

La Comédiathèque

Lockdown Shorts

Jean-Pierre Martinez

comediatheque.net

**The text of this play is to free download.
However, an authorisation is required from the author
for any public representation.
To get in touch with Jean-Pierre Martinez
and ask an authorisation to represent one of his works –
<https://comediatheque.net/>**

Lockdown Shorts

A sketch comedy

Jean-Pierre Martinez

A comedy in sketches inspired by the Coronavirus health crisis.

Cast

16 characters. All roles may be played by either men or women. For 2 to 16 performers (men and/or women).

1. Vaccine Candidate.....	3
2. Side Effects.....	5
3. Viral Conversation.....	8
6. Back to Life.....	10
5. Bad Taste.....	12
6. Missed Connection.....	14
7. Mistaken Encounter.....	16
8. Locked Down for Life.....	18
9. Normal Life.....	19

© La Comédiathèque

1. Vaccine Candidate

One character is already onstage. Another enters wearing a costume suggesting that they are the personification of a vaccine.

One – Hello... So, you're the vaccine candidate?

Two – That's me.

One – But tell me... I've looked at your CV, and it's completely blank.

Two – That's right. I'm new, so I have no experience.

One – I see... So what can you tell me that would convince me to hire you?

Two – I'm 95% effective.

One – Of course... But that's what they all say. Why should I believe you?

Two – If I wanted to lie to you, I'd say I was 100% effective.

One – Yes... but 95% sounds more credible, doesn't it? It's like elections. No dictator ever gets 100% of the vote.

Two – In that case, I could have said I was 51.64% effective. That would have sounded even more credible.

One – But less convincing...

Two – That's why I thought 95% sounded about right.

One – All right. And what about side effects?

Two – No side effects.

One – None? Come on, that's not remotely credible. You have to admit...

Two – There have been one or two reported cases of cannibalism, but no formal link to the vaccine has been established.

One – Right...

Two – I should also add that I cost next to nothing and could make you twice what you spend on me.

The other character thinks for a moment.

One – All right... We'll give you a trial.

Two – A trial?

One – A clinical trial!

Two – Thank you for your confidence. You won't be disappointed, I promise...

One – I hope not. And in a few months, if there aren't too many victims, you'll be the candidate who gets our vote. Anything else to add?

The other character snaps to attention.

Two – Long live our country, and long live me!

One – Don't overdo it...

2. Side Effects

Two characters, possibly a couple.

One – Do you think we did the right thing?

Two – If it helps.

One – Yes... And anyway, did we really have a choice...?

Two – Exactly.

One – After all, it's only a vaccine.

Two – If it helps advance the research.

One – Yes... And since we're not doctors...

Two – We can always be guinea pigs.

Pause.

One – I didn't quite understand... What exactly is this vaccine for?

Two – I don't know... It's new... It's still experimental...

One – New, fine, but what is it supposed to protect us from?

Two – I don't think they told us.

One – We'd remember, wouldn't we?

Two – Yes, probably...

One – So they didn't tell us.

Two – No.

One – Anyway, even if they had...

Two – They could have told us anything.

One – Exactly.

Pause.

Two – They used to start by testing things on animals.

One – But now there aren't any animals left.

Two – All the wild animals have disappeared.

One – And animal farming has been replaced by cell culture.

Two – So now they test things directly on humans.

Pause.

One – Do you think there'll be a lot of side effects?

Two – I don't know.

Pause.

One – Have you noticed anything yet?

Two – Anything?

One – Side effects.

Pause.

Two – When I showered this morning, I noticed my toenails had turned into claws.

One – Claws? Like a cat's, you mean.

Two – More like a wolf's.

One – Oh, right...

Two – I've also got a lot more hair on my back.

One – Really?

Two – And my front teeth are getting longer too.

One – Right...

Two – What about you?

One – I noticed my feet had turned into hooves.

Two – Like a horse's, you mean?

One – More like a sheep's. And on my back, it's more like wool.

Two – Must be a side effect.

One – Yes...

Pause.

Two – Or maybe it's the main effect.

One – The main effect?

Two – A wolf and a sheep...

One – I see what you mean.

Two – Oh, do you...?

One – Maybe they're trying to repopulate the planet with animals.

Two – If we can help bring back species that have disappeared...

One – Yes.

Two – But then, here in our living room...

One – How are we supposed to live together?

Two – Exactly... A wolf and a sheep...

Pause.

One – Why did they do this?

Two – I don't know.

One – The wolf's going to eat the sheep...

Two – And when there are no sheep left, the wolves will have to eat each other.

One – That'll be the end of our species.

Pause.

Two – But then what exactly is this vaccine against?

One – I don't know.

Two – The human species?

One – Maybe it's a conspiracy.

Two – Organised by whom?

One – Viruses?

Pause.

Two – We were right to be suspicious of vaccines.

3. Viral Conversation

Two characters in costumes suggesting that they personify viruses. They seem to be waiting, pretending not to notice each other, until the first finally decides to greet the other rather timidly.

One – Hello.

Two – Hello.

One – Are you new around here?

Two – You could say that.

One – And like me, you're waiting for someone to come along.

Two – Shouldn't take long. This is usually quite a busy street. Well... it used to be.

The first holds out a hand.

One – I'm the flu virus. And you?

After a slight hesitation, the other shakes hands.

Two – Covid-19.

One – I thought so! The famous Covid-19?

Two (*with false modesty*) – Oh, famous...

One – Come on! You must be joking.

Two – The Spanish flu killed a hundred million people.

One – But you put a billion people out of work! The lockdown, the state of emergency, the carnage in retirement homes, Black Friday being delayed by a week... That was all you!

Two – That's true...

One – No, seriously, respect! I'm telling you, you're my idol.

Two – And how are things with you? Is the autumn-winter season looking good?

One – Oh, you know... We get by.

Two – Sorry to hear that...

One – And I have to admit, you've done us a lot of damage... People don't go out any more.

Two – I'm really sorry...

One – Don't apologise. Enjoy it while it lasts. Because it won't last forever, you know...

Two – You think?

One – As soon as they find an effective vaccine...

Two – We can always mutate. Take you, for example: you come back every year. Never quite the same, never quite different...

One – True. We never go out of fashion.

Two – Unlike all those that have been wiped out completely, or nearly: plague, cholera, tetanus... and so many others that thought they were invincible.

One – Apparently cholera is still hanging on pretty well...

Two – Yes, but its glory days are behind it. It's a disease of the poor...

One – Leprosy, on the other hand, is done for.

Two – Another species on the verge of extinction. Sad, but that's the way it is... Make way for the young!

One – The young... meaning you.

Two – You said yourself it won't last forever, so I might as well make the most of it.

One – Ah, here comes someone... Shall I leave this one to you? You can show me what you can do...

Two – I'd offer to share, but... look. He's wearing a mask and he's got hand sanitiser in his hand, ready to fire.

One – I'm telling you, you hit too hard. Now they're wary.

Two – And if we stand around here for an hour, we're dead.

One – I think I'll drop by the maternity ward.

Two – Are you having a baby?

One – The maternity ward! The newborns.

Two – Ah, of course... You're right. The maternity ward is the future. Because retirement homes...

One – They certainly aren't the future...

6. Back to Life

One character in a white coat runs into another wearing the same kind of coat and carrying a file.

One – You all right?

Two – Yeah...

One – You look like you've just seen a dead man.

Two – A dead man? More like the opposite...

One – And what's the opposite of a dead man?

Two – In this case... a resurrection.

One – You saw one of your former patients climb out of a drawer in the morgue?

Two – Almost... The patient in room 301 has just woken up.

One – Room 301?

Two – A guy who's been here for at least ten years. Don't you remember?

One – I didn't even know there was a room 301. I thought this hospital only had 300 rooms.

Two – He was admitted after an accident. And he never came out of his coma.

One – Right... So?

Two – Well, he's just woken up.

One – Oh, shit...

Two – Yeah, I know... It should be good news, but...

One – Yeah...

Pause.

Two – Ten years ago, he left a world where you could leave home without having to fill in a form, go for a drink with friends, see a film at the cinema... or just wander along the boulevards. And all that without a mask.

One – Yeah... Waking up is going to be a shock. When you tell him that none of that exists any more...

Two – No more cafés, no more restaurants, no more cinemas, no more theatres...

One – Maybe it's better not to tell him anything...

Two – He'll find out sooner or later.

One – Yeah...

Two – As long as he's in hospital, he'll be fine...

One – But when he gets out into the street...

Two – He's in for a shock.

One – What did he do for a living?

The other glances at the file, then looks back at his colleague with a dramatic expression.

Two – He worked in the performing arts...

One – Oh, shit... And now his job doesn't even exist any more...

Two – Maybe I'd better unplug him, then?

One – You just told me he'd woken up!

Two – He's still on a ventilator...

Pause.

One – I don't know... Listen to your conscience...

Two – Right.

Pause.

One – No, obviously I was joking.

Two – Of course... So was I...

They both look as though they are not entirely sure how much they are joking.

One – Anyway... I'm sure you'll make the right decision.

He gives his colleague a pat on the back and walks away. The other remains there, looking perplexed.

5. Bad Taste

One character, dressed in clashing, garish colours, appears before another wearing a white coat.

One – Good morning, Doctor.

Two – So, what brings you in today?

One – Well, Doctor, I've lost my sense of taste.

The other glances at her clothes.

Two – Your sense of smell too?

One – Er, no... Just my sense of taste. But that's bad enough.

Two – I can imagine...

One – Given my job, I'd say it's pretty serious.

Two – Do you work in a restaurant, perhaps? Or are you a food critic?

One – Not at all... I'm a fashion designer.

Two – Right... *(He holds out a box.)* Would you like a mint?

The other looks surprised.

One – Why not?

She takes a mint, puts it in her mouth and starts chewing it.

Two – I always keep some on my desk. For the children, you know. It helps put them at ease...

One – Of course...

Two – It's mint-flavoured.

One – Yes, I can tell...

Two – So you can taste the mint?

One – Yes. Why?

Two – You said you'd lost your sense of taste...

One – Oh, yes... But no! That's not what I meant! I didn't explain myself properly... When I said taste, I meant... good taste.

Two – That's what I thought...

One – This morning, for example, I opened my wardrobe and... well, look what I ended up wearing.

Two – I see...

One – Would you say this is in good taste?

Two – No, not really...

One – Exactly. That's what I was saying: I've completely lost my sense of taste.

Two – Clearly.

One – Can you prescribe something for me, Doctor?

Two – If it were a symptom of an infectious disease, perhaps, but in this case...

One – You can't leave me like this!

Two – Unless it's a new virus we haven't identified yet.

One – The bad taste virus?

Two – And... any idea where you might have caught it?

One – I don't know... I was in England not long ago...

Two – Well, we'll start by putting you in quarantine for two weeks, just in case.

One – Quarantine?

Two – We can't let you go out looking like that!

One – Why not?

Two – Because you might accidentally start a trend! Do you really want to see everyone in the street dressed like that? And know that you were responsible for the disaster?

One – No, of course not...

Two – Then stay at home for a couple of weeks.

One – All right, Doctor...

Two – And then come back and see me. *(He gives her clothes one last look.)* We'll see if it's any better.

One – All right, Doctor. Thank you, Doctor...

The character leaves. The other gets ready to leave as well and sighs.

Two – Honestly, I've seen it all... Thank goodness that was my last appointment... I just hope it isn't too contagious...

He leaves for a moment and returns without his white coat. He is wearing the same hideously tasteless outfit as the other character.

6. Missed Connection

Two characters. One dials a number on their mobile phone. The other takes out their phone, which has started ringing, and answers.

One – Hello...

Two – Hi, this is Jean-Paul Ramirez.

One – Sorry? Jean-Paul who?

Two – Ramirez. We were in the same class in our final year of high school.

Pause.

One – Is this a joke?

Two – Not at all. Don't you remember me?

One – No... Jean-Paul Ramirez?

Two – I found your name and photo on Old Friends...

One – Old Friends?

Two – Yes, you know, that website where...

One – Yes, yes, I know... Old Friends... But we weren't friends, were we? I don't even remember your name...

Two – Don't worry, I didn't remember yours either.

One – Right... So... why are you calling me? I mean... if we hardly knew each other?

Two – I don't know... I've been stuck out in the country for six months because of the lockdown. I thought I might use the time to reconnect with people I'd lost touch with...

One – Yeah... But to reconnect, don't you have to have had some kind of connection in the first place?

Two – We were in the same class! Even if we weren't really friends, we must have spoken once or twice.

One – Mmm... I suppose so... Jean-Pierre Martinez?

Two – Jean-Paul Ramirez.

One – No, honestly, it doesn't ring a bell at all. And I still don't understand why you're calling me. If we barely knew each other...

Two – You never know... Maybe we missed out on something.

One – Something?

Two – We could have been friends.

One – Er... Yeah...

Two – Maybe back then we never really got the chance to know each other and...

One – We spent a whole year in the same class. I imagine if we were meant to be friends, we had plenty of opportunities, didn't we?

Two – Maybe we had nothing in common. Nothing to say to each other.

One – Yes... That's pretty much what I meant.

Two – Back then, maybe. But what about now?

One – Now?

Two – Time has passed... Maybe if we met again now, we'd realise we have a lot in common. A lot to talk about. *Pause.* Hello...?

One – Yes... No, but... I don't know what to say to you... And... that in itself, you see, isn't a very good sign...

Two – Sorry. I won't bother you any longer.

One – Okay...

Two – Shall we keep in touch?

One – Okay...

Two – You never know... Maybe in a few years we'll have more in common.

One – Maybe...

They put their phones away.

7. Mistaken Encounter

Two characters cross paths. They are both wearing face masks. After a moment's hesitation, the first greets the second.

One – Hello!

Two – Hello...

One – How are you?

Two – Oh, sorry. With your mask on, I didn't recognise you.

One – No, no, that's all right.

Two – And I'm already a bit hard of hearing... When people talk to me through a piece of fabric, that doesn't make it any easier. I didn't recognise your voice either...

One – How have you been?

Two – Fine, thank you.

One – Good, good... And how's business?

Two – Fine...

One – Mind you, the stock market isn't doing too badly at the moment. Despite the crisis...

Two – Yes... Well, when you work in education, like I do, you know...

One – And your wife?

Two – My wife?

One – The last time I ran into her, she had a really bad cold. How is she?

Two – She died.

One – No... It can't be... Then it can't have been just a cold...

Two – No, it wasn't a cold.

One – I'm so sorry. This disease really is terrible. But when did it happen?

Two – About ten years ago...

One – I see... So she didn't die of... Well, of the...

Two – She died of leukaemia.

One – Right... So you're not...

Two – Apparently not...

One – Sorry, with the mask... I must have mistaken you for someone else...

Two – But do we actually know each other...?

One – To be honest... No, I don't think we do.

Two – Yes, that's what I thought.

One – Well, then... Have a good day.

Two – Right... You too.

One – Well, give my regards to your wife... I mean... My condolences...

Two – Thank you...

They each go their separate ways.

8. Locked Down for Life

One character is already there. The doorbell rings. Another character enters.

One – Hello!

Two – Ah, hello, postman.

One – You’ve got some mail.

Two – Yes, I thought so. Otherwise you probably wouldn’t have bothered coming in to tell me.

The postman hands him a letter.

One – Here you are.

Two – Thanks... *(He glances at the envelope.)* Another death notice...

One – With this damned virus... Death notices are what I deliver most these days... Sorry I don’t have any good news for you.

Two – Depends. It might be good news.

One – Oh, sorry, isn’t it a death notice?

Two – It is... But it depends who’s died. A death notice is a bit like a surprise bag. You never know what you’re going to find inside...

He opens it and looks at the card.

One – Well?

Two – A great-aunt on my father’s side...

One – Did you know her well?

Two – I hadn’t seen her for twenty years... She lived at the other end of the country... But she was the only family I had left.

One – Bad news, then...

Two – The good news is that, because of the lockdown, I’ve got a good excuse not to go to her funeral.

One – You’re right. These days, it’s better to look on the bright side. Come on, we’ll get through this! They can’t keep us locked down forever.

Two – Oh, you know, for me... Going out for one hour a day to do the shopping, curfew at nine, nowhere to go, no friends... I feel as though I’ve already been in lockdown for quite a while.

One – Ah, yes. When you put it like that...

Two – But at least now that everyone else is stuck at home too, I feel less alone.

One – Thanks... You’ve managed to depress me for the rest of the day.

Two – You’re welcome. See you soon...

9. Normal Life

Two characters.

One – I wonder when we'll be able to get back to a normal life...

Two – A normal life? You mean getting up at six in the morning, spending three hours on public transport to go and do a pointless job, all so you can afford to buy pointless things in the sales?

Pause.

One – All right, then... I wonder when we'll be able to get back to the way things were before...

Two – Soon. And you'll see, we'll think it's wonderful.

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 websites :

<https://jeanpierremartinez.net/>

<https://comediatheque.net/>

However, performance rights, which constitute fair compensation for the author's work, are a legal obligation. Whether you are an amateur or a professional, you must request authorization to perform the play and pay the corresponding royalties for the production.

Jean-Pierre Martinez is represented by the French Society of Authors (SACD).

To get in touch with Jean-Pierre Martinez and request authorization to perform one of his works, please use the [contact form on his websites](#).

Other plays by the same author translated in English

Comedies for 2

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

Comedies for 3

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

Comedies for 4

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

Comedies for 5 to 6

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

Comedies for 7 or more

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

Collection of sketches

Apocalypse
Backstage Bits
Don't panic ! Enough is Enough
Ethan and Eve
For real and for fun
Him and Her
Killer Sketches
Lost time Chronicles
No Sense Off Limits
Of Animals and Men
Open Hearts
Park Bench Shorts
Sidewalk Chronicles
Stage Briefs
Stories to die for

Monologues

Happy Dogs
Like a fish in the air

This text is protected under copyright laws.
Criminal copyright infringement will be investigated
and may result in a maximum penalty of up to 3 years in prison
and a EUR 300.000 fine.

Avignon – September 2026
© La Comédiathèque – ISBN 978-2-38602-419-1
<https://comediatheque.net/>
Play available for free download