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In Flagrante Delirium

Jean-Pierre Martinez



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In Flagrante Delirium

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A body in a sauna, a case of plagiarism and a detective on the verge of retirement. Captain Dupont is drawn into an investigation that could become a national scandal. Unless it is all just theatre...

Characters

Captain Dupont (male or female)
Lieutenant Bordeli (male or female)
Captain Ramirez (male or female)
Chief of Police Lambert (male or female)
Baron Swindlemore von Hustlestein (male or cross-dressed female)
Baroness Swindlemore von Hustlestein (female or cross-dressed male)

Possible casts (six performers):

6F, 1M/5F, 2M/4F, 3M/3F, 4M/2F, 5M/1F, 6M

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Act 1

An old-fashioned police station. Two desks and furniture that has seen better days. Lieutenant Bordeli is slumped over one desk, snoring beside a bottle of whisky. Captain Dupont enters, hangs up his raincoat and settles at the other desk with a magazine for retirees. The cover promises such delights as "Retirement and Depression" and "Planning Your Funeral". He looks unconvinced. An ancient desk phone rings. Bordeli slowly stirs. Dupont answers.

Dupont – Dupont speaking... Yes, sir... No, I'm afraid Captain Ramirez has left us.

Chief Lambert enters carrying a funeral wreath bearing the words "To our dear departed colleague and friend".

Dupont (*glancing at the wreath*) – Yes, for good, you might say... No, he didn't mention that case before he left... He probably never got round to it... Of course, come by whenever you like.

Dupont hangs up. Lambert places the wreath on Dupont's desk.

Lambert – Hello, Dupont.

Dupont – Chief...

Lambert gives Bordeli a disapproving look. He struggles to wake up.

Lambert – Lieutenant...

Dupont (*reading the wreath*) – "To our dear departed colleague and friend." Lambert, you shouldn't have! I'm only retiring!

Bordeli stands up and takes a few uncertain steps.

Lambert – Dupont, the wreath is for Captain Ramirez. His funeral was this morning. We had to do something.

Dupont – Oh, of course. Ramirez... This morning? And you brought the wreath back?

Bordeli approaches the wreath, placing a hand on it.

Bordeli – They're fake, aren't they?

Dupont – You're right. They look almost real.

Lambert – Artificial flowers last for ever. Like our grief. And we can use them again.

Dupont – Of course... And since there's no name on the wreath... It's convenient...

Lambert – As you know, the police budget has been cut again. The country's finances are a disaster.

Dupont – Fake funeral wreaths... Just as well I'm retiring. Next they'll be giving us toy guns and cardboard bulletproof vests.

Bordeli (*muttering*) – As long as they let me drink real whisky...

Bordeli discreetly hides his bottle. Lambert gives him an annoyed look but chooses not to comment.

Lambert – So, Dupont, your last day! Ready for retirement?

Dupont (*showing his magazine*) – I'm doing a little research. So far, everything I've read makes me want to kill myself.

Lambert – Come on, Dupont, you're still young. You could have stayed a few more years. Why retire if you're so afraid of boredom?

Dupont – Never outstay your welcome, Lambert. (*Dryly*) I'd rather go out at the height of my career.

His phone rings again.

Dupont – Dupont speaking... Yes, Director... Of course, Director... Goodbye, Director... (*He hangs up.*) That was the Director.

Lambert – Calling to congratulate you on a distinguished career, I imagine.

Dupont – Mainly to make sure I won't be here tomorrow. And that I won't take any embarrassing files with me.

Bordeli – Embarrassing to whom?

Dupont – Anything else, Chief? One last case, perhaps?

Lambert – No, Dupont. It looks like a quiet day. Plenty of time to pack your things.

Dupont stands up and takes the wreath.

Dupont – I'll put these flowers back in storage. Until the next unfortunate occasion.

Bordeli – Yes, because right now, one might think it's you being buried...

Dupont leaves with the wreath.

Lambert – What time is his farewell party?

Bordeli – Six o'clock... After the end of the shift.

Lambert – Good. You haven't let anything slip, have you? It's meant to be a surprise.

Bordeli – Not a word. But can you really keep a secret from a detective of his calibre?

Lambert – No alcohol at the party, right? You know the new guidelines...

Bordeli – Don't worry, Chief. I never drink outside working hours... We've replaced the champagne with alcohol-free sparkling apple juice.

Lambert – Just as nice, and considerably cheaper. Where did you hide the bottles? Not in the storeroom, I hope.

Bordeli – Somewhere cold. He'll never think of looking there.

Lambert – Where exactly?

Bordeli – The morgue fridge.

Lambert – Inspired. Well, I'll leave you to it. And while you have a moment, Bordeli, do try to tidy up this pigsty.

Bordeli – Yes, Chief.

Lambert – The prosecutor is coming to Dupont's farewell party tonight. We don't want to make a bad impression.

Bordeli – Yes, Chief.

Lambert exits.

Bordeli – She sounds just like my mother telling me to tidy my room.

Conchita Ramirez enters and catches Bordeli taking a healthy swig of whisky.

Bordeli – Can't I get five minutes' peace around here?

Ramirez – Sorry to interrupt you while you're so busy.

Bordeli – Next time, report to the desk sergeant first, young lady. Now, what can I do for you?

Ramirez – I'm Captain Ramirez.

Bordeli – If you're Captain Ramirez, I'm Mother Superior.

Ramirez – Sorry, Mother. I mistook you for a police officer.

Bordeli – Captain Ramirez was buried this morning.

Ramirez – Yes. Funny, I didn't see you at the funeral.

Dupont returns with the wreath.

Dupont – No room in storage... I'll have more space once I've cleared my desk. I'll leave this here for now.

He places the wreath and looks at Ramirez.

Dupont – Miss? Can we help you?

Bordeli – You'll like this, Captain. She says she's Captain Ramirez.

Dupont – Well, well. I never believed in reincarnation, but I might have to reconsider. The last Captain Ramirez wasn't nearly as attractive, was he, Bordeli?

Bordeli – Between us, we called him Quasimodo...

Lambert returns.

Lambert – Ah, Captain Ramirez, you're here already. Gentlemen, meet Captain Conchita Ramirez. She's the daughter of our late colleague, whom we buried this morning.

Dupont – Really?

Bordeli – Now that you mention it... There is a certain family resemblance...

Dupont (*shaking hands with Ramirez*) – Captain Dupont. My condolences. I'm sorry I missed the funeral, but it's my last day on the force and...

Lambert – Exactly. Captain Ramirez will be taking over your office. The one you shared with her father.

Dupont – If it's a family matter, then...

Lambert – Budget cuts. We're replacing one officer for every two who retire or die. You know how it is.

Dupont – So she'll be replacing both of us.

Lambert – I'm sure this bright young graduate can do the work of two experienced officers. Not that anyone could ever replace Captain Dupont...

Dupont – As the saying goes, the future belongs to women.

Ramirez – Thank you for the warm welcome...

Lambert – I need her for five minutes to sign the transfer papers. Then you can bring her up to date on your cases, Dupont.

Dupont – With pleasure, Chief.

Ramirez – Thank you for the wreath, it meant a lot to me.

Bordeli tries to discreetly take the wreath.

Lambert – Your father was a fine officer. He died serving his country. Come along, Captain.

Lambert leaves with Ramirez.

Bordeli – Serving his country? He choked on a clam during his lunch break.

Dupont – What the hell is this young woman doing here? You can inherit a title or a law practice, but the police force isn't a family business.

Bordeli – Maybe she wants to carry the torch her father dropped.

Dupont – Careful, Bordeli. Whisky makes you poetic. Still, if choking on lunch counts as dying for one's country, they'll give you a medal when your liver finally packs up. For services to the spirits industry.

Bordeli – Not on this whisky, boss. It's contraband, confiscated at the Spanish border.

Dupont – Spanish whisky? Bordeli, if Spain starts making whisky, civilisation really is coming to an end.

Bordeli – I've noticed the signs myself. Take Captain Ramirez. Choking on a clam. Doesn't that strike you as odd?

Dupont – Odd? Are you suggesting a conspiracy? What, the shellfish farmers have declared war on the police?

Bordeli – Clam farmers, boss. You're thinking of oyster farmers.

Dupont – Alright. I'm listening to you...

Bordeli – Picture it: the daughter never believed her father's death was an accident. So she gets herself posted to his station on the very day of his funeral. All to investigate his death.

Dupont – And where did you get that idea?

Bordeli – I saw it in a detective series.

Dupont – You watch too much television. And I hope you haven't organised a surprise farewell party. I hate surprises. Besides, a retirement party is practically a funeral with sandwiches.

Bordeli – Your last wishes will be respected, boss. No flowers, no wreath.

Ramirez returns.

Dupont – Captain Ramirez. We were just talking about your late father.

Bordeli – And the heroic circumstances surrounding his death.

Dupont gives Bordeli a reproachful look.

Ramirez – There are only two desks. Where am I supposed to work?

Dupont – We'll share mine today. Tomorrow it's all yours.

Bordeli – Of course, there's some tidying up to do, Ramirez...

Ramirez – I'd prefer "Captain Ramirez", Lieutenant.

Bordeli – Of course, Captain.

She approaches Dupont's desk.

Ramirez – Don't you have a computer?

Dupont – I'm an old-school detective. When I joined the force, cutting-edge technology meant a pocket calculator and a phone-sex hotline.

Ramirez – I see...

Dupont – I'm leaving tonight. It's not worth changing my working methods now...

Ramirez – I'll ask Lambert to find me a desktop computer.

Bordeli – You mean Chief Lambert. She's rather particular about her rank.

Dupont – Would you like some coffee?

Bordeli – Unless Mademoiselle would prefer tea? (*Ramirez glares at him.*) Captain Ramirez, I mean.

Ramirez – Coffee is perfect.

Dupont serves her coffee in an absurdly decorated mug, presenting it as though it were a sacred relic.

Dupont – This was your father's mug. I'm sure he'd have wanted you to have it.

Ramirez – Thank you... I'll try to be worthy of it.

Dupont – Bordeli, a coffee?

Bordeli – Yes, gladly. With a sweetener and a dash of milk, please...

Dupont also serves Bordeli. They all take a sip of the coffee and grimace.

Dupont – You want police reform, Ramirez? Give every station a decent espresso machine.

Bordeli pours a dash of whisky into his coffee. Ramirez notices.

Ramirez – And a breathalyser beside it.

Awkward silence. They finish their coffee. Baroness Margarita Swindlemore von Hustlestein enters the room.

Margarita – Captain Dupont?

Dupont – Until tonight, yes.

Margarita – Captain, I'm here to report my husband's death.

Bordeli – Looks like business is picking up...

Dupont – Please, have a seat.

Margarita sits down.

Dupont – Perhaps we could start with your name, madam.

Dupont signals Bordeli to come closer and assist him.

Bordeli – Name, age, distinguishing qualities... assuming you have any.

Dupont gives him a disapproving look, while Margarita glares at him.

Dupont – If you have no qualities, madam, your occupation will do.

Margarita – Baroness Margarita Swindlemore von Hustlestein. The fifth of that name.

Dupont (*to Ramirez*) – Please, Captain, feel free to join us...

Ramirez – Conchita Ramirez, Captain of Police. Also the fifth of that name.

Bordeli – Age, qualities or occupation?

Margarita – My age is none of your business. And I am a person of quality, which means I have no need of an occupation.

Dupont – Very well... Can you at least share the name of your late husband?

Margarita – Henry Swindlemore von Hustlestein.

Bordeli – Profession?

Margarita – Don't tell me you've never heard that name before...

Dupont – In our line of work, we meet so many people...

Bordeli – Well, if he didn't have a criminal record...

Margarita – My family has no criminal record, sir. We have five quarters of noble ancestry.

Bordeli – Five quarters? That's more than a whole person.

Dupont – Aristocrats, Bordeli. They always take more than their share.

Ramirez – Back to your husband, Baroness. Where did you find him?

Margarita – After his death, you mean?

Ramirez – Um... yes.

Margarita – In the gym downstairs, at our family residence.

Bordeli – Cool...

Margarita – In the sauna.

Dupont – In the sauna?

Margarita – A horrible accident, Captain...

Ramirez – And are you sure he's dead?

Margarita – I didn't notice he was missing last night. His Jaguar wasn't in the garage, so I assumed he'd gone out. It was only this morning...

Ramirez – This morning?

Margarita – It's been about twelve hours since he's been in the sauna.

Bordeli – So, you're sure he's dead.

Margarita – I can't be absolutely sure. The little window is all steamed up. There are scratches on the glass, though. And my husband had a weak heart.

Ramirez – And you didn't try to get him out of there?

Margarita – The door seems to have jammed. Perhaps the wood swelled in the heat. I thought I'd call the police rather than a repairman.

Dupont – Quite right, madam. Bordeli will take your statement next door, and we'll send someone round to check the facts.

Margarita – Thank you, Captain.

Bordeli – Baroness, if you would kindly come this way...

Bordeli exits with Margarita.

Dupont – A Baroness... Just what we needed...

Ramirez – What do you think about this case, Captain?

Dupont – A case? What case? An unfortunate household accident, surely.

Ramirez – I don't know. Something about that sauna doesn't add up.

Dupont – People die every day. In saunas, in restaurants, choking on clams... (*Ramirez gives him a withering look.*) Sorry. Too soon?

Ramirez – I don't believe either death was an accident.

Dupont – Your father's death was a shock. But grief can cloud your judgement, Ramirez.

Ramirez – Isn't suspecting everyone supposed to be our job?

Dupont – So everyone is guilty until proven innocent?

Ramirez – A man locked in a sauna all night. You don't find that suspicious?

Dupont – You have a point. A locked sauna... It sounds like the title of a murder mystery.

Lambert arrives, preoccupied.

Lambert – I just greeted Baroness Swindlemore von Hustlestein, who is giving her statement about her husband's death...

Dupont – Honestly, Lambert! An old man has a heart attack in a sauna. It's hardly a national emergency.

Lambert – You don't understand, Dupont. This is a very delicate matter. Henry Swindlemore von Hustlestein is somebody.

Dupont – Oh yeah? And who exactly is he?

Lambert – You've never heard of Henry Swindlemore von Hustlestein?

Dupont – The name rings a bell. What is he actually famous for?

Lambert – I'm not entirely sure. But he's on television all the time.

Ramirez – That would explain it.

Dupont – We used to put famous people on television. Now television makes people famous.

Lambert – I tried to reach Prosecutor Fireman for instructions, but he's not answering his mobile.

Ramirez – Prosecutor Fireman? Is that his real name?

Dupont – Very appropriate. Whenever a scandal breaks out, he's sent in to put out the fire.

Lambert – Nevertheless, Dupont, I'm entrusting you with handling this case with the utmost discretion.

Dupont – And here I was hoping to end my career with a bang...

Lambert – Don't overdo it. It's your last day. I've put your name forward for a medal. The prosecutor was going to mention it to the minister.

Ramirez – If you allow me, Chief, I'd like to assist Captain Dupont in this investigation.

Lambert – Excellent idea, Ramirez. Do you mind, Dupont? It'll be an opportunity to give her a leg up...

Dupont – You mean she can keep an eye on me and report back to you.

Lambert – That too. These are celebrities, Dupont. Important people.

Dupont – Famous people. Yes, I got that.

Lambert – They're not ordinary suspects.

Dupont (*solemnly*) – The law is blind, unless the accused happens to be rich and famous.

Lambert – Your methods can be rather rough, Dupont. And Bordeli's are worse. Ramirez will bring some much-needed tact.

Ramirez – In that case, I'll go to the scene right away, Chief.

Lambert – I trust you to act with the utmost discretion, Ramirez.

Ramirez exits.

Dupont – So, you're taking me off a sensitive case. Just a few hours before retirement?

Lambert – Not at all, Dupont! Of course not... I only said that to put her at ease.

Dupont – I'm joking, Lambert. I couldn't care less about this case. But if I can help the poor girl through what she's going through...

Lambert – Her father's death has hit her hard. I'm counting on you to guide her through her first case. Can we trust her?

Dupont – Like father, like daughter...

Lambert – I'm not sure if that should reassure me... Her father died from choking on a clam...

Lambert exits. Dupont sighs and begins packing the contents of his drawers into a box.

Fade to black.

Act 2

Dupont packs his belongings. Bordeli returns.

Dupont – Thirty years on the force, Bordeli. You wouldn't believe the rubbish I've accumulated. (*He holds up a package in plastic.*) Look! A kilo of cannabis I'd forgotten about in the bottom drawer.

Bordeli – Good thing you cleaned up before Ramirez. She would have found something else to criticize about our working methods.

Dupont – I wonder what they'll find in your drawers when you retire.

Bordeli – Empty bottles, mainly. You know me, boss. I don't do drugs.

Bordeli takes another gulp. Dupont sniffs the package.

Dupont – I wonder if it's still any good.

Bordeli – Isn't there a use-by date?

Dupont looks absentmindedly.

Dupont – I'll keep it as a souvenir anyway...

He puts the package in his box.

Bordeli – Retirement's full of elderly friends with aches and pains. A little medicinal cannabis might cheer them up.

Dupont – That's a comforting thought, Bordeli.

Bordeli – I'll miss you, Dupont. I never thought I'd say that one day, but ever since I found out who's going to replace you...

Dupont – Yes, it seems like Ramirez already has it in for you.

Bordeli – I don't think I made a good impression on her, boss. No idea why...

Dupont – About the party tonight... Well done. It took me a while to work out where you'd hidden the bottles.

Bordeli – How did you guess?

Dupont – I asked myself where I would hide them.

Bordeli – And went straight to the morgue. You really are a great detective.

Dupont – I am. You've just told me where they are. I hadn't a clue.

Bordeli – Don't get your hopes up about the champagne.

Dupont – Cheap sparkling wine?

Bordeli – Worse.

Dupont – Please don't tell me it's fruit juice. I knew the budget was tight, but I thought Lambert had some respect for me.

Bordeli – Remember, I didn't tell you. Look surprised.

Dupont – A great detective is a great actor. Now, where have you put the Baroness?

Bordeli – I hit her a few times with the society directory, but she wouldn't confess.

Dupont – Confess to what?

Bordeli – I didn't ask. I was hoping for a spontaneous confession.

Dupont – You didn't arrest her, I hope. We need the prosecutor's permission.

Bordeli – She's having tea with Lambert.

Dupont – The gentle approach works too. I've had little old ladies confess to murdering their husbands over nothing more than a herbal tea and a biscuit.

Ramirez returns.

Dupont – Well, Captain? How did the sauna visit go?

Ramirez – I've had the body taken to the morgue for an autopsy.

Dupont – The pathologist will tell us the cause of death.

Ramirez – Why are there bottles of sparkling apple juice in the morgue fridge?

Dupont – See, Bordeli? The investigation is moving along. I now know what we're drinking at my surprise farewell party. Apple juice. Wonderful.

Lambert arrives.

Lambert – Keep your voices down! The widow is in my office. So, is he really dead?

Ramirez – If he isn't, he's doing a remarkable impression. He was lying in a pool of sweat. I'd say he'd lost five litres.

Lambert – Of blood?

Ramirez – Sweat. No one could survive losing that much water.

Bordeli – We know how much blood a person has, roughly five litres. But how much water is there in a body?

Dupont – About sixty per cent. Fifty litres or so.

Bordeli – Fifty litres?

Dupont – In your case, much less, Bordeli. Given how much you drink, I'd advise the pathologist not to smoke during your autopsy.

Lambert – What was the Baron thinking? Everyone knows you shouldn't stay in a sauna more than half an hour.

Ramirez – The door had jammed. I had to force it open to get the body out.

Bordeli – What an awful death. I'm never going into a sauna again.

Dupont – That's no excuse to stop showering. I've never heard of anyone drowning in a shower cubicle.

Lambert – So it was an accident. Thank heavens. I much prefer that.

Ramirez – Unfortunately, it's not that simple, Chief...

Lambert – What now?

Ramirez – Apparently, the Baron had ingested sleeping pills.

Lambert – Suicide?

Ramirez – The door was sealed shut with strong glue to prevent it from being opened.

Bordeli – I see the scenario, boss: the guy swallows sleeping pills and glues the sauna door behind him to make sure he can't go back.

Dupont – Suicide by sauna? In thirty years I've never heard of that one.

Bordeli – Did you find a tube of glue in his pockets?

Ramirez – No.

Dupont – Your theory doesn't quite stick together, Bordeli.

Ramirez – Unless it was murder.

Lambert – Oh, no. First a suicide, now a murder. You're determined to ruin my day. I preferred the accident.

Bordeli – How do you know he took sleeping pills? There hasn't been an autopsy yet.

Ramirez – I found an empty packet in the pocket of his tuxedo.

Dupont – His tuxedo?

Ramirez – I forgot to mention it. He was wearing a tuxedo.

Bordeli – A tuxedo in the sauna? That's a bit formal.

Dupont – Even in his circles, I doubt the sauna has a black-tie dress code.

Bordeli – Perhaps he wanted to die in style. A tuxedo looks better on a corpse than a bathrobe.

Lambert – Corpses don't wear tuxedos, Bordeli!

Bordeli – Another good title for a murder mystery.

Dupont – But that doesn't get us any closer to solving this one.

Ramirez – Or perhaps it confirms murder. The killer slips sleeping pills into his clams, then leaves the empty packet on the body to make it look like suicide.

Bordeli – Clams?

Ramirez – Yes, clams. There may be a link to another case.

Lambert – Did we find clams and chips in his stomach?

Ramirez holds up a piece of paper.

Ramirez – There was a restaurant receipt in his pocket. The Crazy Clam. It's just down the road, next to a theatre.

Lambert holds up a theatre listings magazine.

Lambert – A theatre that's currently staging a play written by Henry Swindlemore von Hustlestein.

Dupont – I never knew you were such a theatre lover, Lambert.

Lambert – The Baroness told me. She even offered me two free tickets.

Dupont – I must confess, this case is turning out to be more complicated than it initially appeared...

Lambert – I'll make another attempt to contact the prosecutor and seek further instructions...

Lambert exits.

Bordeli – Imagine having a gym in your own basement.

Dupont – And I thought we'd abolished the privileges of the aristocracy centuries ago.

Ramirez – Did you get anything out of the Baroness?

Bordeli – Not a word. Silent as the grave.

Ramirez – I'll go and see what the pathologist has found.

Bordeli – You'll probably get more sense out of the dead.

Dupont – Quite right, Ramirez. In my experience, corpses have a great deal more to say than the living.

Bordeli – And they're less likely to lie.

Dupont – Dead people never let you down, Ramirez.

Ramirez – Thank you both for that invaluable contribution to the investigation.

Ramirez exits.

Dupont – Was that sarcasm, Bordeli?

Bordeli – A little something to steady the nerves, boss?

Dupont – Why not? Since all we're getting tonight is apple juice.

Bordeli – We might as well arrive drunk at the farewell party.

They pour themselves a generous whisky. Frank Maskovich enters, wearing a wig and an absurdly obvious false moustache. His disguise is so unconvincing that the officers' failure to notice it is comical.

Frank – Good afternoon. Frank Maskovich. Playwright.

Bordeli – A playwright. Well, the day just keeps getting worse.

Dupont – What can we do for you, sir?

Frank – I filed a complaint a few days ago against Henry Swindlemore von Hustlestein.

Dupont – Oh really? And on what grounds?

Frank – He stole one of my plays. "In Flagrante Delirium". It's been running at a theatre nearby for the past month.

Dupont – "In Flagrante Delirium"? Never heard of it.

Bordeli – It's all over the papers, boss. An absolute disaster.

Dupont – If it's that bad, why are the papers writing about it?

Frank – Because the author is a celebrity. When someone famous fails, it's a national event.

Dupont – And what do you want us to do?

Frank – I told Captain Ramirez everything, but I haven't heard back.

Dupont – That's because he's dead.

Frank – Baron Swindlemore is dead?

Dupont – No, the captain!

Frank – Oh, thank goodness.

Bordeli – Well, actually, the Baron's dead too.

Dupont – But that's strictly confidential.

Frank – Swindlemore... dead?

Bordeli – You seem upset. You weren't exactly friends, were you?

Frank – No, of course not, but...

Ramirez returns.

Dupont – Mr Maskovich, this is Captain Ramirez.

Frank – I thought he was dead?

Dupont – His daughter.

Frank – My condolences, Captain. How did he die?

Bordeli – Also classified.

Frank – I meant the Baron.

Ramirez – We haven't established the cause yet.

Dupont – Mr. Maskovich here is a playwright. It seems that Swindlemore plagiarised one of his plays.

Ramirez – A play?

Frank – "In Flagrante Delirium". Your father handled my complaint.

Ramirez – Really?

Frank gives Ramirez a book and a recording of the performance.

Frank – Here's my script, published by a small theatre publisher, and a recording of Swindlemore's production. See for yourself. It's the same play, word for word.

Margarita returns.

Margarita – Where's my husband?

Frank (*startled*) – I'd better leave you to it.

Dupont – We'll look into it, Mr Maskovich. You'll hear from us.

Frank – Thank you. I'd better go. I'm parked in a disabled parking space.

Frank leaves.

Ramirez – I'm afraid your husband is dead, madam.

Margarita – Yes, Lambert told me. I'd just like to see for myself.

Dupont – The body isn't ready to be viewed yet.

Ramirez – He's at the morgue. They're in the process of...

Dupont – We'll let you see him as soon as he looks vaguely human again.

Margarita – I hope it won't take all day. I have things to do. Funeral arrangements, obviously.

Ramirez – Of course...

Margarita – I need to see him with my own eyes. To make sure he really is dead. For closure, you understand.

Ramirez – We understand perfectly well, I assure you...

Dupont – Bordeli, show the Baroness back to Lambert's office.

Margarita – I know the way, thank you. Perhaps someone could find me a decent cup of tea.

Dupont – Ask at reception. Our desk sergeant's an expert.

She exits.

Bordeli – She’s not exactly devastated, is she?

Ramirez – See, I told you so.

Dupont – Told you what?

Ramirez – The cases are connected!

Dupont – Which cases?

Ramirez – Maskovich, Swindlemore... and my father.

Bordeli – Here’s my theory. Maskovich accuses Swindlemore of plagiarism. When the police do nothing, he locks the plagiarist in his sauna and cooks him alive.

Ramirez – Why a sauna?

Bordeli – A disastrous play, followed by a roasting... The symbolism is obvious.

Dupont – You should write crime dramas, Bordeli. Except for one thing: why would the killer then stroll into the police station?

Ramirez – To throw us off. When you’re guilty, the best disguise is to play the victim.

Dupont hands the script and the recording to Bordeli.

Dupont – You’re our theatre expert, Bordeli. Read the play and watch the recording. Tell me what you find.

Bordeli – Alright, boss.

Ramirez – I’ll look into the Baron’s background. Something isn’t right.

She takes out a laptop and starts typing on it. Lambert arrives.

Lambert – How's it going, any updates?

Dupont – We’re making excellent progress, Lambert. Unless Prosecutor Fireman has already ordered you to bury the case with the victim?

Lambert – I still can't reach him.

Dupont – Perhaps he’s away on holiday. Have a helicopter bring him back. The nation needs him.

Lambert – This is a nightmare. Swindlemore was being considered as our next Minister of Culture.

Dupont – Is the current minister resigning?

Lambert – Off the record, we’ve just discovered he can’t read or write.

Dupont – I thought he had a doctorate in philosophy.

Lambert – Forged. Along with the rest of his qualifications. He never finished school. His excuse was a phobia of classrooms. He’ll have to resign before the scandal breaks.

Ramirez looks up from her screen.

Ramirez – In that case, Swindlemore would hardly be an improvement.

Lambert – What do you mean, Ramirez?

Ramirez – The Baron is a career fraudster.

Lambert – A crook?

Ramirez – For a start, he’s no more a baron than I’m a duchess.

Dupont – You’re not a duchess? Sorry. You mean the Baron isn’t a baron?

Ramirez – That's not even his real name.

Lambert – That can't be! He's close friends with Prosecutor Fireman. He even stood as a witness at his wedding.

Ramirez – He took his wife’s surname. As for the title, it belongs to her. He’s just married to it.

Lambert – Taking your spouse's name isn't uncommon these days. Why are you accusing him of being a crook?

Ramirez – He owes everyone money and has a dozen lawsuits against him.

Lambert – But if he's never been found guilty...

Ramirez – Only because he appeals every conviction. Fraud, false invoicing, tax evasion...

Dupont – And now plagiarism...

Ramirez – He’s spent his life deceiving people under false identities.

Dupont glances at the computer screen.

Dupont – Look at this. He’s even passed himself off as a philosopher.

Ramirez – He’s a fraud, a liar, a born performer. He’d sell his own mother for five minutes on television.

Lambert – That may be exactly why they wanted him in the government.

Bordeli raises his head.

Bordeli – I’ve watched the recording. It’s the very same play, boss.

Dupont – What’s it about?

Bordeli – A murder investigation. Almost identical to ours.

Dupont – Implying?

Bordeli – A corpse in a sauna... and a detective who chokes on a clam.

Ramirez – Bingo!

Lambert – You scare me, Ramirez...

Ramirez – The man who came here can't have murdered the Baron.

Dupont – And why is that?

Ramirez – Because Frank Maskovich and Baron Swindlemore are the same man!

Lambert – What?

Dupont – How did you find that out?

Bordeli – Facial recognition? DNA?

Dupont – Interpol?

Ramirez – Wikipedia. Frank Maskovich is the name he used before he married the Baroness.

Bordeli – His maiden name, then?

Lambert – Who is Maskovich?

Dupont – A playwright who says the Baron stole his work.

Lambert – And he filed a complaint against himself?

Dupont – That takes talent. Suing yourself for damages.

Ramirez looks at her computer screen again.

Ramirez – And the so-called Baroness used to star in adult films. She made a fortune selling videos.

Dupont – I thought I recognised her.

Bordeli – A Baroness in pornography. You really can't rely on the aristocracy to uphold standards any more.

Ramirez – She bought the title along with a ruined castle, from a blind old man who died rather conveniently soon afterwards.

A pause.

Lambert – But if Maskovich and Swindlemore are the same man...

Dupont – Then the Baron is alive. He walked out of here an hour ago.

Bordeli – So who's the man in the tuxedo we found in the sauna?

Fade to black.

Act 3

Dupont and Bordeli arrive and take off their raincoats.

Dupont – I won't miss much about this place, Bordeli.

Bordeli – Our romantic lunches, boss?

Dupont – My meal vouchers.

Bordeli – Perhaps the council will send someone round with your meals.

Dupont – What was that restaurant called again?

Bordeli – The Crazy Clam.

Dupont – That's it. Excellent food.

Bordeli – The clams and chips were lovely.

Dupont – As long as the clams are fresh.

Bordeli – And don't go down the wrong way.

Dupont – Yes, that's where Ramirez Senior died.

Bordeli – Luckily we didn't remember until after lunch.

Dupont – Consider it an accidental pilgrimage.

Bordeli – A touching tribute to the man whose funeral we missed.

Dupont's phone starts ringing.

Dupont – Dupont speaking... Yes, Chief... Very well. (*He hangs up.*) Lambert's coming to identify the body.

Bordeli – What do you think, boss?

Dupont – After a meal like that, Bordeli, I'd rather see a pretty woman than a corpse. It won't do my digestion any good.

Bordeli – I meant the case, boss.

Dupont – Oh, the case. You were right. It's turning into a soap opera.

Bordeli – You could write a play about it when you retire.

Dupont – Let's see how it ends first.

A pause.

Bordeli – Can I share something with you, boss?

Dupont – What?

Bordeli – I'm not sure how to say this, but... sometimes I get the feeling we're being watched.

Dupont – Watched? By whom?

Bordeli walks towards the edge of the stage.

Bordeli – Strangers. Over there, in the dark. Like an interrogation behind one-way glass.

Dupont – Ah, yes...

Bordeli – Some of them even bought tickets. And now they expect us to tell them a story. We don't even know how it ends.

Dupont – Cut down on the whisky, Bordeli. You're getting paranoid.

Bordeli – Haven't you noticed this room only has three walls?

Dupont – What room?

Bordeli – The one we're performing in... I mean, standing in.

Dupont – If you start seeing giant beetles, I'm calling an ambulance.

Bordeli – No need, boss. Delirium tremens only happens when an alcoholic stops drinking.

Dupont – That's a relief.

Lambert arrives with Margarita.

Lambert – I know this won't be easy, Baroness. I can't stand looking at a dead body myself.

Margarita – An unfortunate weakness in your line of work.

Lambert – Nevertheless, I will need you to identify your husband's body.

Margarita – I hardly think there can be any doubt. But if you insist.

Lambert – Usually, it's just a formality, indeed...

Margarita – Usually?

Ramirez wheels in a trolley carrying a body under a sheet. The feet are far too large for the Baron. They are wearing cowboy boots.

Margarita – Is this some kind of joke?

Lambert – What do you mean, joke?

Margarita – That's not my husband!

Dupont – Grief can play tricks on you. At least look at his face.

Margarita – My husband was nowhere near that tall! And another thing...

Ramirez – What?

Margarita – I would never marry a man who wore cowboy boots!

Ramirez – I'm afraid I still need you to look at his face.

Ramirez lifts a corner of the sheet. Margarita approaches, takes a glance, and freezes.

Margarita – Oh, my God!

Lambert – Is that your husband?

Margarita – No. Thank heavens, no.

Ramirez – Yet you seem upset.

Bordeli – There goes her chance of being a widow.

Dupont – Do you know this man?

Margarita – No... I mean, absolutely not. I've never seen this man before.

Lambert – Bordeli, take him away. What a smell! I wonder whether his feet were like that when he was alive.

Bordeli takes the cart and leaves.

Margarita – I think I'm going to faint...

Lambert – I don't feel too good myself. Let me get you something restorative.

Lambert opens Bordeli's desk drawer, takes out his whisky and pours Margarita a glass.

Dupont – Alcohol is strictly forbidden on police premises. Except for emergencies, when we keep a bottle handy.

Margarita downs the whisky in one gulp. Lambert pours herself a glass and does the same.

Margarita – Not bad. I think I need another.

Lambert refills it. Bordeli returns.

Bordeli – I've put the meat back in the fridge, boss. Between the crates of sparkling apple juice. (*Seeing the Baroness drinking.*) Make yourself at home.

Lambert – Come to my office. I'll take your statement personally. The good news is that you're not a widow after all.

Margarita – If you say so...

Lambert leaves with Margarita. Bordeli notices that the bottle is almost empty.

Bordeli – Twelve-year-old Spanish whisky. What a waste.

Ramirez – She knows that man. I'm sure of it.

Dupont – Then who the hell is the stiff?

Ramirez – And why was he wearing a tuxedo in her sauna?

Maskovich returns with a briefcase.

Frank – Sorry to bother you again...

Dupont – Well, well, if it isn't a ghost...

Frank (*uneasy*) – It's about Baron Swindlemore's death.

Ramirez – Excellent timing. His widow is next door. We can call her in and you can offer your condolences.

Bordeli – Unless you've come to identify the body yourself?

Frank – All right, I admit it. I'm the Baroness's husband.

Dupont – So you're not actually dead.

Frank – It seems not.

Ramirez – Why sue yourself for plagiarism?

Frank – Publicity for the play.

Ramirez – Publicity?

Frank – It's a flop. But if people hear that someone's stolen it, they'll assume it must be worth stealing. Suddenly everyone wants a ticket.

Bordeli – A ridiculous idea. It might just work.

Dupont – How do we know you're not lying again?

Bordeli – Prove you're the Baron.

Frank removes his fake moustache and wig.

Frank – People steal from great writers. Nobody has ever bothered to copy one of Henry's plays.

Lambert enters with Margarita.

Lambert – I'm escorting the Baroness to her car...

Margarita notices Maskovich.

Margarita – Good heavens! My husband!

Frank – Margarita, my darling!

Margarita – But how is this possible?

Frank – It's me, Margarita. Not a ghost.

Margarita – Oh, my God, I think I'm going to faint.

The Baroness pretends to faint. Her husband rushes to take her in his arms.

Bordeli – Brings a tear to the eye.

Dupont – You can almost believe it.

Lambert – Let's give them a moment alone. Such a moving reunion.

Lambert, Dupont, Ramirez and Bordeli leave them alone. Margarita immediately regains her composure.

Margarita – Well? How was I?

Frank – Good. Very good.

Margarita – Is that all?

Frank – You were excellent.

Margarita – It's a real character part. I've never played a Baroness before.

Frank – Yes, well, precisely...

Margarita – What?

Frank – Don't you think you're overdoing it a bit?

Margarita – You think so?

Frank – "Good heavens! My husband!" It isn't even in the script.

Margarita – All right. I'll try something more restrained.

Frank – And you? What do you think of the play?

Margarita – Very good. Really.

Frank – I detect a hesitation.

Margarita – No, it's original, it's...

Frank – But...?

Margarita – It's not exactly believable, is it?

Frank – Why not?

Margarita – Someone dying in a sauna because the door's been glued shut...

Frank – Well, I doubt anyone's done it before.

Margarita – And perhaps there's a reason for that. I'm not even sure I understand the story. Did I kill the man or not?

Frank – Wait until the end.

Margarita – Do you actually know the ending?

Frank – Yes, of course, don't worry. Shall we go back?

Margarita – Okay...

Dupont, Ramirez, and Bordeli return.

Dupont – Bordeli, take the Baroness next door. We still have questions for her. But first I'd like a word with her husband.

Bordeli grabs Margarita by the arm.

Margarita – Hey, hands off!

Bordeli – I've been looking at your old films online. You weren't always quite so grand. Which one made you famous?

Ramirez (*distracted*) – The Crazy Clam...

Bordeli – You've seen her films too?

Ramirez – I meant the restaurant next to the theatre. All of you seem to end up eating clams there. Does that strike you as a coincidence, Dupont?

Dupont dozes off. He wakes up upon hearing his name.

Dupont – Dupont speaking.

Ramirez shoots him an annoyed look. Bordeli and Margarita exit.

Ramirez – So, it's your turn, Swindlemore!

Dupont – Or perhaps you'd rather we used your old name?

Ramirez – Who's the dead man in your sauna?

Frank – I have absolutely no idea, I swear.

Dupont – Of course. The innocent act.

Ramirez – Your wife's lover?

Frank – Husbands are always the last to know.

Dupont – The jealous husband kills his wife's lover. Straight out of a bedroom farce.

Frank – I'm a fraud, I admit it. Not a murderer.

Lambert returns, followed by Bordeli.

Lambert – Baron, is it really you?

Frank – At your service, dear lady...

Lambert – I haven't seen your play yet, but I've heard wonderful things.

Frank – Really?

Lambert – The Baroness gave me two complimentary tickets...

Dupont – Can we get back to the interrogation when you've finished socialising?

Lambert – By all means, Captain.

Ramirez – What are you carrying in that briefcase?

Frank – Nothing important, I assure you.

Dupont (*showing his badge*) – Police. Open it.

Maskovich complies reluctantly. Ramirez examines the contents of the briefcase and takes inventory.

Ramirez – Forged identity cards, forged credit cards, forged health insurance documents...

Dupont – Even a forged actors' union card.

Frank – No, that one's genuine!

Lambert – And fake diplomas!

Frank – I'm hopeless at inventing characters for the stage. So I invent them in real life. What's wrong with that?

Dupont – Forgery, for a start.

Bordeli – Unless there's a war and you happen to be on the winning side. But you can't know that until it's over.

Ramirez takes a notebook from the briefcase.

Ramirez – Is this your client list?

Frank nods without speaking.

Ramirez – Quite a directory of high society.

Frank – I help people with little problems.

Ramirez – Ministers, judges, prosecutors... even police officers.

Dupont – No kidding?

Ramirez – No... I can't believe it...

Lambert – What now?

Ramirez – Fireman's on the list.

Lambert – Prosecutor Fireman?

Ramirez – Our forger supplied him with a fake law degree.

Bordeli – With so many students overcrowding university lectures, perhaps he deserves an award for saving everyone time.

Lambert (*devastated*) – Fireman, an impostor...

Dupont – Five years of study, replaced by one stroke of a pen.

Bordeli – I always wanted to be a pilot. But the training took too long. If I'd met this fellow sooner, I might not be a drunken policeman today.

Ramirez – No. You'd be a drunken pilot.

Lambert – A fake prosecutor... It's unbelievable... Where is all this going?

Dupont – Yeah...

Ramirez – Thirty years as a prosecutor without a proper qualification.

Frank – Well, he's not a surgeon, is he?

Dupont – No wonder he kept burying cases involving his friends.

Ramirez – Bordeli, take him away.

Bordeli exits with Maskovich.

Lambert (*panicked*) – This case is getting extremely delicate... I was supposed to have lunch with the prosecutor, but I haven't heard from him.

Ramirez – Lunch with Fireman?

Lambert – At the clams-and-chips place.

Ramirez – The Crazy Clam.

Lambert – How do you know?

Ramirez – What if Fireman tried to kill Maskovich to shut him up?

Dupont – Maskovich blackmails him over the forged degree. Fireman decides to get rid of him.

Ramirez – And kills the wrong man.

Bordeli returns with the corpse on the cart.

Dupont – Bordeli, must you keep wheeling that corpse around?

Bordeli – Fireman isn't the killer, boss.

Lambert – How can you be sure?

Bordeli – Because he's the victim. (*He lifts the sheet.*) The man in the tuxedo is Prosecutor Fireman.

Lambert – Oh my God, Mr. Prosecutor!

They all approach the cart to see the evidence.

Fade to black.

Act 4

An interrogation. Margarita faces Dupont and Ramirez. The body on the trolley is still under its sheet. Dupont lifts a corner.

Dupont – You still deny knowing this man?

Margarita – You may as well call me a liar!

Ramirez – How do you explain finding his corpse, dressed in a tuxedo, in your sauna?

Margarita – People die in ridiculous ways. I heard of a policeman who choked on a clam.

Ramirez loses her temper.

Ramirez – I could strangle her.

Margarita – Careful, young lady. I know the Minister of Culture personally.

Ramirez – Your husband forged his school certificate, didn't he?

Dupont – Calm down, Ramirez. Leave this to me... Baroness, do you know a good optician who doesn't keep patients waiting six months?

Margarita – Of course. There's one opposite my house. Mention my name.

Dupont – Very kind of you, Margarita.

Ramirez – What has that got to do with the case?

Dupont – I'm gaining her trust. Besides, I need new glasses while my medical insurance still covers them.

Margarita – The cover for spectacles is dreadful these days.

Ramirez – Baroness, have you been unfaithful to your husband?

Margarita – My dear, ladies of my standing do not discuss such matters.

Ramirez – You made your fortune in adult films.

Margarita – Quite. But if I had an affair, I certainly didn't put it on camera.

Ramirez – Then let me be direct. Was the man in your sauna your lover?

Margarita – I won't say another word without my lawyer.

Dupont – There. You've frightened her into silence.

Ramirez – You can wait for your lawyer next door.

Bordeli arrives with the funeral wreath and places it on the prosecutor's body.

Margarita – You'll be hearing from me, just wait. You have no idea who you're dealing with.

Ramirez – You call yourself a lady of high standing. From what I've seen of your films, you spent most of your career lying down.

Margarita exits theatrically, forgetting her bag.

Bordeli – Those two are hard to read. Half criminal mastermind, half stage villain.

Ramirez glances at the funeral wreath.

Ramirez – What the hell are you doing with that?

Bordeli – A final tribute to our dear departed colleague. You know, Ramirez, there are two sorts of people: those who know the law and those who know the judge. Fireman had plenty of friends.

Dupont – Less philosophy, Bordeli. Put the prosecutor somewhere cold. He's beginning to smell like the justice system.

Bordeli – Right, boss.

Bordeli takes the cart away. Lambert returns.

Lambert – I've informed the Director. He's deeply concerned and wants everything handled discreetly.

Dupont – All I care about is my medal. I hope Fireman mentioned it to the minister before he died.

Lambert – Did you get anything out of the Baroness?

Dupont – We couldn't even get her to tell us her age.

Lambert – She denies sleeping with Fireman, but he had quite a reputation. Even with me, if I'd wanted to...

Dupont – Surely not, Chief. Everyone knows you can't sleep your way to the top. You earned every promotion.

Bordeli returns.

Bordeli – Fireman. Always rushing about putting out fires of passion.

Dupont – Another reason his name suited him.

Ramirez – That still doesn't explain the tuxedo in the sauna.

Bordeli – Lovers hide in wardrobes. Why not a sauna?

Dupont – I've never been happy about the glue. There's something wrong with that part of the story.

Maskovich returns.

Frank – You're right. It isn't my finest idea.

Dupont – So what?

Frank – What if the killer nailed the sauna door shut from the outside?

Bordeli – I like that better, boss.

Dupont – Yes. That'll do. Chief?

But Lambert is immersed in Maskovich's briefcase.

Lambert – Good heavens! Maskovich forged the President's diploma too! Look at the graduation photograph. The Groucho Marx Class. That class doesn't even exist!

Bordeli approaches to look at the photo.

Bordeli – Look at those faces. Half the government's in that picture.

Ramirez – And none of them has a real qualification.

Dupont – Now this really is a national scandal.

Dupont grabs the Baroness's bag and glances briefly, apparently examining its contents.

Ramirez – Here's my theory: the minister orders the forger's murder to protect the President. But the killer gets the wrong man. He murders the prosecutor, who was hiding in the Baroness's sauna.

Lambert – A state-sponsored murder followed by a police blunder? I don't like that theory.

Bordeli – What if the Baroness wanted to kill her husband, but accidentally killed her lover instead?

Lambert – Excellent, Bordeli. Much better.

Dupont puts the bag down and returns to them.

Dupont – A political scandal becomes a domestic tragedy. The President keeps his job, the minister keeps his, and I get my medal.

Lambert – No scandal. Everybody wins.

Ramirez – So we blame the Baroness?

Lambert – It would suit everyone.

Ramirez – Except her, if she's innocent.

Dupont – A crime of passion. She can plead temporary insanity.

Lambert – I trust you to secure a full confession, Dupont. Use whatever methods you like. I'd rather not know the details.

Dupont takes Margarita's bag and searches it.

Dupont – No need for force, Chief. Look what I found in her handbag.

He takes out a tube of super glue from the bag.

Ramirez – The murder weapon! A tube of strong glue.

Bordeli – Hang on. Didn't we just decide the door was nailed shut?

Dupont takes out a hammer and nails from the bag.

Dupont – And a hammer and nails!

Lambert – Perfect! So she really did it. Wonderful!

Dupont (*aside to Lambert*) – I planted them in her bag.

Lambert – You see, Ramirez? Traditional police work. We'll miss you, Dupont. They don't make detectives like you any more.

The phone rings. Bordeli answers.

Bordeli – Yes...? What...? That's impossible!

He hangs up.

Lambert – What now?

Bordeli – The morgue. Apparently the body wasn't entirely dead. He's just come back to life.

Lambert – Oh my God!

Dupont – Fireman's alive?

Lambert – A miracle!

Ramirez – He's still a fraud, remember.

Lambert – Even Jesus had his doubters, Ramirez.

Church music plays. Supernatural lighting. Lambert falls to her knees and crosses herself.

Blackout.

Act 5

Bordeli wheels in the supposed corpse on its trolley. This time the body is attached to a drip.

Lambert – How is that possible? He spent half a day in the morgue!

Ramirez – The pathologist's qualifications were forged too. He's actually an actor.

Dupont – At this rate we'll discover we're all actors.

Lambert – He doesn't look very well, though...

Dupont – A night in a sauna at ninety degrees Celsius, followed by a morgue freezer at minus twenty. That could wake the dead.

Bordeli – Perhaps the cold shock actually did.

Lambert – And the drip?

Bordeli – He lost five litres of sweat. We're putting it back.

Margarita and Frank return.

Lambert – Ah, Baroness... Baron...

Frank – Can we know what's going on here?

Margarita – Hasn't my lawyer arrived yet?

Dupont – We just sent him away. You won't need him anymore.

Margarita – What? You have some nerve!

Dupont – Let's not get worked up. You'll see, everything will fall into place.

Lambert – I have good news and bad news for both of you.

Frank – Go on.

Lambert – Your wife's lover is alive.

Frank – What lover?

Margarita – And what's the good news?

Lambert – So there'll be no attempted-murder charges against you for trying to kill your husband.

Frank – Margarita! You tried to kill me?

Margarita – A misunderstanding, darling. I'll explain later.

Lambert – Our apologies. I suggest we close this case. None of us has understood it from the beginning.

Frank – So, we're free?

Dupont – It was just a bad farce.

Lambert – A farce that nearly brought down the government.

Ramirez – Not so fast. We still haven't explained my father's death!

Lambert – Why shouldn't he have died as foolishly as he lived?

Ramirez – He was investigating this case. He died at The Crazy Clam, beside the theatre where "In Flagrante Delirium" is playing. You can't tell me that's a coincidence.

Dupont – Find me the theatre's address, Bordeli. We'll go and have a look.

Lambert – Later. Right now we're celebrating Dupont's retirement!

Dupont – All right, Bordeli. Break out the sparkling apple juice.

Bordeli produces the bottles of sparkling apple juice from beneath the sheet covering the body.

Lambert – A small drop, Baroness?

Margarita – With pleasure. But please, call me Margarita.

Lambert – Baron, a glass of our finest fake champagne?

Frank – Thank you. I'll pretend to drink it.

The phone rings. Dupont answers.

Dupont – Dupont speaking...

Bordeli – I'll miss hearing that...

Dupont – Yes, Minister... Of course, Minister... Thank you, Minister... (*He hangs up.*) Friends, tomorrow the Minister of the Interior will present me with a national honour for my services to the country.

Lambert – Congratulations! A fitting end to your last investigation.

Ramirez – The Minister of the Interior? Maskovich forged his diplomas too!

Lambert – Ramirez, if you intend to have a career in this force, you'll have to learn to be flexible.

Frank – If we got rid of every liar, we wouldn't have a government left.

Dupont – The purpose of justice, Ramirez, is not to protect the innocent. It is to prevent the guilty from being unfairly punished.

Lambert – And nobody died! We'll bury the case, not the body. Life goes on.

Ramirez – My father died.

Bordeli – Look on the bright side. There are certain advantages to being an orphan.

Dupont – Especially the orphan of a police officer. The benefits are quite good.

Lambert raises her glass for a toast.

Lambert – Captain Ramirez is dead. Long live Captain Ramirez!

Dupont – This office is yours, Ramirez. Your father would have been proud to see you sitting here.

Bordeli – In a dead man's chair.

Lambert – One last word of advice, Ramirez. Don't try to clean up this police station.

Dupont – Welcome to the force. You've lost a father, but gained a family.

Lambert – Another case solved, Dupont. Your last case.

Bordeli – And what about this plagiarism case, boss? Are we closing it?

Dupont – All writers are counterfeiters, Bordeli. Sometimes they even plagiarise themselves.

Bordeli – At least they don't claim they can run a country.

Ramirez – Captain?

Dupont – Dupont speaking!

Ramirez – I found the address of the theatre performing "In Flagrante Delirium". It's the same address as this police station.

Lambert – You mean... we're performing the play right now?

Frank – As Shakespeare said: "All the world's a stage, and all the men and women merely players."

Margarita – Then let's drink to the greatest playwright of them all!

They raise their glasses.

All – To Shakespeare!

Fade to black.

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
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

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https://jeanpierremartinez.net/

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