.

Possible casts:

2M/6F, 3M/5F, 4M/4F, 5M/3F

2M/7F, 3M/6F, 4M/5F, 5M/4F, 6M/3F

2M/8F, 3M/7F, 4M/6F, 5M/5F, 6M/4F, 7M/3F

2M/9F, 3M/8F, 4M/7F, 5M/6F, 6M/5F, 7M/4F, 8M/3F

2M/10F, 3M/9F, 4M/8F, 5M/7F, 6M/6F, 7M/5F, 8M/4F, 9M/3F

2M/11F, 3M/10F

2M/12F, 3M/11F, 4M/10F

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PROLOGUE

(optional)

An empty set, as it will appear at the start of the first act. The action can also take place in front of the curtain before it rises, or even in the audience.

Maximilian, the president of TV2, rushes in and crosses paths with his vice-president, who is strolling in, slowly reading a sports magazine.

Maximilian – Ah, Donald! Have you seen this? Our ratings have dropped again!

Donald (*folding his newspaper*) – Yes, I know, Maximilian...

Maximilian – It's bad enough that TV1 consistently beats us in the ratings, but at this rate, we'll soon be trailing behind TV3...

Donald – Yes...

Maximilian – Be straight with me, Donald...

Donald – Yes, Maximilian...?

Maximilian – Where on earth did you get that ridiculous name? Is it a pseudonym?

Donald – No...

Maximilian – Who in their right mind would choose a pseudonym like that? It must have been tough growing up with a name like that, right? Especially as a kid...

Donald – Good grief...

Maximilian – Anyway, back to business... I mean, back to our housewives under fifty. What's behind this steady decline in our ratings? And when I say steady decline... we're sinking fast, Donald!

Donald – We could replace the head of programming...? And bring back the one we fired six months ago? He's in charge of drama now...

Maximilian – We're on the Titanic, Donald, and all you're suggesting is rearranging the deck chairs? How is that going to help? We even got rid of the ads.

Donald – Exactly...

Maximilian – Exactly what?

Donald – The ads were the only thing people still watched on TV2. So now that we've pulled them, the audience is dropping... They're tuning in to TV1 for the ads instead...

Maximilian – And what about our original dramas? The ones that put us on the map and are exported worldwide!

Donald gives him a look, suggesting he's exaggerating a bit.

Maximilian – Fine, I was mostly thinking of the far eastern part of Benelux... Luxembourg, to be exact... But don't tell me that even before we axed the ads, no one was watching TV2's series anymore?

Donald – Exactly. They were just passing time between ad breaks...

Maximilian – Tell me the truth, just this once...

Donald – Can I speak frankly?

Maximilian – I didn't hire you for that, it's true, but desperate times...

Donald – By trying to make our shows appeal to everyone, we ended up with invisible series. Or at least unwatchable ones. We didn't want to disturb anyone, so we bored everyone. Do you even watch them?

Maximilian – I'm paid to...

Donald – But we can't pay millions of people to watch our shows...

Maximilian – Yet today's writers are supervised so closely, I don't get it.

Donald – Oh, they're certainly supervised... For every writer who writes, we pay six programme advisors to tell them their writing is rubbish...

Maximilian – So what's the problem?

Donald – Take comedy, for example. It's hard enough to make one programme advisor laugh. Now try getting six to laugh at the same joke...

Maximilian – And where do all these advisors come from?

Donald – That's a mystery... When a cow drops something, do you know where the flies come from?

Maximilian – We need to turn this around, and fast, Donald. What do people still watch on TV, apart from ads?

Donald – Football... But we missed out on buying the rights this year... We can't afford it anymore... Not with the ads gone... We managed to secure the Winter Olympics, but apparently, air rifle biathlon on ice skates hasn't found its audience yet...

Maximilian – Football? Perfect, there you go! We'll just replace the actors in our dramas with footballers.

Donald – Footballers?

Maximilian grabs the sports magazine from Donald's hand.

Maximilian – Here! This one, for example...

Donald (*sceptical*) – He's barely scored any goals this season...

Maximilian – Why else would he want to be an actor?

Donald (*unsure*) – I don't know...

Maximilian – If you've got a better idea... I'm paying you for that, aren't I?

Donald thinks for a moment.

Donald – What if, instead of exhausting trying to compete with TV1, we fully embrace our editorial line?

Maximilian – Our editorial line...? I didn't know we had one...

Donald – We stop making fiction! We show TV being made! We could call it *CCTV*, for example. We film the writer as they're writing and self-censoring. The six programme advisors not laughing at the jokes the writer didn't dare include. The ultimate level of reality TV!

Maximilian – Brilliant, Donald! I always knew you weren't just a clown. So, when does it start?

Donald – What?

Maximilian – CCTV!

Donald points to the surveillance cameras.

Donald – It's already happening...

Blackout.

ACT 1

The set of a TV show being filmed at TV2, with the channel's name displayed on a sign against the back wall. The set is currently empty, except for a coffee table with three microphones on it. A technician in overalls enters, carrying a chair. He inspects the place to check that he's in the right spot.

Bob – Mike!

Mike (*offstage*) – Yeah?

Bob – Is this set number 2 for *A Will, A Destiny*?

Mike (*offstage*) – Yeah.

Bob – Well, come on, get a move on, we're live in fifteen minutes.

Bob puts the chair down on one side of the stage. Mike, also in overalls, enters with another chair. Depending on the casting, Bob and Mike could be male or female (with a slightly masculine look).

Mike – Hey, I'm not God, I can't be everywhere at once. (*He places the chair opposite the other.*) And no rush – the guest's still in makeup...

Bob – Where's the camera?

Mike (*pointing to the control room*) – Over there.

Bob (*calling to the control room*) – How are the chairs? Should they be more in the middle?

Mike and Bob move the chairs closer together.

Bob – Who's the guest today?

Mike – A politician.

Bob – Who?

Mike – I can't remember...

Bob – Left or right?

Mike – Centrist, I think. But these days, left, right...

Bob – I meant the chairs, you idiot. Is your centrist on the left or right?

Mike – That's the thing about centrists. You never know which side they'll land on...

Bob – Do you really think we have time to joke around?

Mike – Usually, the guest sits here. And the other idiots just take turns sitting across from him.

Bob – And the host?

Mike – You're right, we're missing a chair.

Bob – Thought so... (*Mike exits.*) What an idiot.

Mike returns with another chair, which he places in the centre between the other two.

Mike – There. All done.

Bob – Go on, sit there.

Mike sits in the guest's chair, and Bob takes the host's seat.

Mike – OK. I'll play the guest, then.

Bob (*to the control room*) – Can you hear us back there? OK, mic check time. (*To Mike*) So, Mr Twaddleworth, during your campaign, you promised taxes would go down and wages would go up. But the exact opposite happened. How dare you show your stupid face on TV?

Mike – My dear friend, we must not view things so simplistically. In reality, beyond appearances – which can be misleading – the situation is far from the catastrophe the opposition claims.

Bob – Well, it looks like everything's working.

Mike – Yeah...

Bob – The show can begin...

Mike – Once the clowns finish up in makeup...

Bob – Who's the host for *A Will, A Destiny*?

Mike – It's that idiot who just arrived.

Bob – You mean the one who got fired from TV1? I thought he'd taken early retirement in the South of France...

Mike – Yeah, well, we're not retiring anytime soon, are we?

Bob – Oh, here comes the star presenter now...

Brian, the host, enters, either as an ageing heartthrob or a younger one.

Brian – So, lads, everything running smoothly? We're already behind schedule...

Bob – And whose fault is that? We had to do the sound check ourselves. Is your centrist done with makeup?

Brian – Hey, I'm just the host. And some guests need more makeup than others to look halfway decent... Are the cameras in place?

Mike – Yeah, yeah, everything's fine.

Brian – What would we do without the camera operators?

Bob – Probably radio.

Brian – Ha, ha, ha! Brilliant... That's a good one... Reminds me of my early days in local radio. Ever tell you about the first time I met...?

Bob – Sorry, but we’ve got work to do.

Bob and Mike exit.

Brian – Work... What a bunch of slackers. One does work, the other two watch. (*Calling towards the wings*) Diana? What’s that airhead up to now?

Diana enters, dressed somewhat provocatively.

Brian – Ah, Diana! There you are, sweetheart. I was just about to page you...

Diana (*flirtatiously*) – I’m here, Doctor. Ready to fulfil your every desire...

Brian – Is the guest ready?

Diana – Yes, yes, he’s on his way...

Brian – Politicians, I swear. They need more makeup than women.

Diana – Especially with all the work he needs...

Brian – He even made me promise to seat him on the right – his “best” side. Can you imagine...

Diana – I can’t stand him...

Brian – He’s no prize, I know, but... he could be our next president! We went to university together, and even back then, he was stepping on people to get ahead.

Diana – He’s so pretentious! And sexist!

Brian – Oh, that’s not good... He hasn’t disrespected you, has he?

Diana – He asked the intern to bring him some honey tea to clear his voice before the show. And you know what? He sent her back because it wasn’t hot enough!

Brian – Not hot enough? The tea or the intern? (*He laughs loudly.*) I ran into Samantha this morning, and she’s quite... (*Noticing Diana’s disapproving look*) Right... We’ve got one minute left. Shall we go over the final details?

Diana – I was just about to suggest that...

Brian – And those workers he invited to sing his praises, they’re all here?

Diana (*pulling out a list*) – Yes, well... I wanted to discuss that with you...

Brian – Yeah, but we don’t have time now, darling. Let’s see... (*Brian grabs the list from her hands.*) I imagine we’ve got his first schoolteacher who gave him his first crush, his boarding school buddy who taught him how to polish his stick, and his mum’s friend who took his virginity. Just kidding...

Charles, the politician, enters, holding a cup.

Brian – Charles! How are you?

Charles – Very well, Brian, and you?

Brian – Sorry, I couldn’t come and greet you in makeup, we’re a bit behind schedule... Did they offer you a coffee?

Charles – Never coffee, it stains your teeth... I've also quit smoking and I'm on a little diet.

Brian – Oh yes, it shows.

Charles – My communication advisor says that if you have political ambitions, it's best to have white teeth and not look too well-fed.

Brian – That makes sense.

Charles – It's strange being here, isn't it? It's been years...

Brian – That's what I was just saying to Diana – we were together at law school.

Charles – I was in business school.

Brian – Right. We were young and beautiful. Those were the days!

Charles – Yes, indeed...

Brian – In any case, they didn't hold back with the makeup, did they? You look like a clown!

Charles – I'm really counting on you to avoid jokes like that when we're on air. Politicians aren't exactly well-liked as it is...

Brian – You know what they say: better to be disliked than... (*He catches Diana's eye.*) By the way, do you know Diana? She's my assistant...

Charles – Yes, yes, we've met, but... I didn't know she was your assistant.

Brian – To me, she's much more than an assistant, believe me... But hands off – don't even think about stealing her from me, alright?

Charles – You haven't changed, have you...

Brian – Of course, on air, we address each other formally.

Charles – Otherwise, they'll talk about the incestuous relationship between politics and the media again.

Brian – If only politicians didn't marry so many journalists!

Diana – The day it's the other way around, that'll be a real step toward gender equality...

Brian – Alright, enough joking around – we need to get moving. We're on air in five minutes.

Charles – Everything ready, then?

Brian – Yes, yes, don't worry... Diana gave me the list of your surprise guests, carefully prepared by your spin doctor.

Diana – Actually, I wanted to talk to you about that...

Brian (*grabbing the list from her*) – Let's see... Who's up first... Mrs Carpenter...

Charles – Mrs Carpenter? Who’s that? I didn’t put her on my surprise guest list!

Diana – Well... With this stomach flu going around, we had a lot of last-minute cancellations so... we had to replace some of your guests.

Charles – Replace them? Did you clear this with Peter?

Brian – Who’s Peter?

Charles – Peter! My comms director, for heaven’s sake!

Diana – Well... we had to do it at the last minute...

Brian – Don’t worry, Charles, it’s all under control... We do this all the time... We’ve got this... And anyway, now they’ll really be surprise guests!

Charles – I hate surprises... If I’m where I am today, it’s because I never leave anything to chance.

Brian – Relax... Take it easy... Want me to call the intern for a little pre-show massage? She’s really good, you know...

Charles – Speaking of the intern, that herbal tea she gave me makes me need the toilet... Do I still have time?

Brian – Yes, yes, go ahead... It’s over there... But be quick... (*Charles exits.*) What the hell were you thinking? You could have told me!

Diana – I tried, but...

Brian – Well, it’s too late now...

Diana (*gesturing to the audience*) – Maybe you should say a few words to them before we go live...

Brian – Oh yes, I forgot about them... (*To the audience*) Ladies and gentlemen, welcome to the studios of TV2. As you know, you’ll be watching a live broadcast of our show *One Will, One Destiny*. So, you’re welcome to clap from time to time – in fact, it’s encouraged.. (*Diana holds up an “applause” sign.*) Otherwise, keep quiet, okay?

Diana – So if you need to blow your nose, cough, or choke on your popcorn, now’s the time.

Brian – No asthmatic babies in the audience? No elderly people breathing through a noisy machine? No chatty mothers-in-law? Now’s the time to leave them at reception. You’ll get them back after the show.

Diana – And that goes for mobile phones, too.

Brian – Don’t forget to label them, so there’s no confusion later.

Diana – Brian’s talking about the phones, of course.

Brian – Really, no last-minute regrets?

Diana – Right then, let’s get started!

Charles returns.

Brian – Ah, Charles, all done with your little tinkle? Perfect, let's start the show...

Charles seems to notice the audience for the first time.

Charles (*quietly*) – Who are all these people?

Brian – They're the audience.

Charles – The audience? What's the audience for?

Diana – The show's being filmed live, with an audience.

Charles – I didn't know it was being filmed in front of an audience...

Brian – They are your voters, Charles! Having them here is crucial...

Charles – My voters? Did you check with my comms advisor that they all voted for me?

Brian – I meant voters in general. If you want to be the next president, my friend, these are the people you need to convince! They're the people of our country, and they're the ones you need to speak to! TV2 is here to help you do that.

Bob (*coming back*) – Alright, I don't mean to rush you, but we're live in thirty seconds, so please take your seats and wrap up the chatter...

Brian – OK... If the tech is ready, then let's go...

They sit in their chairs. Diana, standing behind the cameras, counts down with her fingers: five, four, three, two, one, zero. She signals the host to start by pointing at him, as the show's intro plays.

Brian – Dear loyal and ever-growing audience, welcome! It's a pleasure to have you back on the set of *One Will, One Destiny*. Our guest today is someone you all know—one of your elected representatives and a rising political figure: Charles Blackwood. Mr. Blackwood, good morning!

Charles – Good morning, Brian, and good morning to everyone. Thank you for having me on the show...

Brian – Mr. Blackwood, you are currently a member of parliament, representing our citizens living abroad – a constituency that's been unfairly overlooked...

Charles – Nevertheless, it's essential that our compatriots who contribute to our country's influence abroad are properly represented in Parliament.

Brian – And for our dear audience, let's clarify: when Mr. Blackwood talks about our fellow citizens abroad, he's not only referring to tax exiles but also to those unsung engineers exporting the best of our country's industry – like military aircraft and nuclear power plants...

Charles – Absolutely, I see all these anonymous workers as the Unknown Soldiers of globalization.

Brian – Well said, Charles, and that leads us to our next topic. It’s no secret you’re being considered for the Ministry of Defence or Home Affairs, and you haven’t hidden your ambitions for the next presidential election.

Charles – All in good time, Brian. For now, I have only one goal: to serve our country to the best of my ability in the position I hold today.

Brian – That modesty does you credit, Mr. Blackwood. In any case, this show will surely give the wider public a chance to get to know you better. While the compatriots abroad who elected you may be familiar with your political career, many others may be seeing you for the first time today.

Charles – I certainly hope they won’t be disappointed...

Brian – Well, it’s up to you to show them your best side, Charles! Our compatriots know you as the politician, but they don’t know the person behind the title. You’re quite a private person, aren’t you?

Charles – Indeed, I don’t like talking about myself much. But these days, I believe it’s necessary to put oneself out there a little more. And my fellow citizens, who entrusted me with the responsibilities I hold today, have the right to know who I am...

Brian – Without further ado, Mr. Blackwood, let’s welcome the first of our surprise guests – a guest who will no doubt shed light on your personality in a more personal way... because she’s your former teacher!

Charles’s face drops.

Charles – My teacher...

An older woman enters, possibly with a regional accent. From the side of the stage, Diana holds up the “applause” sign for the audience. Brian glances at his notes.

Brian – Hello Chris, and welcome to *One Will, One Destiny!* (*Charles looks surprised but composes himself.*) Charles, I’m sure you recognise Chris... even if it’s been a few years since you last saw each other.

Charles – Yes, yes, of course... Well, no... I mean... Chris?

Brian – She’s changed a bit over the years too. She’s retired now, yes, but this is indeed your primary school teacher, Chris – back from when you were wearing out the seats at Holy Cross College in Glenwick.

Charles – Ah, of course... Mrs. Carpenter... That’s why I didn’t recognize “Chris”.

Brian – First of all, Chris, was Charles a brilliant student?

Chris – Brilliant? Goodness, no... I’d say... Average. Yes, just about average. Maybe even a little below.

Brian – Well, it seems he’s made up for it. Just goes to show that in our great country, even the dunces have a fair shot at becoming President one day...

Chris – Yes...

Brian – So Chris, describe what Charles was like as a child. What’s the first adjective that comes to mind when thinking of him as a young boy?

Chris – An adjective?

Brian – Yes... or several, if you prefer.

Chris – That’s not easy...

Brian – Go on, give it a try... Don’t overthink it.

Chris thinks for a moment.

Chris – Sneaky.

Brian – Excuse me?

Chris – Yes... I wouldn’t say he was nasty, not at all. But sneaky, you know?

Brian – Well, I mean...

Chris – Or maybe... two-faced, if that sounds better.

Brian tries to play it off with humour to lighten the mood.

Brian – I’m not sure Charles would be thrilled with either term, to be honest...

Charles – I admit, I wasn’t the best-behaved child... Like most boys my age, I suppose...

Chris – Let’s just say... when he did something wrong, he always managed to make someone else take the blame, you see?

Brian – I see, Chris... Thank you for that enlightening testimony, which I’m sure...

Chris – I remember once, he broke the arm off a gnome while playing football during break time...

Brian – A gnome? What, did Mr. Blackwood go to a school for gnomes?

Chris – No, not a real gnome. A porcelain one. A garden gnome, if that’s clearer. Right in the middle of the playground flowerbed.

Brian – Ah, I was starting to wonder... A school for gnomes. Not exactly Snow White, are you, Chris?

Chris – Anyway, young Charles broke the gnome. It was Happy, my favourite. I sometimes wonder if the little rascal did it on purpose. Well, he managed to get one of his classmates blamed for it instead...

Brian – Now, now, Chris, let’s not pile it on poor Charles... It’s only human not to want to face the consequences... And after all, the statute of limitations has long expired, hasn’t it? Besides, I’m sure Charles sincerely regretted that unfortunate incident later on... And this mostly shows that he’s just like everyone else, perfectly normal, with his faults but also his strengths.

Chris – In any case, he hasn’t changed...

Brian – Well, thank you, Chris, for that insight...

Chris – I remember another story...

Brian – Maybe another time, Chris... We've got plenty of other guests to get to...

Chris exits, almost escorted by Diana, while Charles tries to maintain his composure under her angry gaze. From the side of the stage, Diana holds up the "applause" sign for the audience.

Brian – Well, Charles, that's the beauty of live TV! At least no one can say we hand-picked your guests!

Charles – Quite right, Brian...

Brian – So, did seeing your dear old teacher stir up any emotions after all these years?

Charles – Of course, it's very moving to see Cassy again...

Brian – Chris...

Charles – I'm afraid this poor woman isn't quite in her right mind anymore.

Brian – Well, without further ado, Charles, let's welcome our second guest.

From the side of the stage, Diana holds up the "applause" sign, and a young woman with a foreign accent enters. The role of Alex could also be played by a man with ambiguous sexuality.

Charles – Alex?

Brian – Ah, at least you recognise this one...

Charles – Yes, well...

Brian – So, Alex? You were Charles's flatmate when he was a student, I believe.

Alex – Alex is just a nickname... Because... Mr. Charles couldn't manage my real name...

Brian – So, what is your real name?

Alex – Zastermadmarmo. It's a Tibetan name that means "Goddess of Wealth".

Brian – Zaster... Well, I think we'd better stick to calling you Alex, right? So, Alex, what kind of flatmate was Charles?

Alex – Very tidy.

Brian – A taste for order! That's a promising trait for a future Minister of Home Affairs...

Alex – I'd even say he was a bit... obsessive.

Brian – Obsessive?

Alex – His trousers always had to be perfectly ironed. With the crease right down the middle. So it fell exactly on the tassel of his loafers.

Brian – You ironed his trousers for him? Well, Alex, I would have loved to have a flatmate like you when I was a student...

Alex – Honestly, I was more like his maid...

Brian – His maid? Well, Alex, not just the perfect flatmate – you're the ideal woman!

Alex – Since I didn't have papers, I couldn't even rent a small room in my name... So Mr. Charles let me stay with him...

Brian – Well, that certainly shows his generosity...

Alex – In exchange, I did some household chores...

Brian – Ah, just a few friendly favours, then...

Alex – Mr. Charles also made use of my services when he was feeling a bit lonely, if you know what I mean...

Brian – Of course – you probably read to him by the fireplace in the evenings... or gave him the occasional massage to help him de-stress before exams...

Alex – Yes, well...

Brian (*cutting her off*) – So, what kind of student was he? I imagine Charles was just as conscientious about his studies as he was about his neatly pressed trousers, right?

Alex – I shouldn't say this, but I typed up his master's thesis for him...

Brian – Another little secretarial favour, then. You know, back in the day, people forget too quickly – word processors didn't exist yet. So, he gave you his drafts, and you typed them up on the typewriter...

Alex – Yes, I typed it up. But actually... he never really gave me a draft. In fact, I wrote his entire thesis for him.

Brian – Really? Well, that shows a great deal of trust in you, doesn't it?

Alex – In exchange, he helped me get a temporary residence permit through his father, who was was a minister at the time.

Brian – Well, ladies and gentlemen, that shows us that Charles can also be a man with a heart. Thank you, Alex, for sharing that touching story.

Alex – By the way, Mr. Charles, if you could still help me with something... My visa expires at the end of the month, and... I'll do anything you want, I swear.

Brian – My assistant will take down your details, and I'm sure Mr. Blackwood, one he's Minister of Home Affairs, will look into your case favourably... Won't you, Charles?

Charles – Of course...

Brian – Could someone please escort Miss Alex to the border – uh, I mean backstage?

Bob and Mike arrive and escort Alex offstage. From the side, Diana holds up the "applause" sign for the audience.

Alex – Let go of me, you brutes!

They exit.

Brian – Well, Charles? Any final thoughts before we move on to the next guest...?

Charles – At first, I thought I recognised that person, Brian, but I'm fairly certain now that she's an impostor...

Brian – That's my impression too, Charles. And I'm truly sorry for the incident. But hey, what can we do? That's the nature of television! Probably just some radical feminist with a message to push...

Sounds of a struggle and commotion are heard backstage. An awkward pause follows.

Brian – Well, it seems we have a show full of surprises! What will our third guest reveal about you, I wonder...? (*Glancing at his list*) None other than, if I'm not mistaken, Baroness Cassandra Von Kronenbourg – your mother-in-law...

From the side of the stage, Diana holds up the "applause" sign for the audience.

Brian – Ah, I'm being told through my earpiece that this won't be possible...

A woman attempts to enter the set but is immediately hauled off by Bob and Mike. (If only the first act is performed as a short comedy, the scuffle sounds and the baroness character can remain offstage to avoid unnecessary extras.)

Cassandra – Wait, let me through! I have things to say...

Brian – Alas, we're out of time. We have to wrap up the show, and we won't have time to hear from our last guest.

Charles – What a shame, that one was actually on my surprise guest list...

Brian – Ladies and gentlemen, time flies, and unfortunately, we have to end the show. Thank you for your loyalty to *One Will, One Destiny*, and have a great evening.

The show's closing credits roll as everyone forces a smile.

Charles – What a nightmare... I need to dash to the toilet... Must be the stress of being on this show... Brian, I'm holding you accountable for this!

Diana – Keep it down a bit... There are still a few people in the audience...

Charles – And you, you silly woman – no one asked you! If only you hadn't changed my guest list at the last minute without telling me!

Brian – Come on, let's all calm down... It didn't go that badly, did it?

Charles – You think so? Whatever... we'll just cut all that in editing...

Brian – In editing? But Charles, it was live...

Charles – Live? I didn't know it was live...

Diana – Come on, it wasn't that bad.

Brian – The important thing is just being on TV, you know.

Charles – You think so?

Brian – And between us, if you ask me, when it comes to politics, our fellow citizens prefer cheaters and schemers...

Charles – You think so?

Brian – Absolutely! People can't stand honest politicians. They find it scary. An honest person? Well, they just don't trust them.

Diana – They feel closer to someone they can relate to.

Brian – Now they'll feel a stronger connection to you.

Diana – A good guy? Maybe for a Prime Minister, but for a president, they want Super Liar.

Bruno – With a touch of rustic charm, of course.

Diana – To be president in this country, you have to prove you can sell a draft horse as an Arabian thoroughbred.

Charles – You think so?

Brian – Absolutely!

Charles – So, in your opinion, we don't cut anything at all?

Diana – Otherwise, you'd have to cut everything.

Brian – And besides, it was live.

Charles – Well, you know, you've almost convinced me.

Brian – I'm telling you, it was a great show.

Charles – Say, Brian, how would you feel about replacing Peter?

Brian – Who's Peter?

Charles – My communications advisor!

Brian – How about we have lunch and talk it over?

They exit together.

Blackout.

ACT 2

Bob and Mike, the two technicians, return.

Bob – So, what’s on set number 2 now?

Mike – Shopping channel.

Bob – Whether it’s detergents or politicians they’re selling, it’s always the same... They promise to get things whiter than white... TV’s always a shopping channel, isn’t it?

They sweep the floor, clean the table, and adjust the microphones on set.

Mike – What’d you think of the centrist?

Bob – Well, you know, he wasn’t half bad, I must admit.

Mike – Yeah, me too.

Bob – Should we move the chairs?

Mike – We need to make space for the products.

Bob – What products are they?

Mike – Urns.

Bob – No way? After selling us the candidate, now they’re selling us the urns?

Mike – Funeral urns!

Bob – Oh yeah...

Mike – In the afternoons, it’s mostly the elderly who watch TV. You have to admit, it’s hard to find products that still make them dream.

Bob – You’re right – a nice cremation promo right after their nap...

Mike – I can’t wait for retirement, I’m telling you. So we can kick back and watch TV instead of working on it.

Bob – Who’s presenting this shopping channel gig?

Mike – Samantha, the intern, is handling it. I helped her rehearse her part earlier. Just watching her hold a funeral urn to her chest makes you think cremation doesn’t sound so bad.

Bob – That good, huh?

Mike – She’s a knockout, I’m telling you. Haven’t you seen her yet?

Bob – I don’t think so.

Mike – You’d remember if you had, trust me... Look, here she comes now...

Samantha, the intern, rushes in, looking panicked.

Bob – What’s wrong, my dear?

Samantha – Oh my God! Have you seen Diana?

Mike – She was here just a minute ago... What’s going on?

Samantha – I just found Charles Blackwood in the men’s toilets.

Bob – The men’s toilets? Is that so terrible?

Diana – He’s dead!

Samantha rushes off.

Mike – Blackwood? Dead?

Bob – Looks like your centrist will never be President...

Mike – Yeah, that seems quite unlikely now. You know, it’s strange...

Bob – What is?

Mike – What was she doing in the men’s toilets, anyway?

Bob – Who?

Mike – The intern!

Bob – A presidential candidate is dead, and that’s what you find strange?

Mike – Do you think they’ll still air the shopping channel?

Bob – Good point. We’d better check – no sense working for nothing...

They exit. Samantha enters with Diana.

Diana – Dead? Are you sure?

Samantha – I’ve seen dead people on TV, and believe me, he looks very dead.

Diana – This can’t be happening! He’s really gone and done it this time! We need to inform Brian immediately.

Samantha – You’re right, I’ll go look for him...

But Brian enters.

Brian – I already know... Damn it, this is all I needed! On my first day presenting *One Will, One Destiny*, and my guest dies practically live on air! Talk about a baptism by fire! No one’s going to want to come on the show now...

Diana – On the other hand, the ratings were tanking. This might spark public interest again...

Brian – You think so?

Diana – Either way, we need to call the police right now.

Brian – Already done. They’ll be here any minute.

Diana (*to Samantha*) – But how did he die?

Samantha – How should I know?

Brian – Well, not of old age, that's for sure. (*To Diana*) Why don't you go and check?

Diana – I'm not sure if... maybe it's best if no one goes into those toilets for now. It's a crime scene...

Samantha – You really think it was a crime?

Diana – No, I mean... I don't know... But that's where the body was found. It's probably best not to touch anything until the police arrive, right?

Brian – Samantha, dear, go put a sign on the door so no one uses the toilets until we sort out this little problem.

Samantha – And what should I write on it?

Brian – I don't know... Improvise!

Samantha exits.

Brian – What a dimwit...

Diana – You're the one who hired her...

Brian – You've got to give young people a chance.

Diana – So hiring her was an act of charity?

Ramirez and Sanchez (either men or women) enter.

Ramirez (*showing their badge*) – Detective Ramirez, and this is my assistant, Sanchez.

Brian – Ah, hello Detective. We've been expecting you. Brian Cascaldi, host of *One Will, One Destiny*. And this is my assistant, Diana.

Ramirez – Very good. I have one question for you to start with, Mr. Cascaldi.

Brian – I'm listening.

Ramirez – Do you know the weather presenter on TV2?

Diana – Do you think he had something to do with Charles Blackwood's death?

Ramirez – There's nothing to suggest that at the moment. I just wanted to know if you're close to him. My mother-in-law adores him. I'd appreciate it if you could get me an autograph. Is he a friend of yours?

Brian – Well... I've had the chance to meet him, yes... In this business, you know, we all know each other. Plus, he has a country house, not far from mine.

Sanchez – Really?

Diana – The body is in the toilets, Detective.

Ramirez – Ah yes, the body... Sanchez, go take a look at the body, will you?

Sanchez – Yes, Chief.

Diana – This way, I'll show you...

Ramirez – I hate seeing dead bodies. I know, in my line of work, I should be used to it, but no. I just can't... As long as there's no blood, I can handle it. What state is it in?

Brian – I haven't seen it myself, to be honest. It was the intern who found the body, and... I have to admit, I'm not a fan of that kind of sight either.

Ramirez – The smell is the worst part. Decomposing bodies are a nightmare...

Brian – No worries there, Detective, I was talking to him barely fifteen minutes ago. The body's still warm, I can assure you.

Ramirez – That's a relief, Brian... So, we're talking about Charles Blackwood, right?

Brian – Yes, that's correct.

Ramirez – The name rings a bell...

Brian – He's a Member of Parliament, and people were talking about him for the Home Office... If you weren't a fan, you're in luck – looks like he won't be your boss after all.

Ramirez – You know, for us, politics... Governments come and go, but the police stay the same... Was he left-wing or right-wing?

Brian – Centrist...

Ramirez – But who would want to kill a centrist... I mean, enough to actually go through with it?

Brian – You think it's murder, Detective?

Ramirez – I'd prefer it to be. At least then I wouldn't have come here for nothing... *(He glances towards the audience)* But tell me, who are all these people watching us?

Brian – That's... the audience, Detective!

Ramirez – The audience? I thought people watched TV alone in their living rooms...

Brian – The show was broadcast live, with a live audience.

Ramirez – I see... Well, let them know they'll need to stay at the disposal of the police, all right?

Brian – You mean they can't go home?

Ramirez – I'm afraid not, my friend. After all, there might be someone here who's been dreaming of killing a centrist for years.

Brian – In that case, ladies and gentlemen, I'll have to ask you to remain seated until further notice. If this takes too long, we'll arrange for bottled water and blankets. Thank you for your understanding, and once again, apologies for this unfortunate and unexpected incident.

Ramirez – Yes, well, what can you do. Some days are just like that – bad luck... It's like at the theatre. You can't leave before the end of the performance. Do you go to the theatre much?

Brian – Honestly, rarely.

Ramirez – You're right not to. Last Sunday, my wife dragged me to a matinee. Believe me, if I could've escaped at the interval, I would've!

Brian – They stopped you?

Ramirez – Worse... There was no interval!

Brian – They should ban plays without intervals.

Ramirez – So, who else was in this studio when Mr. Blackwood died?

Brian – Let's see... The witnesses we invited to talk about him, the stage technicians...

Ramirez – In that case, no one's leaving, right?

Brian – Very well, Detective.

Ramirez – Were you close to the victim?

Brian – Close... no, not exactly.

Ramirez – Yet you call him by his first name.

Brian – You know, in this business, we all call each other by our first names and kiss on the cheek. Sometimes we even sleep together. Doesn't mean we're close... Anyway, we did study together at university a few years ago...

Ramirez – Really? What kind of student was he? Was he a good student? A good friend?

Brian – Already a bit of a teacher's pet, to be honest... But are you sure this is relevant to the investigation?

Ramirez – Probably not. Anyway, we need to find out if Mr. Blackwood's death was natural. Ah, here comes Sanchez now...

Sanchez enters with Diana.

Ramirez – So, what's the body telling us?

Sanchez – At first glance, not much, Chief. No blood. No signs of a struggle. No marks of strangulation. But I didn't touch anything. Waiting on the coroner.

Diana (*excited*) – This is crazy! I feel like I'm in a crime drama...

Ramirez – You don't seem too disturbed by the victim's death...

Diana – This was my first time meeting him... and he wasn't exactly friendly. I think our intern would confirm that...

Ramirez – The intern... She's the one who found the body, correct? I'd like to speak to her.

Brian – I'll go fetch her, Detective...

Sanchez's phone rings.

Sanchez – Yes... Okay, I'm on my way... The coroner's here – I'll handle it.

Ramirez – Take a seat, miss.

Diana sits in one of the chairs, and Ramirez takes the other.

Diana – This is funny. I feel like I'm the guest on the show...

Ramirez – That's perfect, I've always dreamed of being a TV presenter.

Diana – Can I offer you a coffee, Detective?

Ramirez – No, thank you, never coffee. Then I can't sleep during the day. (*He spots the half-full cup left by Charles*) But what's that?

Diana – That's... herbal tea. The one Mr. Blackwood asked for to clear his throat before the show.

Ramirez – I see... A little trick of the trade for TV appearances...

Diana – Looks like he only drank half. It must be cold by now, though...

Ramirez clears his throat a little.

Ramirez – This'll do just fine. Got a bit of a frog in my throat myself.

Ramirez empties the cup of herbal tea while Diana watches in disbelief. Brian returns.

Brian – Samantha's on her way...

Ramirez – Very well. Now, let's get started.

Diana – I'm ready to answer all your questions, Detective.

Ramirez – Name, first name, age, profession...

Diana – Diana Wilson. Single, no dependants, and personal assistant to Mr. Brian Cascaldi. As for my age, that's something I'll only reveal under torture.

Ramirez gestures towards the control room, and a spotlight shines on Diana.

Ramirez – So, Diana, tell me about your relationship with Mr. Cascaldi. I've read in the press that it isn't purely professional...

Diana – You know, they say a lot of things in the papers...

Ramirez – You're not getting away with that dodge, Diana. The public's listening and they want to know too...

Diana – Ah, the public... naturally. Maybe we should let them go, don't you think?

Ramirez – Don't worry about them, my dear. They should have stayed home watching TV like everyone else. But you still haven't answered my question... So, if you had to pick a Facebook status to describe your relationship with Mr. Cascaldi? "In a relationship"? "Domestic partnership"?

Diana – Let's just say... It's complicated.

Ramirez – I see... Well, actually, I don't see at all...

Sanchez returns with Samantha, the intern, who is carrying a handbag containing something rather bulky.

Sanchez – Here's the intern, Chief. She was about to leave, but I stopped her...

Ramirez – So, Miss? You don't like it here with us?

Samantha – Not at all! I was just...

Ramirez – We'll find out soon enough. Any news from the coroner?

Sanchez – According to him, it looks like poisoning, Chief.

Ramirez – Poisoning... you mean it was deliberate?

Brian – But who would want to poison Charles Blackwood?

Sanchez – The lab should have more information soon.

Ramirez – Very well, then, let's talk, Samantha.

Samantha (*inadvertently provocative*) – I'm fully at the disposal of the police, Detective...

Ramirez – And believe me, we appreciate your eagerness to cooperate. (*Ramirez, however, shifts uncomfortably in his chair.*) Sanchez, take care of her. I'll be right back. I need to do something in the bathroom.

Diana – That's where the body is, though.

Ramirez – Well, I'll take a look at the body while I'm there.

Sanchez (*to Samantha*) – Set your bag down and sit here.

Diana – I'll come with you, Detective.

Ramirez and Diana exit. Samantha puts down her bag and sits.

Samantha – Thank you...

Sanchez – What's your name?

Samantha – Samantha White.

Sanchez – So, Samantha, what were you doing in the men's toilets when you found Mr. Blackwood's body?

Samantha – Well, I...

Sanchez – You'll admit, a lady's place is usually in the ladies' room... So?

Samantha looks very embarrassed.

Brian – She was with me.

Sanchez – Oh, really?

Brian – I’m a gentleman, I couldn’t let the young lady feel embarrassed.

Sanchez – One thing puzzles me, Mr. Cascaldi... Why would a gentleman like you need to meet his intern in the men’s toilets?

Brian – I don’t think I need to spell it out for you...

Sanchez – We’ll see if that’s necessary later. But can I ask you a question, Mr. Cascaldi?

Brian – Yes...

Sanchez – Are you in a romantic relationship with Miss White?

Brian – Uh... Isn’t that what I just said?

Sanchez – Ah, sorry, I didn’t catch that... Right, I see... But in that case, Mr. Cascaldi, why didn’t you immediately say you were there when your intern discovered Mr. Blackwood’s body?

Brian – We were both locked in a stall in the men’s room! You can see why that was a bit embarrassing...

Sanchez – Embarrassing for whom?

Ramirez returns with Diana.

Sanchez – Any news, Chief?

Ramirez – I couldn’t use the men’s room; there was a sign on the door saying it was temporarily out of order due to asbestos removal.

Brian and Diana both look at Samantha.

Samantha – I thought it was the most effective excuse to stop anyone from entering the toilets while the body was still in there...

Ramirez – In any case, from the initial analysis by the coroner, it seems Charles died of an overdose.

Brian – An overdose? I didn’t know he was a drug addict.

Sanchez – An overdose of what, Chief?

Ramirez – An overdose of herbal tea, as the most likely hypothesis suggests.

Brian – If that’s your most likely hypothesis, Detective, I’d be curious to hear what you think the least likely hypothesis might be.

Diana – An overdose of herbal tea? I didn’t know herbal tea could be that toxic...

Ramirez – Yes, according to the coroner, at very high concentrations. Apparently, Mr. Blackwood ingested a massive dose of *Night Time Tea* all in one cup, which would have plunged him into a deep sleep, close to a coma.

Samantha – So he’s not dead?

Ramirez – Not yet, but there’s no telling if he’ll ever wake up.

Sanchez picks up the empty cup from the table and examines it thoughtfully.

Sanchez – And when you say “tea”, Chief, do you mean something like what this empty cup seems to have contained?

Diana – Yes, I can confirm, it’s the same tea Mr. Blackwood drank before he... well, before he collapsed. But...

Ramirez suddenly feels unwell.

Ramirez – Then we won’t have to wait long to feel the toxic effects of this violent poison ourselves...

Sanchez – But who could have poisoned the drink, Chief?

Ramirez turns to the audience.

Ramirez – And have you questioned them?

Sanchez – Uh... no, not yet...

Ramirez – The culprit could just as easily be among them... Take a look around, Sanchez, and keep an eye out for anyone who doesn’t seem to have a clear conscience... And I’m not talking about those who snuck in without paying for their tickets...

Sanchez walks through the audience, scanning the spectators suspiciously. This part can allow for a bit of improvisation, depending on the audience’s reactions and the inspiration of the moment. Sanchez finally stops in front of a spectator (male or female) who is actually an actor.

Sanchez – Can you come with me, please?

Pat – Why me?

Sanchez – Let’s call it... profiling. Don’t worry, though, we’ll give you a receipt after we rough you up a bit. And we’ll tattoo our badge numbers on both your buttocks. Sound good?

The spectator reluctantly follows Sanchez.

Ramirez – Search him.

Sanchez frisks the spectator thoroughly. He feels something suspicious, pulls it from the spectator’s coat pocket, and holds it up for his colleague to see.

Sanchez – Bingo, Chief. A whole box of *Night Time Tea*.

Ramirez – Well, what do you have to say for yourself?

Pat – It’s for personal use, Detective!

Sanchez – They all say that...

Ramirez – We'll need to trace the source of this stuff. To prevent any more innocent victims. Even if it started off harmless, it could've been cut with much more toxic substances.

Sanchez (*reading the box*) – Linden, verbena, chamomile... You're right, Chief, there are colourings and additives in here too...

Ramirez – Sit over there. (*The spectator obeys.*) You're in luck, mate. It's your fifteen minutes of fame... We're going to interview you!

Pat – But I didn't do anything, I swear!

Sanchez – Right, you come to the theatre after drinking *Night Time Tea*, when everyone else is chugging coffee to stay awake, and you expect us to believe you?

Ramirez – Go fetch the phone book, Sanchez.

The spectator looks terrified.

Brian – Come on now, you're not going to rough up one of our audience members, are you? We already struggle to get them in here... Imagine the reviews we'd get...

Ramirez – Don't worry, it's just to find a pizza delivery number. I'm starving. Aren't you?

Samantha – I'll sort that for you, Detective.

Samantha returns with a phone book, handing it to Sanchez.

Sanchez – Let's see... pizza, pizza... this should do... (*He dials a number.*) The usual, Chief?

Ramirez – Can't mess with a winning formula.

Sanchez – Yes, we'd like two pizzas... One Margherita with extra cheese and one Napolitana. The address? (*Proudly*) We're filming at the TV2 studios. Yes, the TV channel. Oh, you know where it is? Perfect, thanks.

He puts away his phone.

Ramirez – So, where were we...

Sanchez – What are we drinking with that?

Ramirez – Wait – didn't you order the beers?

Sanchez – It completely slipped my mind, Chief.

Ramirez turns to the spectator.

Ramirez – All right, go fetch us two cans.

Pat – Me?

Sanchez – Yes, you!

Diana – Aren't you worried he won't come back?

Sanchez – Not with this.

Brian – An ankle bracelet?

Sanchez – Combined with a taser. We rigged it up ourselves. It's foolproof.

Brian – Ah, yes... I've got something similar for training my German Shepherd...

Ramirez – Yeah, we were kind of inspired by that, to be honest.

He straps an electronic bracelet around the spectator's ankle.

Brian – We should use this system for theatre audiences. It'd stop people from sneaking out during the interval.

Sanchez – Off you go! Fetch those drinks!

The spectator exits.

Ramirez – Now, back to business...

Sanchez – So, the intern is getting it on with the host in the toilets...

Diana – Excuse me?

Sanchez – Sorry, I mean... you didn't know?

Ramirez – I fear that your Facebook status might soon shift from "It's complicated" to "It's very complicated"...

Diana glares furiously at the intern.

Diana – You little tramp!

Samantha – You witch!

Sanchez – Now, ladies, let's show some decorum. Just a reminder, ladies: this interrogation is being broadcast live, with an audience...

Ramirez – Attempted murder by administering a massive dose of Night Time Tea... That's strange; it reminds me of another case.

Sanchez – You think we're dealing with a serial killer, Chief?

Ramirez – Unless it's simply a sordid crime.

Diana – But why?

Ramirez – It's true; we still don't have a motive.

Brian – He dreamed of becoming president, but let's face it, his chances were pretty slim.

Samantha – He wasn't exactly Kennedy, that's for sure.

Diana – A centrist doesn't upset anyone.

Sanchez – A centrist in a coma, even less.

Brian – Though the difference between a centrist in a coma and one who isn't, isn't always easy to spot.

A moment of perplexed silence.

Ramirez – Bring in the guests, let's grill them too.

Samantha – I'll go fetch them.

Sanchez – Speaking of grilling, I'm starving. Aren't you, Chief?

Ramirez – I don't know what's wrong with me, I've lost my appetite. I hope it's not the first effects of that toxic tea I drank.

Sanchez – That's funny... When I smoke a joint, it just makes me hungrier...

Samantha returns with Chris.

Ramirez – All right, little lady. Enough messing around. Are you going to confess, or do I need to rough you up a bit first?

Chris – It's true; when he was my pupil at Holy Cross College, I couldn't stand him. He was my scapegoat. But Detective, Christian charity forbids me from giving in to thoughts of revenge.

Ramirez – Sure, Grandma. Tell that to someone else. Pass me the taser, Sanchez, maybe this old biddy needs her memory jogged.

Chris – Fine, I admit I once thought about drowning him in the toilet during recess by holding his head in the bowl. But I never had the nerve...

Sanchez – Was that the only time?

Chris – I also put a bit of rat poison in his snack, but it didn't really work. And that was years ago, Detective. Surely the statute of limitations applies, doesn't it?

Sanchez – Of course, Grandma, don't worry... If a schoolteacher can't deal with the rowdiest kids in her class, how can we expect to keep any kind of order in schools?

Ramirez – I hope no one in the audience left their kids with a babysitter like this to come to the show... Anyway, where's our guy with the beers?

Sanchez – I'll speed this up, Chief.

He pulls out a remote control and presses it. The spectator reappears instantly, his hair standing on end as if he's just been zapped with a high-voltage shock. He hands two pizza boxes and two cans of beer to the officers.

Ramirez – Ah, there we go!

Pat – I ran into the pizza delivery guy on my way back...

They open the boxes, and Sanchez starts eating messily.

Sanchez – Want some?

Diana – No, thanks...

Sanchez – You’re missing out, it’s really good.

Ramirez – All right, off you go, Grandma. Next!

Diana – At the reception, they’ll give you an urn as compensation for all this hassle.

Brian – Just to make sure you don’t leave with a bad memory of our show.

Diana – We had to cancel our shopping segment, and now we don’t know what to do with the products.

Chris – An urn? Thank you, that’s very kind...

Chris exits. Alex enters.

Ramirez – So, I’m guessing you hated the victim too?

Alex – Not at all! I adored him! I even worshipped him...

Ramirez – Search her. She’s got one of those faces I don’t trust. And when it comes to profiling, I’m rarely wrong.

Sanchez frisks her and pulls out a figurine of Charles with a tricolour sash, stuck with needles.

Sanchez – Once again, you were right, Chief...

Ramirez – This doll with needles in its eyes... it looks a lot like our victim, doesn’t it? So, that’s the kind of “worship” you had for him?

Alex – Okay, I tried to cast a spell on him. But it never worked, I swear!

Sanchez – Until today, at least...

Ramirez – All right, let her go too. We deal in forensic science here, not exorcisms...

Alex exits. Sounds of a struggle are heard offstage and Baroness Cassandra Von Kronenbourg bursts onto the set despite the security guards' efforts to hold her back (offstage).

Cassandra – Let go of me, you brutes! I have things to say, and you’ll listen!

Ramirez – Who’s this madwoman?

Diana – She’s the victim’s mother-in-law, Detective.

Ramirez – The mother-in-law? You know, in 10% of family-related murder cases, it’s the mother-in-law who kills the son-in-law. Or vice versa... Let her through, we’ll question her. Take a seat, dear lady.

Cassandra – Ah, finally... Thank you, sir... You’re truly a gentleman... (*She straightens her outfit and fixes her hair coquettishly, then sits.*) Shall we begin? (*As if she’s on TV*) Hello everyone. I’m Baroness Cassandra Von Kronenbourg.

Ramirez – So, you knew Charles Blackwood very well...

Cassandra – Know him? He’s my son-in-law! And despite all the malicious testimonies I’ve heard so far, I must say, without exaggeration, that Charles is the ideal son-in-law!

Ramirez – The ideal son-in-law? You mean because of the state he’s in now?

Cassandra – Knowing my daughter is married to a man who might one day make her First Lady... it’s a source of pride. That would, of course, make me the First Mother-in-Law of our country. I’d like to take this opportunity to send my regards to my daughter, who’s probably watching us right now...

She gives a discreet wave.

Ramirez – So, in your view, you had no reason to want him dead?

Cassandra – Murder my son-in-law? That’s ridiculous! (*To Diana*) Miss, could you show me where the camera is? I can’t seem to spot it...

Diana – The camera? But... there isn’t a camera. I mean...

Cassandra – No camera? But surely I’m on the set of *A Will, A Destiny*, right? And this gentleman asking me questions, he’s the famous host Brian Cascaldi, isn’t he?

Ramirez – What’s she talking about?

Diana – She thinks you’re Brian Cascaldi...

Brian – The lady believes she’s being interviewed for the show...

Ramirez lets out a sigh of exasperation.

Ramirez – Right, take her away.

Sanchez leads Cassandra offstage.

Cassandra – This is outrageous! They’re trying to silence me! This is a conspiracy!

Ramirez – Bring in the technicians. They’re the only ones we haven’t questioned yet.

Diana ushers in Bob and Mike, still in their work overalls. Sanchez returns.

Ramirez – Well, well, the dynamic duo. So, what did you two have against Blackwood? Seems like everyone hated him...

Bob – What, us? Have something against him?

Mike – Nothing at all.

Ramirez – Was he homophobic or something?

Bob – Homophobic? No. I mean, I wouldn’t know.

Sanchez – Was he against gay marriage or something?

Mike – And what would that have to do with us anyway?

Sanchez – Come on, guys, don’t play dumb. You’re not going to tell me you two...

Ramirez – The overalls, the moustaches...

Bob and Mike step menacingly towards the Detective.

Mike – What exactly are you trying to imply?

Bob – How about we make you eat that microphone?

Diana steps in to prevent the looming confrontation.

Diana – Please, gentlemen, no! Enough violence for today! I confess, Detective. I was the one who put a sachet of laxative in Mr. Blackwood's tea.

Ramirez – Laxative? But why?

Diana – To teach him a lesson! He'd been rude to everyone here... But I didn't think it could have killed him...

Ramirez – A laxative? So that's all it was? You've relieved me... I drank some of that tea myself... But that still doesn't explain the state Mr. Blackwood's in right now...

Charles staggers in.

Sanchez – Well, this should add some life to the investigation. It's rare to get a statement from the victim in a murder case.

Ramirez – So, what happened, mate? Tell us everything. Who tried to kill you?

Charles – Kill me?

Sanchez – You don't remember anything, do you?

Charles – Oh wait, it's coming back. I really had to go to the toilet. I went into the men's room and... when I came out, I saw Samantha. I asked her what she was doing in the men's toilets, and that's when I lose the thread...

Samantha – Brian had just come out. Mr. Blackwood tried to take advantage of the situation... I hit him with my handbag to get away.

Ramirez – Given that a young lady's honour is at stake...

Sanchez – What do you have in your handbag? A sledgehammer?

Sanchez grabs Samantha's bag and pulls out a printer.

Ramirez – Why are you carrying a printer in your handbag?

Sanchez – Is that in case anyone tries to take liberties with your virtue?

Ramirez – You know, a pepper spray is much lighter...

Diana – Yes, and it's even more curious because this printer looks suspiciously like the one that disappeared from my office this morning.

Samantha – I needed a printer, and it's not like I'm getting paid much here...

Ramirez – Clearly, getting hit with that would be more effective than a dose of *Night Time Tea*...

Sanchez – Do you want to press charges?

Charles – That won't be necessary... In my position, I'd prefer if this didn't become public, you understand. May I leave now?

Ramirez – Of course.

Charles leaves. Samantha and Diana follow him.

Brian – Thank you, Detective. I really appreciate how discreetly and delicately you've handled this investigation.

Ramirez – You owe me for this.

Brian – Actually, would you be interested in appearing on the show?

Ramirez – As the guest of honour?

Diana – We also feature representatives of civil society. And as a police officer, you're something of a social hero...

Ramirez – Really?

Brian – With all that's happened, we had to cancel our tele-shopping segment. We could film this interview right now, since you're here.

Ramirez – Why not? I'll be on TV, right?

Brian – It's not TV1, but still...

Ramirez – My wife will be thrilled. So, do I sit here?

Brian – Exactly. And this time, I'll be the one asking the questions...

Ramirez – I'm not used to answering them, but I'll do my best...

Brian – Let's do a quick run-through before we roll the camera, all right? Here we go... So, Mr. Ramirez, as you know, the police aren't very well-liked in this country. Why do you think that is?

Shouting is heard. Samantha and Diana come back onstage, strangling each other.

Brian – Looks like we'll have to pause the interview...

Ramirez – Now what?

Brian – Just a little domestic squabble, apparently...

Ramirez – Unbelievable! The one time I get a chance to be on TV...

He pulls out his taser and aims at the two girls, who start convulsing before collapsing.

Ramirez – There, now we'll have peace for five minutes. Trust me, it's more effective than tea.

Brian – Wow... Could you get me one of those? I think it would help a lot with my professional relationships.

Ramirez – If you can get me an autograph from the weather presenter for my mother-in-law...

Brian – I'll see what I can do... Right, let's get back to it. Ready in the control room? Cue the music!

The show's soundtrack begins to play.

Blackout.

The End.

About the author

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

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

Other plays by the same author translated in English:

Comedies for 2

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

Comedies for 3

A brief moment of eternity
A simple business dinner
An innocent little murder
Cheaters
Crash Zone
Fragile, Handle with care
Friday the 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
A Skeleton in the Closet
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
The Tourists

Comedies for 5 to 6

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

Comedies for 7 or more

At the bar counter
Backstage Comedy
Blue Flamingos
Check to the Kings
Christmas Eve at the Police Station
False exit
In flagrante delirium
Just like a Christmas movie
Miracle at Saint Mary Juana Abbey
Music does not always soothe the savage beasts
Neighbours'Day
Nicotine
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

Enough is Enough
For real and for fun
Him and Her
Lost time Chronicles
Open Hearts
Sidewalk Chronicles
Stage Briefs
Stories to die for

Monologues

Happy Dogs
Like a fish in the air

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