

Comedic scenes

12 texts

A comic scene rests on a misunderstanding the audience sees and the characters do not. That is all. The rest, slamming doors and pulled faces, is decoration added when the misunderstanding does not hold.

1. The Aquatic Existentialist (2 min)
2. The Reservation (3 min)
3. The Neighbour (2 min)
4. The Interview (3 min)
5. The Guests (4 min)
6. The Dinner Party (2 min)
7. The Flatshare (2 min)
8. The Bill (1 min)
9. The Rehearsal (4 min)
10. The Gift (2 min)
11. The Group Photo (3 min)
12. The Carpool (4 min)

The Aquatic Existentialist

Comedy · Two-hander · 2 min · Female role · Young adult · Beginner

(Sam comes in, looking grave. Léa barely looks up.)

SAM

We need to talk. It's serious.

LÉA

Oh no. You're about to tell me you adopted something again.

SAM

... How do you know?

LÉA

Sam. Last time it was a turtle. Before that, a ukulele. Before that, "a passion for theatre."

SAM

That one I stand by. And it's related, actually: his name is Hamlet.

LÉA

You named a turtle Hamlet?

SAM

He's a fish. And he already seems to doubt everything.

(A beat.)

LÉA

Fine. Where does he sleep, your aquatic existentialist?

The Reservation

Comedy · Two-hander · 3 min · Female role · Adult · Beginner

(A restaurant. The host studies a screen with the gravity of a surgeon.)

HÔTE

Do you have a reservation?

CLIENTE

Yes. Under Marchand. Two people, eight o'clock.

HÔTE

I have no Marchand. I have a Marchal. A Marchais. A... Marwhatsit.

CLIENTE

Maybe it's Marwhatsit, then. I have a name with options.

HÔTE

Marwhatsit was yesterday.

CLIENTE

Yesterday I wasn't hungry. That's Marwhatsit's whole problem: bad timing.

(Types.)

HÔTE

I can put you down for three weeks from now.

CLIENTE

Three weeks? My guest over there has already started aging on the bench.

HÔTE

The gentleman in blue? He's ours. He's been waiting for a certain Marchand for twenty minutes.

CLIENTE

...I'm the Marchand.

HÔTE

Ah. You see. It all works out in the end.

CLIENTE

You nearly sent me back in three weeks for someone waiting six metres away.

HÔTE

Patience, madam, is part of the menu.

The Neighbour

Comedy · Two-hander · 2 min · No gender marker · Adult · Beginner

(A landing. The doorbell rang. MOI opens; the neighbour holds a potted plant.)

VOISIN

Hello. It's about the noise.

MOI

I haven't made any noise.

VOISIN

Exactly. That's suspicious. Three days, nothing. Everyone's worried.

MOI

You're worried because I'm... quiet?

VOISIN

We'd got used to it. You played music at six. It was our clock.

MOI

I was on holiday.

VOISIN

Without telling the building?

(Holds out the plant.)

VOISIN

Here. We watered it for you. Put some life back, please. The silence here is unsettling.

The Interview

Comedy · Two-hander · 3 min · Male role · Young adult · Beginner

(An office. The recruiter reads a CV upside down, without noticing.)

RECRUTEUR

Tell me about your greatest flaw.

CANDIDAT

I'm a perfectionist.

RECRUTEUR

Everyone says that.

CANDIDAT

Exactly, and nobody means it. With me, it keeps me up at night. It's a real flaw, not a brochure flaw.

(Notes.)

RECRUTEUR

Interesting. And your greatest strength?

CANDIDAT

Honesty.

RECRUTEUR

So you're honestly telling me you're honest.

CANDIDAT

If I were lying, I'd start right there, yes.

(The recruiter finally turns the CV the right way up.)

RECRUTEUR

Ah. You have a lot more experience the right way up.

CANDIDAT

That's often true of people, the right way up.

RECRUTEUR

Why do you want this job?

CANDIDAT

Honestly?

RECRUTEUR

We've established that's your trademark.

CANDIDAT

Because I have rent, and your coffee machine is, I'm told, the best on the floor.

(A beat.)

RECRUTEUR

That's the first true answer all day. You start Monday.

The Guests

Comedy · Two-hander · 4 min · Male role · Adult · Intermediate

(A table set for twelve. Only one person has arrived.)

HÔTE

You're the first.

CONVIVE

I'm the only one.

HÔTE

No, no. The others are coming. I set twelve plates.

CONVIVE

How long have you been setting twelve plates?

HÔTE

Since 2011.

CONVIVE

And how many have come, since 2011?

HÔTE

You.

(A beat. The host refills wine in eleven empty glasses.)

CONVIVE

Why are you filling the empty glasses?

HÔTE

So they feel expected. An empty glass that's ignored is sad. An empty glass you keep refilling is hope.

CONVIVE

You talk to the glasses.

HÔTE

They answer less than people, but they cancel less, too.

CONVIVE

Have you never thought of setting a single plate?

HÔTE

I have. Once. I got so scared I put the other eleven back within the

minute.

(He tastes the dish, winces, smiles anyway.)

HÔTE

The roast is perfect. That's the curse of great roasts: they wait for no one.

CONVIVE

I can stay, you know. All evening.

HÔTE

...You'd do that?

CONVIVE

On one condition. We clear ten settings. We keep yours and mine. And we refill our own glasses.

(A long beat.)

HÔTE

All right. But we keep a third. For the idea that someone, one day, will ring during dessert.

(They clink glasses. The third glass waits, full.)

The Dinner Party

Comedy · Scene for 5 · 2 min · Male role · Adult · Beginner

(The bell rings. Léo opens the door, panicking, a dish towel on his shoulder.)

LÉO

You're... early. By three hours.

SLIMANE

You said seven o'clock.

LÉO

I said seven so you'd get here by ten. You know me!

FANNY

I brought dessert. Well, the idea of a dessert.

GABY

Who's the guy already asleep on the couch?

LÉO

... What guy?

ROSE

The one wearing your jumper. And your glass. And, I think, your keys.

LÉO

Ah. Him. He's... a friend. Very close. Whose name I have absolutely no idea of.

SLIMANE

Léo. You invited a stranger to your own party?

LÉO

Technically, he invited me. Into my flat. Sit down, I've got this.

FANNY

Twenty euros says we leave without eating.

GABY

You're on.

The Flatshare

Comedy · Scene for 3 · 2 min · No gender marker · Young adult · Beginner

(A chore chart covers the entire fridge.)

BASILE

New rules. I made a chart. With colours.

JO

Basile, there are more columns than there are dishes in this kitchen.

NOUR

I'm in purple. Why am I in purple?

BASILE

Purple means "responsible for the general harmony."

NOUR

So I do nothing, but if it goes wrong, it's my fault?

JO

Welcome to management, Nour.

BASILE

The chart is very clear. Box 4B: "Who let the yoghurt turn into a civilisation?"

JO

... I plead guilty to the civilisation. But it was peaceful.

NOUR

Can't we just do the dishes in turns, like humans?

(A beat.)

BASILE

... That, I hadn't thought of. But it doesn't have a colour.

The Bill

Comedy · Scene for 3 · 1 min · Male role · Young adult · Beginner

(End of the meal. The waiter has left a single bill.)

KARL

Right, split it three ways? Easy.

INÈS

Except I had a salad. You, Karl, you had... the menu.

KARL

I tasted. Tasting isn't eating.

TOM

You "tasted" three desserts, Karl.

KARL

Quality control. It's a service I provide, really.

INÈS

So you want us to pay you for eating our desserts.

KARL

"Pay" is a strong word. Let's say: acknowledge.

TOM

Waiter! Three bills. And a medal for the gentleman.

The Rehearsal

Comedy · Scene for 4 · 4 min · Male role · Adult · Intermediate

(A rehearsal. The director is tearing his hair out.)

RÉGIS

From the top. The poison scene. Nina, you enter, you see the body, you scream.

NINA

I scream inwardly. It's a choice.

RÉGIS

The audience can't hear your insides, Nina.

BÉBERT

Quick question: I'm the corpse. Do I breathe or not?

RÉGIS

You're dead, Bébert. The dead don't breathe.

BÉBERT

Yes, but last time I held my breath and actually fainted. At least that was realistic.

CLÉMENCE

And my costume? They put me in widow's black, but I play the sister.

RÉGIS

The widow's ill. You're the widow tonight.

CLÉMENCE

So I cry for a husband I never rehearsed?

RÉGIS

You cry, that's all! People cry perfectly well for strangers: ask any funeral.

NINA

He's cracking. I love it when he cracks, he gets sincere.

RÉGIS

I'm not cracking! I... I'm directing. With passion. From the top. Bébert, die. Nina, scream. Clémence, cry. And please, someone, tonight, pretend to believe it.

(Everyone freezes, deeply focused. Bébert raises a hand.)

BÉBERT

... Do I take one last breath first, or not?

The Gift

Comedy · Two-hander · 2 min · Female role · Adult · Beginner

(Léa unwraps a parcel. Sam watches, a little too relaxed.)

LÉA

Oh, a vase. It's...

(She stops.)

LÉA

Sam. This vase. It has a little chip, there, at the base.

SAM

Every vase has a little chip. That's a vase's life.

LÉA

No. **THIS** chip. I made it. Giving it to you. For your birthday. Two years ago.

SAM

...So you recognise it. Funny how a good gift keeps going round.

LÉA

You're re-gifting me my own vase.

SAM

I'm returning it to you at full sentimental value. I even put the wrapping back on. The wrapping's on the house.

(A beat.)

LÉA

Next year, I re-gift you the wrapping.

The Group Photo

Comedy · Scene for 4 · 3 min · No gender marker · Teen · Beginner

(Four people squeezed in front of a wall. The photographer steps back, one eye shut.)

LE PHOTOGRAPHE

Perfect, hold still. Grandpa, you're right behind the vase.

PAPI

I'm ALWAYS behind the vase. Since 1998, I've been behind the vase.

RIM

Théo shut his eyes. Théo always shuts his eyes.

THÉO

I'm not shutting them, I'm blinking. It's a reflex, not an opinion.

LE PHOTOGRAPHE

Let's go again. One, two...

PAPI

Wait, I've got a stray hair.

(A beat.)

PAPI

No. False alarm. It was the wind.

RIM

There's no wind. We're indoors.

LE PHOTOGRAPHE

One, two, smile!

(Flash. Everyone moved. The vase, though, is perfect.)

THÉO

Let's keep that one. We look real.

PAPI

We look like a family trying to take a photo. That's already a miracle.

The Carpool

Comedy · Two-hander · 4 min · Female role · Adult · Intermediate

(A car, the motorway. Nadia drives. Bruno, in the passenger seat, hunts for a topic.)

BRUNO

So... four hundred kilometres. That's nice. Plenty of time to get to know each other.

NADIA

Yes. Only, I don't talk much when I drive. I concentrate.

BRUNO

Of course, of course.

(A beat.)

BRUNO

I can talk for two, if that helps you concentrate.

NADIA

...It doesn't, actually.

(Silence. Bruno taps on his knees.)

BRUNO

What kind of music do you listen to?

NADIA

Silence. I listen to a lot of silence.

BRUNO

Oh, me too, I love it!

(A beat.)

BRUNO

Well, not four hundred kilometres of it, but a bit.

(Nadia turns on the radio. A song Bruno knows by heart.)

(Humming despite himself.)

BRUNO

...sorry.

(A beat.)

NADIA

No, go on. That one, just this once, you're allowed.

What you can do with it

Original text written for Acto. Read it, print it, work on it in class, perform it at an audition or on a self-tape: that is what it is for, and you need no permission. For a public performance or any commercial use, write to us at contact@acto.re.