

La Comédiathèque

In Flagrante Delirium

Jean-Pierre Martinez



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In flagrante delirium

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Translation by the author

A corpse in a sauna and a plagiarism case... Captain Dupont is assigned to an investigation that appears to be linked to a state affair. Unless it's 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 distributions:

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

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Act 1

In a run-down office within a dated police station, simple and antiquated furniture fills the space. Lieutenant Bordeli is slouched over his desk, snoring, and accompanied by a bottle of whisky. Captain Dupont walks in. Without sparing a glance at Bordeli, he removes his overcoat and hangs it on a coat rack. Settling at another desk, he starts reading a retiree-oriented magazine, featuring a depressing topic (Retirement and Depression or Funeral Conventions: Good Deals). Clearly unaccustomed to such reading material, he looks skeptical. The ancient landline phone on his desk starts ringing. Bordeli gradually awakens, and Dupont answers the call.

Dupont – Dupont here, go ahead. Hello, Sir... No, Captain Ramirez has left us, unfortunately.

Chief of Police Lambert walks into the office, carrying a wreath adorned with the inscription "To our late colleague and friend."

Dupont (*glancing at the wreath*) – Yes, forever, you could say that... No, he didn't bring up this case before he left... Right, he probably didn't have the time... No problem, you can come anytime you want.

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

Lambert – Hello, Dupont.

Dupont – Chief...

Lambert gives a disapproving look to Bordeli, who continues to wake up gradually

Lambert – Lieutenant...

Dupont (*reading*) – "To our late colleague and friend." Chief Lambert, you're crazy, you shouldn't have... After all, I'm just retiring...

Bordeli stands up and takes a few uncertain steps.

Lambert – Come on, Dupont... It's for Captain Ramirez... The funeral took place this morning... We had to make a gesture...

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

Bordeli approaches the wreath, placing a hand on it.

Bordeli – They're fake, aren't they?

Dupont – Oh yes, indeed, very well imitated...

Lambert – The advantage of artificial flowers is that they're eternal. Just like our regrets. We can use them multiple times...

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

Lambert – As you know, the police budget was further cut this year in an attempt to reduce the country's massive deficit...

Dupont – Fake funeral wreaths... It's time for me to leave the police. Soon, we will be equipped with fake guns and fake 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, Captain, it's your last day! Are you ready for retirement?

Dupont (*pointing to his magazine*) – I'm trying to educate myself a bit by reading specialized press. So far, it makes me want to commit suicide.

Lambert – Come on, Dupont! You're still young. You could have stayed with us for a few more years. What's compelling you to leave if you're so afraid of getting bored?

Dupont – One must not wear out their audience, Lambert... (*Ironically*) I prefer to leave at the height of my glory...

His phone rings again.

Dupont – Dupont here, go ahead! Yes, Commissioner... Very well, Commissioner... Goodbye, Commissioner... (*He hangs up*) It was the Commissioner...

Lambert – To personally congratulate you before your well-deserved retirement, I imagine.

Dupont – He mainly wanted to make sure I won't be here tomorrow morning... and that I won't take any compromising files with me.

Bordeli – Compromising for whom?

Dupont – Did you have something else to tell me, Captain? Perhaps one last case to entrust to me?

Lambert – Well, no, Dupont... The day seems rather calm. You'll have plenty of time to pack your things peacefully.

Dupont stands up and takes the wreath.

Dupont – I'll start by putting these flowers in storage. Until the next chance to let them see the light again.

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 – Excellent... You kept the information from him, right? We want to catch him off guard.

Bordeli – In theory, he's completely unaware. However, can we truly keep any secrets from a brilliant detective like him?

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

Bordeli – Don't worry, Chief. I never touch alcohol outside of work hours... We replaced real champagne with Appletiser.

Lambert – It's just as good... and way cheaper. But where did you hide the bottles to keep them out of sight? Please tell me they're not in the storage room.

Bordeli – I put them in the cold room. A place where he's unlikely to find them.

Lambert – Where exactly?

Bordeli – In the cold storage of the morgue.

Lambert – That was a clever move indeed... Well, I'll let you get back to work. And since you don't seem too busy either, could you tidy up this mess a bit, Bordeli...

Bordeli – Yes, Chief.

Lambert – The Prosecutor will be there tonight for Dupont's farewell party. I wouldn't want him to get a bad impression.

Lambert exits.

Bordeli – Feels like I'm hearing my mother telling me to clean up my room...

Conchita Ramirez enters and glances at Bordeli, who's taking a swig of whisky to set the mood.

Bordeli – There's just no way to have a moment of peace.

Ramirez – Sorry to interrupt you while you're working...

Bordeli – Next time, kid, make sure to check in with the desk officer at the entrance. How can I assist you?

Ramirez – I'm Captain Ramirez.

Bordeli – If you're Captain Ramirez, then I'm Sister Emmanuelle.

Ramirez – My apologies, Sister. I thought you were a cop.

Bordeli – Captain Ramirez was buried this morning.

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

Dupont returns with the wreath.

Dupont – There's no more space in the storage... It'll be better once I've emptied my stuff... I'll just leave it here for now...

He places the wreath and looks at Ramirez.

Dupont – Miss... Can I help you with something?

Bordeli – You'll laugh, Captain. This young lady claims to be Captain Ramirez.

Dupont – Well, well. Until now, I didn't believe in reincarnation. But if it's true, we're not losing out, right, Bordeli? Because the last time we saw Captain Ramirez, he had much less sex appeal than you, believe me.

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

Lambert returns.

Lambert – Ah, Captain, you're already here? Gentlemen, let me introduce Captain Conchita Ramirez. She's the daughter of our late colleague, whom we honoured this morning before laying him to rest.

Dupont – Really?

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

Dupont (*extending his hand to Ramirez*) – Captain Dupont. My condolences... I'm truly sorry I couldn't attend the funeral, but it's my last day in the force, and...

Lambert – Precisely, Captain... I forgot to mention, Captain Ramirez will be occupying your office from now on. The same office you once shared with her father...

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

Lambert – Downsizing. One-to-one replacement for retiring or deceased civil servants. You know the drill...

Dupont – So, Miss Ramirez will be replacing both of us...

Lambert – I'm confident this freshly graduated young woman is fully qualified to replace two experienced police officers. Although, of course, you can't replace Captain Dupont...

Dupont – As the poet said... "woman is the future of man."

Ramirez – Thank you for the warm welcome...

Lambert – If you excuse me for a moment, I need her to sign some documents for her new assignment here. After that, Dupont, you'll kindly brief Captain Ramirez on the ongoing cases...

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 great cop, he died in service to the homeland... Do you follow me?

Lambert leaves with Ramirez.

Bordeli – Died in service to the homeland... He died in a restaurant during his lunch break, choking on a clam...

Dupont – The question is, what the hell is this bitch doing here? Being a cop is not like being a notary. It's not a family business.

Bordeli – The daughter may want to pick up the torch that her father dropped in his fall...

Dupont – Watch out, Bordeli, the whisky seems to make you dramatic. But you have a point. Died in service to the homeland... In that case, if you happen to succumb to liver cirrhosis tomorrow, they might just posthumously award you the Legion of Honour for your significant contribution to the alcohol tax.

Bordeli – I'm not sure, boss. It's some bootlegged whisky. A Mexican stock we recovered during a border seizure.

Dupont – If the Mexicans start making whisky, Bordeli, it's not just that globalization is on the way. The end of the world is near, believe me.

Bordeli – You're right, boss. Lately, I've been seeing signs of an impending apocalypse. For instance, it's not every day you hear about someone dying from choking on a clam. I'd go so far as to say it's downright bizarre.

Dupont – Bizarre? What are you implying, Bordeli? Don't tell me you're getting into conspiracy theories as well. Do you have a reason to believe that the oyster farmers' association holds a grudge against the police?

Bordeli – Clam farmers, boss. Oyster farmers are more about oysters.

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

Bordeli – Here's the scenario I see: the daughter never bought into the accident theory... and she's assigned to the same police station as her father on the very day of his funeral to investigate this case.

Dupont – What makes you think that, Bordeli?

Bordeli – I don't know... I've seen it in a police series before.

Dupont – Bordeli, I've mentioned this to you before—you really watch too much TV. By the way, I hope there's no surprise farewell party in the works for me. I can't stress enough how much I dislike surprises. And let's be honest, a farewell party often feels more like a funeral than a celebration.

Bordeli – Don't worry, Captain. Your last wishes will be respected. You'll leave without flowers or a wreath...

Ramirez returns.

Dupont – Ah, Captain Ramirez... We were just reminiscing about your late father's memory.

Bordeli – And the heroic circumstances surrounding his death.

Dupont gives Bordeli a reproachful look.

Ramirez – I only see two desks... Where do I settle in?

Dupont – Today, we'll have to share mine. But don't worry, tomorrow it'll be all yours.

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

Ramirez – If you don't mind, Lieutenant, I'd prefer you call me Captain Ramirez.

Bordeli – Of course, Captain.

She approaches Dupont's desk.

Ramirez – Don't you have a computer?

Dupont – What can you expect? I'm an old-fashioned cop... Back when I started my career, new technology meant an electronic calculator and a vibrator.

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 – The exact name is Chief of Police Lambert. She's very particular about her title.

Dupont – Would you like some coffee?

Bordeli – Unless Mademoiselle prefers a tea... (*She glares at him*) I mean, Captain Ramirez.

Ramirez – Coffee is perfect.

Dupont serves her a coffee in a ridiculously designed mug, handing it to her as if it were the Blessed Sacrament.

Dupont – Here, it was your father's mug... I think he would have been proud to pass it on to you himself if he had had the time.

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 – In my opinion, Ramirez, a genuine police reform would involve equipping every police station with an espresso machine.

Bordeli pours a tear of whisky into her coffee, which doesn't go unnoticed by Ramirez.

Ramirez – Yes... And why not breathalysers too...

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 the death of my husband.

Bordeli – Looks like business is picking up...

Dupont – Please, have a seat.

Margarita sits down.

Dupont – Perhaps you could start by telling me who you are, dear Madam.

Dupont signals Bordeli to come closer and assist him.

Bordeli – Surname, first name, age, profession... if you have any.

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

Dupont – In the absence of profession, your occupation will suffice.

Margarita – Baroness Margarita Swindlemore von Hustlestein. The fifth of the line.

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

Ramirez – Conchita Ramirez, Captain of Police. The fifth of that name.

Bordeli – Age, profession... or occupation?

Margarita – My age is none of your concern, and I do, in fact, have the pretension of being among the quality people who, by definition, do not require a profession.

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 – You know, in our line of work, we see so many people pass by...

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

Margarita – The Swindlemore von Hustlestein don't have a criminal record, sir. They only have quarters of nobility. I have five, as far as I'm concerned.

Bordeli – Five quarters? Is that possible, boss?

Dupont – I imagine it's like a pound cake, Bordeli, but with an extra pound.

Ramirez – Shall we get back to our case, dear Madam... Where did you find your husband?

Margarita – You mean after his death, I presume?

Ramirez – Um... yes.

Margarita – In the basement of our mansion, in the fitness area...

Bordeli – Cool...

Margarita – In the sauna.

Dupont – In the sauna?

Margarita – A horrible accident, Captain...

Ramirez – And are you sure he's dead?

Margarita – Last night, I didn't realize he was missing. His Jaguar was not in the garage. I thought he had gone out. It's 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 – It's hard to say. Through the porthole, all you can see is steam. And there are some nail marks on the glass. But don't think anyone can survive that. Especially since my husband had a weak heart.

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

Margarita – It seems the sauna door is stuck, probably due to the heat. Rather than calling a repairman, I thought it best to inform the police.

Dupont – You did the right thing, Madam... Lieutenant Bordeli will record your statement in the office next door. And we'll send someone to your home to evaluate the situation...

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 – This case? What case? It seems like a simple domestic accident, doesn't it?

Ramirez – I don't know... I find this sauna incident rather suspicious.

Dupont – It's true that it's not ordinary, but well. Dying of a heart attack in a sauna or choking on a clam at a restaurant... (*Ramirez gives him a black look.*) Sorry, I didn't mean to awaken painful memories...

Ramirez – In both cases, I don't buy into the accident theory.

Dupont – I get that you're a bit on edge today, but pain can lead you astray. You shouldn't see evil everywhere, Ramirez.

Ramirez – Oh, really? I thought it was our job to suspect everyone...

Dupont – So, in your view, every innocent person is an unwitting culprit?

Ramirez – A guy ending up locked in a sauna all night, don't you find that weird?

Dupont – Well, you're right... The sauna was locked from the inside... It would indeed make a good title for a police comedy...

Lambert arrives, preoccupied.

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

Dupont – Don't tell me you're getting into this too? An old man dying of a heart attack in a sauna! It's not the Kennedy assassination, after all!

Lambert – You don't realise, Dupont. We're treading on thin ice! Henry Swindlemore von Hustlestein is not just anyone!

Dupont – Oh yeah? And who exactly is he?

Lambert – Haven't you ever heard of Henry Swindlemore von Hustlestein?

Dupont – That name vaguely rings a bell... But what is he famous for, exactly?

Lambert – I'm not quite sure anymore. But in any case, we often see him on TV.

Ramirez – That's probably why he's famous.

Dupont – Back in my day, you got on TV for being famous; now, you're famous for being on TV.

Lambert – I tried to reach Prosecutor Fireman to update him and ask for his instructions, but his mobile isn't responding.

Ramirez – Prosecutor Fireman? Is that his real name?

Dupont – Well, it's quite fitting, I must say. Whenever an embarrassing case crops up, he's the one they dispatch 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 – No need for excessive zeal, Dupont. It's your last day. I've mentioned you to the Prosecutor for your little medal and he'll speak to the Minister about it...

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 it'll be an opportunity for her to keep tabs on me and report to you...

Lambert – That's part of it, yes. We're dealing with celebrities, Dupont. Famous people.

Dupont – Yes, I got it. Well-known people, in other words.

Lambert – In any case, not ordinary defendants.

Dupont (*sententious*) – As the saying goes, "According to whether you're powerful or poor, the court's judgments will render you white or black.""

Lambert – I'm aware that your methods can be somewhat cavalier, Captain. Not to mention Bordeli. I believe Captain Ramirez will be better suited to handle this case with the necessary delicacy.

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. And if I can help this poor girl a little in overcoming the ordeal she's going through.

Lambert – I believe her father's death has shaken her seriously. By the way, I'm counting on you to supervise her on her first mission. Do you think we can 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 – You wouldn't believe the mess one can accumulate in thirty years of career, Bordeli... *(He shows something wrapped in transparent film.)* Look, in the bottom drawer, at the very back, I even found a kilo of cannabis that I completely forgot about.

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

Dupont – I wonder what your successor will discover in the drawers of your office when you retire, Bordeli.

Bordeli – Mostly empty bottles. You know me, boss. I don't do drugs.

Bordeli takes another gulp. Dupont sniffs the package.

Dupont – I'm not sure if it's still good.

Bordeli – Isn't there an expiration date on the packaging?

Dupont looks absentmindedly.

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

He puts the package in his box.

Bordeli – In retirement, there's always a friend or two dealing with cancer, and a bit of therapeutic cannabis can bring them great comfort. It's nice to be able to bring them some joy.

Dupont – Thank you for your support, Bordeli. It means a lot to me.

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 think I didn't make a good impression on her, boss. I don't know why...

Dupont – As for the farewell drinks tonight, I must say, well done. It did take me a bit of time to locate where you stashed the bottles.

Bordeli – How did you guess?

Dupont – It's simple. I thought about where I would have hidden them.

Bordeli – And you went straight to the morgue. You're truly a great cop, boss.

Dupont – Yes. I just made you confess where you stashed the champagne, when I had no idea.

Bordeli – Regarding the champagne, you might be disappointed.

Dupont – Is it sparkling wine?

Bordeli – Worse.

Dupont – Not a kir, is it? I'm aware the police budget is tightening, but I didn't expect Lambert to subject me to such humiliation...

Bordeli – Well, I didn't tell you anything. Try to act surprised in front of Lambert.

Dupont – A great cop is first and foremost a good actor. What have you done with the Baroness?

Bordeli – I smacked her with the Socialite Directory a few times to get her to confess, but she wouldn't say anything.

Dupont – Confess what?

Bordeli – I don't know. I didn't ask her any questions. I was counting on some spontaneous confession.

Dupont – Damn Bordeli. You didn't place her in custody, did you? You know we can't do anything without the prosecutor's authorisation.

Bordeli – She's having tea with Lambert.

Dupont – Kindness can be just as effective. I've managed to get numerous elderly ladies to confess to their involvement in the euthanasia of their husbands just by offering them marijuana-infused tea and a Biscoff.

Ramirez returns.

Dupont – So, Captain? That little sauna? Did it go well?

Ramirez – I just brought the body back to the morgue for an autopsy.

Dupont – The coroner will tell us the exact cause of death.

Ramirez – What are all those bottles of Appletiser in the cold room?

Dupont – Well, you see, Bordeli. The investigation is progressing. I already know what we'll drink for my surprise farewell party. Damn, Appletiser...

Lambert arrives.

Lambert – Don't speak too loudly, the widow is right next door, in my office... So it's true? Henry Swindlemore von Hustlestein is really dead?

Ramirez – If it's not death itself, it certainly looks like it. His body was lying in a pool of sweat. I would say he lost at least five litres.

Lambert – You mean blood, I assume?

Ramirez – No, no, sweat. It's practically impossible for a human being to survive such a significant loss of water.

Bordeli – True, I never considered that... We have a general idea about blood, approximately five litres per person. But when it comes to the total water content in the human body...

Dupont – Man is made up of 60% water. It must be around fifty litres.

Bordeli – Fifty litres?

Dupont – In your case, much less, Bordeli, don't worry... Besides, considering the amount of alcohol you're drinking, I would advise the coroner not to smoke during your autopsy.

Lambert – But what happened to the Baron? Everyone knows you shouldn't stay in a sauna for more than half an hour.

Ramirez – According to my initial findings, he got trapped inside. I had to force the door open to get him out.

Bordeli – What a terrible death! I swear, I'll never step into a sauna again in my life.

Dupont – Don't let that stop you from taking a shower from time to time. As far as I know, nobody has ever drowned from getting stuck in a shower cabin.

Lambert – So, we're inclining towards it being an accident. I have to admit I prefer that possibility.

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

Lambert – What's the issue now?

Ramirez – Apparently, the Baron had ingested sleeping pills.

Lambert – Are you implying 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 – Committing suicide by willingly locking oneself inside a sauna? In my thirty years of experience, I've never encountered such a situation...

Bordeli – Did you find a tube of glue in the victim's pockets?

Ramirez – No.

Dupont – There's a flaw in your scenario, Bordeli.

Ramirez – Unless it's a murder.

Lambert – Oh no... A suicide... Now a murder... You've decided to ruin my day... I much preferred the theory of a domestic accident.

Bordeli – How do you already know the Baron took sleeping pills? The autopsy hasn't even been conducted yet...

Ramirez – I discovered an empty tube in the pocket of his tuxedo.

Dupont – His tuxedo?

Ramirez – Oh yes, I forgot to mention that detail. The victim was wearing a tuxedo.

Bordeli – Wearing a tuxedo to go to the sauna, that's quite unusual.

Dupont – I guess even in those circles, sauna doors don't come with a sign that says, "proper attire required"...

Bordeli – If it's indeed a suicide, perhaps he aimed to make a stylish exit. It's true that for a corpse, a tuxedo does carry more elegance than a bathrobe.

Lambert – Bordeli, corpses don't wear tuxedos!

Bordeli – That could also make a great title for a crime novel.

Dupont – But it doesn't really help our investigation.

Ramirez – Or it confirms the hypothesis of murder. The killer discreetly makes him swallow a sleeping pill with his clams, and leaves the empty tube in the corpse's pocket to stage it as a suicide.

Bordeli – Clams?

Ramirez – Yes, clams. This leads me to suspect there could be a potential link to another case...

Lambert – Did we find clams and chips in the stomach of the victim?

Ramirez shows a paper.

Ramirez – He had a restaurant bill in his pocket: "The Crazy Clam." I did a little research. It's a restaurant located right next to a theatre, not far from here.

Lambert shows the cover of Time Out, or a similar magazine.

Lambert – A theatre which is currently staging a play by Henry Swindlemore von Hustlestein...

Dupont – I didn't know you had this passion for theatre, Lambert...

Lambert – The Baroness just informed 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 – Can you imagine? A fitness area in his basement...

Dupont – I used to believe that privileges were abolished during the French Revolution...

Ramirez – Were you able to get anything out of the Baroness?

Bordeli – She remains as silent as a grave.

Ramirez – Well... I'll go inquire about the progress with the coroner.

Bordeli – You're right, the dead are often more talkative than the living.

Dupont – They say "silent as a grave," Ramirez, but believe me, based on my experience, corpses often have much more to tell us than the living.

Bordeli – And they lie much more rarely.

Dupont – A dead person will never disappoint you, Ramirez.

Ramirez – Thank you for these valuable insights, which I'm sure will greatly advance this investigation.

Ramirez exits.

Dupont – I couldn't help but sense a touch of irony in your last comment.

Bordeli – How about a little pick-me-up, Captain?

Dupont – Well, I won't say no. Now that I'm aware we're stuck with Appletiser for the evening...

Bordeli – Might as well arrive drunk at that farewell party, right?

They both pour themselves a strong cup of whisky. Frank Maskovich enters the office. He's wearing a wig and a rather noticeable fake moustache. Clearly, he's in

disguise, and the fact that the two officers don't realize it should add a comedic touch to the scene.

Franck – Hello, gentlemen. Allow me to introduce myself, Frank Maskovich, playwright.

Bordeli – Damn, a playwright... It's really been quite a day.

Dupont – What can we do for you, sir?

Franck – A few days ago, I filed a complaint against Henry Swindlemore von Hustlestein.

Dupont – Oh really? And on what grounds?

Franck – He plagiarised one of my works. "In flagrante delirium" The play has been running for a month in a theatre not far from here.

Dupont – "In flagrante delirium"? Never heard of it...

Bordeli – But boss, it's making headlines everywhere. It's a huge flop.

Dupont – Why would the press be talking about it if it's a flop?

Franck – Because Henry Swindlemore von Hustlestein is a prominent figure. Even in failure, it becomes a noteworthy event.

Dupont – Well... What exactly brings you here?

Franck – I had already discussed this issue with Captain Ramirez, but I haven't heard back.

Dupont – That's because he's dead...

Franck – Baron Swindlemore von Hustlestein is dead?

Dupont – No, the Captain!

Franck – Ah, you reassure me...

Bordeli – Well, the Baron is also dead, but anyway...

Dupont – For now, the news is classified as top secret...

Franck – This can't be... Swindlemore is dead?

Bordeli – It seems to upset you... Yet, you have no reason to grieve, do you?

Franck – No, of course not, but...

Ramirez returns.

Dupont – Mr. Maskovich, let me introduce you Captain Ramirez.

Franck – I thought he was dead?

Dupont – It's his daughter...

Franck – My condolences, Miss... And how did he die?

Bordeli – That's classified as top secret as well.

Franck – No, I was talking about the Baron...

Ramirez – We don't have confirmation yet.

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

Ramirez – A play?

Franck – "In flagrante delirium." Your father was in charge of the investigation.

Ramirez – Really?

Franck hands him a book and a DVD.

Franck – Here is a copy of my play, published by Millefeuilles Editions, along with a video recording of Swindlemore's show. You can verify for yourself that it's indeed the same play.

Margarita returns.

Margarita – Where is my husband?

Franck (*surprised to see her*) – Well, I'll leave you to it...

Dupont – Yes... We'll take a look at all this and keep you informed if there are any updates.

Franck – Thank you... I'll make my exit... I parked in a disabled spot...

Franck leaves.

Ramirez – Unfortunately, your husband is deceased, madam.

Margarita – Yes, I know. Lambert just informed me. I just wanted to confirm it personally.

Dupont – I'm afraid Baron Swindlemore von Hustlestein can't be viewed at the moment, dear madam.

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

Dupont – We'll make sure you can identify the body as soon as they've restored it to human form...

Margarita – Fine, I hope this won't take the entire day. I have other matters to attend to, you know. I mean, I need to take care of the funeral arrangements and all that.

Ramirez – Of course...

Margarita – Plus, I need to see him one last time, to make sure he's really dead. It's important for me to grieve, you understand...

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

Dupont – Bordeli, please escort the Baroness to the Chief's office.

Margarita – Very well, my good man, I know the way... However, if you could find me a decent cup of tea in this place...

Dupont – Ask at the reception, the officer at the desk is well-versed in the art of tea.

She exits.

Bordeli – She doesn't seem very upset about her husband's death...

Ramirez – See, I told you so.

Dupont – What are you talking about?

Ramirez – You can see that these two cases are linked!

Dupont – Which cases?

Ramirez – Maskovich and Swindlemore! Not to mention my father's death...

Bordeli – Here's my take on it, boss. Maskovich files a plagiarism complaint against Swindlemore. Since Ramirez Senior didn't address the issue, Maskovich decided to take matters into his own hands, locking his plagiariser in a sauna until he perished.

Ramirez – And why this peculiar *modus operandi*, in your opinion?

Bordeli – To die of heat in a sauna after a massive flop... There must be a symbolic dimension that escapes us...

Dupont – You should have been a playwright, Bordeli. But something doesn't add up in your story. Why would Maskovich come to the police station right after killing Swindlemore?

Ramirez – Probably to throw us off track. By acting innocent. When you don't want to be the culprit, you pretend to be the victim.

Dupont hands the book and the DVD to Bordeli.

Dupont – Check this out, Bordeli. You're the script expert. We'll talk about it later, alright?

Bordeli – Alright, boss.

Ramirez – I'll dig into Swindlemore's background. Something about him doesn't sit right with me.

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

Lambert – How's it going, any updates?

Dupont – We're moving forward, Lambert. We're fully committed to the investigation. Unless Prosecutor Fireman has already instructed you to bury it along with the victim?

Lambert – I still can't reach him.

Dupont (*sarcastic*) – Maybe he's on vacation... Request his emergency repatriation by helicopter. The nation is in danger, Lambert...

Lambert – Dupont, you can't imagine the mess I'm in. Henry Swindlemore von Hustlestein was expected to replace the current Minister of Culture.

Dupont – Our Minister of Culture has resigned?

Lambert – Keep it hush-hush, but we just found out he's illiterate.

Dupont – I thought he had a Ph.D. in philosophy?

Lambert – It turns out, those diplomas were all fake. In truth, he never even attended school. He claimed to suffer from school phobia. He will be forced to resign before the scandal breaks out.

Ramirez looks up from her screen.

Ramirez – Well, at least we can be relieved it's not Swindlemore stepping in...

Lambert – What do you mean, Ramirez?

Ramirez – I suspect the Baron is a professional crook.

Lambert – A crook?

Ramirez – To start with, he's no more a baron than I am a marquise.

Dupont – You're not a Marquise? I mean... Baron Swindlemore von Hustlestein isn't a real 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 name when he married her. As for his title of nobility... in reality, he was just the spouse of the Baroness.

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

Ramirez – He owes money to everyone. He's involved in a dozen lawsuits.

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

Ramirez – Only because he appeals all his convictions... Abuse of weakness, false invoices, tax fraud.

Dupont – And now plagiarism...

Ramirez – He's fooled the entire world using different pseudonyms.

Dupont glances at the computer screen.

Dupont – Henry... Check this out! It's right here! He even portrayed himself as a philosopher...

Ramirez – This guy is a liar! A master illusionist! He would sell his own mother just to be on prime-time TV!

Lambert – Probably it's due to all these qualities that they were thinking of appointing him as a Minister...

Bordeli raises his head.

Bordeli – Yes, it's the same play, boss. The story is exactly the same.

Dupont – And what's the plot?

Bordeli – A complex police case. It closely mirrors the one we're handling now.

Dupont – Implying?

Bordeli – A guy found dead in a sauna... and a cop who meets his end while choking on a clam...

Ramirez – Bingo!

Lambert – You scare me, Ramirez...

Ramirez – The guy who just left here cannot be the Baron's murderer.

Dupont – And why is that?

Ramirez – Because Maskovich and Swindlemore are the same person!

Dupont – What?

Dupont – How did you discover that?

Bordeli – Facial recognition? Genetic fingerprints?

Dupont – Interpol?

Ramirez – Wikipedia. Look, it's right there. Frank Maskovich. That was Swindlemore's name before he adopted his wife's name when he married.

Bordeli – Maskovich, is that Henry's maiden name?

Lambert – Who is Maskovich?

Dupont – An author who accused the Baron of plagiarising one of his works.

Lambert – And he filed a complaint against himself?

Dupont – The height of the crook... Filing a complaint against himself to claim damages...

Ramirez looks at her computer screen again.

Ramirez – Regarding the so-called Baroness Swindlemore von Hustlestein, she used to be a porn star. She made a fortune by producing adult films on videotapes.

Dupont – I knew her face looked familiar...

Bordeli – A Baroness starring in adult films... If we can't even rely on the nobility these days to preserve moral order.

Ramirez – Baroness... My ass... She acquired her title along with a dilapidated castle, bought on a life annuity from a blind man who died prematurely in suspicious circumstances.

A pause.

Lambert – But... if Frank Maskovich and Henry Swindlemore von Hustlestein are the same person...

Dupont – It means the Baron is still alive. Maskovich just left!

Bordeli – So, who is the dead body we discovered in a tuxedo in the sauna?

Fade to black.

Act 3

Dupont and Bordeli arrive and take off their raincoats.

Dupont – There's only a handful of things I'll miss from tomorrow onward, Bordeli.

Bordeli – Our romantic lunches, boss?

Dupont – My meal vouchers.

Bordeli – You can still have your meals delivered to your home by the local council.

Dupont – I didn't know about this little restaurant, it's really nice. What's it called again?

Bordeli – The Crazy Clam.

Dupont – Right. Anyway, the food there is excellent.

Bordeli – Clams and Chips are always good.

Dupont – As long as the clams are very fresh, Bordeli.

Bordeli – And as long as you don't choke on them...

Dupont – Fair point, I forgot. That's where Ramirez choked to death.

Bordeli – Luckily, we didn't recall it; it would have ruined our appetite.

Dupont – Let's view this meal at The Crazy Clam as a kind of involuntary pilgrimage.

Bordeli – Our last tribute to a colleague we cherished. Since we forgot to attend his funeral...

Dupont's phone starts ringing.

Dupont – Dupont here, go ahead. Yes, Chief. Very well, Chief. (*He hangs up*) Lambert is coming for the body identification...

Bordeli – What do you think, boss?

Dupont – What do I think? Personally, Bordeli, after a good meal, I'd prefer visiting a beautiful girl than a dead body. I'm afraid this gloomy sight won't be kind to my digestion. Let's hope the clams hold up.

Bordeli – No, I meant, what do you think of this case?

Dupont – Ah, yes... the case... Well, you were right, Bordeli. This story becomes a real soap opera.

Bordeli – When you retire, you can always turn it into a play.

Dupont – Let's wait and see the ending before deciding if it's worth writing...

A pause.

Bordeli – Can I share something with you, boss?

Dupont – What?

Bordeli – It's a bit awkward... I'm not quite sure how to say this, but... Sometimes, I feel like someone is watching us.

Dupont – Watching us? Who ?

Bordeli walks towards the edge of the stage.

Bordeli – I don't know... People we don't know, there, in the dark. Almost like through the one-way mirror of an interrogation room...

Dupont – Ah, yes...

Bordeli – They bought their tickets, well, some of them did, and they expect us to tell them a story whose ending we ourselves don't know.

Dupont – You need to lay off the whiskey, Bordeli. You're becoming completely paranoid...

Bordeli – Did you ever notice that this room only has three walls?

Dupont – Which room?

Bordeli – The one in which we are acting! I mean, the one we're in right now.

Dupont – You're really worrying me, Bordeli. If you ever feel like you're being pursued by giant beetles, let me know and I'll call the hospital to come fetch you.

Bordeli – No worries, boss, delirium tremens only hits alcoholics who quit drinking.

Dupont – Well, in that case, I'm relieved...

Lambert arrives with Margarita.

Lambert – I understand this is going to be a tough moment, Baroness. Personally, I can't stand witnessing a dead body...

Margarita – It must be challenging in your line of work...

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

Margarita – Unfortunately, there's hardly any room for doubt... But I suppose it's necessary.

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

Margarita – Usually?

Ramirez arrives, pushing a cart with a draped body on it. The feet of a very tall man are sticking out from under the sheet. He is 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 cloud your judgment, dear Madam, that's understandable. But at least wait until you've seen his face...

Margarita – But, my husband wasn't that tall! And above all...

Ramirez – What?

Margarita – I would never have married a man who wears cowboy boots!

Ramirez – Nonetheless, I'm still going to ask you to take a 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, quite the opposite.

Ramirez – Yet you seem upset.

Bordeli – Looks like she's already regretting not being a widow.

Dupont – Do you know this man?

Margarita – No, well... No, no, I assure you... I've never seen this guy in my life.

Lambert – Alright, Bordeli, get rid of this. How dreadful... I don't know if he already had such smelly feet while alive...

Bordeli takes the cart and leaves.

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

Lambert – I admit that it made me sick too. I'll get you a little pick-me-up.

She opens a drawer in Bordeli's desk, takes the whiskey bottle, fills a cup, and hands it to Margarita.

Dupont – Technically, alcohol is strictly prohibited in police stations, but we always keep a bottle in a drawer for this kind of occasion...

Margarita downs the whiskey in one gulp. Lambert pours herself a cup and does the same.

Margarita – Ah, yes, it's not bad. I could use another cup...

Lambert refills it. Bordeli returns.

Bordeli – I put the meat back in the fridge, boss... Between the two crates of Appletiser... (*He sees the Baroness downing her whiskey.*) Don't hold back, help yourself...

Lambert – Come to my office, I will take your statement myself... Since the victim is not your husband, the good news is you're not a widow.

Margarita – If you say so...

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

Bordeli – Did you see that, boss? A twelve-year-old Mexican whisky!

Ramirez – I'm sure she knows the victim.

Dupont – The question is, who is this stiff...

Ramirez – And what was he doing in the Baroness's sauna wearing a tuxedo...

Maskovich returns with a briefcase.

Franck – Sorry to bother you again...

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

Franck (*embarrassed*) – It's about the death of Baron Swindlemore von Hustlestein.

Ramirez – Just in time, his widow is right next door. We'll call her, and you can offer your condolences in person...

Bordeli – Unless Monsieur is here to identify the body as well?

Franck – Okay, I confess. I am the Baroness's husband...

Dupont – So you're not actually dead.

Franck – It seems not.

Ramirez – And why did you file a plagiarism complaint against yourself?

Franck – To create some publicity for the play!

Ramirez – Publicity?

Franck – The play is a flop... A plagiarism scandal always grabs headlines... People think that if the play was plagiarised, it is because it deserves to be. So, it must be a good play.

Bordeli – It's a twisted reasoning, but it makes sense.

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

Bordeli – Yes, what's the proof that you're really Baron Swindlemore von Hustlestein?

Franck removes his fake moustache and his wig.

Franck – It's the great authors who get plagiarized. No one ever considered copying Henry's plays...

Lambert enters with Margarita.

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

Margarita notices Maskovich.

Margarita – Heavens, my husband!

Franck – Margarita, my darling!

Margarita – But how is this possible?

Franck – It's really me, Margarita. I'm 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 – It brings tears to my eyes.

Dupont – Yes, you almost believe it...

Lambert – Let's leave them alone for a moment for this moving reunion...

They exit. Margarita immediately regains her composure.

Margarita – So, how do you find me?

Franck – Good, very good.

Margarita – Is that all?

Franck – No, I assure you, you're an excellent actress.

Margarita – It's a composition role, of course. I had never played a Baroness before.

Franck – Yes, well, precisely...

Margarita – What?

Franck – I wonder if you're not overdoing it a bit, though.

Margarita – You think so?

Franck – Heavens, my husband... That's not in the script...

Margarita – Alright, fine. I'll try to internalise it more.

Franck – And what about you? How do you find the play?

Margarita – It's good, very good...

Franck – I sense a slight reservation.

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

Franck – But...?

Margarita – It's not very realistic, is it?

Franck – Why not?

Margarita – This idiot who dies locked in a sauna because someone glued the door shut with Super Glue...

Franck – Well, at least, it has never happened before.

Margarita – Yeah... Makes you wonder why... But I'm not sure if I understood everything. In the end, did I kill that guy or not?

Franck – Wait until the end, you'll see.

Margarita – Are you sure you know the ending?

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

Margarita – Okay...

Dupont, Ramirez, and Bordeli return.

Dupont – Bring the Baroness to the office next door., Bordeli. I think we still have a few things to discuss... But first, I'd like to talk to her husband...

Bordeli grabs Margarita by the arm.

Margarita – Hey, hands off!

Bordeli – I have just reviewed your filmography on You Tube. You didn't put on airs back then. What was the movie that launched your acting career?

Ramirez (*elsewhere*) – "Crazy Clam"...

Bordeli – Ah, so you're a cinephile too?

Ramirez – I'm talking about that seafood restaurant next to the theatre. Everyone involved in this affair, in one way or another, is a fan of clams and chips. Don't you find that odd, Dupont?

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

Dupont – Dupont here, go ahead.

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

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

Dupont – Unless you prefer to be called by your maiden name?

Ramirez – How about you spill the beans on the guy in the tuxedo we found in your sauna?

Franck – I have absolutely no idea, I swear.

Dupont – Classic move, playing the innocent card...

Ramirez – Was he your wife's lover?

Franck – You know, husbands are the last to find out about those things...

Dupont – The cuckolded husband who wants to get rid of his wife's lover. A classic of boulevard comedies.

Franck – I've told you all I knew... I confess I'm a crook, but I'm not a killer.

Lambert returns, followed by Bordeli.

Lambert – Baron, is it really you?

Franck – At your service, dear lady...

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

Franck – Really?

Lambert – The Baroness was kind enough to give me two free tickets, and...

Dupont – When you're done with your socializing, can we continue this interrogation?

Lambert – Please, Captain.

Ramirez – What are you carrying in that briefcase?

Franck – 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 – Fake ID cards, fake credit cards, fake health insurance cards...

Dupont – There's even a fake show business worker card.

Franck – Oh no, that one is real, I swear.

Lambert – This is crazy... There are even fake diplomas...

Franck – Since I don't really know how to create characters in the theatre, I create them in real life... It's not a crime.

Dupont – Forgery and use of forgery? Well, that's a crime, nonetheless.

Bordeli – Except in times of war, and when you're on the right side. But you only know that once the war is over. And it mostly depends on who won the war...

Ramirez takes out a notebook.

Franck – Is that the list of your clients?

Franck nods silently.

Ramirez – A real Socialite Directory...

Franck – I'm trying to help friends in need...

Ramirez – Look at this, Dupont. Ministers, judges, prosecutors... There are even cops...

Dupont – No kidding?

Ramirez – No... I can't believe it...

Lambert – What now?

Ramirez – Hold on tight... Fireman is on the list.

Lambert – Prosecutor Fireman?

Ramirez – It's this forger who supplied him with fake law diplomas!

Bordeli – Well, considering how overcrowded law lecture halls are, especially in the first year, one wonders if this crook shouldn't receive academic honours.

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

Dupont – It does make you wonder... Five or six years of higher education validated with a stroke of a pen.

Bordeli – Personally, I always dreamed of being an airline pilot, but the studies were too lengthy. If I had crossed paths with that guy back then, maybe I wouldn't be an alcoholic cop today...

Ramirez – No, you would probably be an alcoholic airline pilot.

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

Dupont – Yeah...

Ramirez – Can you believe it? Fireman has been practicing without a diploma, completely illegally, for thirty years.

Franck – Well, it's not like he's a surgeon or a gynaecologist either...

Dupont – No wonder Fireman spent his life covering up certain affairs 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 a clams and chips restaurant...

Ramirez – "Crazy Clam," I imagine...

Lambert – How do you know?

Ramirez – What if it was Fireman who tried to murder Maskovich to silence him?

Dupont – It makes sense. Maskovich is a crook. He blackmails the prosecutor. The prosecutor decides to eliminate him.

Ramirez – And he gets the wrong person.

Bordeli returns with the corpse on the cart.

Dupont – Can you stop playing with that cart, Bordeli? It's getting annoying...

Bordeli – Fireman is not the culprit, boss.

Lambert – I'd prefer it that way, but how can you be so sure?

Bordeli – Because he's the victim. (*He lifts a corner of the sheet.*) The corpse in a tuxedo in the sauna is Fireman...

Lambert – Oh my God, Mr. Prosecutor!

They all approach the cart to see the evidence.

Fade to black.

Act 4

In the tense atmosphere of the interrogation room, Margarita sits in the hot seat, facing Dupont and Ramirez. Dupont lifts a corner of the sheet covering the corpse on the cart.

Dupont – Do you still maintain that you don't know this man?

Margarita – Don't hold back. Call me a liar!

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

Margarita – There are stupid deaths, you know. I've even heard of someone who died choking on a clam.

Ramirez loses her temper.

Ramirez – I'm going to strangle her...

Margarita – I warn you, I personally know the Minister of Culture.

Ramirez – Because it was your crook husband who gave him his fake primary school certificate, right?

Dupont – Calm down, Ramirez. Let me handle this... Baroness, by any chance, do you happen to know a good ophthalmologist who doesn't make you wait six months for an appointment?

Margarita – Yes. There's a very good one right in front of my house. I'll give you the phone number if you want. Just mention my name when you call.

Dupont – That would be very kind of you, Margarita...

Ramirez – What does this have to do with our investigation, Captain?

Dupont – Nothing. It's just a technique to gain her trust. And besides, I want to get a new pair of glasses while I still have health insurance...

Margarita – It's true that glasses are poorly covered...

Ramirez (*outraged*) – Mrs Swindlemore von Hustlestein, are you cheating on your husband?

Margarita – My dear, that's not a question to ask a society woman.

Ramirez – I remind you that you made a fortune by acting in X-rated films.

Margarita – In this case, if I cheated on my husband, it was undercover.

Ramirez – So you'll allow me to be more direct: was the man found in your sauna your lover?

Margarita – I won't say another word until my lawyer arrives.

Dupont – There you go, I told you: now you've got her to clam up...

Ramirez (to Margarita) – Very well, you'll wait for your lawyer in the office 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 – On that, at least, we agree... You claim to belong to the nobility of the robe, but in the films where you appear, you rarely wear one...

Margarita exits theatrically, forgetting her bag.

Bordeli – It's true that this diabolical couple is quite hard to figure out... It seems that each of them is part Dr. Mabuse and part Mr. Hyde.

Ramirez glances at the funeral wreath.

Ramirez – What the hell are you doing with that?

Bordeli – I thought it would be nice to pay our late colleague and friend a last tribute... You know, Ramirez, there are two kinds of defendants: those who know the law well and those who know the judge well. Everyone who knew Fireman will miss him, trust me.

Dupont – Bordeli, skip the philosophy and go find a spot to cool off the Prosecutor. He's getting to smell a bit, much like the justice system.

Bordeli – Right, boss.

Bordeli takes the cart away. Lambert returns.

Lambert – I've briefed the Director, and he's quite concerned. He urges us to handle this with utmost discretion.

Dupont – My main concern is my medal. I hope Fireman, in his final moments, managed to slip a word about it to the Minister...

Lambert – Did you get anything out of the Baroness?

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

Lambert – Even though she claims the prosecutor wasn't her lover... Fireman had the reputation of being a real womaniser. Even with me, if I had a mind to...

Dupont – But, Chief, everyone knows that you don't sleep your way to success. You wouldn't have climbed the ranks that way...

Bordeli returns.

Bordeli – Fireman... Always ready to take off to extinguish the fires of love.

Dupont – Another hidden meaning to that destined name, no doubt.

Ramirez – That still doesn't explain why he was in a tuxedo in the Baroness's sauna.

Bordeli – Lovers often hide in closets, why not in a sauna...

Dupont – What still doesn't stick is this Super Glue story... I've had a bit of trouble with that from the beginning, haven't you?

Maskovich returns.

Franck – If I may, I admit it's not the best idea I've had.

Dupont – So what?

Franck – What if we say that the sauna door was sealed shut from the outside with a hammer and nails?

Bordeli – Personally, I prefer that idea. What do you think, boss?

Dupont – Yes, well. If you want... Chief?

But Lambert is immersed in Maskovich's briefcase.

Lambert – Oh my God... Maskovich also crafted the fake National School of Administration diploma for the President. Take a look at the class photo! Groucho Marx Class... It's a class that doesn't even exist!

Bordeli approaches to look at the photo.

Bordeli – Oh, absolutely... And there are some high society figures in there. It looks like the photo of the entire government.

Ramirez – And not a single one of them holds any diploma...

Dupont – Now we can confidently say it's turning into a state affair...

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

Ramirez – Here's the scenario I see: to protect the President, the Minister of the Interior orders the assassination of the forger but targets the wrong person, by mistake. It's the prosecutor, the Baroness's lover, who was hiding in the sauna, thinking it was a closet.

Lambert – A state crime ending in a police blunder... I'm not quite fond of this scenario, Ramirez.

Bordeli – Or maybe it's the Baroness who wanted to get rid of her husband. And it's her lover, hiding in the sauna, whom she murders by mistake...

Lambert – Well done, Bordeli! I much prefer this version!

Dupont puts the bag down and returns to them.

Dupont – It turns an affair of state into a simple news item. The President remains in power. The Minister of the Interior retains his position. And I obtain my medal.

Lambert – No ripples, and all's well that ends well!

Ramirez – So, you're suggesting we lay the blame on the widow?

Lambert – You have to admit that it would suit everyone...

Ramirez – Except her, perhaps. If she's innocent...

Dupont – A crime of passion, that pleads well... She can always plead temporary insanity.

Lambert – I trust you to obtain a full and detailed confession from the Baroness, Dupont... I prefer not to witness that, but you have carte blanche.

Dupont takes Margarita's bag and searches it.

Dupont – I don't think force will be necessary, 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 Super Glue!

Bordeli – In the end, didn't we say that the sauna door was...

Dupont takes out a hammer and nails from the bag.

Dupont – And also... a hammer and nails!

Lambert – Incredible and perfect! So, it was truly her who committed the murder? That's fantastic!

Dupont (*aside to Lambert*) – I discreetly placed these pieces of evidence in her bag.

Lambert – You see, Ramirez, the good old methods still hold their value... Take note. We'll miss you, Dupont! There are no more cops like you...

The phone rings. Bordeli answers.

Bordeli – Yes? No? It can't be true?

He hangs up.

Lambert – What's happening now?

Dupont – It was the morgue. Seems like the deceased wasn't entirely dead. He just came back to life!

Lambert – Oh my God!

Dupont – Fireman is alive?

Lambert – It's a miracle!

Ramirez – I remind you that this guy is an impostor!

Lambert – Don't be so rigid, Ramirez! Even Jesus in his time was seen as an impostor...

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

Blackout.

Act 5

Bordeli brings the presumed corpse back on the cart, this time equipped with a drip.

Lambert – But how is this possible? He spent a dozen hours in the morgue!

Ramirez – The forensic doctor also operates with fake diplomas. Turns out he's an actor...

Dupont – You'll see, later we'll find out we're all actors...

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

Dupont – All night in a 90-degree sauna, and then straight into the morgue fridge at minus 20, it's bound to give him a hot and cold shock...

Bordeli – On the other hand, it's probably the temperature shock that revived him.

Lambert – And the drip, what's that for?

Bordeli – Fireman has lost all his fluid.. He left five litres of sweat in the sauna. We're rehydrating him...

Margarita and Franck return.

Lambert – Ah, Baroness... Baron...

Franck – 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 – Yes, well, in short... I have good news and bad news for both of you...

Franck – Go on.

Lambert – Your wife's lover is still alive...

Franck – What lover?

Margarita – And what's the good news?

Lambert – So, you won't be charged with attempted murder on your husband...

Franck – Margarita? Did you try to kill me?

Margarita – It's a misunderstanding, darling. I'll explain later...

Lambert – Please accept our apologies, and I suggest we close this case, which nobody has understood since the beginning anyway.

Franck – So, we're free?

Dupont – It turns out it was all just a bad farce...

Lambert – Though it was risking the very foundations of our institutions.

Ramirez – Not so fast, Chief... We still need to elucidate the circumstances of Captain Ramirez's death!

Lambert – What makes you think he didn't simply die foolishly, as he lived?

Ramirez – My father was investigating this case. He died in a restaurant called "The Crazy Clam," next to the theatre where this play titled "In flagrante delirium" is being performed. It can't be a coincidence.

Dupont – Find me the address of that theatre, Bordeli, we'll check it out.

Lambert – But for now, Ramirez, let's forget all that. It's time to celebrate! We're toasting the retirement of Captain Dupont!

Dupont – Come on, Bordeli, let's pop open the Appletiser...

Bordeli takes out a few bottles of Appletiser from under the sheet that covers the body on the cart.

Lambert – A small drop, Baroness?

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

Lambert – Baron... A glass of faux champagne?

Franck – Thank you, dear friend. I'll pretend to drink it.

The phone rings. Dupont answers.

Dupont – Dupont here, go ahead....

Bordeli – I'll miss hearing that...

Dupont – Yes, Minister... Certainly, Minister... I appreciate it, Minister... My dear friends, I am pleased to share that tomorrow I will be honoured with the Legion of Honour, presented by the Minister of the Interior, in recognition of my contributions to the Nation.

Lambert – Congratulations, Dupont. One more reason to rejoice in the way this investigation concludes.

Ramirez – The Minister of the Interior... It's that crook who fabricated his fake diplomas!

Lambert – Ramirez... If you want to pursue a career in the police, you'll have to learn to be more accommodating...

Franck – If we started by excluding all the liars, Miss, we wouldn't be able to form a government anymore!

Dupont – Ramirez, grasp this: justice aims not to shield the innocent but to prevent the unjust persecution of the guilty.

Lambert – And besides, no one died! Thankfully, in this story, it's only the case that we're going to bury. Isn't that right, Ramirez? Life goes on...

Ramirez – My father died, though...

Bordeli – Between us, Ramirez, being an orphan has its advantages too, you'll find.

Dupont – Especially when you're part of the police orphans. I hear they have a solid insurance plan, among other things.

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 the place of the dead.

Lambert – One last piece of advice, Ramirez: forget the idea of cleaning up this police station.

Dupont – And welcome to the police! You may have lost a father, but you gain a big family.

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

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

Dupont – All authors are forgers, Bordeli... You see, they even sometimes end up plagiarizing themselves.

Bordeli – But at least they don't claim to govern us.

Ramirez – Captain?

Dupont – Dupont here, go ahead!

Ramirez – I checked the address of the theatre staging "In flagrante delirium". It's identical to the address of this police station where we currently are...

Lambert – You mean that... we are the ones performing this play right now?

Franck – As Shakespeare said: "All the world is a stage, and all the men and women merely players..."

Margarita – Let's raise a toast to our master!

They raise their glasses.

All – To Shakespeare!

Fade to black.

The end.

Other plays by the same author translated in English:

Comedies for 2

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
Preliminaries
Running on empty
The Costa Mucho Castaways
The Joker
The Window across the courtyard

Comedies for 3

A brief moment of eternity
A simple business dinner
An innocent little murder
Cheaters
Crash Zone
Fragile, Handle with care
Friday the 13th
Ménage à 3
One small step for a woman, one giant leap
backward for Mankind

Comedies for 4

A Cuckoo's nest
A hell of a night
Back to stage
Bed and Breakfast
Casket for two
Crisis and Punishment
Family Portrait
Family Tree
Four stars
Friday the 13th
Gay friendly
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
Quarantine
Strip Poker
Surviving Mankind
The perfect Son-in-Law
The Smell of Money

Comedies for 5 to 6

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

Comedies for 7 or more

Check to the Kings
Christmas Eve at the Police Station
False exit
Just like a Christmas movie
Miracle at Saint Mary Juana Abbey
Neighbours' Day
Open Hearts
Save our Savings
Special Dedication
Stories and Prehistories
The Jackpot
The Performance is not cancelled
The Worst Village in England
Welcome aboard!
White Coats, Dark Humour

Collection of sketches

Him and Her
Lost time Chronicles
Open Hearts
Sidewalk Chronicles
Stories to die for

Monologues

Like a fish in the air

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