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Christmas Eve at the Police Station

Jean-Pierre Martinez

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Translation by the author

On Christmas night, two inspectors are on duty, accompanied only by some lost souls no one is waiting for at home. In an unexpected turn of events, the Minister of the Interior makes an appearance at their police station to pay tribute to the dedication of law enforcement. Clearly, things are about to take an unforeseen twist...

Characters:

Chief of Police

Cop 1

Cop 2

Cop 3

Minister's Chief of Staff

Informant

Bum

Compulsive liar

Cross-dresser

Paranoiac

6 to 10 actors or actresses

All roles can be played interchangeably by men or women.
The last five roles can be portrayed by one or more individuals.

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A gloomy office in a timeless police station. In one corner, a pathetic Christmas tree is supposed to bring a touch of cheer to this atmosphere reminiscent of a bad TV series. Two disheveled cops, each with a weapon in a holster, finish a game of poker on a desk. The first one lays down his cards.

Cop 1 (*confident*) – Pair of queens.

Cop 2 – Pair of kings.

Cop 1 – Oh, damn...

He removes his belt and hands it to the other.

Cop 1 – I give up... I'm not going to play my pants, for heaven's sake...

Cop 2 – You're right... If the chief walked in and found you in your underwear, it could lead to confusion...

They put away the cards.

Cop 1 – What time is it?

Cop 2 – You already asked me that five minutes ago. It was five to ten.

Cop 1 – So what? What time is it now?

Cop 2 (*pointing to his forehead*) – It doesn't say 'talking clock' here!

Cop 1 – I gave you my watch; you can at least tell me the time!

Cop 2 – I won it fair and square. With a three of a kind.

Cop 1 – Fair and square is debatable... And why do you need a watch on each wrist?

Annoyed, the other cop removes one of the watches from his wrist.

Cop 2 – You're pitiful, really... (*He tosses the watch.*) There's your timepiece...

The first one fails to catch the watch, which falls to the floor. He picks it up and holds it to his ear.

Cop 1 – And now, it doesn't work anymore.

Cop 2 – Time of death?

Cop 1 (*looking at the watch*) – Ten o'clock.

Cop 2 – Well, now you know the time...

A pause.

Cop 1 – It's quiet, isn't it?

Cop 2 – It's always quiet this time of year...

Cop 1 – The Christmas truce, as they say.

Cop 2 – Even serial killers respect traditions... They must be carving the turkey...

Cop 1 – Why did it have to be us again this year?

Cop 2 – We drew the short straw with the colleagues. But you're right, it's suspicious. We've been on duty on Christmas Eve for three years in a row now...

Cop 1 – Do you think they cheated?

Cop 2 – Next year, we'll decide with a poker game.

Cop 1 – How do you cheat with drawing straws?

Cop 2 – Console yourself by thinking that right now, you could be opening oysters for your in-laws.

Cop 1 – I don't really like oysters.

Cop 2 – Nobody likes them! And besides, oysters are very dangerous...

Cop 1 – No one has ever filed a complaint about being attacked by an oyster.

Cop 2 – According to the Ministry of the Interior's stats, more cops get injured opening oysters than cleaning their service weapons.

Cop 1 – Oh, really...?

Cop 2 – On Christmas Day, everyone is bored everywhere... That's why people are stuck at home, risking their lives opening oysters. Even though they hate it, and so do their guests.

Cop 1 – You're right, we're better off here.

Cop 2 – In any case, we don't have a choice. We're on duty until eight tomorrow morning.

Cop 1 – Someone has to volunteer to watch over the honest folks who are getting drunk with their families.

Cop 2 – We're superheroes, old man, we have to own it.

Cop 1 – Even if no one recognises the value of our sacrifice.

Cop 2 – Soldiers on foreign operations get a visit from the president every Christmas, by helicopter, with champagne, foie gras, and even strippers in his sack.

Cop 1 – Strippers, you think?

Cop 2 – We, the domestic soldiers, don't even get a visit from the Mayor and his wife with a bottle of sparkling wine.

Cop 1 – Yet, on New Year's Eve, there are probably more cars burning here than in Baghdad or Kabul.

Cop 2 – Despite being cops, we're still human beings... Even we get the blues on Christmas Eve.

Cop 1 – There are more and more cockroaches in here. (*He takes off his shoe and squashes something with it.*) We don't know how to get rid of them...

A third cop arrives (female or male, with a gay style).

Cop 3 – You have a visitor...

Cop 1 – A visitor?

Cop 3 – Even prisoners get visits on Christmas Eve. And I think this year again, you're in for your little Christmas package...

A man enters following Cop 3, holding a bottle.

Cop 1 – Oh, damn, not him...

Cop 2 – Good evening, Mr. Martin, how are you?

Informant – Good evening, good evening... Just dropping by to wish you a Merry Christmas. I hope I'm not bothering you?

Cop 1 – But you never bother us, Mr. Martin.

Cop 1 – We were just talking about you... Well, we were talking about cockroaches in general...

Cop 2 – Fortunately, there are vigilant citizens like you to assist the police in their noble mission.

Cop 3 – If there were more people like Mr. Martin, for sure, the local authority wouldn't even need to invest in security cameras.

Cop 2 – So, Mr. Martin, who are you here to report today? A presumed polygamist? A family allowance fraudster? An undocumented orphan?

Informant – Just a courtesy visit. I come as a neighbour to pay tribute to the dedication of law enforcement, of which you are the armed force.

Cop 1 – But I see you didn't come empty-handed...

Informant – I know what it's like to spend Christmas alone away from family; mine refuses to see me. So, if I can bring a little comfort to the soldiers who protect our country from internal threats. Here, you'll love this...

He places his bottle on a desk.

Cop 1 – Oh, tell me, it looks homemade, doesn't it? It's handwritten, like on my grandma's jam jars.

Cop 2 (*reading over his shoulder*) – Chestnut alcohol...

Cop 3 – I didn't know you could make alcohol with chestnuts...

Informant – You can make alcohol with anything, you know. During the war, my grandfather even made it with potato peelings and old leather shoe soles.

Cop 3 – Oh yes, 53 degrees, still... It must be good... As an antiseptic, at least.

Informant – Grandpa left me a few bottles before being executed at the Liberation. When this one was distilled, you weren't even born yet...

Cop 2 – You know it's strictly forbidden to make alcohol at home, Mr. Martin. We could arrest you for violating the laws on wines and spirits.

Martin seems worried.

Cop 3 – My colleague is joking, of course...

Cop 1 – Besides, there's a statute of limitations, right? Unfortunately, we won't be able to toast with you. You know how it is: never during duty hours!

Informant – You'll drink to my health on New Year's Day, then. If you're not on duty again... Well, I'll be off... You must have plenty of people to put in jail...

Cop 3 – It's true that on New Year's Eve, it's like a play here. We often have a full house. Shall I walk you out, Mr. Martin?

Informant – I know the way, but well...

Cop 2 – You're almost family, aren't you?

Cop 1 – And thanks again for the bottle!

Martin is about to turn away but changes his mind.

Informant – I take this opportunity to inform you that my next-door neighbour hasn't bought his breathalyser yet. Do you want his license plate number?

Cop 2 – We're a bit overwhelmed during the holiday season. And understaffed. But do come back for the New Year's tip...

Informant – I won't miss it. And still, have a good evening...

The man leaves, followed by Cop 3.

Cop 1 – And then, they say people don't like the police...

Cop 2 – It's true, we always complain about being disliked, and yet... We can't help but find it a bit suspicious that someone likes the police so much.

Cop 1 – We did well not to toast with him; he would have been capable of reporting us to Internal Affairs for drinking on duty.

He uncorks the bottle while the other fetches two glasses, promptly filled. They clink glasses.

Cop 1 – Well then... Merry Christmas.

Cop 2 – Yeah, Merry Christmas to you too.

They down their drinks in one gulp.

Cop 1 – Oh, that's something...

Cop 2 – 53 degrees.

Cop 1 – It's strong.

Cop 2 – We'll have to ask him for the exact recipe.

Cop 1 – Yeah, it's not just chestnut in there.

Cop 2 – I wonder if Grandpa didn't add a bit of drain cleaner to enhance the fruit's flavour.

Cop 1 – Can you imagine, this liqueur is older than us?

Cop 2 – The old man must have made it in his cellar during the curfew with whatever he could find.

Cop 1 – His way of resisting the occupiers.

Cop 2 – Come on, pour us another round. It's something the Jerries won't get their hands on.

The other refills the two glasses, and they down them again.

Cop 1 – I don't know if there's drain cleaner in there, but it sure clears the pipes.

Cop 3 returns. The two cops hastily hide the bottle and glasses. Cop 3 drags along a drunken bum.

Cop 3 – We found him showing his behind right in front of the police station.

Cop 1 – As if we haven't seen enough horrors like that during the war.

Bum – Down with the pigs!

Cop 2 – Down with the pigs... A bit old-fashioned as an expression, my friend, isn't it?

Police 3 – It's true that as an insult, it's not very original. He doesn't even seem to believe it himself.

Police 2 – What are we going to do with him?

Police 1 – We should respect the elderly, I suppose.

Police 2 – Besides, someone who hates the police so much can't be entirely bad. I suggest we grant him amnesty. It's Christmas, after all.

Cop 1 – Yeah... And besides, I don't know if he's entirely bad, but what's for sure is that he smells very bad.

Cop 3 – He's a weapon of mass destruction all by himself. If Saddam Hussein could have laid hands on this guy during the Gulf War, he would have surely won against the coalition.

Bum – Insult to an officer! You don't have the right to release me! I know my rights!

Cop 1 – Another one who doesn't want to spend Christmas Eve freezing outside.

Cop 2 (to Cop 3) – Go on, try to find him an individual cell... I wouldn't want the others accusing us of trying to gas them.

Bum – Thank you, my Lords... God will repay you.

Cop 3 takes the bum away, but Cop 1 calls out to him.

Cop 1 – Wait a minute... Give me your belt.

Bum – My belt? Why?

Cop 1 – You're in custody, it's regulations. In case you had the idea of hanging yourself with it.

The bum reluctantly complies and hands his belt to the cop.

Bum – Do you want my shoelaces too?

Cop 1 – Thanks, that'll do.

Cop 3 takes him away. Cop 1, who no longer has a belt, puts on the bum's belt.

Cop 1 – At least, I got a belt back.

He takes out the bottle and glasses again, and they drink once more.

Cop 1 – It's funny, an old memory is coming back to me, I don't know why.

Cop 2 – Don't feel obliged to tell me.

Cop 1 – I must have been five years old... My father owned a toy store... At the Children's Delight, it was called.

Cop 2 – Phew... I was afraid you were going to tell me about your unhappy childhood.

Cop 1 – Unfortunately, my father was very stingy.

Cop 2 – Ah...

Cop 1 – On Christmas Eve, my mother gave me a huge teddy bear that was displayed in the store window.

Cop 2 – Something tells me this story won't end well...

Cop 1 – When my father saw that, he went crazy. He beat my mother, snatched the teddy bear from my hands, and put it back in the display window...

Cop 2 – Mmm...

Cop 1 – I wonder if that's why, since then, Christmas has been a downer for me.

Cop 2 – Well, there you go, you just saved yourself ten years of psychoanalysis. And I haven't charged you anything to listen to your nonsense, except for what I took from you in poker...

Heavy silence. Cop 1 seems quite depressed.

Cop 2 – I'm wondering if I shouldn't confiscate that belt too. You're not going to hang yourself with it on the coat rack as soon as I turn my back, right?

Cop 3 returns with an ambiguously gendered prostitute (a woman with a somewhat masculine appearance or a man in drag).

Cop 1 – What's this?

Cop 3 – A variable cast, as they say in the theatre.

Cop 1 – I never go to the theatre; it puts me to sleep. What does that mean anyway?

Cop 2 – It means we don't know if she's got them or not.

Cross-dresser – Want to check?

Cop 1 – In doubt, we'll call you Madam.

Cross-dresser – Miss, I prefer.

Cop 1 – So what brings the young lady here?

Cop 3 – She was turning tricks in front of a synagogue.

Cop 1 – Have you no respect for anything?

Cop 2 – She might not even be circumcised.

Cross-dresser – So what? Would you prefer if I solicited outside the midnight mass?

Cop 3 – What do we do? We can't arrest her for antisemitism.

Cross-dresser – Do you know what the French actress Arletty said when they wanted to shave her at the Liberation for fraternising with the Germans?

Cop 2 – I'd like you to remind us.

Cop 3 (*responding on his behalf*) – My heart is French, my ass is international.

Cross-dresser – Well, my ass is ecumenical.

Cop 1 – Pardon?

Cop 2 – Forget it; it's probably a swear word.

Cop 1 – Okay, well, we'll release her after midnight mass then.

Cross-dresser – And on what grounds are you arresting me?

Cop 2 – Disruption of Biblical order, does that suit you?

Cop 1 – All right, put the young lady in the royal suite, and make sure she doesn't lack anything.

Cross-dresser – You'll regret it, I guarantee. You don't know who you're talking to. I have connections, not just with clergy ministers.

Cop 2 – If you happen to have connections with the Minister of the Interior, could you tell him we're understaffed?

Cross-dresser – You fucking assholes!

Cop 1 – That's right, Merry Christmas to you too. (*Cop 3 takes the cross-dresser away.*) It's incredible how vulgar prostitutes can be nowadays.

Cop 2 – Seems like their parents didn't teach them anything.

The two cops continue to drink.

Cop 1 – It's strange, but another thing comes to mind all of a sudden.

The other, concerned, looks at the label on the bottle.

Cop 2 – Fuck, what kind of gut-rot did he give us? A truth serum? I wonder if you shouldn't stop drinking it...

Cop 1 – It was also at Christmas, but this time, I must have been about ten years old. My father had just died, under rather obscure circumstances, by the way...

Cop 2 – Oh no, I'm the one who's going to hang myself...

Cop 1 – I still believed in Santa Claus, and my mother told me he would come around midnight. So I waited to see him...

Cop 2 – And obviously, you never saw him.

Cop 1 – Yes... Around midnight, I woke up. I got up to see what Santa had brought me, and that's when I saw him... in my mother's bed.

Cop 2 – And then you wonder why you don't like oysters...

Cop 1 – I went back to bed... But I think that day, if I had a gun like today, I would have shot Santa Claus. In fact, I think I became a cop to have a big one.

Cop 2 – A big what?

Cop 1 – A big gun! To shoot Santa Claus!

Cop 2 – I think you'd better go to see a shrink after all. Even if it costs you half your pay.

The Chief of Police arrives. The two cops, a bit slouched, straighten up, but don't have time to hide the bottle.

Cop 1 – Chief...

Chief of Police – I see we've started celebrating the Nativity.

Cop 2 – A gift from one of our informants, Chief.

Cop 1 – We couldn't refuse to toast with him; it would have been rude...

Chief of Police – Of course... And otherwise, what do we have?

Cop 1 – Oh, like every year, you know... A few Christmas Eve castaways... A bum, a prostitute, an exhibitionist, a voyeur...

Chief of Police – All that's missing is the ox and the donkey, and you'll have enough to make a live nativity scene.

Cop 2 – Yes... We're waiting for the three wise men...

Chief of Police – Meanwhile, put the exhibitionist and the voyeur in the same cell. At least those two will have a Merry Christmas. Anything else?

Cop 3 arrives with another individual.

Cop 3 – I think this might interest you, Chief... The gentleman came here of his own free will to make spontaneous confessions and turn himself in.

Chief of Police – Well, well... You know we don't like spontaneous confessions in the police; it ruins the profession. Considering the ministry now only replaces one officer out of two... So, my friend, what brings you here? Did you stab your partner with the carving knife because the roast was overcooked? Don't laugh, it happened last year.

Compulsive liar – No, not exactly.

Chief of Police – Simple assault then? It seems that for some, beating their turkey to tenderise it before stuffing is also a Christmas tradition...

Compulsive liar – The reason for my presence here is much more important, Chief.

Chief of Police – I'm listening...

Compulsive liar – I assassinated Kennedy.

A moment of disbelief.

Cop 3 – I told you it might interest you...

Chief of Police – While you're at it, are you sure you didn't assassinate the Pope as well?

Compulsive liar – I was sure you wouldn't believe me...

Cop 3 – At the same time, it's true that it's a pretty dark story that has never been fully elucidated.

Chief of Police – Say, Sherlock Holmes, if I can't solve this mystery on my own, I'll ask for your opinion, alright?

Cop 3 – Of course, Chief...

Chief of Police – Here's the plan. These gentlemen will provide you with a pencil and paper. You'll write down your complete confession, and we'll review it tomorrow morning with a clear head, alright?

Compulsive liar – Certainly. Thank you for lending me an attentive ear, Sir...

Cop 1 hands the liar a notepad and a pen.

Chief of Police (to Cop 3) – Kindly escort our guest to his cell, will you?

Compulsive liar – If it's not too much trouble, could I get a cup of coffee? This might take a bit of time...

The others roll their eyes.

Cop 3 – How many sugars?

Cop 3 leaves, taking the liar with him.

Chief of Police – I'm telling you, the assassin of Henri IV might make an appearance later...

Cop 2 – For him, at least, we're sure it's past the statute of limitations...

Chief of Police – Another one who didn't know where to spend Christmas Eve...

Cop 2 – It's amazing how the holiday season can be cruel for lonely people.

Cop 1 – At the same time, we're not the Soup Kitchen, either. We wouldn't want too many guests showing up without a reservation; otherwise, we'll have to turn people away...

Chief of Police – Alright, well, it's not that I'm bored, but... I do have a family, you know... I'll leave you the keys to the shop?

Cop 1 – You can rely on us, Chief...

Chief of Police – Anyway, I'll remain reachable on my mobile in case of an emergency. Oh, I almost forgot... There's very little chance it will be you, but still...

Cop 1 – Well, for the past three years, it has been us...

Chief of Police – No, what I meant was... This year, the newly appointed Minister of the Interior has decided to shake things up. He'll be paying an unannounced visit to a randomly selected police station to commend the dedication of the force.

Cop 2 – We'd be honoured to receive such recognition, Chief...

Chief of Police – Well, in any case, maintain a somewhat decent appearance, you never know... And don't overdo it with the bottle.

Cop 2 – Come on, Chief, join us for a toast before you go! It's Christmas, after all...

Chief of Police – Well, just one glass then...

Cop 1 pours three glasses. The Chief of Police looks at the label on the bottle.

Chief of Police – What's this stuff?

Cop 1 – A regional specialty.

Chief of Police – Which region?

Cop 2 – The suburbs of Paris, I think. You'll see, it's very special.

The Chief of Police takes a sip, squints, and winces. The other two chuckle.

Chief of Police – Oh, yes, indeed...

Cop 1 – 53 degrees.

Chief of Police – I advise against smoking after drinking this...

They all take another sip.

Cop 1 – It's funny, it reminds me of something...

Chief of Police (*interrupting*) – Well, you can tell me another time. I really have to go; I'm already late...

Cop 2 – So Chief? Aren't you dressing up as Santa Claus this year to bring us our gifts under the Christmas tree?

Chief of Police – If you've been good... Alright, good luck for tonight...

Cop 1 – Merry Christmas, Chief!

The Chief of Police leaves, crossing paths with Cop 3 who returns, pushing ahead of him an individual looking quite excited.

Cop 1 – What's going on here, again...

Cop 3 – Nothing too serious, don't worry. But it seems that the end of the world is scheduled for December 31st. The gentleman will explain everything.

Paranoid – I'll keep it short because time is running out. I am an amateur astronomer.

Cop 2 – This is starting well...

Paranoid – Over the past few weeks, I've observed through my telescope a celestial object hurtling towards our planet at the speed of light.

Cop 2 – Uh-huh...

Paranoid – According to my calculations, it's due to collide with Earth precisely on December 31st at midnight, in Marseille.

Cop 2 – And how does that concern the Parisian police?

Cop 1 – Meteorites falling to Earth happen quite frequently, don't they?

Cop 3 – This is where it gets complicated, if I may. According to the gentleman, this meteorite is the size of Corsica.

Paranoid – And the curious thing is that this meteorite has exact the shape of Corsica.

Cop 2 – No kidding?

Paranoid – Obviously, the government and the media are aware, but they preferred to keep this information secret.

Cop 2 – They hide everything, it's unbelievable...

Cop 1 – At the same time, Corsica is not that big... and let's be honest, Marseille, it's not a huge loss...

Cop 2 – Your'e right. It's not the end of the world, after all...

Paranoid – Are you joking? A meteorite of this size launched at the speed of light will unleash, upon collision with Earth, an energy equivalent to several million atomic bombs.

Cop 1 – Oh yes, indeed...

Cop 2 – Too bad it won't hit on July 14th; it would have been quite a fireworks show...

Paranoid – Our planet will practically disintegrate upon impact, followed by a nuclear winter lasting millions of years. We'll all be wiped out! Just like the dinosaurs. If we're lucky, a handful of cockroaches might survive.

Cop 2 – Damn... can't even get rid of them.

Cop 1 – It's true, those creatures are tough. We've tried everything to get rid of them...

Cop 2 (to Cop 3) – Well... And why exactly did you bring him to us? Does he want to file a complaint against God or something?

Cop 3 – Attempted suicide.

Cop 2 – Excuse me?

Cop 3 – This fool jumped into the Seine from the Pont de l'Alma.

Cop 1 – What's the point of committing suicide a week before the end of the world?

Cop 3 – A final act of individual freedom, I suppose. A way to retain control over one's destiny, despite the certainty we all have of dying one day. Have you read what Nietzsche wrote about suicide?

Cop 2 – Well, so what? Are we not allowed to commit suicide anymore? It's not a crime!

Cop 3 – The issue is, a sightseeing boat happened to pass directly beneath when the guy leaped off the bridge, and he landed on an American tourist. A bit on the heavier side, thankfully. It softened the impact for him, but the Yank, she's in bad shape. So, naturally, she filed a complaint.

Cop 1 – Sure, she must have thought the sky was falling on her

Cop 2 – Okay, put him in the cooler until tomorrow, and we'll deal with it later with the Chief.

Paranoid – It's the end of the world, I tell you! In exactly one week. It's time to atone for your sins!

Cop 3 takes the eccentric away.

Cop 2 – Corsica crashing into Marseille... We've never heard that one before...

Cop 1 – Well, what this guy is saying is entirely possible... It's happened before, and it will probably happen again, a meteorite colliding with Earth. So why wouldn't December 31st be the end of the world...

Cop 2 – I predict one thing, though: on December 31st, it will be the end of the year...

Cop 1 – What would you do if the end of the world was in a week?

Cop 2 – I wouldn't stay here listening to your nonsense for a miserable salary, that's for sure... You see, it's ultimately what ruins our lives...

Cop 1 – What?

Cop 2 – The future! Since we were little, we've been taught to give up all our dreams to secure our future. This guy might be onto something. Perhaps we should all live as if the world is ending in a week.

Cop 1 – Yeah... Well, for him, it mostly led to jumping off a bridge...

Cop 2 – Onto an American! Maybe he likes curvy women... Me too, if I thought the end of the world was imminent, I'd probably pounce on the first girl I came across. And if not, maybe even on you...

Cop 1 looks at him with a worried expression, then refills the glasses.

Cop 1 – Why did you become a cop?

Cop 2 – When I was little, playing cowboys and Indians, I always played the Indian. As I grew up, I was told to think about my future... So, I became a cowboy.

Cop 1 – Result? We've never even had a chance to draw our guns from their holsters, except during training.

Cop 2 – Fortunately! You shoot like a foot... You could have hurt someone...

Cop 1 – I shoot better than you.

Cop 2 – Are you challenging me?

Cop 1 – Do you want to turn cockroaches into targets to settle who's the better shot? Look, I spot one on the wall over there. I bet that from here, I can put a bullet right between its eyes.

Cop 1 removes the safety catch from his gun and pretends to aim.

Cop 2 – This idiot would actually do it. Alright, put that away; you're going to kill someone, I tell you...

The other cop pretends to shoot before bursting into laughter. Then he puts his gun back in its holster.

Cop 1 (raising his glass) – To the health of cockroaches!

Cop 2 – You're right. After the end of the world, they're the only ones we can rely on to rebuild civilisation.

They drink.

Cop 2 – Well, I'm going to the toilet to unload my clip. This stuff really clears the pipes.

Cop 2 exits. Cop 1, somewhat tipsy, dozes off in his chair, gradually slumping until he falls to the floor. A guy arrives, dressed as Santa Claus, with a sack. He doesn't see anyone in the room. Cop 1, both drunk and drowsy, gets up from behind his desk in a daze and notices him.

Santa Claus (*voice distorted behind the fake beard*) – Merry Christmas!

Cop 1 – Oh, damn, Santa Claus! (*He takes out his gun.*) I've wanted to take you down for a long time!

The other raises his hands, surprised.

Santa Claus – But...

Cop 1 – Shut your mouth and don't move, okay! Ah, you're not so tough now, huh, Santa Claus? I don't know what's holding me back from... (*The shot accidentally goes off.*) Damn, I forgot to put the safety back on...

Santa Claus collapses to the floor. Cop 2 returns from the toilet and is surprised to see Santa Claus on the ground.

Cop 2 – What's this mess?

Cop 1 – I just killed Santa Claus...

Cop 2 – Oh, yeah, that's a major screw-up. On the evening of December 24th. Can you imagine all the children you're going to disappoint?

Cop 1 – The shot went off accidentally...

Cop 2 – Well, you can explain that to the internal affairs investigators. Involuntary manslaughter.

Cop 1 – Do you think he's dead?

Cop 2 realizes that the situation is more serious than he initially thought.

Cop 2 – Did you really shoot him? Who the hell is this guy?

Cop 1 – I swear I have no idea. He just appeared out of nowhere...

Cop 2 – If only he were the real Santa Claus, we might still have a chance to cover it up.

Cop 1 – You think so?

Cop 2 – But at your age, you surely know that the real Santa Claus doesn't exist. The last time you saw Santa Claus was in your mother's bed...

Cop 1 – Damn, then who could it be... The Chief of Police! He said he would come dressed as Santa Claus to bring us our gifts! I thought he was joking...

The other leans over the body.

Cop 2 – Well, let's take off his hood, beard, and moustache, and we'll find out right away...

He is about to do it when the Chief of Police returns, apparently under pressure.

Chief of Police – We're in deep trouble, kids...

Cop 1 – Tell us something we don't know...

Cop 2 – Any problem, Chief?

Chief of Police – The minister! We've just been informed of his arrival!

Cop 1 – Which minister?

Chief of Police – The Minister of the Interior! He chose our police station for his little Christmas visit!

Cop 2 – No...?

Chief of Police – I would have preferred to have a quiet Christmas Eve at home, but well. If we manage to make a good impression, it's an opportunity to get the additional staff we've been requesting for years.

Cop 1 – You can count on us, Chief!

The Chief of Police notices Santa Claus lying on the floor.

Chief of Police – What's this?

Cop 1 – Well, you see...

Cop 2 – Alcohol-induced coma, Chief... We picked him up in front of Galeries Lafayette while he was showing his 'talents' to...

Chief of Police – I don't want to know more; I don't have time. Anyway, get rid of him right away, okay!

Cop 1 – Don't worry, Chief; we'll put him in the sobering-up cell immediately...

Chief of Police – And stash that bottle, damn it! The Chief of Staff is parking the ministerial car, but he informed me the minister is already within our walls. I even expected to find him here. I'll see what he's up to, that idiot...

The Chief of Police leaves. The others look at Santa Claus.

Cop 2 – Apparently, it's not the Chief of Police either...

Cop 1 – Then who could it be?

Cop 2 – The urgency is to hide the body before the minister shows up here. Because Santa Claus, a victim of police violence on Christmas Eve, I'm not sure that contributes to making a good impression...

Cop 1 – We don't have any individual cells left... We can't put him with the others; that would cause a stir...

Cop 2 – Anyway, we don't have time. We'll hide him behind the desk for now. Did you hear the Chief of Police? The minister will be here any minute.

The two cops hastily hide Santa Claus behind the desk. The minister's Chief of Staff arrives.

Chief of Staff – Good evening, gentlemen, and Merry Christmas to you!

Cop 1 – Mr. Minister...

Chief of Staff – I'm just his Chief of Staff... But I thought I'd find him here. I was trying to park the Twingo...

Cop 2 – The Twingo...

Chief of Staff – What can you do; the times are tough budget-wise... And the worst part is that I have to drive it myself... It's crazy how challenging it is to park in your neighbourhood...

Cop 2 – Well, despite the crisis, the poor still manage to afford cars.

Chief of Staff – And often more luxurious than a Twingo, believe me... Anyway, I had to park mine in double file. And with this snow...

Cop 1 – Don't worry, if a colleague gives you a ticket, we'll take care of it.

Chief of Staff – Ah, but that's out of the question; you're joking! As you know, we stand for an exemplary Republic!

Cop 2 – Of course...

Chief of Staff – I don't understand... We were supposed to meet here. He came in a sleigh...

Cop 1 – In a sleigh?

Chief of Staff – Of course, we couldn't afford reindeer; they were too expensive. We replaced them with police dogs... So, you haven't seen him?

Cop 2 – The sleigh?

Chief of Staff – The minister! You couldn't have missed him; he's disguised as Santa Claus...

Cop 1 – As Santa Claus!

Chief of Staff – It's a bit childish, I know, but it's a very strong symbolic gesture. A way to show that for the Minister of the Interior, all the police officers are his children, and he will reward you. As long as you're on your best behaviour, of course. So, you haven't seen him...

Cop 2 – Maybe he's in an office nearby...

Chief of Staff – I'll go check, thank you. And, we'll come back to pay you a little visit later.

Cop 2 – Very well...

Chief of Staff – And don't change anything for us. Just act as if we weren't here, okay?

The Chief of Staff leaves. The cops are devastated. Their eyes turn to where Santa Claus is hiding.

Cop 1 – The Minister of the Interior...

Cop 2 – There's a reshuffle in the air.

Cop 1 – Oh, damn...

Cop 2 – Yeah, in terms of blunders, it's hard to surpass this one...

Cop 1 – What do we do?

Cop 2 – We'll find a solution...

Cop 1 – You think?

Cop 2 – No, I just said that to reassure you.

Cop 1 – Meanwhile, we can't leave him here. The other said he'd be back in five minutes...

Cop 2 – We have no choice; let's throw him in a cell...

They pull Santa Claus from behind the desk and start dragging him. Cop 3 returns.

Cop 3 – Need a hand?

Cop 1 – We're good, thanks...

Cop 3 – What's wrong with him? Something he didn't digest?

Cop 2 – That's right...

Cop 3 – The holiday season is conducive to all excesses...

Cop 2 – Yeah, and then we regret it... *(To Cop 1)* Right?

Cop 3 – A Santa Claus, on top of that... What an example for the children...

Cop 3 leaves.

Cop 2 – You can put him with the pathological liar.

Cop 1 – Why?

Cop 2 – If he claims he saw the Minister of the Interior's corpse, no one will believe him.

Cop 1 – You're right; pathological liars do have their uses...

Cop 2 – I'll stay here to keep the Chief of Staff occupied.

Cop 1 goes out dragging Santa Claus by the feet. The Chief of Staff returns with the Chief of Police, who tries to put on a good face.

Chief of Police – You won't believe it, but we lost the minister... Didn't he come through here?

Cop 2 – I didn't see anyone...

Chief of Staff – I hope nothing happened to him...

Chief of Police (*joking*) – What do you expect to happen to a Minister of the Interior in a police station?

Chief of Staff – You're right...

Chief of Police – Maybe... where the king himself goes alone. No matter if you're a minister; you have the same needs as everyone else, right?

Chief of Staff – Absolutely.

Chief of Police – Still, the minister being in the bathroom and his Chief of Staff not being aware, you must admit...

Chief of Staff – Very funny... Humour is important... Especially in a profession like yours, I imagine...

Chief of Police – Come on, I'll show you around the premises in the meantime... You'll see, unfortunately, it's very run-down. Needs refreshing, as they say in real estate ads to mean it's a ruin... If you could mention it to the minister when we find him...

Chief of Police leaves, dragging the Chief of Staff with him. Cop 1 returns.

Cop 2 – So?

Cop 1 – I told the fibber that it was the Minister of the Interior disguised as Santa Claus, and that I had just shot him in the stomach.

Cop 2 – And he believed you?

Cop 1 – The advantage with compulsive liars is that they're very gullible...

Cop 2 – That buys us a bit of time.

Cop 1 – True, because hiding a corpse in a police station... It's not the first place the police would think to look, but still...

Cop 2 – At the same time, it won't be easy to discreetly get the body out of here. There are cops everywhere... So, imagine when the Minister's disappearance is officially reported, which won't take long... We'll have the Secret Service and the Special Forces on our backs...

Cop 1 – You're right; we need to find a solution, and fast...

Cop 2 – If we can't get rid of the body, we need to come up with a natural explanation for his death...

Cop 1 – Natural... with a bullet in the stomach...

Cop 2 – In that case, we need to find someone to take the fall for you!

Cop 1 – I guess you're not volunteering...

Cop 2 – The fibber!

Cop 1 – What?

The Cop 2's phone rings.

Cop 2 – Go get it, I'll explain.

Cop 1 – I'm on my way...

He exits. The other one takes the call.

Cop 2 – Yeah... Oh, hello, Mum... Well, yes, I know, but what can you do... Of course, I'd rather be with you eating oysters, but well... Oh, here, you know, it's pretty calm, right? On Christmas Eve... Well, I have to let you go now because I have a little problem to solve... No, no, nothing serious, I assure you... Okay, save me a piece of yule log, that's kind... Merry Christmas to you too, Mum...

Cop 1 returns with the compulsive liar.

Cop 2 – So, my friend, any progress on those Memoirs from Beyond the Grave?

Compulsive Liar – It's going well, thank you... But I'm only at the very beginning, you know... So, if you don't mind...

Cop 1 – You surely have five minutes.

Compulsive Liar – Alright, but only five minutes...

Cop 2 – Sit down, please. Would you like something to drink? A little chestnut liqueur? It's a specialty from my region...

Compulsive Liar – Thank you, I don't drink...

Cop 2 – So, here's the thing... Since you're friendly to us, my colleague and I have a little proposition for you... A very interesting proposition, you'll see...

Cop 1 seems curious about what his colleague has in mind.

Compulsive Liar (*suspicious*) – I hope you're not going to talk to me again about the statute of limitations...

Cop 2 – No, don't worry. It's actually the opposite... Because with Kennedy, the statute of limitations... That's what you risk, you're well aware of it...

Cop 1 (*starting to understand*) – Even with a good lawyer...

Compulsive Liar – Where are you going with this...?

Cop 2 – Would you like to be the murderer of the Minister of the Interior instead? He was just appointed...

Compulsive Liar – But... he's dead. His corpse is in my cell...

Cop 2 – Yes... but it was an involuntary homicide. What we're proposing here is a real assassination.

Compulsive Liar – I can't kill him; he's already dead.

Cop 2 – Exactly! With the little arrangement we're suggesting, all the glory of attempting on his life would fall solely on you...

Cop 1 – And for us, let's say... it would do us a favour too.

Compulsive Liar – Oh no, I'm sorry, but... that's not possible.

Cop 1 – We're not talking about the President of the United States or one of the Beatles, but still... He's a minister!

The compulsive liar gets up.

Compulsive Liar – No, really, I would have liked to help you, but...

Cop 2 – But why, for God's sake?

Compulsive Liar – Because I don't want to lie...

Cop 3 passes by.

Cop 3 – Are you aware? We've lost the Minister of the Interior! It's starting to be a panic; the Chief of Police is beside himself..

Compulsive Liar – The Minister of the Interior? He's with me in my cell, and he's dead. But I swear I had nothing to do with this murder.

Cop 3 – That's it, my friend, and I bet he's dressed as Santa Claus...

Compulsive Liar – Exactly.

Cop 3 rolls his eyes.

Cop 1 – Put him back in his cell, please.

Cop 3 takes the liar away.

Cop 1 – Damn... We had to run into a compulsive liar who refuses to lie...

Cop 2 – The downside with compulsive liars is that they are convinced they're telling the truth...

Cop 1 – There's the prostitute, but I don't see how we can pin it on her.

Cop 2 – Even though I wouldn't be surprised if Santa Claus was one of her clients.

Cop 1 – True, he was already sleeping with my mother...

Cop 2 – I'm talking about the Minister!

Cop 1 – Oh yes, sorry...

They ponder.

Cop 2 – The bum! He's napping in his cell, completely drunk...

Cop 1 – So what?

Cop 2 – Follow me; I might have a solution...

They exit. The Chief of Police and the Chief of Staff arrive.

Chief of Police – I don't understand what could have happened to him...

Chief of Staff – If he doesn't show up in the next five minutes, I'll have to notify the President... A Minister of the Interior vanishing in a police station is a serious matter. Trust me, if anything happened to him, it wouldn't be very good for your career.

Chief of Police – And you mention he was dressed as Santa Claus... With such a precise description, we shouldn't have too much trouble finding him...

The two officers enter with Santa Claus, his hood lowered, and the fake beard covering his face.

Cop 1 – We've got him!

Chief of Police – Thank goodness!

Chief of Staff – But what's wrong with him? He doesn't look very well...

Cop 2 – I have the feeling he took advantage of his police station tour to hit up few bars...

Chief of Police – But I've already encountered this Santa Claus before...

Cop 2 – Yes, earlier, indeed... It's just a simple mix-up.

Cop 1 – Since he was completely drunk when he arrived here...

Cop 2 – And dressed as Santa Claus, too...

Cop 1 – We mistook him for a bum, so we placed him in the detox cell.

Chief of Staff – He really doesn't smell like roses... I sincerely apologize; this is not typical behaviour for him... Thank you for handling it. And, of course, I trust your discretion regarding this little incident...

Cop 2 – But of course... Our lips are sealed.

Chief of Staff – I'll take him home and tuck him into bed; he should be better tomorrow...

The Chief of Staff tries to take charge of Santa Claus.

Chief of Staff – Can you help me load him onto his sleigh? I mean, my Twingo? He weighs like a dead donkey...

Chief of Police – My officers will handle it; no need to worry.

Chief of Staff – Thank you, gentlemen. Just sit him in the passenger seat. And don't forget to buckle him up...

The two officers escort Santa Claus away. The Chief of Police presents the bottle.

Chief of Police – Well, there you have it! All's well that ends well. Shall we shed a tear in celebration?

Chief of Staff – Well, just a drop, and then I'm off... Ah, what an evening; it's one for the books...

Chief of Police – To your health!

They take a sip.

Chief of Staff – Oh, goodness... If this is what he consumed, I now understand why the minister is in this condition... Anyway, thanks for everything, Chief. On behalf of the minister, I commend you for your dedication and efficiency...

Chief of Police – Unfortunately, we are short-staffed, but...

Chief of Staff – Regarding additional staff, I can't make any promises. It's a crisis, as you're well aware. However, the minister will express his gratitude for your discretion tonight. Once he regains his composure, I'll recommend you for a decoration... It won't cost anything, at the very least.

Chief of Police – The Legion of Honour, really? That would indeed be a splendid Christmas gift...

Chief of Staff – Well, I must be on my way...

Chief of Police – I'll accompany you. They're expecting me too...

The two officers return.

Cop 1 – Phew... Now that they're gone, we can breathe a bit easier.

Cop 2 – What do we do with the body?

Cop 1 – Let's just toss it in the Seine. Plenty of people drown on New Year's Eve.

Cop 2 – But not many ministers. Especially with a bullet in the gut.

Cop 1 – When you're the Minister of the Interior, enemies are inevitable...

Cop 2 – Well... He'll probably have a state funeral...

Cop 1 – Either way, I'd pay a lot to witness the minister's wife's reaction when she wakes up tomorrow morning with a bum in her bed...

The Chief of Staff returns.

Chief of Staff – The guy you loaded into my car just woke up. Turns out, he's definitely not the minister!

Cop 1 – No kidding...

Chief of Staff – I had my suspicions. He does enjoy a drink, but usually, he handles alcohol much better... This one managed to decorate the ministerial Twingo with his vomit.

Cop 2 – I don't understand what happened...

Cop 1 – Must be a mix-up.

Chief of Staff – The good news is that we've just found the minister.

Cop 1 – Really...?

Chief of Staff – Indeed, he just arrived. He was a bit delayed on the ring road with his sleigh, but he'll be here any moment now...

Cop 2 – Seriously?

Chief of Staff – Well, I'll head back to the entrance to welcome him...

He leaves.

Cop 1 – Oh, damn... So I didn't kill a minister...

Cop 2 – Phew... Let's celebrate... (*They drink.*) Yes, but then who's the guy you bumped off?

Cop 1 – We switched costumes in the dim light earlier to avoid drawing attention; I never got a good look at his face...

Cop 2 – And we were so sure it was him... Didn't even cross my mind to double-check...

Cop 1 – Any chance it's the real Santa Claus?

Cop 2 – We're about to find out.

They step out and return, dragging the body, now stripped of the Santa Claus attire and dressed as a bum.

Cop 2 – Oh damn, it's Martin.

Cop 1 – He must have dressed up as Santa Claus to surprise us.

Cop 2 – Well, he succeeded...

Cop 1 – At the same time, he was an asshole; no one's going to shed tears for him...

Cop 2 – What did he bring in his sack?

Cop 1 (*looking into the sack*) – Oysters!

Cop 2 – Too bad we hate them...

Cop 1 – Oh, there's a little note too...

Cop 2 – Probably his best wishes for the new year.

Cop 1 – It's his neighbour's license plate number. The one who hasn't bought his breathalyser yet. There's a composite sketch of the offender too.

Cop 2 – Let me see... (*He looks at the sketch.*) Oh yes, he had quite a talent with a pencil.

Cop 1 – A genuine artist.

Cop 2 – Indeed, but we still have to get rid of him.

They lift the body, feeling its weight.

Cop 1 – The advantage is that when we toss him into the Seine, the oyster shells will ensure he stays at the bottom for a while...

They drag the corpse. In an unreal light, a Santa Claus appears, addressing them with a supernatural voice.

Santa Claus – So, my children, have you been good this year?

Cop 1 – Oh, damned... Who's this now?

The End

About the author

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

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

For those who prefer reading or working from books, printed versions of his plays can be purchased from Amazon for a price similar to that of photocopying this document.

Other plays by the same author translated in English:

A Cuckoo's nest
A simple business dinner
All's well that starts badly
An innocent little murder
Bed and Breakfast
Casket for two
Cheaters
Check to the Kings
Crash Zone
Crisis and Punishment
Critical but stable
Eurostar
Family Tree
Four stars
Fragile, handle with care
Friday the 13th
Heads or Tails
Him and Her
In lieu of flowers
Is there a pilot in the audience?
Is there an author in the audience?
Just a moment before the end of the world
Last chance encounter
Lovestruck at Swindlemore Hall
Miracle at Saint Mary Juana Abbey
New Year's Eve at the Morgue
One marriage out of two
Preliminaries
Quarantine
Running on Empty
Strip Poker
Surviving Mankind
The Costa Mucho Castaways
The Ideal Son-in-Law
The Jackpot
The Joker
The perfect Son-in-Law
The Performance is not cancelled
The Smell of Money
The Window across the courtyard
The Worst Village in England
Welcome aboard!

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Avignon – January 2024
© La Comédiathèque – ISBN 978-2-38602-131-2
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