

THE MOONSHINE VINE

Translated and adapted by Frank J. Morlock

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<http://www.cadytech.com/dumas/personnage.asp?key=130>

Etext by Dagny

NOTE: The Moonshine Vine is an adaptation of an anonymous French play of the type that used to be staged at fairs in the 19th century. It was given an American setting.

The Lady
Her Husband
The Washerwoman
The Old Woman
The Police Officer
A Marine
A Cow
A Butcher

5 men, 3 women with the possibility of doubling some parts.

The action takes place in a rural area of a an unidentified country

(The stage represents a comfortable room. A person is seated at a table covered with manuscripts. He's working seriously which is proved by the fact he consults a large dictionary from time to time. His wife who is young and pretty rushes in, very fashionably dressed.)

WIFE: I'm ready! (Husband turns the pages of the dictionary with close attention) (louder) I am ready!

HUSBAND: (still at his dictionary) So much the better!

WIFE: Look at me!

HUSBAND: (nose in his dictionary) I am looking at you.

WIFE: Liar!

HUSBAND: (still working) Me? A liar?

WIFE: You told me you are looking at me, and you're not looking at me. You're looking at your old book.

HUSBAND: (still fumbling through his dictionary) Excuse me, my work

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WIFE: (weeping) You don't love me any more!

HUSBAND: (raising his head) Yes, yes, I do. But my work.

WIFE: (squeaking like a rabbit) Am I not well dressed, well made up, and well shod? (showing him her legs)

HUSBAND: (staring flabbergasted) Oh!

WIFE: I am very pretty. I know it! My mirror told me so.

HUSBAND: Huh?

WIFE: (letting her skirt fall) Tell me the same thing as my mirror.

HUSBAND: Eh!

WIFE: Have you finished bleating?

HUSBAND: But

WIFE: Don't you realize that you are bleating?

HUSBAND: No.

WIFE: Then you're dumb.

HUSBAND: Oh!

WIFE: All you say is oh, ah, eh, but, huh. (tearfully) I am not happy.

HUSBAND: Why aren't you happy? I leave you alone.

WIFE: That's what displeases me! Occupy yourself with me instead of sticking your nose in your scribblings all the time.

HUSBAND: (eyes to heaven) To call the most scientific research scribblings!

WIFE: By the way. What are you working on?

HUSBAND: (gravely) The origins of the universe.

WIFE: That's something that took place a long while ago.

HUSBAND: That's why it's so difficult.

WIFE: How sad it is to have a husband who concerns himself with antiquarian things instead of admiring his wife in detail. (pulling up her skirt) Why, look at my legs.

HUSBAND: Yes, yes, Very fine quality.

WIFE: (letting her skirt fall) That's not what you should have said.

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HUSBAND: (in despair, hands over his face) My head! My poor head!

WIFE: You should have said: Oh, what beautiful legs.

HUSBAND: (calmly) What beautiful legs.

WIFE: You say it mechanically.

HUSBAND: (sighing) I say it as I think it.

WIFE: Say it with more enthusiasm.

HUSBAND: (calmly) What pretty legs.

WIFE: That's still mechanical.

HUSBAND: (exhausted) You wear me out.

WIFE: That's just the way men are! Love for them is just a brush fire. Soon out. Only women know how to love.

HUSBAND: But

WIFE: And who remain attached to the object of their desire. Come with me.

HUSBAND: Where are you going?

WIFE: To my cousin's. She doesn't live far away. A short walk.

HUSBAND: Impossible! My work.

WIFE: You've always disliked my family. You don't want to come to her party. It's her birthday. You prefer to busy yourself with idiocies, your origins of the universe!

HUSBAND: Excuse me! They are not idiocies. There is nothing more serious than the origins of the universe.

WIFE: Well, stay with them! I'm in my killing clothes. There will be men at my cousin's. Men who will know how to appreciate the beauty of my gorgeous legs.

HUSBAND: (starting) All the same! You aren't going to show your legs to your cousin's guests.

WIFE: (scornfully) Don't worry. I know how to behave in society. I'll find a good pretext.

HUSBAND: That's preposterous.

WIFE: What is preposterous is a husband who abandons his wife who is dressed up to annihilate other women at her cousin's party with her elegance.

HUSBAND: If you want to annihilate the other ladies at your cousin's party with your elegance, you don't need any help from me. I have no thought of annihilating them.

WIFE: Oh! Paul! Paul! Paul!

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HUSBAND: I know my name is Paul.

WIFE: You will live to regret your attitude. Goodbye! Remain with the origins of the universe! As for me, I am going to deploy my charms in an assembly of the highest society. Goodbye, Paul. May you not regret your indifference to the feelings of an ardent and passionate wife. (she leaves abruptly)

HUSBAND: (fists at his temple) Ouf! Ouf! Where was I? In the year 16294 before Prince Mini of Egypt who lived 5000 years before our era My head, my poor head. (someone knocks)

(A very pretty girl enters.)

WASHERWOMAN: Sir the Washerwoman.

HUSBAND: (nose in his dictionary) Put the linen in the kitchen.

WASHERWOMAN: Sir, I didn't bring any!

HUSBAND: (nose still in his dictionary) Oh, you've come for the dirty linen? I don't know where it is. My wife went out.

WASHERWOMAN: How lucky.

HUSBAND: To whom are you speaking?

WASHERWOMAN: That woman is always in the way.

HUSBAND: I'm at the point of proving that steam was first utilized in the year 70,294 before Mini

WASHERWOMAN: Sir, I love you.

HUSBAND: (startled) Huh? What did you say?

WASHERWOMAN: (speaking in a monotonous tone) Sir, it's been a long while since I wrote a letter on this paper. I am going to read it to you and I've learned it by heart. "Sir, I love you. You are my only thought, my only ideal, and my only happiness. Sir! I think about you day and night; in the day my thoughts fly towards you, and at night I imagine you are stretched out in my bed, which is a proof of love no one can dispute. I love you. In my eyes you are an accomplished man, handsome, distinguished, intelligent. All other men seem to me, in comparison to you, stupid, inept, insipid. I love you, I suffer that you are married, for I was the woman God intended for your wife. I know that you are united by sacred chains, but I can no longer submit to my martyrdom. I love you. I must tell you of my love. It's too strong for me. I know that, acting as I am, I am committing a great sin, but I am going to confess myself. I love you. You are my idol. And that's all."

HUSBAND: Get hold of yourself, miss.

WASHERWOMAN: I waited for the departure of your spouse to come make my declaration.

HUSBAND: I'm very much obliged to you for it.

WASHERWOMAN: Tell me that you love me.

HUSBAND: Listen, miss, you surprise me in the midst of my work.

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WASHERWOMAN: You are a very intelligent man, right?

HUSBAND: Oh!

WASHERWOMAN: You must understand this is a great love.

HUSBAND: You take me a little unawares.

WASHERWOMAN: Don't you find me pretty?

HUSBAND: (looking at her) Yes, indeed, yes, indeed.

WASHERWOMAN: (pulling up her skirt) Look at the pretty stockings I put on for you!

HUSBAND: Evidently. They're very pretty.

WASHERWOMAN: You say nothing of the legs in those stockings.

HUSBAND: I mean ah!

WASHERWOMAN: I'll show you that, too. This is only the beginning.

HUSBAND: You are goodness itself, miss, and believe me, I am very sensible of

WASHERWOMAN: (letting her skirt fall) Kiss me, if you please.

HUSBAND: Frankly, miss you make me rather very uncomfortable.

WASHERWOMAN: Oh. No need to be uncomfortable with me!

HUSBAND: My wife isn't here.

WASHERWOMAN: That works out fine. When you kiss a woman not your wife, surely it's when your wife is not about.

HUSBAND: And she might return at any minute.

WASHERWOMAN: Where did she go?

HUSBAND: To her cousin's on the other side of a little woods.

WASHERWOMAN: On the other side of a little woods? You'll never see her again.

HUSBAND: Don't give me hopes.

WASHERWOMAN: You don't believe me! Are you unaware that in the little woods there is a vine called the Moonshine Vine? It causes those who tread on it to lose their way and gives them the most bizarre looks.

HUSBAND: Miss, I am a scientist to whom one must not tell old wives' tales.

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WASHERWOMAN: Sir, I am not an old wife! (weeping) Oh, you treat me like an old wife. That's not nice! All the same (pulling up her skirts) Look at my legs! Don't they please you?

HUSBAND: I told you before already. They please me a lot.

WASHERWOMAN: I love you!

HUSBAND: I am very grateful to you for it.

WASHERWOMAN: (letting her skirt fall) Well, then kiss me.

HUSBAND: My work prevents me.

WASHERWOMAN: Don't hold yourself back!

HUSBAND: I am a man of learning.

WASHERWOMAN: Well, study me.

HUSBAND: I am overwhelmed, miss.

WASHERWOMAN: That's not enough! I love you. Tell me you love me!

HUSBAND: The world took hundreds of millions of years to form

WASHERWOMAN: Love is quicker. Do I please you? Or don't I please you?

HUSBAND: You are very pretty, that's evident.

WASHERWOMAN: Then what are you waiting for? Embrace me! What? In despair, I, too, will go into the little wood where the Moonshine Vine will cause me to vanish to I don't know where and change me into I don't know what!

HUSBAND: After all, you're right! You are charming and desirable! Ah? My wife treats me like a pen pusher and a library rat. Wait a bit!

WASHERWOMAN: I am waiting. But waiting is tiresome.

HUSBAND: After all, I'm a man like other men. An opportunity presents itself. Go to it! (jumps on her)

WASHERWOMAN: Ah Paul!

HUSBAND: You know my name?

WASHERWOMAN: Yes, my Paul. Ah, how nice it is in your arms.

HUSBAND: Is it true?

WASHERWOMAN: Is it ever true? Happily your wife will never return, thanks to the Moonshine Vine.

HUSBAND: Let's hope so! What's your name?

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WASHERWOMAN: My name is Pauline.

(The door opens and a filthy old woman appears. A kind of ragged sorceress with a wand.)

OLD WOMAN: This is nice!

HUSBAND: Indeed, I think it is nice. She's a washerwoman.

OLD WOMAN: The situation is dramatic! A husband has a woman not his wife clasped in his arms. The man is ridiculous to the whole world.

HUSBAND: I ask myself, what's it to you if I kiss a woman not my wife?

WASHERWOMAN: She's unbalanced.

OLD WOMAN: Miserable accomplice of an unworthy husband, I will not allow you to insult a woman who is distinguished, elegant, and ravishing. Vanish, girl from nowhere. Cajoler of men who belong to others. Or I'll break my stick on your back.

WASHERWOMAN: Put yourself in front of me, my dear love, so that the blows from her stick will fall on you and not on me.

HUSBAND: (pursued by the old woman and shielding the washerwoman with his body from her blows) Old sorceress, I order you to get out of here!

OLD WOMAN: (brandishing her stick) Not satisfied with surrendering yourself to lust with someone other than me, you intend for me to sacrifice myself to your filthy work.

HUSBAND: I forbid you to speak to me like that!

OLD WOMAN: (stopping, eyes to heaven) A fine creature! To make me get out of my own home!

HUSBAND: You don't understand what that means in plain English?

OLD WOMAN: Plain English? You've got some nerve!

WASHERWOMAN: She stepped on the Moonshine Vine. She doesn't realize what she's become.

HUSBAND: Stop your flourishings with that big stick. You are going to do some harm.

OLD WOMAN: You take my umbrella for a big stick. You are hallucinating.

HUSBAND: Pauline, go find a cop to arrest this intruder.

OLD WOMAN: Intruder? In my own home? I'm going to beat you unmercifully.

HUSBAND: Hurry, Pauline!

(Pauline rushes out. The Old Woman drops her stick.)

OLD WOMAN: Now that she's gone I am ready to forgive you!

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HUSBAND: Forgive me for what?

OLD WOMAN: Don't be an imbecile! Your only excuse is that you are behaving like all other men when the opportunity presents itself.

HUSBAND: (picking up the stick and holding it firmly with both hands behind his back) My good woman

OLD WOMAN: I forbid you to call me your good woman! I am in the Spring of my youth.

HUSBAND: I have had enough of this. The young girl

OLD WOMAN: (dramatically) That you were kissing!

HUSBAND: That young woman was recounting a tale of the Moonshine Vine which doesn't grow on the brain of my sceptical science.

OLD WOMAN: You are right. She babbles stupidities! Fall in my arms! All is forgiven. With men, women have to be flexible.

HUSBAND: Decamp immediately!

OLD WOMAN: At the moment I am showing you great indulgence, I beg you: Don't be vulgar!

HUSBAND: If you don't decamp

OLD WOMAN: Again?

HUSBAND: The cop will throw you in jail.

OLD WOMAN: In jail? Me?

HUSBAND: Listen! Let's stop this. What is it you want? Charity? You have a funny way of asking for it !

OLD WOMAN: Yes, it's charity I ask for! The charity of your inviolate love despite your culpable weakness for the Washerwoman. My poor friend, I see how things stand. You stepped on the Moonshine Vine and your wits are turned. You don't recognize me.

HUSBAND: The Moonshine Vine again! You are getting on my nerves.

OLD WOMAN: Paul, Paul. Remember me. (she pulls up her skirts) Look at my legs. They are the most beautiful in the country.

HUSBAND: Leave the country in peace.

OLD WOMAN: Paul You are hurting me a lot.

HUSBAND: Lower your skirt. It's indecent.

OLD WOMAN: Beauty is never indecent.

HUSBAND: You are suffering from delusions! I order you to stop this disturbing exhibition and lower your skirt.

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OLD WOMAN: (letting her skirt fall) So be it! But tell yourself your stupidity excuses your fault. You no longer know what you are doing or you wouldn't have kissed the Washerwoman. I am going to bring you back to me, to care for you! to pet you! to cover you with kisses.

HUSBAND: And the cop doesn't come!

OLD WOMAN: (jumping on him) Ah! I've got you! Paul! Remember our embrace! I will save you from your dreadful illness.

HUSBAND: Will you kindly release me?

OLD WOMAN: Smell my hair!

HUSBAND: Smell your scrubby wig! How horrible!

OLD WOMAN: I will never let you go again.

HUSBAND: Have you finished choking me?

(The Washerwoman returns.)

WASHERWOMAN: The cop is not at his post. (pathetically) Oh, Paul. What you are doing is criminal. To cheat on a love like mine with an old monster. After I've destroyed myself, you'll be remorseful. But it will be too late!

OLD WOMAN: Don't listen to her. She has surely trampled on the Moonshine Vine and she, too, cannot see my beauty.

WASHERWOMAN: I who am young and in the Spring of my youth. Must I see the man I love in the arms of an octogenarian!

OLD WOMAN: The Spring of my youth is worth more than yours, my little one.

HUSBAND: This situation cannot continue!

OLD WOMAN: That's my opinion, indeed.

(Pauline curls up in the chair and peeks into the scribblings.)

HUSBAND: (desperately trying to free himself from the grasp of the old woman) Pauline, I beg you, don't soak my documents on the origin of the universe with your tears! That's going to screw everything up!

PAULINE: (tearfully) You don't love me any more.

HUSBAND: (still trying to free himself) For once I was at peace without my wife and I could follow my inclinations. Here comes this old vampire who ruins a unique opportunity.

OLD WOMAN: Paul! You're going beyond all bounds!

PAULINE: (in tears) You can't expect anyone to believe that you can't break the grip of an octogenarian! You must be a pervert! Ah, my life is ruined!

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HUSBAND: Ah? I can't break the grip, eh? That's too much. Pauline, you are going to see what you are going to see! (dragging the old woman to the door)

OLD WOMAN: Paul! Don't jostle me.

HUSBAND: From respect for your sex, I've kept within polite bounds. But I no longer know them. (pulling her violently towards the door)

OLD WOMAN: (clinging to him) Paul! What you are doing exceeds in horror the greatest infamies committed since the creation of the universe!

HUSBAND: The creation of the universe is my business! (he hurls her out the door)

OLD WOMAN: (shouting outside) Paul! Paul! I am going to show my legs to all my cousin's guests. That's what you are asking for!

HUSBAND: (going to Pauline, hiccuping) What a scandal! What an unbelievable scandal! Look, Pauline, you don't for a minute think being hugged by a witch gives me any pleasure, do you?

PAULINE: She's not a witch she's your wife.

HUSBAND: I beg you not to keep saying that!

PAULINE: It's the truth! And I was crying because you were in your wife's arms!

HUSBAND: Be reasonable, Pauline. Come on, kiss me.

PAULINE: I forgive you, but you don't deserve it.

HUSBAND: Come to my arms! (they entwine and kiss)

PAULINE: I am feeling better!

HUSBAND: So much the better

PAULINE: Kiss me some more. (they kiss again)

HUSBAND: What a contrast with the other one.

PAULINE: There's nothing special about me?

HUSBAND: She wanted me to smell her hair!

PAULINE: Smell mine!

HUSBAND: As you wish!

PAULINE: (pulling away with a distracted air) Ah! ah! ah!

HUSBAND: What's wrong with you?

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PAULINE: After she stepped on the Moonshine Vine she was changed into an octogenarian. If only that were forever. If she steps on it again, she's capable of becoming as beautiful as she was before. (tearfully) I will never be reconciled to that!

HUSBAND: Ravishing Pauline, once and for all, forget that ridiculous superstition; it is unworthy of the century in which we live.

PAULINE: You are right to say you are a sceptic.

HUSBAND: Stop this unreasonable nonsense.

PAULINE: When a woman is in love, she's always uneasy.

HUSBAND: Pauline, throw yourself into my arms.

PAULINE: (in his arms) With pleasure.

HUSBAND: Kiss me.

PAULINE: (kissing him) Effusively!

HUSBAND: My wife has a difficult character. You will be my consolation.

PAULINE: With passion! (knocking at the door) It's she! (Pauline pulls away)

HUSBAND: You can never get any peace and quiet. Who's there?

VOICE: (outside) The Cop.

PAULINE: (with a sigh of relief) I prefer that.

HUSBAND: (opening the door) Me, too.

COP: You want me for something?

HUSBAND: Yes, officer, but you arrived too late.

COP: That's always the case. What happened?

HUSBAND: Miss Pauline.

COP: Hello, Miss Pauline.

PAULINE: Hello, officer.

HUSBAND: Miss Pauline came to get a bag of laundry. My wife was out. I was looking for the bag, when suddenly

(The Cop sits down and lights his pipe.)

HUSBAND: A woman of eighty years old entered

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COP: Are you sure of her age?

HUSBAND: Within a few years.

COP: This isn't really serious.

HUSBAND: Let me finish

COP: Have you got a light?

HUSBAND: Here

COP: (lighting up) Thanks.

HUSBAND: Then, this old woman, this old harpy, approached me, made incoherent remarks to me, threw herself at me, and insisted on "Conjugal caresses".

COP: Case is solved. She's a mad woman.

HUSBAND: She showed me her legs.

COP: What for?

HUSBAND: I have no idea! She seemed to be under the delusion they were attractive. Then she tried to kill us, Miss Pauline and me. I sent Miss Pauline to find you.

COP: Did the right thing, 'cause with me, no time to waste.

HUSBAND: I was forced to throw her out before you got here.

COP: Under the circumstances, no need for a jury trial.

HUSBAND: That's what happened.

COP: And that's fine, fine, fine.

HUSBAND: Fine? That's going a little far.

COP: No use beating a dead horse.

HUSBAND: (stiffly) I regret having needlessly disturbed you.

COP: Oh, it doesn't disturb me. My shift is over for the day.

HUSBAND: (uneasy) Completely?

COP: Completely. Nothing more to do until after supper.

HUSBAND: And when do you eat?

COP: In two hours.

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HUSBAND: You dine late.

COP: Oh, not really.

HUSBAND: You don't go home to rest between your tours of duty, do you?

COP: I prefer to go elsewhere. At home my wife is always scolding me a bit. I'm more at ease at the Donut Shoppe. (Pauline exchanges an anguished look with Paul)

COP: See, I'm very content just to be here.

HUSBAND: Me, too. I'm very happy to see you.

COP: I want to ask you a question. Last week, I was paid a visit by your cousin.

HUSBAND: He's a charming man.

COP: Charming. He made me drink a whiskey. Really, a whiskey. I've never had anything like it. I wasn't sure how matters stood. Then he said: "You don't have to go a long way to get another one like it. My cousin, the Professor has two good casks of it. Just a short way from you." He meant you, of course.

HUSBAND: (excitedly) He's mistaken. I don't have a drop of alcohol in my house. My wife forbids me to drink.

COP: In that case, you've probably got it hidden behind the woodpile.

HUSBAND: I assure you, no, officer.

COP: Still, your cousin

HUSBAND: My cousin drinks too much.

COP: All the same he's a great guy, your cousin. He told me you also have some Champagne.

HUSBAND: But what made him tell you such things?

COP: He couldn't have invented

HUSBAND: The alcohol was fermenting in his brain and confused him

COP: He carries his liquor very well. And his mind was sharp.

HUSBAND: I don't understand a word, not a word of his insinuations.

PAULINE: (worn out) Gentlemen, I bid you goodbye.

HUSBAND: (desperate) Are you leaving, Miss Pauline?

PAULINE: It's getting late. I'll return another day to square accounts.

HUSBAND: (excitedly) Not at all! Not at all! I'm going to give you a bill. Come here, Miss Pauline. (leading her to a chair) Money is needed for commerce. (very low voice) Go quickly and give this twenty dollars to the

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beadle's boy and tell him to ring the alarm.

PAULINE: Good idea. (aloud) Goodbye, sir. Goodbye, officer.

HUSBAND AND COP: Goodbye, Miss Pauline.

(She leaves hurriedly.)

HUSBAND: She's very sweet, this Miss Pauline.

COP: Yeah, but she doesn't have a good reputation.

HUSBAND: (startling) What are you saying?

COP: It's funny.

HUSBAND: (controlling himself) You find that funny?

COP: That your cousin made such a mistake.

HUSBAND: I thought you were talking about Miss Pauline.

COP: No indeed. She's not an interesting person.

HUSBAND: (anxiously) You think so?

COP: I know what I know.

HUSBAND: What do you know?

COP: That you are hiding a whiskey still.

HUSBAND: You have a one track mind.

COP: Not me. I tell myself, if I didn't have such a long way to go to get some great moonshine whiskey as good as your cousin's, my life would be

HUSBAND: You only think of moonshine whiskey.

COP: (lugubrious) That can't be in question here any more. (the alarm bell sounds) Must be a catastrophe!

HUSBAND: There's a fire in town. Evidently it is a catastrophe.

COP: (looking complacently towards heaven) I was talking about the moonshine whiskey. Which was only a hope.

Husband: You hear the alarm?

COP: Are you sure it's the alarm?

HUSBAND: You must be hard of hearing.

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COP: Me? Hard of hearing? Who can say that? I've got the trained ear of a police officer.

HUSBAND: Then, what do you hear?

COP: A bell.

HUSBAND: It's the alarm bell, I tell you.

COP: Sometimes that might be true, but with your stories about moonshine, I doubt it.

HUSBAND: (solemnly) It's your duty.

COP: (not budging) I'm going.

HUSBAND: (exasperated) I've had enough of seeing you so calm! What is it all about? Are you really not going to rush to manage the conflagration?

COP: (worried) Manage the conflagration?

HUSBAND: You make me splutter with your tranquil air! You've got to go keep back the crowd of onlookers.

COP: (rising, very annoyed) How can I keep back the crowd all by myself? And my shift is over already.

HUSBAND: When duty calls it's your duty to work after your shift is over.

COP: Thanks for telling me my job. But it's tough all the same.

HUSBAND: Go, officer, go.

COP: I'm going, sir, I'm going. But with death in my heart.

(The Husband slams the door behind him.)

HUSBAND: Vanish, infamous slanderer, who gossips about the reputation of Pauline who is purity itself 'cause she loves me! Go! Go! Run find whoever rang the false alarm. Use your flat feet to pursue the beadle's little boy who has twenty bucks in his pocket. I'd rather cut off my arms and legs than let you taste my moonshine. Moonshine that I am going to drink when my unbearable wife is out visiting or asleep. Ah! You interrupted the ravishing hugs of Pauline? Ah! You outstay your welcome? Ah! You wasted my time? Run, feet, after that beadle's boy. But you'll never catch him 'cause he's even faster than you are! (knocking) Is it you, Pauline? O joy! My wife is, as I know only too well, in the process of exposing her legs to the guests at her cousin's. (more knocking) But you, you are the adorable mystery of woman. The one that is unknown in detail. (opens the door)

(A superb Marine in dress uniform appears.)

MARINE: Hello, Paul.

HUSBAND: (astounded) You know me?

MARINE: (entering with authority) Paul, don't play the fool!

HUSBAND: Sir, I do not allow you

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MARINE: Shut up! Take me in your arms and give me an interminable, languishing kiss!

HUSBAND: (retreating behind the table) Sir, I have a horror of jokes that are in doubtful taste.

MARINE: Listen, Paul. You've got to be reasonable.

HUSBAND: You insinuate that I am mad? Return to your barracks and await my seconds!

MARINE: Don't I look ravishing?

HUSBAND: Evidently! Your uniform is very pretty! Anyway, I ask myself how you got here. There's no Marine base around here.

MARINE: (brandishing his sword) Paul, if you continue, I am going to have you confined.

HUSBAND: Will you please stop brandishing that dangerous weapon!

MARINE: Are you speaking of my umbrella? There's something about it that distracts you today. Just now you were telling me that it was a cudgel. Now you say it's a sword.

HUSBAND: (conciliatory) Listen, sir. We're all men here, and, between reasonable men, I dare hope that, despite your truly extravagant way of entering my house

MARINE: Since you are speaking more sedately, I am quite ready to forgive all your brutalities just now when you shoved me out the door.

HUSBAND: I shoved you out the door?

MARINE: Yes, to remain shut up with the laundress! That breaks my heart!

HUSBAND: It's you who need to be confined! I don't understand how your commanding officer let you leave your camp! You are a public danger.

MARINE: Paul, I am speaking to you calmly. Why do you say I am a Marine?

HUSBAND: Because you are! Do you know what you are? Yes or no? This uniform, these boots, these braids

MARINE: I have braids? Me? You treat me like a Marine. But, it's less vexing than hearing myself called a witch, a vampire, or a monstrous octogenarian by you.

HUSBAND: Now you pretend you are that old octogenarian witch? This is unheard of.

MARINE: What witch? There's no witch! Just me! Me alone! Ah, Paul, Paul, look how pretty and well made my legs are.

HUSBAND: Legs again? This is incomprehensible! The two sexes speak only of their legs, show only their legs. It's becoming a fashion nowadays.

MARINE: Paul, I repeat to you what I said before. Come back to me!

THE MOONSHINE VINE

HUSBAND: (hand over his face) My head is spinning. Too much emotion for one day. I see witches and Marines whirling before my eyes.

(Pauline enters.)

MARINE: (seeing Pauline, grabbing Paul) I've found you again, idol of my soul.

PAULINE: (seeing Paul in the arms of a Marine) I feel ill. (she totters and falls into a faint)

HUSBAND: (trying to escape) Pauline. Come to!

MARINE: Don't bother about her! Now she's fainted, she'll leave us alone.

HUSBAND: Before it was the Cop, now it's the Marine. There's a kind of fate preventing me from remaining alone with Pauline. It's revolting.

MARINE: Don't call me a vampire any more. Or a witch or a Marine.

HUSBAND: My head is boiling over.

(The Cop enters.)

MARINE: (still grasping Paul) Give me that interminable, languishing kiss that I just asked for.

COP: (dropping his night stick) For God's sake!

MARINE: (loosening his grip) What's that noise?

COP: I am speechless.

HUSBAND: Officer, deliver me from this Homoerotic Horsemarine! The Marines have landed.

COP: (sourly) He's no more a Marine than that was a fire. And the alarm was a false alarm.

HUSBAND: There's something strange in all this!

MARINE: Officer, you are a reasonable man. Understand me! My husband is the victim of an illness as secret as it is horrible.

COP: Who are you, sir?

MARINE: The wife of my husband.

COP: What's this, sir? You, a man respected in the community

HUSBAND: I am going to confess everything to you.

COP: (turning away his face) What am I going to hear?

HUSBAND: It's a fact. I have a still.

THE MOONSHINE VINE

COP: I can breathe again.

HUSBAND: Just now, besieged by an old fury, I sent for you. You came too late. But, by an extraordinarily rare piece of luck, you returned just as this Marine had the unheard of pretension to rape me. Rid me of this extravagant presence and I'll give you two little bottles of moonshine.

COP: Agreed! Ha! My fine lad! You are dealing with high class folks. (punching the Marine) I wasn't able to catch the prankster who rang the false alarm. But you, I've got you. And that will do. (dragging the struggling Marine to the door)

MARINE: This is a scandal. I am in my own home and the police are putting me out!

COP: I forbid you to bite me.

MARINE: I am a martyr.

COP: If you keep scratching my neck I will kick you in the ass, my little friend!

MARINE: I am going back to my cousin! And I will show my legs one more time. TO THE WHOLE COMPANY! IN FACT I'LL DO A STRIP TEASE. (punches the Cop and runs out)

COP: (calmly) I'll catch him, Professor. Later. (noticing Pauline) Miss Pauline is asleep in the chair?

HUSBAND: Don't you worry about Miss Pauline! I am going to wake her up. Run after the Marine and catch him.

COP: No hurry.

HUSBAND: Run, I say.

COP: (more and more calm) Okay, I'll run. I'll return for those two little bottles. At your service. (picks up his truncheon and leaves)

HUSBAND: Thanks from the bottom of my heart! Ah, Darling Pauline. She hasn't come to. I'm going to take advantage so as to kiss her till I'm satisfied. (kissing her ardently) How convenient if the woman is unconscious. (continuing to kiss her) You can do whatever you like. Ah, what fine skin. It's delirious. It's exquisite.

PAULINE: Not my neck. That makes me scream.

HUSBAND: You're coming back to life. What joy!

PAULINE: Ah, Paul, Paul.

HUSBAND: Pauline.

PAULINE: What must I think of you.

HUSBAND: Appearances are against me, it's true.

PAULINE: Really?

THE MOONSHINE VINE

HUSBAND: But my soul is pure.

PAULINE: I'd like to believe it.

HUSBAND: The Cop can be my witness. He threw out the Marine.

PAULINE: (weeping) You are telling me lies. It's not possible that the cops came when they could be useful.

HUSBAND: Don't feel bad! He came after you had fainted in such a touching way. Look, Pauline, you ought to realize the arrival of the Marine was not natural.

PAULINE: That's what made me lose my senses.

HUSBAND: (eagerly) Let's hope you'll find them, Pauline.

PAULINE: That Marine was so handsome. And his uniform was so pretty. A military uniform has a certain effect. (knocking at the door)

HUSBAND: (eyes to heaven) Oh. I can't have a private conversation, even for a minute, with the woman I love. I'm disgusted.

(The Marine enters.)

MARINE: I came in since no one said, "Come in."

HUSBAND: This is too much. The cop didn't collar you!

MARINE: That cop is an alcoholic brute. He was looking for me while he was drinking. He didn't find me, so I've come back!

PAULINE: Ah! He's a handsome Marine! (throwing herself at him and twining around him) This uniform, these boots, these braids, these tight pants.

MARINE: Miss, will you please release me? What kind of manners are these? Is it because I wear tight pants?

PAULINE: (grabbing him) Oh! He's irresistible.

HUSBAND: (trying to pry Pauline off the Marine) Pauline, you are tearing my happiness to shreds.

MARINE: This is nice! You see the effect that has! Yes, you can see the effect that has . . . when the person you love throws herself into the arms of another under your eyes. Well, that's what you did to me!

HUSBAND: (trying to pull her to him) Pauline! I would never have believed this of you.

PAULINE: (molesting the Marine) What do you want? I'm a woman.

HUSBAND: That's not a reason.

PAULINE: (still clutching the Marine) There are moments when you please me a lot. But this Marine! Ah, this Marine! How perfectly made he is!

THE MOONSHINE VINE

MARINE: (struggling) Little horror. Don't you have any shame? And what manners! To twine around a woman when you are one. That's scandalous!

PAULINE: (still hugging) You stepped on the Moonshine Vine and you think you are a woman. That's not true! You are Mr. Perfect!

MARINE: You are scratching my back. That hurts me. I'm going to whack you.

PAULINE: (still hugging greedily) I prefer your whacks to anyone else's kisses. Whack me!

HUSBAND: (in despair) Pauline!

MARINE: I am avenged. Admire the fate of men who cheat. They are captivated by the first to come along. And she throws herself into the arms of the first to come along.

PAULINE: (squeezing harder) Oh, you are naughty to say I am the first to come!

MARINE: (getting loose) That's enough! Paul, remain with your laundress. You see what she wants! (she hurls Pauline into the arms of her husband and flees)

HUSBAND: (falling into a chair) Pauline, I am destroyed.

PAULINE: (sitting in his lap) Me, too.

HUSBAND: My sentimental life is over.

PAULINE: Mine, too

HUSBAND: Let's cry together.

PAULINE: Let's cry! But it's very sad to cry.

HUSBAND: (lugubriously) The Cop was right. Your reputation isn't very good. There's no smoke without fire.

PAULINE: Paul! That cop is a degenerate alcoholic. He speaks ill of every one 'cause he's always drunk.

HUSBAND: (lugubriously) My eyes don't deceive me.

PAULINE: Paul. Listen to me.

HUSBAND: No. You've caused me too much pain.

PAULINE: The Marine is gone! Let's not talk about him any more. He doesn't want me. That's a fact. But you remain to me. You must accept what fate gives you.

HUSBAND: That's easy for you to say after you preferred the whacks of that Marine to my ardent kisses.

PAULINE: Everything will be explained, believe me. This morning, through an inexplicable lack of prudence, I was picking strawberries in the woods. I must have stepped on the Moonshine Vine. And at the moment I saw the Marine, I wasn't myself. It was a passing distraction and very forgivable truly.

THE MOONSHINE VINE

HUSBAND: Women are given to very suspicious explanations.

PAULINE: You are always telling me that the Moonshine Vine is an old wives' tale. That's where you are wrong. Besides, it was only your wife I was pursuing with my attentions. So! Everything is straightened out.

HUSBAND: Ah! You know how to get me. Pauline, you are a creature of charm and sweetness. Adorable creature, I will cure you of your naiveté with the aid of my scientific method. We are at peace here now. Yes, alone at last. Let's resume the course of our dear studies. Excuse me. I am always buried in studies so I employ that beautiful expression. Let's resume the course of our tender embraces.

PAULINE: Very willingly.

HUSBAND: Return to my arms.

PAULINE: (leaping into his arms) Done!

HUSBAND: You were saying Not on the neck; it makes you scream.

PAULINE: It's too much for me.

(The Cop enters.)

HUSBAND: Now what?

COP: (dropping his night stick) Oh!

HUSBAND AND PAULINE: (moving apart) What?

COP: Pay no attention! I'm so emotional.

PAULINE: The emotion is ours!

COP: Have no fear. I am a graveyard of secrets. I never tell what I know about people.

HUSBAND: Hum! Hum!

COP: Just like I'm telling you.

HUSBAND: There's nothing to tell! I was showing Miss Pauline how that crazy Marine was behaving towards me.

COP: Right! Right! I came to take delivery of those bottles of whiskey.

HUSBAND: I'm going to get them.

COP: You have some Champagne, too. I really love Champagne.

HUSBAND: Two bottles of Champagne for you!

COP: Speaking of that Marine. He got away from me.

THE MOONSHINE VINE

HUSBAND: That's understandable. You stopped, I don't know how many times, to pick up your truncheon before pursuing him.

COP: They told me he fled into the woods. And Hell! I didn't want to go there for fear of the Moonshine Vine.

PAULINE: You see! The officer takes as iron truths the frightening powers of the Moonshine Vine. (something collides violently with the door)

HUSBAND: Who's knocking like that? It must be the Marine! Happily, you are here, officer.

COP: (picking up his truncheon) I'm here for the whiskey, but also to exercise my functions. (another collision)

HUSBAND: The door's not going to withstand it.

(A threatening cow comes in.)

COW: MOOO!

(The Cop, the husband and Pauline all seek refuge behind the table.)

COW: Paul! Paul! My adorable Paul!

HUSBAND: Officer. Hit it with your truncheon.

COP: (dropping his truncheon) A talking cow! Never in my life. It's an enchanted cow!

(The cow pursues them around the table.)

COW: You are back with the laundress. This is infamous. I'm going to kill her and you, too.

HUSBAND: She's going to gore us. Officer, go get the Butcher! He'll know what to do with her.

COW: After wanting to kick me out, now you want to deliver me to the Butcher!

HUSBAND: I am going to go with you. To help you find him.

COW: (barring his way) You shall not leave! Paul, I forgive you.

(He seeks refuge behind the table.)

HUSBAND: My head must be deranged.

COW: Kiss me on the lips!

HUSBAND: When will that Butcher get here?

COW: You don't want to kiss me on the lips?

HUSBAND: She's foaming at the mouth!

COW: Don't I have a pretty dress?

THE MOONSHINE VINE

HUSBAND: Yes, yes.

COW: Look. See how languid my eyes are.

HUSBAND: I'm having a flash. I feel I'm going to faint.

COW: (lying down) Come lie beside me. It will be very comfortable.

HUSBAND: I am drowning.

COW: Look at my pretty legs.

HUSBAND: Legs. The beasts, too.

COW: I am your life's companion. I am the person that will shut your eyes! If you don't sleep with me, I'll choke you and there will be no one to bury you.

HUSBAND: This is horrible.

COP'S VOICE: (outside) She just came in as if she owned the place.

BUTCHER'S VOICE: These animals are full of nastiness.

(The Butcher enters, in his smock, followed by the Cop, who hides behind him, and Pauline, who hides behind the cop.)

BUTCHER: Officer, you go probe her from behind. I am going to tie her horns with my chain. (the cow gets up erect) Yes, yes, old girl. I've known others like you. (the cow is on its feet, horns lowered) Are you ready, officer?

COP: (not bravely) I am. (drops his truncheon)

COW: Clumsy old fool!

BUTCHER: Who spoke?

COW: (advancing threateningly) Me! You assassin of innocent animals.

BUTCHER: The Cow!

COW: (taking a step forward) For whom do you take me, you ill-mannered fellow?

BUTCHER: A talking cow! Never seen that before.

COW: (charging him) I'll teach you to try to stick me in the butt. I'm going to whip your ass. (goring the Butcher in his kidneys)

BUTCHER: Yi! Yi! I've been gored.

(The cow chases the group out.)

COP: I'm going to call headquarters for reinforcements.

THE MOONSHINE VINE

COW: I spit on your reinforcements!

COP, PAULINE, BUTCHER: (outside) Help! Help! Help!

(Confused noises can be heard. Darkness falls.)

(BLACKOUT.)

COW'S VOICE: (in the distance) Paul! Paul! Paul! (a clock strikes three o'clock) Paul, it's three o'clock.

(The lights go up.)

(The Husband is dozing in his chair, head in his scribblings. His pretty wife appears in her beautiful dress.)

WIFE: Paul! (shaking him)

HUSBAND: Huh? What? Excuse me.

WIFE: A man who spends his time sleeping is ridiculous!

HUSBAND: My work tires me!

WIFE: We should have left already. Go get properly dressed. My cousin is expecting us. It's her birthday today.

HUSBAND: Birthday parties bore me.

WIFE: You always scorn my family. But you are coming to my cousin's party.

HUSBAND: It's going to interrupt my work.

WIFE: You mean you want to sleep some more. This isn't an office, it's a dormitory. You are going to thicken your blood by going to sleep after lunch.

HUSBAND: Might dream, too.

WIFE: Go get dressed. I am going to buy some perfume to intoxicate my cousin's guests. You'll find me in the perfume shop. And hurry up! (she leaves)

HUSBAND: The Moonshine Vine. Perhaps it's not a superstition. The Moonshine Vine. I must have stepped on it, since I made the mistake of marrying an unbearable wife!

CURTAIN