



The Perfect Pimp

A comedy in eight scenes

by Christian Lanciai (1991)

The Characters :

Inspector
Constable
a policeman
Dupont
Jules
Pierre
Legros, bartender
a sailor
a bouncer
Lola
Malou
Frou-Frou
Clou-Clou
Jou-Jou
Lili
Gigi
Laurent, customer
Other customers and policemen

The action is in Paris.

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Scene 1. The police office.

Inspector This will not do, constable!
Constable No, it will not do at all, Sir!
Inspector What do you intend to do about it, constable?
Constable What *can* you do, chief?
Inspector You should know!
Constable We could always replace him with someone else. We always did so far.
Inspector Unto damnation! They all failed! All have fallen!
Constable Yes, Sir.
Inspector We have to find someone who cannot fall! We must find someone completely incorruptible!
Constable That's the problem, chief. They don't exist.
Inspector Search!
Constable Chief! We have been searching! The position has been replaced fifty-seven times!
Inspector I know. We have to succeed next time. It's our last chance.
Constable That's the case you state every time, chief.
Inspector This time I mean it!
Constable Yes, that's also the case every time.

Inspector (hits the table) Buit now it's enough! Is that understood?

Constable Yes, boss.

Inspector Well, what do you intend to do about it?

Constable Suggest a replacement.

Inspector By whom?

Constable Who would you suggest, Sir?

Inspector You keep asking that every time! Could you never present an initiative of your own, constable? Do I always have to manage everything?

Constable With respect, Sir, but you manage everything much better than all the rest of us.

Inspector So you are all useless! But this matter I could never even handle myself!

Constable Yes, chief.

Inspector Well, what do you suggest?

Constable That you handle the case, Sir.

Inspector That's the last thing I want! No one in uniform could patrol that district without disgracing his uniform and degenerate!

Constable Yes, boss.

Inspector We have to find someone who can! And quickly!

Constable Yes, Sir.

Inspector Who, constable?

Constable I don't know, Sir.

Inspector (hits the table even harder) You are then thoroughly incompetent!

(a policeman opens the door)

policeman Dupont is here, Sir.

Inspector Dupont? What bloody Dupont?

policeman The parky.

Inspector What bloody devil of a poor parky?

policeman He who saved that child from drowning in the pond.

Inspector (recalling something, brightens up) Oh, Dupont. (regards his constable with blessing benevolence)

Constable (embarrassed) Why do you look at me that way, Sir?

Inspector My friend, we have our man.

Constable (incredulous) Do we?

Inspector He started as a lifeguard at a swimmingpool for kids. It was only one meter deep. He was so caring for the children that he was promoted to a park keeper. Last week he saved a small girl from falling into the bird pond and drowning. He deserves a better reward than just a merit badge. We will make him a policeman!

Constable Instead of...

Inspector Exactly! He will be perfect! He lives with his mother! He knows nothing about women! He is indifferent to them maybe even immune! But he is very careful and considerate concerning poor innocent little children!

Constable He will be perfect!

Inspector That's what I mean! (to the policeman) Bring him in! Bring him in! Bring him in! (exit policeman)

If he won't make it, no one will! (Dupont is shown in.)

(with empathy) Welcome, my dearest friend Dupont!

Dupont (humbly) Are you addressing me, inspector?

Inspector Who else, you nitwit?

Dupont Dupont is such a common name.

Inspector No excuses! We know everything about you! You have saved the life of a human being!

Dupont Sir, it was just a small mischievous girl...

Inspector But still! You deserve a full reward!

Dupont But I only did my duty...

Inspector You deserve a higher position!

Dupont (frightened) But I am happy with everything as it is, inspector...

Inspector Nonsense! You are perfectly qualified for a very special mission!

Constable What would you like to be a constable, Dupont?

Dupont I would be grateful for the honour... I always dreamt of wearing a fine uniform, but...

Inspector Then it's settled! You are appointed! You can start tomorrow!

Dupont But...

Constable No buts! Take it as an honour, Dupont!

Dupont I do! But what shall I do?

Constable You will just patrol and maintain order. Nothing else.

Dupont Nothing else?

Inspector Yes, just make a report and keep your protecting hand over small innocent children.

Dupont Nothing else?

Inspector No, nothing else.

Dupont (goes eagerly forth to take the inspector's hand) Monsieur, this is the happiest day in my life! You can't imagine how happy you have made me!

Inspector If you just manage all right, Dupont, it might also be the happiest day in mine and our constable's life.

Dupont I thank you from the bottom of my heart! (*shakes the hands of both heartily*)

Constable There, Dupont, you may go out now and try your uniform.

Dupont Thank you! Thank you! (*exits overwhelmed*)

Inspector Well, what do you think?

Constable He could be the right one. He is innocent like a lamb and will manage, until...

Inspector Until what?

Constable Until he discovers something about woman and love.

Inspector May that day never arrive. And if anyone can walk blind to such things in life, it would be such a perfect silly idiot as our blessed friend Monsieur Dupont!

Scene 2. The café.
Jules and Pierre at the bar.

Jules Victor is done for.

Pierre Like all the others.

Jules There will be a new one.

Pierre Do you know anything about him?

Jules (*shrugs his shoulders*) A cop.

Pierre Will they never give up!

Jules Yes, you are amazed. (*enter Dupont in his splendid uniform.*)

Dupont Good day to all of you! How are you all?

bartender Welcome to our quarter, constable?

Dupont Dupont, Ernest Dupont.

bartender Constable Dupont! May we welcome you by inviting you for a drink?

Dupont You are welcome to, as long as it is not too strong! (*Jules and Pierre look at each other.*)

bartender To you, monsieur! (*pours him a glass*) Salut!

Dupont (*takes a position in the middle of the café, solemnly*) Gentlemen, it's a great honour for me to serve here in the very heart of Paris. (*enter a tart*) I hope to become really good friends with all of you, so that I will have the great honour of honouring my uniform! I am looking forward to serving you all and justice with joy and glory! (*raises his glass*)

tart (*Lola, to Jules*) What kind of a mad fool is that?

Jules He is new.

Lola Really? (*goes up to Dupont*) Hi, sweetheart! (*dashes him heartily in his back, to make him spill his absinthe and choke.*) Cheers! (*raises her glass*)

Dupont (*dazed*) Cheers, madame! It's an honour for me to toast a lady!

Lola But you have nothing left in your glass! Fill it up, Legros! (*the bartender willingly refills Dupont's glass*) Now have a drink with us! It's an honour for us to have a real policeman in the quarter!

Dupont (*finds himself obliged to drink with her*) The pleasure is entirely mine, madame! My name is Dupont! What is yours?

Lola Call me Lola! We need a real neighbourhood police who can protect us defenceless women! (*blinks at Pierre and Jules*)

Dupont I love helping old ladies and children, like when they have to cross the street! But I will surely help all ladies who need my protection! I represent the law! The law exists for the protection of everyone!

Lola And especially us defenseless women! (*blinks at Pierre and Jules*)

Dupont And especially all defenseless swomen!

Jules (*advances*) Have another drink with us, constable, so that we really get to know each other like good friends! (*refills his glass*)

Dupont I really don't know if I should while I am on duty...

Jules Drink! (*drinks to him. Dupont is obliged to drink.*)

Pierre Don't drink him under the table immediately, Jules, he seems totally green and inexperienced.

Jules I just want to make him feel at home.

(*to Dupont*) We are all here like one large family, constable! I just want you to feel that and know it!

Dupont How kind of you, monsieur?

Jules Jules.

Dupont Monsieur Jules. (*wants to be friendly. Raises his glass*) Cheers!

Lola (*to Pierre*) He is too kind.

Pierre He could be the right one for us at last.

Lola We'll see. *(to Jules)* There, Jules! The constable is perhaps not as used to drinking as the rest of us.

Jules He seems to be able to take anything, like any real man! *(fills up Dupont's glass)*

Pierre *(to Lola)* Let's try him. - Cheers, constable!

Dupont *(already affected)* Cheers, Monsieur?

Pierre Pierre.

Dupont Cheers, Monsieur, with the big nose. *(drinks)*

Jules He has had enough. He has already forgotten us.

Lola I think he is cute.

Jules *(angry)* You are mine, Lola, and no one else's!

Lola I only said he was cute.

Dupont *(raises his glass)* It's a great honour for me... *(drops off)*

Pierre There. He has had his first lesson.

Legros He will make a good policeman in time.

Jules With his inordinate modesty he could make too good a policeman.

Pierre He could also be the very right one to suit us.

Jules *(threateningly)* Make sure he makes that then and nothing else! *(leaves)*

Pierre What was the matter with him?

Lola He turned jealous at once. We have never had such a green policeman here before. We have to make sure he doesn't lose his virginity.

Legros *(experienced)* That will be difficult in the long run, Lola.

Pierre But it started off well. Wake him up, Legros!
(Legros pours cold water on Dupont who wakes up.)

Dupont *(alarmed)* Is anything on fire?

Legros No, but you passed out, constable. Make sure to perform your duty! A constable is supposed to patrol.

Dupont *(suddenly reminded)* You are right, my dear Legros! I must honour my uniform! *(rises and hurries out, all wet.)*
(The others laugh after him.)

Pierre He will make it in time!

Lola He is doing well already.

Legros We started well. A few working days more in the same way, and he will trust us completely!

Pierre We have a new member in the family!
(All three drink to each other with satisfaction.)

Scene 3. Harlot street.
Dupont patrolling along the street.

Malou *(as Dupont passes)* Hi, sweetheart!

Frou-Frou *(as Dupont passes)* Hallo, handsome!

Clou-Clou *(as Dupont passes)* What about a hug, darling?

Jou-Jou *(as Dupont passes)* What perfect legs he's got!

Lili *(as Dupont passes)* What about taking off the uniform, sweetie?

Gigi *(as Dupont passes)* Are you busy tonight, prince of my dreams?

(Dupont patrols past the hotel, just as a sailor is being thrown out of there.)

Bouncer And don't you come back any more without money!

Dupont What's the trouble, my good man?

bouncer This is no charity institution for sucking goats!

Dupont What has the sailor done wrong, since you treat him so harshly?

Bouncer That parasite consumed without paying!

Dupont Couldn't you have let him wash the dishes then?

Bouncer Washing the dishes is not enough here!

Dupont But what other indemnity could you then ask for?

Bouncer Restoration of virginity! *(returns inside in anger. Lola comes ut.)*

Dupont Well, good day, Lola! Do you live here?

Lola But isn't it constable Dupont! Are you patrolling here?

Dupont Yes, this is my street.

Lola What an honour!

Dupont No, mademoiselle, the honour is all mine.

Lola Is it?

Dupont I assure you! On my honour!

Lola You seem to believe in what you are saying.

Dupont Mademoiselle, how could you doubt it?

Lola I don't doubt it.

Dupont Are you living here?

Lola Yes, for the moment I live here.

Dupont Do you have no real home of your own?

Lola No, not quite, but I have a nice and cheap hotel room.

Dupont May I ask you something?

Lola Of course!

Dupont *(lowers his voice and looks around)* Why are there so many beautiful ladies on this very street which was assigned to me for patrolling?

(Malou comes to the hotel with an escort.)

Malou *(to Dupont)* Hi, sweetheart! *(walks in with a customer)*

Lola Yes, imagine, I also wondered about that myself. Why do I have so many lovely sisters on my very street?

Dupont It almost seems like a mystery.

Lola Yes, constable Dupont, you are actually right!

(Jules passes by.)

Jules Why do you stand here idling, Lola? Start supporting yourself!

Dupont Monsieur Jules, I would not speak so harshly to a beautiful young lady, if I were you.

Jules *(places his hands on his hips)* Wouldn't you? And how do you know? Have you perhaps once been like me?

Lola Pardon me, constable, but I actually have to get to work.

Dupont I understand that completely. You are a dutiful and well brought up young lady.

(Lola leaves.)

(Frou-Frou passes into the hotel with an escort.)

Frou-Frou *(to Dupont)* Hallo handsome! *(enters with her customer.)*

Dupont *(to Jules)* Do all the beautiful ladies of this street stay at this hotel?

Jules No, they are just working there.

Dupont Are they serving the customers?

Jules No, they wash the dishes.

Dupont So beautiful! And they are all just dishwashers?

Jules Yes.

Dupont But then they must have some men to help them? Can't they wash the dishes alone?

Jules No, they can't wash the dishes alone.

Dupont What do the men do? Are they drying the plates?

Jules No, they use the bottlebrush.

Dupont Are there many bottles to wash?

Jules Yes, there are only bottles.

Dupont Then there must be a lot of drinking in this hotel.

Clou-Clou (*passes into the hotel with an escort, to Dupont*) What about a hug, darling?
(*enters with her customer*)

Dupont How happy they all seem when they go to work!

Jules They get well paid.

Dupont But I saw a man being thrown out a moment ago. Couldn't he manage the bottle-brush?

Jules Yes, he could handle that thing well enough, but he couldn't clean it up afterwards.

Dupont Perhaps he dropped too many bottles on the floor?

Jules Yes. The hotel can't afford losses.

Dupont I see.

Jou-Jou (*passes into the hotel with an escort, to Dupont*) What perfect legs he's got! (*enters with her customer*)

Dupont (*to Jou-Jou*) Thank you! (*to Jules*) Can she see through the pants?

Jules I guess most would like to do that.

Dupont Why?

Jules For the same reason that a buyer of horses wants to look into his horse's mouth.

Dupont I don't understand. Are the ladies buying their bottle-brush dishwashers?

Jules No, it's actually the contrary.

Dupont Then I understand even less why the ladies wish to look through the pants of their dishwashers.

Jules Not the legs. The pockets. The fly.

Dupont (*completely dumbfounded*) Why?
(*Lili passes into the hotel with an escort.*)

Lili (*to Dupont*) What about removing the uniform, sweetie?

Dupont (*correct*) Never on duty!

Lili's customer (*to Lili*) Do you have a police watchman outside?

Lili Yes. We are privileged.

Customer Not bad! (*they walk in*)

Dupont I think I had better move on. I should patrol.

Jules It does no harm to move around.

Dupont It feels as if I already was transparent.

Jules Perhaps you will be.

Gigi (*comes to the hotel with an escort, to Dupont*) Are you busy tonight, prince of my dreams?

Dupont (*frank*) No, tonight I am off.

Gigi's customer (*to Gigi*) What the hell do you take me for?

Gigi (*to the customer*) I am sorry. It was just a courtesy to our policeman.

Gigi's customer I sincerely hope so. (*They go inside.*)
(*Lola turns up with a customer.*)

Dupont (*to Jules*) How many dishwashers do you need?

Jules An endless number.

Dupont So it really seems. And all are just for handling bottlebrushes?

Jules Yes.

Dupont Incredible!

Jules It's a special institution.

Dupont Yes, it has to be. (*salutes Lola and her customer politely*)
Is it time to wash the dishes now?

customer No quips please, Monsieur!

Dupont I asked the lady, not you.

Customer What do you take me for? Some bloody root brush?

Dupont No, bottlebrush.

customer Are you looking for trouble?

Dupont Sir, I have done nothing to insult you. I just wished to compliment the lady for her work. She and I happen to be old friends.

customer Do you mean to steal her from me, what?

Lola Please leave the policeman alone, Marcel. He is kind.

customer Yes, he is stinking of kindness!

Jules Get in, Lola, and start working before you lose your customer!

Dupont Customer? (*starts vaguely to understand*)

customer And who the hell are you who think you can have my whore, what?

Dupont Whore?

Jules Cut it out and get in and fuck while you still are horny!

customer What the hell is that any business of yours, you bloody pimp?

Dupont Pimp?

Lola Don't mind them, constable. They are just fooling around.

Dupont And you? Are you fooling with them?

customer She is mine, and you two smart alecks will not try anything with my chosen whore until I am finished with her!

Dupont Chosen whore?

Jules Don't make trouble, you fishing john!

Dupont Fishing?

Lola (*strainedly smiling*) Yes, constable. First we'll have chicken, then fish, and then we wash the dishes all together!

Dupont Aha! The hotel is a restaurant! That's why all beautiful ladies are invited there!

customer Have you all your bowels in your head, what?

Dupont I wish you a good appetite!

customer Damn it, now I am tired of all your insults! (*wants to fight*)

Lola Don't strike him! He is a policeman!

customer My foot he is! I know the type! He is just another disguised pimp! (*gives Dupont a knockout to floor him.*)

Jules No fighting in here please

customer And you too! (*gives Jules a knockout, but Jules hits back. Dupont blows a whistle.*)

Jules Boys! We need reinforcement!
(Pierre, bartender and others turn up. Windows open, the whores appear in them excited and curious like their customers...)

A customer A fight! Hurray!
(more react in the same way. The fight spreads around, but Lola's hoodlum fights like an infantry.)

Dupont *(rising)* Stop it at once, gentlemen! *(continues to blow his whistle. Several policemen appear. The uproar is complete. It worsens to turn all policemen against all the customers and pimps.)*

Inspector *(turning up, with commanding voice)* What is going on here?
(The fighting wanes and gets lost.)

Dupont A hoodlum molested a beautiful lady, Sir.

Inspector At this place?

Dupont Yes, Sir.

Inspector And you immediately call for reinforcement?

Dupont Yes, Sir, since fighting broke out.

Inspector *(walks around mercilessly inspecting everyone)* I can see that. All the mob of Paris against the force of order. *(to Dupont, severely)* Let it be for this time, but don't provoke any more such quarrels! I warn you, Dupont!

Dupont I didn't even defend myself.

Inspector So, you didn't even strike back! No wonder that everyone felt compelled to interfere and join in the fighting as long as it lasted! Go home, all of you! Dupont is new here! You have to bear with his mistakes as a beginner!

A few policemen Yes, chief! *(they disperse)*

Inspector *(to the pimps and the tricks)* And you should know better than to attack an innocent policeman! Don't you want to go on at large here?

Jules *(and the others)* Yes, inspector!

Inspector *(emphatically)* Then don't make any more trouble!
 That's that! Carry on patrolling, Dupont.
 Return to order, everyone!

Lola's customer *(to Lola)* I really didn't pay for all this! You will have to find someone else, damn it! *(leaves)*

Dupont *(to Jules, when all others have vanished or returned inside to the hotel)* Didn't he want to wash any more dishes?

Jules No. He went on strike.

Dupont Can you do it by yourself just like that without consequences?

Jules I think he was ashamed of having a lousy bottlebrush.

Dupont *(pretends to understand)* I see! *(Jules leaves.)*
 I think I must reconsider all this. It almost seems like a mystery. You could almost suspect that there is something fishy going on here.
(goes to the café on the opposite.)

Scene 4. The café.

bartender What will it be?
Dupont A cup of coffee.
bartender My friend, you almost look troubled. Was there a bad start of the day?
Dupont No, but I have got something to consider.
bartender Don't think too much.
Dupont Shall I then just hang around like a fool and not mind what seems odd and queer?
bartender That's actually the best thing you can do.
Dupont But that will affect my conscience. I must fulfill my duty.
bartender Your duty as a policeman in this district is to just hang around like a fool and not mind what seems odd and queer.
Dupont Did I do wrong then in blowing the whistle?
bartender Yes. Even the inspector gave you reprimands for it.
Dupont Should I then have allowed that hoodlum to just go on molesting the the poor lovely lady Lola?
bartender Yes. She is paid for it.
Dupont Does she get paid for being molested by such rogues?
bartender No, he had paid for doing whatever he wanted with her.
Dupont I don't understand anything.
bartender That's good. Carry on like that. (*enter Jules and Pierre*)
Pierre Hallo, Dupont! (*gives him a friendly stroke on his back*) How did you manage?
Jules You are the hero of the street!
Dupont Why?
Pierre You gave one of our ladies your protection!
Dupont But that was just my duty! What else could I do?
Jules You could have let her mind her own business.
Dupont But it was that hoodlum who bothered her!
Pierre Don't argue, Jules. She did keep her money after all.
Dupont Yes, why did he pay for making trouble for her? It doesn't make sense!
Jules (to Pierre) I would say, that Lola and Dupont have grown damned good friends!
Dupont Is a police not allowed to make friends with those he serve?
Pierre He is innocent, Jules.
Dupont Who is innocent?
Jules You, poor bottlebrush, who don't know how to wash dishes! You could get washed up for less!
Dupont Washed up? Why? I am doing my job!
Pierre Don't say too much, Jules.
Dupont I don't understand anything.
Jules (resigning) That's your blessed state, constable. (*o the bartender*) An absinthe.
bartender That's the spirit. (*serves*)
Pierre Me too.
bartender Voilà. (*serves*)
Jules And our friend? I invite him.

bartender He deserves it. (*serves*)

Dupont Most grateful. (*all three drink in silence. Dupont standing between Pierre and Jules. The harmony is like between three brothers, although Pierre and Jules are pimps and Dupont a policeman.*)

Lola (enters) Cheerio, chums!

Jules Don't look so happy about it.

Lola You if anyone should be happy about it. Look here! (*presents a bundle of money on the counter. Jules immediately picks it up and counts it.*) I got a Marquess for a customer!

Dupont (shocked, rises) What?

Pierre Slow down, Lola.

Lola (realizes the danger) Sorry! I mean, we have got a benefactor at the hotel.

Dupont Benefactor? Dishwasher? Lover? The hotel?

Jules Take it easy, Dupont.

Dupont (begins to understand) Does he also apply bottlebrushes?

Lola (sincerely) No, he is an invalid. But he pays anyway.

Dupont For being able to wash dishes?

Lola No, to watch me wash the dishes.

Dupont (has begun noticing the customers of the lovely ladies coming out again, satisfied and alone) So the hotel is a charity institution?

Lola What else?

Dupont Madame, you ought to be ashamed!

Lola Why?

Dupont (crushing) Because you live in a brothel.

Lola (after a while) So what?

Pierre Take it easy, Dupont.

Jules Give him another absinthe, Legros. He is my guest. He needs it.

bartender (obliges) Voilà, Monsieur. You will have another later.

Dupont (pours the glass on the floor) Do you think I am stupid?

bartender (offended) Monsieur, you are ungrateful.

Dupont No! I am not ungrateful! I am grateful! I am grateful for the young lady to have spoken beside her mouth concerning the procuring business she is being subject to! Now I will really be able to honour my uniform! (*goes with determination to the closest telephone*)

Pierre Don't do anything stupid, Dupont.

Jules We were almost beginning to like you!

Bartender (resigned) There is no hope for someone who empties his glass on the floor.

Dupont (in the telephone) Hallo? I have discovered a clandestine brothel. Send a police force immediately to Rue du Marlou number 13!

Lola (to the others) The Marquess is in there.

Jules Dupont will have to face the consequences.

Dupont (triumphant) The game is over, my friends! This street will now be liberated from all debauchery!

Jules Why didn't you become a priest, Dupont?

Dupont (ashamed) My father was a priest.
(*All laugh heartily and for long.*)

Dupont It's no laughing matter. It was an accident.

bartender Perhaps he was a huguenot?
Dupont No, he was a real Monseigneur.
(All burst out laughing again.)
Dupont (serious) I am afraid, my friends, you laughed for the last time over me. Now things will get serious!
(The police force arrives for the pinch. Dupont exits to unite with them. All the customers and ladies of the hotel, undressed and half dressed, a vast number, are rounded up and packed into a black van and brought away. Dupont goes with them.)
Pierre (meanwhile) He doesn't know what he is in for.
bartender (philosophically) His innocence will be his worst crime.
Lola Can't we do anything for him?
Jules Not yet. Not as long as he is a policeman.
bartender We must allow the law to have its way. Then we'll see.
Lola Will he be fired like all the others?
Pierre Without doubt. And his time was shorter than anyone else's.
Jules At best he will learn something from the experience.
Pierre But he will never be a policeman again.
Jules No, never.
Lola Poor my sweet little Dupont!
bartender (takes her hand in comfort) He will come back.
(The pinch is completed and the coach drives off.)

Scene 5. Like scene 1.

Inspector Idiot! Do you know what you have done?
Dupont I thought I did my duty, Monsieur.
Inspector You have arrested the president of the police prefecture for sex trafficking!
Dupont I thought, Monsieur, that were all equal to the law.
Inspector Are we all born equal, perhaps? Don't you know he is a Marquess?
Dupont That was the breaking point, Monsieur.
Inspector What do you mean?
Dupont When I heard the lovely lady Lola had got a Marquess for her lover, something broke inside me.
Inspector The fine lady Lola! Why couldn't you worry about the fine lady Frou-Frou instead? Or the fine lady Clou-Clou? Do you really have to nose about just as the president of the police prefecture makes a sensitive visist?
Dupont I didn't know it was he, Monsieur.
Inspector But you knew he was a Marquess!
Dupont Yes, Monsieur. I knew the fine lady Lola's customer was a Marquess.
Inspector You are impossible! You are worthless!
Dupont *Oui*, Monsieur.
Inspector Get out and away and out of the way of all order!
Dupont What does that mean, Monsieur?
Inspector You are fired! Out!
Dupont (faint-hearted) *Oui*, Monsieur. *(leaves with his head down.)*

Constable (enters) He only lasted for a day, chief. That's a record. What do we do now?

Inspector If I ever believed in any man, he was the one. That he, the fittest and most suitable of all, would disappoint us so outrageously!

Constable Yes, Sir. It's more than we deserve.

Inspector There is only thing left for us to do now.

Constable And that is?

Inspector To leave the post vacant until further.

Constable A wise decision, Sir.

Inspector I hope so, constable. We'll see what happens.

Scene 6. The café.

(It's closing time. The bartender is cleaning up and closing down, putting the chairs over the tables. Enter Dupont in shabby clothes.)

bartender Good evening, constable.

Dupont I am no constable any longer.

bartender Why then do you come back to the street of your work?

Dupont I have nowhere else to go.

bartender Don't you have a home?

Dupont I have no salary any more. I am out of work. So I no longer can pay any rent.

bartender Don't tell me you have been fired like all the others.

Dupont Like all the others?

bartender (temporarily interrupting his sweeping) Since this became the street of "the cosen ladies", 57 constables have been replaced during three years. You are just one out of many.

Dupont Is that fair?

bartender (continues sweeping) It's not a question of what is fair. It's a course of nature.

Dupont What happened to all the others?

bartender (interrupts his sweeping) One hanged himself. One turned alcoholic. One got married. One became a director of brothels. One turned to trafficking business. They all went down without exceptions.

Dupont And me? What will become of me?

bartender You are honest. You may still keep your honour, but you have to step down one level. (*goes on sweeping*)

Dupont No employer wants a dismissed policeman. I can't even go back to my work as a parkey. What do you suggest?

bartender Lola likes you. She is good. The best thing you can do is to join her in partnership.

Dupont As a pimp?

bartender Call it what you like. Everything good has a worse name than it deserves.

Dupont And I would by becoming a pimp preserve my honour, my innocence and my good name?

bartender (interrupts his sweeping) My friend, you are as fallen as everyone else. The thing is not to fall deeper than necessary. *(goes on sweeping.)*

Dupont But hasn't Lola already got a protector in Jules?

bartender In order to survive you have to challenge and come to terms with him.

Dupont How? He is so much bigger than I. He can fight. I can't. I am too timid.

bartender (puts his brush aside and takes his normal position behind the bar)

My friend, *(brings forth a bottle,)* here is your means. Drink it up, and sleep on it.

Dupont What do you mean?

bartender You'll find the truth in the wine. This wine is from my cousin's farm. It's a true, living wine. It's not a wine for selling or export. This is a wine coming directly from the depths of the wine culture of centuries and millennia. If it survives it's worth more than gold, but it could also stagnate and turn turbid and acid. Watch this colour. It's pure gold. Drink it and consider it until the bottle is empty.

Dupont So you initiate me in the mystery of alcoholism?

bartender No, I am just trying to help you. Trust an old bartender. I serve hundreds of drunks and alcoholics every day. I don't advise you to become one of them. I am just recommending you to discover and consider the eternal truth of a true wine.

Dupont What do you mean?

bartender What I mean is this. Don't drink it all up at once. That's vulgar. Only morbid mortals drink just to get drunk. We are intelligent men of culture, you and I. We have to observe certain ceremonies. First *(holding up the bottle against the light)* you have to study the colour. Is it clear or turbid? You can see it's as golden and shining clear as the sun at dawn. So we can put our faith in this bottle. *(uncorks it)* And next? *(pours some in a small glass)* We have to approach it with pious care. Feel the scent of it. *(smells it himself and then gives it over to Dupont to do the same.)* Do you feel the scent? It's a true and sincere wine. And then? *(resumes the glass.)* The wine must be tested carefully. *(lets the wine circulate.)* With a wary and steady hand. Now we observe there is no turbidity in the wine at all. So we venture to try it. *(takes a sip.)* You too. *(gives the glass. Dupont sips.)* Is the taste convincing enough? Is the wine mature enough? What are your first associations of the taste?

Dupont It tastes far too good.

bartender Wine should do that. Only then it is a true wine. *(resumes the glass)* But we are still not ready. *(lets the wine move around in the glass)* We have only started testing it. Much remains. So far it has made the test. Let's see then how it really goes. *(takes a gulp. Tastes it carefully. Silence. Swallows. Gives over the glass.)*

Let the wine pass through all corners of the mouth. If you just let it go straight down you will only feel the bitter aftertaste. Most people do. Let the wine linger in the mouth for as long as possible, even until it gets disgusting. *(Dupont obeys and finally swallows.)* Well?

Dupont It's the best wine I've ever tasted.

bartender I am just a bartender. I have offered you the wine. The true wine culture consists only of cultivating, harvesting, seasoning and tasting. Drinking in itself is just vulgar.

Dupont But why do you make wine if not to drink it?

bartender Already old man Noah posed that question. He took the consequence of his own logical reasoning, had his fill, became intoxicated beyond control, fell asleep

naked, and the result was the notorious curse of all negroes forever. You know about that. I prefer never to cause any curse to anybody.

Dupont Still all you do is to serve.

bartender Yes, for I feel the original virgin power of the wine which is all I live for, the conservation of it and its blessing to humanity. (*gives over the bottle.*) Take well care of it.

Dupont I will try.

bartender I give you licence to drink. Drink and think.

Dupont I will do my best.

bartender Do so. Farewell, *mon ami*.

(*Dupont leaves the café, and the bartender closes up and locks up after him.*)

Yet another fallen angel whom we have to keep patching up until he dies. (*turns off the light.*)

Scene 7. Lola's room.

(Lola with a customer in bed. They labour. A discreet knock on the door. Lola and her customer are disturbed. Another knock. After the third knock:)

customer (to Lola) Who is it?

Lola I have no idea.

(*Another knock.*)

customer Can't you drive off that disturber of peace and harmony?

Lola I could try. (*gets up and goes to the door, opens very cautiously. Exclaims:*) Oohh! (*closes the door quickly and returns to bed.*)

Hide under the bed, quickly! It's the police!

customer Are you sure?

Lola Of course!

customer Will I be safe under the bed?

Lola Of course!

customer So long! (*dives under the bed. Lola returns to the door, opens and lets in a Dupont under the influence with a more than half empty bottle.*)

Lola Constable Dupont! What's the matter with you!

Dupont I am no longer a constable.

Lola What happened?

Dupont I got sacked.

Lola It's all my fault!

Dupont No, Lola, it's everyone's fault but yours.

Lola But why have you come here?

Dupont I had nowhere else to go.

Lola What about home then?

Dupont I couldn't go back to my mother after having displayed my splendid uniform to her this morning. She is always up. She would never have forgiven me.

Lola It's all my fault!

Dupont Or your credit. It depends on how you look at it. Look what a splendid wine the bartender gave me as a present! I saved some for you. He gave me the wine

for meditation and inspiration, and how it made me think! I have arrived at the conclusion that it was all my own fault, because I liked you too much.

Lola How sweet of you! You were my favourite constable all day!

Dupont Do you have a glass?

Lola Of course! (*presents two*) And I also have more bottles, if necessary.

Dupont They could be of use. You never know. I am just discovering my new life, if I have any.

Lola Have you found any?

Dupont It depends on you.

Lola How come?

Dupont There is so much I don't know about life, but you could teach me a lot.

Lola Like what?

Dupont How do you actually do it?

Lola Do what?

Dupont You know what I mean. What you are paid for.

Lola Oh, that.

Dupont Could you teach me?

Lola It depends on how good you are.

Dupont But unfortunately I cannot pay.

customer I protest! (*comes out from under the bed*) Lola! You can't do that to an old faithful customer! Receiving a discarded and drunk police officer in the middle of the night who doesn't even know how to do it and who can't even pay!

Lola I am sorry, Laurent, but I receive any customers.

Laurent At the same time?

Lola If necessary.

Laurent And what about me? Do you prefer a customer who cannot pay to me, who always paid and was correct about it?

Lola I am sorry, Laurent, but this is an emergency.

Laurent Don't you think that I am in any need then?

Lola You could come back another day.

Laurent Do you think I will have any lust for that, after having been replaced by a besotted and discarded policeman? (*gets into his clothes in anger*)

Lola An officer is always an officer, Laurent.

Laurent Even without a uniform?

Lola (*looks at Dupont*) At least this one.

Laurent It's not fair! I have paid! He hasn't!

Lola Dear Laurent, no love can survive without idealism.

(*Laurent gives up, dons his hat and leaves.*)

Dupont I can't tell you how sorry I am. If I had known that you were busy...

Lola I am not busy any longer now. (*takes the wine and pours it up.*)

Cheers! (*drinks to Dupont.*)

Dupont I am completely at your mercy now, mademoiselle Lola.

Lola I know. And it will be a pleasure. I always wished for a male virgin. You will be my first one.

Dupont (*shyly*) In that case, Lola, I have to confess, that you will also be my first one.

Lola So we have something in common.

(*shuts the light, pulls Dupont with her to bed, start undressing him, and so on.*)

Scene 8. The café.

Jules Dupont has slept with Lola tonight
bartender I know
Jules How do you know?
bartender A bartender always knows more than the whole world.
Jules But you shouldn't have known about this.
bartender Why not?
Jules The entire hotel knows about it. All her sisters know about it. But no one has told you about it.
bartender Yes, you.
Jules Yes, now.
bartender Still I knew it before you told me. Don't ask me how.
Jules Evidently a bartender knows more than the whole world. (*enter Laurent.*)
Laurent A double.
bartender Is that wise so early in the morning?
Laurent Nothing is wise in this world.
Jules He knows more about the world than a bartender.
Laurent You must be Lola's pimp, yes?
Jules Right you are. What can I do for you?
Laurent I beg to file a complaint.
Jules No one ever complained of Lola.
Laurent Sometime there must be a first time then.
Jules What's the trouble?
Laurent She threw me out tonight although I had paid.
Jules That happens sometimes. Did you drivel on her?
Laurent No. She drove me out to let in another one who didn't pay.
Jules Did you demand your money back?
Laurent No.
Jules Sorry, pal.
Laurent But it's unfair!
Jules How do you know he didn't pay? Did you hide under the bed?
Laurent Exactly.
Jules My friend, I will tell you exactly how it works. You can't fool me. Lola got another customer and hid you under the bed in the meantime. That's what she usually does. Then you got so mauled by the exercises of the new customer that you voluntarily ran away. You were simply outcompeted. And now you want revenge.
Laurent It wasn't like that at all. I left before the new one even had undressed.
Jules So you left willingly? You didn't even bother to find out what the new bloke was good for? I call that cowardice.
Laurent But I call it foul play. She took him for love and not for money.
Jules She must not fall in love. Who was it?
Laurent A besotted discarded policeman.
Jules Besotted?
Laurent Yes. He brought with him a half empty bottle.
bartender So he paid by wine instead of money. Wine is more worth than money.

Jules Quiet, Legros! There is something out of order here! Lola must not fall in love with someone else!

Laurent That's what I mean. I always did pay, you know, and handsomely.

Jules You have been the victim of an infamous coup, my friend! But that abortive policeman will get what he deserves!

(enter Dupont in a state of bliss.)

Dupont Good morning, gentlemen!

bartender Have you had a good sleep, monsieur Dupont?

Dupont I have slept for the first time in my life.

Laurent At my expense.

Jules Keep quiet! How come that you have slept so well, Dupont?

Dupont I had such good company in my sleep.

Jules Who, if I may ask?

Dupont The finest lady in the world.

Jules And all you did was to sleep?

Dupont Yes, afterwards.

Jules After what?

Dupont After the dishes.

Laurent What dishes?

Dupont The bottlebrush.

Jules And the bill?

Dupont What bill?

Jules Lola always charge.

Dupont I have no money. I am fired.

Jules Unfortunately I happen to be Lola's manager. If Lola's customer doesn't pay I have to insist on being paid instead.

Dupont But I have no money.

Jules Then I must demand some other payment.

Dupont Like what?

Jules Monsieur knows how to wash dishes. He can wash the dishes for Legros here, and then he can compensate me.

Legros By what?

Jules Cash, of course.

Legros We offer no cash here, only alcohol.

Dupont I have a suggestion. Let's gamble about it. If you win I will wash the dishes for Legros until he has paid you enough in drinks. If I win I get Lola. What about it?

Jules And what game will you play? Russian roulette?

Dupont There is only one honest game here in France. You poculate until the other one is under the table. We will both be in debt to Legros, but the loser will pay.

Jules One can win more than the other.

Dupont But I have a handicap, for I am broke and out of work. You have money.

bartender It's a fair proposition.

Jules That dry greenhorn should be easy to liquidate. I accept the deal. Let's start with Calvados! The first one to drop down or puke has lost!

Dupont *D'accord!*

bartender To demonstrate my impartiality I beg to further the deal by offering, it's all on the house! *Servez-vous!* (*presents a bottle of Calvados. Jules fills up two glasses.*)

Jules Are they on the level?

Dupont Exactly!

Jules Drink! (*Both drink. Jules finishes first. More and more have entered, curious about the duel.*)

Dupont (*puts down his glass*) I am finished.

Jules I finished a year before you. Next one! Napoleon! Fill them up, *bartender!*

Legros (*fills them*) What barbarity! What a waste! What excitement!

Dupont (*takes his glass*) Ready?

Jules Get going! (*they drink. Dupont finishes first.*)

Dupont (*when Jules has finished*) It was a decade since I finished.

Jules (*to the others*) He didn't spill anything on the floor? (*all deny it.*)

(*To Dupont:*) Who the devil taught you to drink?

Dupont My mother didn't have Coca Cola in her breasts.

bartender Third round! What is your pleasure, gentlemen?

Dupont Pure Pernod!

bartender At your service! (*fills the glasses*)

Pierre That's what I call a real duel, when the gentlemen never tire of drawing new weapons!

bartender (*to Pierre*) Just wait until they bring the grenades.

Jules Ready! Steady!

Dupont Drink! (*they drink. They finish at the same time.*)

bartender Draw! You are still equal!

Jules If no one falls, the points will give the verdict.

Dupont And if both fall?

Jules Are you so green that you haven't even learned to avoid wishful thinking?

bartender Monsieur Jules has chosen weapons twice, Monsieur Dupont only once. It's your turn now, Monsieur Dupont.

Dupont (*boldly*) Armagnac!

Jules You sugary rootbrush!

Dupont Bottlebrush, if you please.

bartender Gentlemen, I must ask you to stick to the subject. Or else you will risk not finding your way back.

Jules I always find my way back!

Dupont To any cunt at all?

bartender Gentlemen, you are supposed to drink and not to fight!

Pierre (*to the others*) Stand by to interfere if anyone would deal blows under the belt!

Jules I'll bet that your bottlebrush is shaggy like a fur of old rot and cheese!

Dupont Brother, let's drink, forget and forgive and fight unto the bitter end! Cheers! (*starts drinking*)

Jules False start!

Dupont Sorry! My mistake!

Jules I demand his glass being filled to the brim again!

Pierre Drink instead the equal amount yourself, Jules.

bartender That's fair.
Jules (drinks) Are you happy now? (*puts down his glass.*)
Dupont He has had more than I!
Jules And how the devil could I in my condition decide exactly how much to drink to get down to your level?
Dupont Let's do like this. (*pours some over into Jules' glass.*)
Jules Cheat! (*pours plenty over into Dupont's.*)
bartender Gentlemen! Stick to the rules!
Dupont I only tried to help you on your way. (*pours some back to make the glasses perfectly equal.*)
Jules What rules? (*throws his Armagnac into Dupont's face.*)
Dupont That's not fair! (*throws his into Jules' face.*)
Pierre They are out of order!
bartender My poor Armagnac! Only the stickiness remains!
Jules (cries) Champagne!
Dupont (also) Champagne!
bartender Bottles or glasses?
Jules One glass at a time! We must stay sober!
Dupont As far as possible.
bartender Champagne was the order. (*uncorks a bottle professionally. Not a drop is lost.*)
Pierre Ladies and gentlemen! The most exciting duel of the year is taking place here and now! It's the hardest pimp of Paris against a discarded commissaire! The odds are even! Who has the more ice in his stomach? A professional gangster or a ditched policeman? Wage your bets!
Clou-Clou Ten on Jules!
Frou-Frou Twenty on the cop!
Gigi Thirty on my pimp!
Jou-Jou Fifty on the little one!
Lili Hundred on the pro!
(all speculate eagerly. The Champagne glasses are now filled.)
bartender Ready! Steady! Raise your glasses!
Pierre Spilling is forbidden!
Jules Who is spilling?
Dupont Stop spilling!
Jules Stop spilling yourself, you drivelling dolt! (*throws his champagne over him.*)
Dupont You are cheating! (*throws his champagne over Jules.*)
Bartender Another draw! Next round! (*refills the glasses.*)
Jules (to Pierre) Just you wait until I bring up the knuckle-dusters!
Lola (enters) Jules! Ernest!
Jules (dusturbed) What Ernest? Who the devil is Ernest?
Lola (disorientated) What are they doing?
Malou I have no idea, but they are both drunk.
Pierre They try to drink each other under the table.
Lola Stop this nonsense at once!
Jules (has raised his glass, fails in bringing it to his mouth, pours it by mistake on the floor)
 Beeeeeeeeer! (*collapses*)

bartender The victor! (*raising Dupont's arm*)

Lola (*gets up to Dupont*) Have you drunk Jules under the table, Ernest?

Dupont (*groggy*) No, he did it all by himself.

bartender Hereby the pimp Jules is pronounced bankrupt of his monopoly of Lola and her income!

Lola Have I lost Jules?

Pierre Yes, Lola. Whom do you choose instead?

bartender Ernest Dupont has defeated Jules, but Lola has the right to choose anyone and no one at all as she pleases.

Lola May I choose anyone for a new protector and partner?

bartender Yes, Lola. You are entirely free.

Lola (*takes Dupont under his arm*) Then I take the copper!

bartender Hereby Ernest Dupont is appointed Lola's new pimp by Lola herself. Long live our new pimp!

(Alla cheer, celebrate and are happy.)

Dupont (*when things calm down*) Have I really got a new job?

Lola Yes, Ernest, and the best one in the world!

Frou-Frou I have some news from the police!

all What then?

Frou-Frou Our street will from now on be left alone by new policemen!

(A wave of enthusiasm. All celebrate even more and are happy.)

Lola Still we have a policeman, our only real policeman, and he will always be our only real policeman, and he is my own Ernest Dupont! (*Another wave of exultation.*)

Frou-Frou Speak to us, Dupont, our saviour!

(Dupont is brought forth, placed standing on a chair, then a table, but he has to be supported.)

Dupont (*groggy*) My friends, it's a great honour for me to serve my uniform here on your own street, I mean, my discarded uniform, I mean... (*gets lost*)

(All exult in laughter and hilarity.)

Frou-Frou More! More!

Dupont (*makes an effort*) I mean, my friends, that this is the happiest day in my life. (*has a blackout at last.*)

bartender He is yours now, Lola. Make sure he behaves from now on.

Lola I will do my best. Give me a hand here! (*Her sisters assist her in carrying out Dupont and into the hotel.*)

bartender Please remove the other body as well.

Pierre (*to Jules*) Come, brother, let's go.

(The bartender splashes some water in his face.)

Jules (*wakes up*) What? What happened?

bartender (*his hands on his hips*) What happened? Yes, you have proved yourself more than despicable, my friend!

Jules (*groggy*) How so?

Bartender You lousy old illiterate grog freak! Don't you know that you can never have a beer after a glass of champagne? You got indeed what you deserved! Never come back here again to defoul my bar!

Jules And Lola?

bartender You'll never see her again! You made yourself unworthy of her! Take him away!

Jules What did really happen?

Pierre If you lost one, there are thousands more waiting for you.

Jules Bottles?

Pierre No, girls.

Jules That's the same thing!

Pierre That depends on how you look at it.

Jules From the point of view of the bottlebrush.

Pierre Don't turn into another imbecile like Dupont now!

Jules He will go far indeed.

Pierre He has already gone too far. He got all the way here.

Jules But he won't get any further.

Pierre No, probably not, for now he is established.

Jules It's time to get a pension, Pierre.

Pierre No deal. In our profession you can always start all over from the beginning.

Jules But at length it wears you out.

Pierre Only if your bottlebrush is bent.

Jules You are right! It must never slacken!

Pierre Come now, you old washing rag! (*gets Jules out of there.*)

bartender Let this now be a lesson to you all, my friends, and a step forward on the eternal course of education in the field of wine and its secrets! Never drink beer!

Curtain.