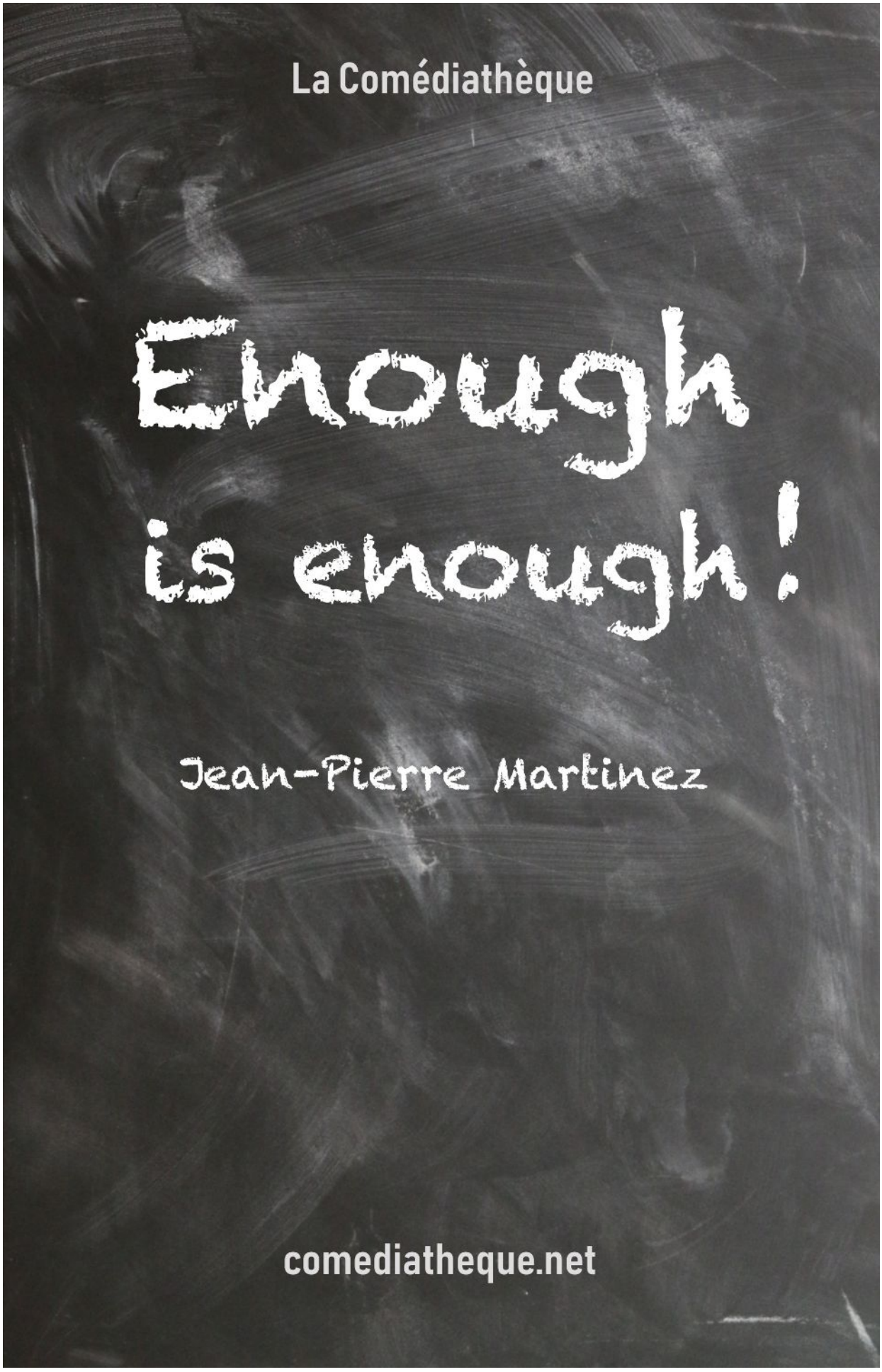
La Comédiathèque
Enough is enough !
Jean-Pierre Martinez
comediatheque.net

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
https://jeanpierremartinez.net

Enough is enough!

Jean-Pierre Martinez

Fifteen comic sketches exploring questions that never seem to go away, inspired by a simple, tragicomic truth: stand still for long enough and you may find yourself somewhere else without ever having moved, because the world around you has changed.

The thirty roles in these fifteen sketches can be played by any number of performers from two to thirty, regardless of gender.

1 – Too Early....3
2 – Too Busy....5
3 – Too Radical....9
4 – Too Nice....13
5 – Too Rich....16
6 – Too Polite....18
7 – Too Short....21
8 – Too Fast....22
9 – Too Exhausting....25
10 – Too Long....27
11 – Too Slow....29
12 – Too Centrist....32
13 – Too Static....34
14 – Enough Is Enough!....36
15 – Too Late....38

© La Comédiathèque

1 – Too Early

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

One – I'm not too late, am I? *(A pause.)* No, otherwise you'd have left by now... *(They look around nervously.)* Unless I'm early... No, you wouldn't be here already... *(A pause.)* Have you been waiting long?

Another character enters, also a bit anxious.

Two – I'm not late, am I?

One – Sorry?

Two – Well, you were here before me...

One – Ah, yes... No, no. You're right on time. I think...

Two – Have you been waiting for me long?

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

Two – Oh, weren't you?

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

Two – Me?

One – Were you expecting to find me here?

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

One – I was just about to leave, actually.

Two – We could so easily have missed each other...

One – Well, we're both here now. That's what matters...

Two – It's beginning to feel like a rendezvous, isn't it?

One – A rendezvous?

Two – Two people in the same place at the same time. That is what you call a rendezvous, surely?

One – Yes.

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

One – And if both people agree to it...

Two – I don't know why, but the word rendezvous always makes me think of spacecraft.

One – Oh, really...?

Two – Two things meeting at precisely the same point in the infinite space and time of the universe.

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

Two – Two spacecraft gently docking. Travelling at enormous speed, yet seeming perfectly still because they are moving together at exactly the same pace. A delicate operation. One small mistake could be fatal...

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

Two – It's a metaphor...

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

Two – Of course...

One – Or it could just be a meeting.

Two – A meeting? You mean...

One – A chance encounter.

Two – Chance?

One – A coincidence.

Two – Still... You know what they say...

One – No.

Two – There are no chance encounters, only appointments with fate.

One – And appointments that never happen.

Two – Well, this one seems to have worked out. We're both here.

One – And the audience too.

Two – That's true.

One – It's the magic of theatre.

Two – Since everyone is here...

One – At the same time.

Two – Just at the right moment.

One – Neither too early nor too late.

Two – And we haven't anything better to do...

Together – Let the show begin!

Blackout.

2 – Too Busy

Two older characters cross paths. One is dressed for sport and bursting with energy; the other is dressed more conventionally and looks rather worn out. The first recognises the second immediately.

One – Well, look who it is! What are you doing here?

The other seems surprised.

Two – Do we know each other?

One – Know each other? *(Introducing themself.)* Alex! We worked at the same company for forty years!

Two – Oh yes...?

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

Two – It's fine... And you?

One – Me? I thought I'd be bored. Not a chance. I haven't got a minute to myself.

Two – Oh really...?

One – On Mondays there's my walking club. Last week we climbed a mountain. Coming down was easy, but going up...

Two – Like stairs, then...

One – It keeps you fit, believe me. Next week we're going hiking through the marshes.

Two – At least that's flat...

One – On Tuesdays, I teach people to read and write.

Two – At a school?

One – In prison.

Two – Oh yes...

One – The inmates come from all over the world. Quite a few are still learning the language...

Two – Same as in school, then.

One – It's very enriching, you know.

Two – Oh, because it's paid?

One – Enriching as a human experience, I mean. It's voluntary, obviously. You give them a lot, but they give you plenty back. Some come from countries I'd never even heard of. We talk about their languages, their cultures, their lives... We exchange stories, memories, sometimes even recipes...

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

One – Where was I?

Two – Wednesday, I think...

One – Wednesdays are sacred. I look after my grandchildren. Both their parents work. Pure joy! Luckily, they live across the street. Have you got grandchildren?

Two – Three. They live on the other side of the world.

One – Oh, that is a shame...

Two – Yes, well...

One – Yesterday I took mine to the zoo. They'd never seen real monkeys! You should have seen their faces. We didn't stay long, though. They were bonobos...

Two – Oh yes... And it's springtime.

One – Then we went out for burgers. Not really my kind of food, but if you don't want to lose touch with the younger generation, you have to compromise.

Two – That's true...

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

Two – You're learning Chinese?

One – Fascinating. And not nearly as difficult as you might think.

Two – If you say so...

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

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

One – Nǐ hǎo.

Two – Meow?

One – Nǐ hǎo!

Two – Right... But why Chinese? Are you planning to visit China?

One – Why not? Or I could chat to the owner of that new Chinese restaurant in town. The Beijing Palace. Just across from the town hall.

Two – It's called the Saigon Palace. And I think the owner is Vietnamese.

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

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

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

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

One – Exactly... Sometimes I think I should slow down. We're not twenty any more.

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

One – You have to stay active to keep fit. And keep your brain working! You didn't even recognise me a moment ago!

Two – Well...

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

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

One – Anyway, tell me about yourself!

Two – Me?

One – What do you do with your days?

Two – Me...? Nothing.

One – Nothing?

Two – I'm bored out of my mind.

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

Two – No, thanks.

One – No, what?

Two – No, I'm not interested.

One – Oh really?

Two – Frankly, I'd rather stay bored.

One – Oh, yeah?

Two – Yeah.

One – Well, when I see the old crowd from the railway company, I'll give them your news. Do you know what the fools gave me when I retired?

Two – No...

One – An electric train!

Two – Oh, those idiots...

One – We meet every June for a big meal and a trip down memory lane. You should come!

Two – Why not... Except I spent my entire career working for an airline.

One – Oh, yeah...?

Two – I was a pilot.

One – Right... Well, I won't keep you. I've got to run. I help at a charity kitchen at lunchtime too. I barely have time to eat. I'm telling you, not a minute to myself...

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

One – Well... Goodbye, Chris...

Two – My name's Sam.

One – In any case, enjoy your retirement.

Two – Yes, you too. So... Tam biet.

One – Tam biêt...?

Two – It means goodbye in Vietnamese.

One – Right. Sayonara.

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

Blackout.

3 – Too Radical

One character waits, trying to look inconspicuous in a raincoat and dark glasses. A second, rather grand and old-fashioned, arrives and hesitates before speaking.

Two – Hello, I am...

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

Two – Ah yes, the password... What was it? My memory isn't what it used to be. And you told me never to write it down. Let me think... I've got it! A pear a day keeps the doctor away...

One – Provided you aim well.

Two – That's an old proverb, isn't it? I do hope this won't involve blood, sweat and tears.

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

Two – An apple, of course. Why did I say pear? Perhaps because lately everything has gone pear-shaped...

One – Pear-shaped?

Two – A complete pain in the backside, if you must know.

One – Well. Now, what can I do for you?

The other extends their hand to introduce themselves.

Two – Charles Grandmont. Thank you for seeing me...

One – Dominic Dupont, of Dupont, Dupont & Sons, Private Investigators.

Two – Mr Dupont...

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

Two – Obviously.

One – You can call me DD.

Two – Dee Dee?

One – D.D. Dupont and Dupont...

Two – Of course.

One – Are you sure no one followed you?

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

One – Very good, so I'm listening.

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

One – Relax, I deal with delicate matters all the time. Adultery? A missing heir? Industrial espionage?

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

One – Of course. An old friend? A lost love? A child nobody knows about?

Two – More like... a family doctor who is still accepting new patients.

One – I see...

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

One – You're the third this week.

Two – Oh really...?

One – Unfortunately, I don't perform miracles.

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

One – Finding a family doctor with room for a healthy new patient is harder than finding proof of a cheating spouse.

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

One – I see...

Two – She found a very elderly doctor in a remote village. I was ready to move there.

One – That far away?

Two – Precisely. Rather drastic, I know. But I never had to decide. The doctor died a few days later.

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

Two – He was 102 years old.

One – Ah yes...

Two – I even went on a pilgrimage, but there too...

One – Not a doctor in sight?

Two – You're my last hope...

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

Two – I'm fully aware of that.

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

Two – That's what I've gathered.

One – Which isn't always very reassuring.

Two – And why's that?

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

Two – True, I hadn't thought of that.

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

Two – Another detective? Someone specialising in medical cases?

One – I was thinking more of... a contract killer.

Two – I'm not sure I understand...

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

Two – A patient has to die.

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

Two – I'd be the first to know when a vacancy came up...

One – And at least the patient's death couldn't be blamed on the doctor.

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

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

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

One – Don't take too long. Even professional killers are fully booked these days. The reliable ones, anyway.

Two – The more professional ones...?

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

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

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

Two – All right... A contract killer it is. Can you recommend someone trustworthy?

The other hands them a business card.

One – Miller, Miller & Sons. Qualified contract killers.

Two – Those aren't their real names either, I suppose.

One – Oddly enough, they are.

Two – Thank you, Doctor... I mean, Mr Dupont.

One – Always at your service.

Two – And by any chance... you wouldn't know a good dentist? *(The other gives no answer.)* I see...

Blackout.

4 – Too Nice

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

Two – Hello, Father.

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

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

One – Certain? My son, no one is automatically entitled to heaven.

Two – Not even for you?

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

Two – What?

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

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

One – Heaven isn't a points system. You can't just reach the target score and walk in. God decides.

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

One – Well... Try to do good wherever you can.

Two – Do good.

One – Be kind.

Two – Yes.

One – This seems to perplex you, my son.

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

One – Your wife?

Two – Too nice for your own good.

One – Excuse me?

Two – Too nice for your own good. She says it all the time.

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

Two – That if you are too nice, people walk all over you.

One – I see.

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

One – Too nice? Well...

Two – I'd like to be just nice enough to get into heaven, but not so nice that everyone takes me for a fool.

One – I understand.

Two – So what's the middle ground?

One – That is...

Two – Take Jesus, for example.

One – Jesus?

Two – Don't you think he might have been a little too nice?

One – But... Why do you say that?

Two – He did end up on the cross...

One – That's true.

Two – Too nice for your own good. My wife was right.

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

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

One – Who?

Two – Jesus!

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

Two – So where is he then?

One – Where?

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

One – Well... I don't know.

Two – And what does he do all day?

One – What Jesus does all day...? I'm afraid you've got me there too.

Two – I'll ask ChatGPT about it.

They take out a mobile phone and start typing.

One – And so?

Two – According to ChatGPT, Jesus is waiting for God to tell him to return to Earth.

One – He's waiting...?

Two – He's waiting.

One – And he does nothing else?

Two – In other words, he must be bored stiff.

One – Ah, yes...

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

One – I don't know...

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

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

Two – What?

One – Great is the mystery of faith...

Two – Yeah.

One – Yeah...

Pause.

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

Blackout.

5 – Too Rich

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

Two – Good morning! I have some wonderful news for you!

One – Right. Give me the bad news first.

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

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

Two – You bought a lottery ticket last week, didn't you?

One – Yes, I did.

Two – Well, you've won!

One – Me? Won? How much?

Two – Two hundred and thirty-three million.

One – 233 million?

Two – 233 million.

One – Ah, yes, that's quite a sum.

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

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

Two – But?

One – Isn't it a bit too much?

Two – Too much?

One – One million would be plenty. I could buy a house and...

Two – And?

One – All right, ten million. I'd buy a house and stop working. But two hundred and thirty-three million!

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

One – Couldn't it be a bit less?

Two – Less?

One – I don't know... Say thirty-three million. I really couldn't take any more.

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

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

Two – Think it over. But don't take too long; there's a deadline for claiming your prize.

One – You know, with that kind of money, I wouldn't have any family left. Or any friends.

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

One – That's exactly what worries me. Everyone around me will want something.

Two – Yes...

One – Not to mention my wife...

Two – Your wife?

One – My wife's a communist! She already thinks I'm not left-wing enough. Imagine telling her we've won two hundred and thirty-three million...

Two – Trust me. With that much money, she won't stay a communist for long.

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

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

One – People who were born rich will never accept me as one of them. I'll always be the lottery winner.

Two – Perhaps...

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

Two – With that sort of fortune?

One – I'll always wonder if they only want me for my money!

Two – Obviously...

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

Two – Another ticket?

One – A lottery ticket!

Two – Why? You've already won!

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

Blackout.

6 – Too Polite

One character is sitting on a chair. A second character enters and appears older.

One – Hello... *(Getting up.)* Please, take my seat!

Two – Why?

One – Please do. I can stand perfectly well.

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

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

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

One – Insulting?

Two – I call it ageism.

One – Ageism?

Two – Exactly. Ageism.

One – I don't even know what the word means.

Two – It is like racism or sexism, but directed at older people.

One – Oh, really?

Two – Call it condescension. Towards women, towards Black people, towards older people... Sometimes several prejudices at once. Imagine how humiliated an elderly Black woman might feel if some young white idiot offered her a seat on the bus out of pure condescension!

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

Two – So you look down on old people?

One – Oh no! I love old people!

Two – There you are! "I love old people!" As though old people belonged to some other species. Ageist prejudice!

One – I'm sorry, I didn't mean...

Two – It's like saying, "I love foreigners; my cleaner comes from abroad." Or "I love gay people; my hairdresser is transgender."

One – Is that so...?

Two – One day you'll be old too. You may never experience some kinds of discrimination, but you will grow old.

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

Two – You wouldn't think so...

A pause.

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

Two – That's right, keep going...

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

Two – Please stop!

One – You don't want to sit down?

Two – Well, I...

One – But...?

Two – I'm wary...

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

Two – I don't know. You're almost... too polite to be trusted.

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

Two – I will, thanks.

A pause.

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

Two – Oh yeah?

One – Politeness isn't exactly your strong suit.

Two – Oh yeah? Say that again?

One – You old fool!

Two – You little creep!

One – You pompous windbag!

Two – You ignoramus!

One – You sanctimonious hypocrite!

Two – You anchorite!

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

Two – Oh no?

One – Do you know what it means?

Two – No, do you?

One – Me neither.

A pause.

Two – I think we got a bit carried away.

One – Yes.

Two – I'll sit down after all.

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

Two – No?

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

Two – Just as I thought. No respect for older people...

Blackout.

7 – Too Short

Two characters. They remain silent for a moment.

One – How time flies...

Two – What time is it?

One – No, I meant... in general.

Two – In general?

One – How time flies... in general.

Two – Oh, I see...

One – As that old song puts it... "Yesterday, when I was young..."

Two – Yeah...

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

Two – You think they don't know?

One – They still think old people are another species.

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

One – You might as well call us old fools.

Two – Isn't that what we are?

One – There are plenty of young fools.

Two – At least they have the excuse of youth.

One – You have a point... If only young people knew how short life is...

Two – They'd already be old.

Blackout.

8 – Too Fast

One character is there. A second one arrives.

One – Hello. May I kiss you?

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

One – I don't know.

Two – You may think me old-fashioned, but it seems a bit rushed.

One – Sorry. You're probably right.

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

One – True.

Two – You have to admit, that is rather a direct way to start a conversation.

One – True enough. But then... what should I have said?

Two – You could have asked me for a light, for example.

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

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

One – And I don't smoke.

Two – Well, that's one point in your favour.

One – Oh really?

Two – Don't get carried away.

One – Sorry. Let me start again...

Two – You are very good-looking, it's true, but... that's exactly the problem.

One – Exactly what?

Two – You know what they say...

One – No...

Two – Too good to be true.

One – You're flattering me. But too good-looking? Let's not exaggerate.

Two – And there's also another saying.

One – What?

Two – Don't bite off more than you can chew.

One – Fair point. Though I only asked for a kiss. I wasn't planning to bite anyone.

Two – Maybe you're just going about it the wrong way.

One – Quite possibly.

A pause.

Two – Seriously, it would be rushing things. We could kiss on the cheek, if you like...

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

They kiss on the cheek.

Two – Was that okay, not too...?

One – No, it was just right.

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

One – That might not have been enough...

Two – Maybe next time.

One – Yes...

Two – I have a rule, you know. Never on the first night.

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

Two – That's true...

One – I know, but I wasn't actually asking you to...

Two – Quite.

One – Well, it's up to you.

Two – So, do you think I was too...

One – Honestly, I'm not sure anymore.

Two – It's a question of finding the right balance.

One – Yes. Perhaps I was a bit too forward.

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

One – Sorry?

Two – You said, "Hello. May I kiss you?" You did say hello first. At least you got that right.

One – That's true.

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

One – Yes.

Two – All the same, you are very good-looking.

One – Too good to be true...

Two – And what about me?

One – You?

Two – Am I a bit too... good to be true, I mean?

One – No, you're... perfectly believably beautiful.

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

One – Sorry, I didn't mean...

Two – Perhaps we should leave it at that kiss on the cheek.

One – Okay.

Two – Until next time, perhaps.

The second character leaves.

One – I suppose I overdid it... Or did I not do enough?

Blackout.

9 – Too Exhausting

One character is there. A second one arrives.

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

Two – That's true.

One – How many are there?

Two – I don't know.

One – In any case, there are too many.

Two – Definitely.

One – And why are there too many?

Pause.

Two – Because there are too many workers.

One – What?

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

One – Who?

Two – The workers!

One – Now you mention it, that is true.

Two – Exactly.

One – So if we have too many unemployed people, it's because we have too many people in work?

Two – If fewer people had jobs, there would be more jobs left for the unemployed. It's obvious.

One – True.

Two – In that case, we could just as easily say we have too many workers in this country.

One – You're right. The people in work are stealing the jobs of the unemployed!

Two – Exactly! Of course I'm right.

One – And that politician on television, always calling out to 'working men and women'... What a joke!

Two – 'Unemployed men and women'! That's who they ought to be talking to!

One – 'Working men and women'...

Two – Honestly!

Pause.

One – Look at all those dishes in the sink...

Two – Just thinking about them exhausts me.

One – You wash, I'll dry?

Two – Oh, all right...

Blackout.

10 – Too Long

One character is there. A second one arrives.

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

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

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

Two – You mean, will we be remembered by future generations?

One – Why not?

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

One – Let's say we did.

Two – Well... like leading a movement that changed history.

One – That was only a few generations ago. Some people still remember those leaders. I mean really being remembered in a hundred years... or a thousand.

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

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

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

One – Preferably by leaving a good memory, if possible.

Two – Discover a new continent, like Columbus?

One – I doubt the people who already lived there remember him fondly. But yes. Five hundred years later, everyone still knows his name.

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

One – That was two thousand years ago.

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

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

Two – Yeah...

One – Do you know the oldest human being whose name we still remember?

Two – Lucy?

One – Lucy is a handful of bones. We don't even have her whole skeleton, and we know nothing about her life.

Two – We know she was a woman.

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

Two – Well... Who then?

One – The pharaoh Narmer. Five thousand years ago, he united Upper and Lower Egypt. We still know his name.

Two – I don't remember him.

One – Egyptologists do.

Two – And when there are no more Egyptologists?

One – There will always be Egyptologists, right?

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

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

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

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

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

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

Two – And when the universe ends, in a Big Crunch or a Big Freeze, whichever theory turns out to be right?

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

Two – Quite a few people have forgotten us already, and we're not even dead.

One – You're right... Why go to all the trouble of achieving something great in the hope of immortality when, sooner or later, everyone will be forgotten?

Pause.

Two – Shall we have another drink and forget about it?

Blackout.

11 – Too Slow

One character is there. A second one arrives.

One – You look upset. What happened?

Two – A speed camera caught me again.

One – By a speed camera?

Two – Of course a speed camera! Who did you think it was, the paparazzi?

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

Two – No, too slowly.

One – Seriously?

Two – Twelve kilometres an hour, apparently.

One – That's insane...

Two – On the motorway. I'd just pulled out of a service station.

One – Twelve kilometres per hour...

Two – It's not a sports car. It takes time to pick up speed. A hefty fine and six penalty points!

One – You must be joking...?

Two – Of course it isn't true, you idiot!

One – You didn't get flashed?

Two – I did!

One – But... why?

Two – For speeding, you fool! I told you a camera caught me!

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

Two – You seem a bit out of it yourself. Are you all right?

One – I've just come out of hospital.

Two – Really? No wonder you're still groggy. What happened?

One – I had an allergic reaction to a bee sting. Right here, on my throat.

Two – Seriously?

One – Yes! Who knew bees could be so vicious?

Two – They make honey. And pollinate plants. Without bees... especially with all those chemicals...

One – Chemicals?

Two – The chemicals they spray on crops! The bees visit the flowers and get poisoned.

One – You know a lot about bees.

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

One – I had no idea one bee sting could land you in hospital.

Two – Maybe that's why.

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

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

One – So if that bee had only visited organic fields, I wouldn't have ended up in hospital?

Two – Who knows...

One – Anyway, they really shafted me at the hospital.

Two – Shafted you? At the hospital? How?

One – Where do you think? At the hospital!

Two – No!

One – Yes!

Two – Shafted? In a hospital? What is the world coming to?

One – Exactly.

Two – How much did they take you for?

One – How much?

Two – Yes, how much?

One – I don't know... Twenty-five centimetres at least. Maybe thirty.

Two – Thirty centimetres? I meant money! You mean they actually...?

One – I couldn't breathe! They had to put a tube down my throat.

Two – Oh! You mean they intubated you.

One – Intubated, shafted... All I know is, there was a tube.

Two – Of course... And did it do you any good?

One – Not at the time, I can tell you.

Two – But you're all right now?

One – I'm fine. What about you?

Two – Apart from the speeding fine...

Blackout.

12 – Too Centrist

Two characters are studying a pile of election leaflets.

One – How many are there exactly?

Two – Twenty-three.

One – It's ridiculous. Every election seems to have more candidates than the last.

Two – Must be inflation.

One – Yes. Politicians are like banknotes: the more there are in circulation, the less they're worth.

Pause.

Two – Who are you thinking of voting for?

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

Two – Which one?

One – The one with the lovely tie and the neat haircut.

Two – Oh, yeah...

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

Two – How about this one? He looks presentable.

One – Almost too presentable.

Two – Too much?

One – I don't know... He looks a bit too... Could he be...?

Two – No... You think so?

One – Or maybe this one.

Two – Which one?

One – This one!

Two – He looks like a detective from an old television series.

One – I like detectives from old television series.

Two – I heard him on television. Every other word was a swear word!

One – Yeah.

Two – This one is always very polite.

One – Yes, but you know what they say.

Two – What?

One – Too polite to be honest.

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

One – Can't argue with that.

Two – Still, when someone represents the whole country, especially abroad...

One – Yeah.

Two – In the old days, when leaders wore uniforms, at least they looked impressive.

One – Some of those generals did wear their uniforms rather badly, though...

Two – The tall ones, you mean?

One – Exactly. Some people are too small for their suits. Others are too big for them.

Two – The shorter commanders always looked smarter.

One – Because their uniforms fitted.

Two – None of this tells us whom to vote for, though.

One – That one looks completely stupid.

Two – He's the incumbent candidate.

One – Oh, really?

Two – We voted for him last time.

One – Really? I hadn't realised he was quite so ugly.

Two – And what about this one?

One – Too close to the centre.

Two – How can you be too close to the centre? The centre is the centre!

One – I don't mean he's too centrist for the centre. I mean he's too centrist for me!

Two – You want him to lean more left?

One – Or maybe further right. The centre is just so...

Two – Yeah, it lacks a bit of...

One – A bit spineless, really.

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

One – Well, I've never tried anal sex either.

Two – What?

One – Nothing... I was just saying, perhaps we could give this one a chance...

Blackout.

13 – Too Static

Two comfortably middle-class bohemians stare straight ahead.

One – Remember when we moved here? There were fields everywhere.

Two – There were even cows.

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

Two – Now the river flows under the shopping centre car park, through a concrete pipe. And our house is surrounded by apartment blocks.

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

Two – Stay in the same place long enough and you can end up somewhere else without noticing. The world changes around you.

One – Same with us. We were rebels when we were young. Now we're just two old fools.

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

One – We were born in the age of record players. Then came portable music players so we could listen to music while walking. Yet somehow we never went anywhere.

Two – We've been treading water.

One – And now, here we are.

Two – In a housing estate, surrounded by young people who no longer speak the same language as us.

One – Yet we tried to educate them.

Two – We even gave them cheap theatre tickets so they could discover the classics.

One – They preferred rap.

Two – I can't stand rap.

Pause.

One – Are you going to that theatre festival this summer?

Two – I don't know. It isn't what it used to be.

One – I remember when its main stage was devoted to the great classics.

Two – The whole idea was to bring serious theatre to people who had never had the chance to see it.

One – Shakespeare, Sophocles, Chekhov...

Two – It didn't last long either.

One – These days, the main festival is full of retired intellectuals, and the fringe is full of stand-up comics.

Two – Anyone can put up a stage in a garage and tell their life story to their friends.

One – It's like social media.

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

One – The progressive newspapers have hardly any readers left.

Two – And the old left-wing parties have hardly any voters.

One – Except for a few old farts like us.

Two – What if we moved?

One – Where would we go?

Two – To the countryside.

One – We did that when we were young. But the city followed us...

Two – Evidently we didn't go far enough...

Blackout.

14 – Enough Is Enough!

Two characters. A long silence.

One – Enough is enough! I've had it!

The other looks at the first in surprise.

Two – Uh... Yeah...

One – Don't you agree?

Two – Yeah, I do...

One – But...?

Two – Nothing, really...

One – You don't agree with me?

Two – Of course I agree...

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

Two – Yes, I do, but...

One – But what?

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

One – Me? Exaggerating?

Two – You're exaggerating a lot, actually.

One – Me, exaggerating? Just because I said enough is enough?

Two – Yes. You're overdoing it. By quite a lot, actually.

One – Well damn...

Two – Yeah...

Pause.

One – Hang on... How can you exaggerate too much?

Two – Don't put words in my mouth. I didn't say you were exaggerating too much. That would be redundant. I said you were exaggerating far too much.

One – How can far too much be different from too much, if too much is already redundant?

Two – Because enough is enough! Either you exaggerate or you don't. You can't exaggerate too much. That's a fact, an absolute fact. But exaggerating a little, a lot or even far too much is a personal judgement. A matter of degree. There's a certain amount of room for exaggeration.

One – Oh really...?

Two – Take a born storyteller. You expect a bit of exaggeration. That's part of the charm. A storyteller who never exaggerates is hardly a storyteller. But there are limits, even to a good story. You can still go too far!

One – Uh... Yeah...

Two – Right.

One – All I said was "enough is enough".

Two – Exactly. Then you added "I've had it". That, I think, was going a little too far. Quite a lot too far, actually. *(A pause.)* Even for a born storyteller.

One – So you think I'm too excessive?

Two – "Too excessive"? That would be another redundancy. Let's say "a bit too excessive" or "far too excessive". Better still, "very excessive".

One – Very, too... What's the difference?

Two – You still don't understand! "Too" means crossing a line. Either you've crossed it or you haven't. "Excessive" already means going beyond the limit, so "too excessive" says the same thing twice.

One – Oh, right...?

Two – "Very", on the other hand, tells you how far beyond the limit you have gone. It's a matter of degree. Once you cross the line, you can go a little way or a long way. That's the difference between merely excessive and very excessive.

Pause.

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

Two – Sorry. I got carried away.

Blackout.

15 – Too Late

One character arrives, out of breath, while another is sweeping the floor.

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

Two – Too late? The show has just finished.

One – Damn! I needed just one more hour's work to qualify for unemployment benefits!

Two – Well, you're officially unemployed, with no benefits. And I doubt you'll find much work in theatre.

One – I can do anything, I assure you!

Two – Did you know your lines, at least?

One – What? We had to learn lines? I thought it was an improvisation show.

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

One – The old-fashioned way...?

Two – The playwright writes the words. The actors learn them. Then they go on stage.

One – Oh, I see...

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

One – Alright, so it's definitely over.

Two – I like you, so I'll give you one last chance. Here. *(Hands over the broom.)* Show me what you can do with improvisation.

One – Thank you! You won't regret it! *(They take the broom hesitantly.)* And... is it paid?

The other holds out a small banknote.

Two – Here. Put this towards a new watch.

The other looks at the note.

One – Can you really buy a watch for that?

Two – At least you can buy a new battery... Now, do you want the part or not?

One – Yes, yes, of course!

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

The first starts sweeping with great theatrical flourish. The second watches, unimpressed.

Two – Less theatrical, please. Try something more natural. Method acting, you know?

The first starts sweeping with exaggerated casualness.

One – Like this?

Two – Better. I'll leave you to work on the part. Who knows? It might be useful for your future career.

One – Thank you! Really...

Two – Please shut the door on your way out.

The second leaves. The first carries on sweeping, trying out different acting styles.

Blackout.

The End.

About the author

Born in 1955 in Auvers-sur-Oise (France), Jean-Pierre Martinez first took to the stage as a drummer in several rock bands before becoming a semiologist in advertising. He then worked as a television screenwriter before returning to the stage as a playwright. He has written around a hundred scripts for television and 123 plays, some of which have become classics (*Friday the 13th, Strip Poker*). His plays have been performed in more than 100 countries and translated into around 50 languages.

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 Society of Dramatic Authors and Composers (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.

Jean-Pierre Martinez recently returned to music, writing original songs inspired by his poems and plays.

With **Jean-Pierre Martinez Music**, he extends that creative universe through original songs: short stories in musical form, humorous or melancholy, in which each song sometimes becomes a miniature theatrical scene.

https://jeanpierremartinezmusic.com/

Other plays by the same author translated in English:

Monologues
Happy Dogs
Like a fish in the air
Short Stories

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
Russian Roulette at the Kremlin
The Costa Mucho Castaways
The Dressing Gown
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
Cards on the Table
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 Ways 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
Hangover
Happy Hour
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
The Worst Best Man Ever

Comedies for 5 to 6
All's well that starts badly
Christmas Eve at the Police Station
Crisis and Punishment
Critical but Stable
Dead End Boulevard
In lieu of flowers...
King of Fools
The Castaways of New Year's Eve
The President's Draw
The Rebels
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 ...
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 Most Beautiful Village in France
The Worst Village in England
Welcome aboard!
White Coats, Dark Humour

Collection of sketches
Apocalypse
Backstage Bits
Blackouts
Don't panic!
Dramedies
Enough is Enough
Ethan and Eve
Every Colour under the Sun
For real and for fun
Funny Stories
Him and Her
Hold on, Butterfly
Killer Sketches
Lockdown Shorts
Lost time Chronicles
Memoirs of a Suitcase
No Sense Off Limits
Now and then
Of Animals and Men
Open Hearts
Open Letters
Park Bench Shorts
Sidewalk Chronicles
Stage Briefs
Stories to die for

All of Jean-Pierre Martinez's plays can be downloaded

free of charge from his websites:

https://jeanpierremartinez.net/

https://comediatheque.net/

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 – June 2024
© La Comédiathèque – ISBN 978-2-38602-229-6
Play available for free download