

THE INTERVIEW

by OCTAVE MIRBEAU

translated by WALTER WYKES

CHARACTERS

THE INTERVIEWER

CHAPUZOT, wine merchant

A WOMAN

SETTING

A wine shop; Paris, France

TIME

1890s

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THE INTERVIEW

[A wine shop. A door, left, opens onto the street. To the right of the door, a counter is covered with various bottles; behind the counter, more shelves, also covered with bottles, glasses, etc ... On the walls, various theater posters ... Tables, chairs.]

[CHAPUZOT, a large, red-faced figure, in shirt sleeves, arms bare, a towel around his neck, stands behind the counter rinsing glasses. A WOMAN, dressed very poorly, her face glazed over with the stunned mask of misery and drink, nurses a small glass of liquor. People pass in the street, behind the door, which reads: ... Wines and Liquors... Top-quality, 20 centimes.]

CHAPUZOT

So ... you know every morning won't be like this?

WOMAN

I know ... I know.

CHAPUZOT

What does he have?

WOMAN

A colic ... it's so pitiful. He's ... he's green ... really green ...

CHAPUZOT

What have you done?

WOMAN

Nothing ...

[She takes a big drink.]

... How do I know what to do? It isn't easy ... and we don't have any money ... so it's ... well, it's embarrassing.

CHAPUZOT

Give him two spoonfuls of coffee and bourbon ... in his milk.

WOMAN

You think so?

CHAPUZOT

It's amazing ... heats 'em right up ... cleans out the stomach ... any blockage ... it works wonders!

WOMAN

Two spoonfuls?

CHAPUZOT

Of coffee ... yes.

WOMAN

Well ... all right ... I'll try it, poor boy!

CHAPUZOT

For two, huh?

WOMAN

That's right!

[CHAPUZOT fills a small bottle.]

Ah ... it isn't fair ... three years ago, our oldest left for god knows where ...

CHAPUZOT

Well, yes ...

WOMAN

Last year ... the second died of a throat infection.

CHAPUZOT

Well, yes ...

WOMAN

And now this poor little one ...

[She drains the last bit from her glass.]

It's always the same ... anyway ... we look after them the best we can ...

CHAPUZOT

It's not enough to look after them ... you have to give them what they need.

[Giving her the bottle.]

Let me know when he's better ... and try not to make yourself sick ...

WOMAN

Well ... how much?

CHAPUZOT

Four cents ...

[He laughs.]

Less expensive than the pharmacist, huh?

WOMAN

That's true ...

CHAPUZOT

And tastes better?

WOMAN

For sure ...

[Paying.]

Four cents.

CHAPUZOT

Thank you.

WOMAN

I'd better go.

CHAPUZOT

Better health to you ...

WOMAN

Poor child!

[The WOMAN leaves. CHAPUZOT retrieves her glass and wipes it. Enter THE INTERVIEWER, a young man of twenty-five years with a pale complexion and a very thin, blonde moustache. A mixture of working-class stiff and shop clerk, he wears a flamboyant tie, flat-brimmed hat, and a camera around his neck.]

THE INTERVIEWER

Mr. Chapuzot, please?

CHAPUZOT

[Leaving the counter, very friendly.]

That's me ...

THE INTERVIEWER

Very good.

CHAPUZOT

What can I do for you?

THE INTERVIEWER

[Examining him carefully.]

Large ... dark hair ... forty-five years old ... short arms ... bestial face ... That's right.

CHAPUZOT

What's that?

THE INTERVIEWER

[He drops his camera on a table and hangs his hat on a hook.]

First, a beer!

CHAPUZOT

Here ... here ...

THE INTERVIEWER

Top of the line.

CHAPUZOT

Here ... here ...

[He serves a glass of beer.]

THE INTERVIEWER

You call that top of the line? ... Fine!

[He drinks the entire glass without stopping. CHAPUZOT retrieves the glass and sets it on the counter.]

Now, roll up your left sleeve.

CHAPUZOT

My left sleeve ... Sorry but ...

THE INTERVIEWER

Show me your arm.

CHAPUZOT

[Suspicious.]

Ah! that ... but ...

THE INTERVIEWER

[Forcefully.]

Let's go ... c'mon ...

CHAPUZOT

[Rolling up his sleeve.]

An inspector of vaccination, no doubt.

THE INTERVIEWER

[Examining Chapuzot's arm.]

Tattooed ... I suspected as much ... a vase of wallflowers between two hearts ...
Perfect, perfect ...

[He takes the camera from its case.]

All right ... ready?

CHAPUZOT

[Anxiously.]

What are you doing?

THE INTERVIEWER

Don't move ... for god's sake ...

[He aims the camera.]

CHAPUZOT

So ... you're what—a photographer?

INTERVIEW

[Taking a picture.]

Very good ... now turn profile.

CHAPUZOT

[Obeying.]

Another? ...

THE INTERVIEWER

That's it—don't move ...

[He takes another picture.]

The other side.

CHAPUZOT

[Obeying.]

Again? ...

THE INTERVIEWER

That's it—don't move ...

[He takes another picture.]

Now turn around—your back to me ... that's it ... The back is also a face ...

CHAPUZOT

What kind of photographer are you?!

THE INTERVIEWER

Smile ...

[He takes another picture.]

Good.

[He puts the camera on the table.]

Now, measurements.

[He pulls a measuring tape from his pocket and begins to measure Chapuzot.]

Height ... one meter and ... seventy centimeters ...

[He registers this in a notebook.]

CHAPUZOT

Now you're a tailor? ...

THE INTERVIEWER

Width of chest ... let's see ...

[He measures.]

Eighty-eight centimeters ...

[Shrugging his shoulders.]

No sense of aesthetic proportion ...

[He adds this to his notebook.]

CHAPUZOT

Must be a tailor! ...

THE INTERVIEWER

[Examining Chapuzot's hand.]

Spatula fingers ...

[Feeling Chapuzot's cheeks.]

Prominent cheekbones ... asymmetrical face ...

[Tapping Chapuzot on the chin.]

Slightly protruding jaw ... Hah! Yes ... more dangerous than I thought ...

CHAPUZOT

What a strange tailor!

THE INTERVIEWER

[Returning to the table where he sits.]

Now, talk.

CHAPUZOT

[Following.]

Sorry ... what?

THE INTERVIEWER

What? Talk!

CHAPUZOT

I don't even know who I'm talking to!

THE INTERVIEWER

Oh, that's right ... the Interviewer-in-chief of *The Movement*.

CHAPUZOT

The what?

THE INTERVIEWER

The Interviewer-in-chief of *The Movement*.

CHAPUZOT

[Obtusely.]

Ah!

THE INTERVIEWER

[With pity.]

You're not familiar with *The Movement*?... The newspaper, the literary journal ... the best informed, most widely ... twelve million readers! ... newspaper that provides for its subscribers the best cars, country houses ... government bonds ... well-trained mistresses ... do you understand now?

CHAPUZOT

[Playing along.]

Oh yes ... yes ...

THE INTERVIEWER

Sorry ... I'm in a hurry ... I must interview the Minister of Education at ten o' clock ... and the King of Belgium at noon ... Please answer the following questions as clearly and concisely as possible ... First, a beer.

CHAPUZOT

[Rising.]

Here ... here.

[THE INTERVIEWER opens his notebook.]

THE INTERVIEWER

It's time ... now is the moment ... the psychological moment of truth ...

[CHAPUZOT serves THE INTERVIEWER a beer which he drinks immediately. CHAPUZOT retrieves the glass and sets it on the counter.]

CHAPUZOT

I have maybe won a house.

THE INTERVIEWER

[Leaning on the table and looking fixedly at Chapuzot.]

You are a wine merchant?

CHAPUZOT

[Motioning to the shop around him.]

Look around! ... It would seem so ...

THE INTERVIEWER

An unsavory profession, sir ... an unpatriotic business, if ever there was one ... Drunkenness ... debauchery ... alcoholism ... degeneration ... depopulation ... socialism—

[On this last word, Chapuzot strongly protests.]

All poisons In the end, you will destroy us all—no?

CHAPUZOT

What are you saying?

THE INTERVIEWER

It's not a question of that, for the moment ... I'm not saying anything ... I must continue the investigation ... soon Well, it is urgent that you answer the questions ...

CHAPUZOT

I don't know what to say. I'm not unhappy ... Perhaps I've won a car?

THE INTERVIEWER

[Gravely serious.]

So ... you are a wine merchant ... You admit this?

CHAPUZOT

Sure ...

THE INTERVIEWER

And you also admit that your name is ... Chapuzot?

CHAPUZOT

Of course ... Joseph Theodule ...

THE INTERVIEWER

Be careful how you answer ... This is very serious ... excessively severe ...

CHAPUZOT

[Already confused.]

... Of course I'm Chapuzot ... like my father.

THE INTERVIEWER

Very good ...

[Pause.]

And you have lived for a long time on bad terms with your wife?

CHAPUZOT

[Disconcerted.]

With my wife?

THE INTERVIEWER

Yes ... by god!

CHAPUZOT

That ... it's quite ... I'm not married ...

THE INTERVIEWER

Perfect ... cohabitation ... worse and worse ...

[He takes notes.]

So, you live on bad terms with your mistress ...

CHAPUZOT

What? ... I don't know what you're ... With my mistress?

THE INTERVIEWER

Good lord, man! ... since you claim not to be married, how shall I refer to the woman with whom you live on bad terms—your cooking pot?!

CHAPUZOT

[Laughing and clapping his thighs.]

My cooking pot! Yes—that's good! But no ... no, I don't have a pot ... or a mistress either ...

THE INTERVIEWER

[Both mocking and severe.]

You're not married ... and you don't have a mistress ... or some other little thing stuffed under your bed, Mr. Chapuzot?

CHAPUZOT

I'm telling the truth ...

THE INTERVIEWER

The truth, yes ...

[Going to Chapuzot.]

You won't pull the wool over my eyes, you devil ... I know ... I know the facts ... It's pointless to deny the truth any longer ... Was she unfaithful? ... your wife ... your cooking pot ... Am I getting warmer?!

CHAPUZOT

For god's sake, you don't understand ... I'm telling you ...

THE INTERVIEWER

[Interrupting.]

Yes ... yes, but you speak with the tongue of the Deceiver!

CHAPUZOT

My god! ... I tell you ...

THE INTERVIEWER

Do you think this is some sort of joke?! You can't clown your way out of this with little word games! ... Your tricks don't work with me!

CHAPUZOT

But ... I'm not ...

THE INTERVIEWER

You cannot deceive the press ... I warn you, Chapuzot, not to try my patience ... the press is a powerful force ...

[Threatening.]

And I *am* the Press, Chapuzot ... Twelve million readers ...

CHAPUZOT

What do you want me to do?

THE INTERVIEWER

The press is the great modern force ... the great educator ... the universal consciousness ... She denounces ... judges and condemns ... A beer!

CHAPUZOT

Here ... here ...

[He serves a beer.]

THE INTERVIEWER

[Beer in hand.]

The press, Chapuzot ... stands alone ... above all else ... police, justice ... et cetera, et cetera ...

[He drinks.]

It rewards ... punishes ... forgives ...

[He finishes his beer.]

... depending on the price that one pays ... The press is everything ... Try not to forget that ...

[CHAPUZOT retrieves the empty glass and puts it on the counter.]

CHAPUZOT

And what does all this have to do with me?

THE INTERVIEWER

What does? ... with the fact ... Do you have a treaty of advertising with *The Movement*?

CHAPUZOT

What?

THE INTERVIEWER

I ask you if you have a treaty of advertising with *The Movement*?

CHAPUZOT

[Confused.]

A treaty? ...

THE INTERVIEWER

Yes ... Everyone has one, Chapuzot ... Governments, administrations, banks ... Trade ... Industry ... judges, lawyers, litigants ... doctors ... patients ... society women ... adulteresses ... cuckolds ... painters ... But not you ... It isn't prudent ... Why don't you have a treaty? ... Well, too bad for you, Chapuzot.

CHAPUZOT

Why do I need a treaty?

THE INTERVIEWER

Fine ... taunt ... Scoff, if you like ...

[A little drunk now, he plays with the button on Chapuzot's jacket.]

Why did you throw a bottle of cassis at your wife's head?

CHAPUZOT

[Flabbergasted.]

A bottle of cassis?

THE INTERVIEWER

Yes ... answer!

CHAPUZOT

A bottle of cassis ... what the devil ...

THE INTERVIEWER

You don't want to say ...

[Pause.]

Okay ...

CHAPUZOT

A bottle of cassis ... but I swear ...

THE INTERVIEWER

Shut up! Don't lie!

[Declaiming loudly.]

Oh! Don't lie ... the lie is wicked ... And it's useless with the Press ... I will try ... although you have no treaty of advertising with *The Movement* ... I will try to understand ... Let's see ...

[He pats Chapuzot's shoulder.]

Let's see ... my dear Chapuzot ... Chapuzot, old man ...

[Very gently.]

What could be the motive for this act of brutality ... Because, really, you look like a decent man ... a fine fellow ... Is this a crime of vulgar vengeance? ... A sudden explosion of anger and rage? ... A suggestion? ... Congestion? ...

[Pause.]

Yes? ...

[Chapuzot denies this, tries to pull away.]

Let us continue ... very softly.

[He caresses Chapuzot's shoulder.]

Are we facing a case of mad passion? ... or purely physiological? ... or simply atavistic? ...

CHAPUZOT

[Eyes nearly popping out of his head.]

Ata ... what?

THE INTERVIEWER

[Forcefully.]

... vistic ... atavistic!

CHAPUZOT

[His head in his hands.]

My god! ...

THE INTERVIEWER

You don't know ... You cannot even analyze your own actions ...

[With great pity.]

Not a single scientific bone in your ... the mental aptitude of a cockroach ...

[He flicks Chapuzot on the forehead.]

CHAPUZOT

Ah, nonsense!

[CHAPUZOT disappears behind the counter and we hear the noise of glassware and dishes being knocked about.]

THE INTERVIEWER

I pity you, Chapuzot ... I see that, in your case, the problem is more intellectual debilitation than voluntary obstinence ... Lend me your full attention.

[THE INTERVIEWER notices that CHAPUZOT has disappeared. He goes to the counter, head tilted, and speaks in a stronger voice.]

I will ask the question in another form ... a form accessible to your limited intelligence ... Two beers!

CHAPUZOT

[Rising suddenly.]

Here ... here ...

THE INTERVIEWER

We will toast ...

CHAPUZOT

[Laughs.]

That's more like it ...

[He serves beers. They drink.]

THE INTERVIEWER

To your health!

CHAPUZOT

And yours!

[They are both at ease for the moment.]

THE INTERVIEWER

Chapuzot ... I am your friend ... Answer me as a friend ...

CHAPUZOT

[Laughing and carrying glasses back to the counter.]

Sure ... sure ... sure ...

THE INTERVIEWER

Have you had a lot of murderers in your family? ... After all, if you have neither wife nor mistress ... you may still have a family ... eh?

CHAPUZOT

[Desperate.]

Now it begins again ...

THE INTERVIEWER

You do not have a family ... Bizarre, but possible, after all ... The child lost his mother ... poor Chapuzot ... abandoned ...

[CHAPUZOT goes from the counter to the table and back again, wiping with a wet towel. THE INTERVIEWER follows his movements.]

So when you were born, your feeble little mind was immediately warped by unbearable suffering and loneliness, exposed to the deplorable conditions of vagrancy ... It would be an explanation ... an excuse maybe.

CHAPUZOT

[Still going back and forth, raising his clenched fists.]

Ah! Ah! Ah!

THE INTERVIEWER

You do not answer ...

[Pause.]

You are determined, then, to subvert this interview?

CHAPUZOT

In the name of God! ... what do you want me to say?

THE INTERVIEWER

Anything! The truth! ... Do you understand the patience I have shown in the face of your ... tenacity ... the delicacy ... I have not accused you of being a traitor ...

[He stops for a moment in his comings and goings.]

... yet there was premeditation in your choice of the bottle of cassis ...

CHAPUZOT

[Emerging and leaving the counter.]

The cassis again ... what do you mean?

THE INTERVIEWER

[The prosecutor.]

Why a bottle of cassis, rather than curaçao, or some other liquor?

CHAPUZOT

My god ... My god!

[He returns to the counter where he stacks more bottles—then climbs a ladder, his back to the audience, and begins moving bottles and glassware to the higher shelves.]

THE INTERVIEWER

Be careful ... It's very important, Chapuzot ... The jury may find extenuating circumstances ... mitigating or aggravating ... depending on your answer ...

CHAPUZOT

The jury ... What jury?

THE INTERVIEWER

Perhaps the eminent Doctor Sock ... a true scientific genius, Chapuzot ...

[With a malicious joy.]

... who will certainly examine you ... autopsy you, perhaps ... will see fixed in this premeditated choice of a bottle of cassis ... anthropological phenomenon of moral *responsibility or irresponsibility* ...

CHAPUZOT

I'll be damned if I understand a word you're saying ...

THE INTERVIEWER

You don't understand? ... You don't understand that ... what I ask you is ... follow me ... the story of your crime ...

CHAPUZOT

[Still facing the shelves.]

My crime now ...

THE INTERVIEWER

An exact and meticulous analysis of circumstances ... particular, general, social, and marital ... that preceded, accompanied and followed ... giving me a framework ... on which I can establish the psychology of this crime ... Ah!

CHAPUZOT

[Without turning.]

My head ... my God!

THE INTERVIEWER

To document the mental chemistry of this crime ... Ah! ... Is it clear now? ... Do you understand?

CHAPUZOT

Well ... you seem to think you know everything ...

THE INTERVIEWER

No! You may no longer hide in the darkness of words or dodge my questions with riddles ... Answer!

CHAPUZOT

I have to get out of here ...

[He comes down from his stool and tries to flee, but THE INTERVIEWER holds him by the apron.]

THE INTERVIEWER

Wicked man!

[Taking him by the arm.]

Let us ... consider your options ... Do you know the famous doctor Cesare Lombroso?

CHAPUZOT

Lom ...?

THE INTERVIEWER

... broso ... yes!

CHAPUZOT

[Picks up a spray bottle and begins wiping down tables.]

I ... I know ... not really ... no ...

THE INTERVIEWER

A man of genius, Chapuzot ...

CHAPUZOT

All right ...

THE INTERVIEWER

[Striking the counter.]

A man of unparalleled genius! ...

CHAPUZOT

... yes ... yes ... all right ...

THE INTERVIEWER

A great scholar and formidable scientist ... who discovered that all men of genius were brutes and murderers ...

CHAPUZOT

Good ... good ...

THE INTERVIEWER

Degenerates ... killers of men ... all blessed with an uncommon mental capacity ... heightened intellectual discernment!

CHAPUZOT

Whatever you say ...

THE INTERVIEWER

[Reaching a frenzy of excitement.]

So ... what is your opinion on the work of the illustrious doctor Cesare Lombroso ... on his admirable discoveries concerning the criminal born ... insensitivity to murderers and women? ... On his categorical assertions of the stupidity of Baudelaire ... and the abject senility of Verlaine ... of Tolstoy ... of Victor Hugo? ... On his glorification of the scientific spirit of Dubut du Laforest? ... Well? ... What you say? ...

CHAPUZOT

Nothing.

[Not knowing what to do, CHAPUZOT sits down and lights his pipe.]

THE INTERVIEWER

Do you support him in his marvelous and refreshing thesis that poverty ... poverty, Chapuzot ... is not a social disease ... an economic deficiency ... but a neurosis ...

CHAPUZOT

[Puffing, without understanding.]

I want to ...

THE INTERVIEWER

[With emphasis.]

A neurosis, Chapuzot!

CHAPUZOT

[Same game.]

Possible ... possible ...

THE INTERVIEWER

And do you know how he resolved to solve this problem? ... Are you listening?

CHAPUZOT

Listening! ... Yes! My god! ...

THE INTERVIEWER

The famous doctor rounded up a dozen test subjects, each displaying all the symptoms of the most acute poverty ...

CHAPUZOT

[Still puffing.]

It isn't hard to miss.

THE INTERVIEWER

Shut up ... He subjected them to X-rays ... Pay attention now ...

CHAPUZOT

[Same game.]

I'm listening ... yes ...

INTERVIEW

These ten poor patients showed ... in the stomach ... the liver ... the large intestine ... serious functional damage ... lesions ... very serious ... but nothing sufficiently characteristic ... In short, the tests were inconclusive Do you understand? ...

CHAPUZOT

Go on ... go on ... please continue ...

THE INTERVIEWER

The decisive discovery was a series of black spots ... which were presented in each patient's brain ... and in the cerebro-spinal fluid.

CHAPUZOT

Huh? ... What? ...

THE INTERVIEWER

[Slowly.]

Ce-re-bro-spi-nal ...

CHAPUZOT

Ah! Good ...

THE INTERVIEWER

The famous scientist had never seen such spots on the brains of his rich patients ... or even the middle-class ... You hear? ...

CHAPUZOT

I ... well ...

THE INTERVIEWER

So it was proven ... beyond a shadow of a doubt ... this was the cause of the disease and demented neuropathy: poverty.

CHAPUZOT

Yes ... yes ... Of course ...

THE INTERVIEWER

What is the nature of these spots, you may ask ...

[While talking, he moves to the inside of the counter, picks up bottles, smelling them, and pours some sort of mixture into one of the glasses. CHAPUZOT rises and approaches the counter to monitor his actions.]

Much like those astronomers who study the periphery of the sun ... once this feature is understood, they soon formulate an understanding of the core as well ...

[He stirs his concoction with a spoon.]

Note in passing, Chapuzot, like any investigation ...

[He drinks.]

One discovery leads to another ... Star and brain, do you see? ...

[CHAPUZOT takes the glass from THE INTERVIEWER, places it in the growing pile of empty glasses, and pushes THE INTERVIEWER, little by little, back around the counter.]

Lombroso now held in his hands not only the scientific explanation for a chronic social problem, but the solution as well, not only to this problem, but to another important question which he had long sought to resolve ... the unification of the sciences ...

CHAPUZOT

[Staring at his counter.]

Son of a bitch ...

THE INTERVIEWER

[Leaning on the outside of the counter.]

I don't have time to give you the complete physiological description of these spots. You wouldn't understand, anyway ... it would be too difficult ...

[CHAPUZOT waves him away from the counter.]

Nevertheless ... Suffice it to say that after many experiments, Lombroso managed to determine the true nature of these spots ... The remainder of the puzzle was very simple for a scientist of his caliber ...

CHAPUZOT

Ah! What do I care? ... Damned scamp! ...

THE INTERVIEWER

He quarantined these ten subjects in cells specially constructed for the treatment he wanted to apply ... limited them to a strict diet ... prescribed iodized scrubbing of the cranial cavity ... along with a combination of ...

[Imitating the sound of the shower.]

Sterilized showers and a series of skillfully administered bloodlettings ... He was firmly resolved to continue this treatment until his patients were completely cured ... I mean, until the poor became rich ... You understand?

CHAPUZOT

[With desperate gestures.]

My head! My God, my head!

THE INTERVIEWER

Forget your head, Chapuzot ... Doctor Sock, Mr. Deibler and I ... we will take care of your head later ...

CHAPUZOT

Mr Deib ... ?

THE INTERVIEWER

Listen! ... After seven weeks of treatment, it was discovered that one of these poor people had inherited a sum of two hundred thousand francs.

CHAPUZOT

[Stunned admiration.]

Ah!

THE INTERVIEWER

A second had won the jackpot in a drawing of the Panama bonds ...

CHAPUZOT

[Same game.]

My god! ... Ah! My god!

THE INTERVIEWER

A third ... a modern-style Victorian mansion, one of several lotteries offered by *The Movement*, twelve million readers ...

CHAPUZOT

The lucky bastard!

THE INTERVIEWER

The fourth, happy man ... escaped the vigilance of his guards, and being out in the street ... had both legs crushed by a car ... which earned him a nice annual allowance of sixty thousand francs.

CHAPUZOT

Unbelievable!

THE INTERVIEWER

The others died ... They were taken too late ...

CHAPUZOT

[Astonished.]

Is this really true?

THE INTERVIEWER

Nothing could be truer ...

CHAPUZOT

It's amazing!

THE INTERVIEWER

No, it's scientific ... Or rather ... Serve me a beer!

CHAPUZOT

Here ... here ...

[He serves a beer.]

THE INTERVIEWER

[After drinking.]

And finally ... I wanted to come to this last, Chapuzot ...

CHAPUZOT

There's more?

THE INTERVIEWER

Chapuzot ... In what category of neuropathy would you classify yourself?

[Pause.]

What type of mental illness have you achieved? ...

[Pause. Walking towards him.]

Are you an unbalanced ... Un ...

CHAPUZOT

[Interrupting.]

... But ... by god ... I'm only ...

THE INTERVIEWER

[Stalking him now.]

A Mystic? ... Syphilitic? ... Alcoholic? ... Sadist? ... Atavist? ... Serial killer? ...
Pornographer? ... Pauper? ...

CHAPUZOT

[Retreating behind his counter.]

Look, just leave me alone ... I'm a wine merchant ... a bartender ... a sommelier
...

THE INTERVIEWER

[Threatening with his finger.]

Chapuzot? ...

CHAPUZOT

No ... stop that ...

THE INTERVIEWER

[Same game.]

Chapuzot? ...

CHAPUZOT

No, no ... go to hell ...

THE INTERVIEWER

So, you continue to deny it?

CHAPUZOT

Dammit! ...

THE INTERVIEWER

Do you deny all scientific experiments?

CHAPUZOT

The devil is in your experiments! ...

THE INTERVIEWER

You are determined to mock the Press?

CHAPUZOT

I don't give a damn! ...

THE INTERVIEWER

Very well ... I will now astound you ... I will present you with irrefutable evidence ... Come back here ... Sit ...

CHAPUZOT

No ... I've had enough ...

THE INTERVIEWER

Sit.

[CHAPUZOT returns to the table slowly and sits. THE INTERVIEWER draws from his pocket a folded bit of newspaper.]

Now ... Here is *le Petit Journal*.

[He shows it to CHAPUZOT.]

And here is what I read this morning in *le Petit Journal* ... You do not dispute that the *Journal* is an authority ...

CHAPUZOT

Of course not! I read it every day!

THE INTERVIEWER

Yes. Well ... listen ...

[Reading.]

"Following an altercation in which the cause has remained mysterious ...

[Speaking.]

Mysterious. You hear Chapuzot?

CHAPUZOT

I'm not deaf ...

THE INTERVIEWER

[Reading again.]

"... whose cause has remained mysterious ... Mr. Chapuzot a ...

[Showing him the newspaper.]

Look ... there are many "Chapuzot" ...

CHAPUZOT

True ...

THE INTERVIEWER

Is it printed or not?

CHAPUZOT

[Anxiously.]

My god, yes!

THE INTERVIEWER

And in *le Petit Journal* no less ... which you read every day?

CHAPUZOT

[Disturbed.]

Ah! But ... Ah! But ... What does this mean? ...

THE INTERVIEWER

You are very pale, Chapuzot ...

CHAPUZOT

What else does it say there, in the newspaper ...

THE INTERVIEWER

You'll see ... You will see ... Ah! You are no longer the loudmouth ... the braggart ... the syphilitic dissimulator!

CHAPUZOT

That's not ... it's ... it's quite ...

THE INTERVIEWER

Let's continue ...

[Reading.]

"... a Mr. Chapuzot, wine merchant in Montrouge ... "

CHAPUZOT

[Correcting.]

Montmartre.

THE INTERVIEWER

Montrouge.

CHAPUZOT

Montmartre.

THE INTERVIEWER

*In Montrouge.**[Showing him the newspaper.]*

It says "wine merchant in Montrouge."

CHAPUZOT

But since I am from Montmartre!

THE INTERVIEWER

Well ... so what?

CHAPUZOT

So what? ... *So what?* ... Is the street we are on in Montrouge or Montmartre?

THE INTERVIEWER

Shut up ... It's irrelevant ...

[Reading.]

"... Mr. Chapuzot, wine merchant in Montrouge !..."

CHAPUZOT

... Martre

THE INTERVIEWER

Rouge ...

CHAPUZOT

Martre ... Martre ...

THE INTERVIEWER

[Reading.]

"... launched a bottle of cassis at the head of his wife pool of blood ... the condition of the victim is very serious ..." ... and so on ... There!

CHAPUZOT

But once again ... I'm not from Montrouge ... since I'm from Montmartre.

THE INTERVIEWER

Rouge ...

CHAPUZOT

Marrrrtre ...

THE INTERVIEWER

I tire of your games ... Is your name Chapuzot? ...

CHAPUZOT

Yes.

THE INTERVIEWER
Are you a wine merchant?

CHAPUZOT
Yes ...

THE INTERVIEWER
All this is recorded in the *Journal*?

CHAPUZOT
Yes ...

THE INTERVIEWER
Well, then ... Whether you are from Montrouge or Montmartre is immaterial ...

CHAPUZOT
But it isn't me ... it can't be ... since I've told you ...

THE INTERVIEWER
You refuse to answer my questions ... You waste my time with childish denials ... with puns ... and clowning ... Very well! ...

CHAPUZOT
But ... even a fool could understand ... As long as I am from Montmartre ...

THE INTERVIEWER
Rouge ...

CHAPUZOT
Martre ...

THE INTERVIEWER
Rouge ...

CHAPUZOT
Martre ... Martre ... Martre ... Montmartre!

THE INTERVIEWER
[His anger gradually building.]
Yes ... yes ... go on ... go on ...
[He marches back and forth, knocking into furniture in his drunken anger.]

That's it! I've lost all patience! ... I will write in *The Movement*, the most literary, the best informed, the most widespread, twelve millions of readers ... I will write, Chapuzot ... that you put strychnine ... not ... not pepsin, in your wine. I will write that you have a child with your daughter, and even that you murdered it! ... After all, if you have neither wife nor mistress, or family, or even cooking pot, you may still have a daughter! ...

[CHAPUZOT begins to cough and choke. He tries to interrupt, but THE INTERVIEWER continues.]

I will write that your establishment is a den of anarchists, Freemasons, and counterfeiters ... I will write that your wife sleeps with the whole neighborhood ... and your aunt ... your ... We'll see if you continue to mock the press now! ... The great voice of the Press!

CHAPUZOT

[In a wild panic.]

I'm telling you ... I swear ... In the name of God! ... This man in the newspaper can't be me ... Since I am from Montmartre! ...

THE INTERVIEWER

Rouge ...

CHAPUZOT

Martre ... Mont Martre ...

THE INTERVIEWER

I will ruin you ... dishonor you ... You don't mess around with the Press! ... We are the great universal consciousness ... Where is your wife?

CHAPUZOT

My wife ... again ...

[He comes close to THE INTERVIEWER, begging.]

I have no wife!

THE INTERVIEWER

How ... if you don't have a wife ... how can you throw bottles at her head?

CHAPUZOT

[Throwing his towel.]

In the name of god!

THE INTERVIEWER

Try to be logical in your denials ...

CHAPUZOT

But ...

THE INTERVIEWER

Now ... bring me your wife ... She will, perhaps, answer more rationally.

CHAPUZOT

[In a choked voice.]

I can't ... because ...

THE INTERVIEWER

It's imperative that I see her ... that I question her ...

CHAPUZOT

Ah! Ah!

THE INTERVIEWER

That I document her psychology ...

CHAPUZOT

Pig!

THE INTERVIEWER

That I trace this atavism to its source ...

CHAPUZOT

Bastard!

THE INTERVIEWER

What kind of woman is she—your wife?

CHAPUZOT

On my life ... I've never ...

THE INTERVIEWER

Blonde? ...

[Silence.]

Brunette, then? ...

[Silence. CHAPUZOT is completely stunned.]

Is she large? ... Well-endowed? ...

[Silence.]

Do you do dirty things to her?

[Silence.]

Is it you who are deprived ... or she?

[Silence.]

How many abortions has she had? ...

[Silence.]

One ... two ... you refuse to answer ... to help me in my investigation? ... Naturally!
... .. What else did I expect from you? ... You make me laugh, Chapuzot! But
that's all right ... I don't mind ...

[He walks, rubbing his hands.]

A few words to conclude.

[He moves towards CHAPUZOT who takes a step backwards at each question.]

What do you think of telepathy? ...

[Silence.]

Are you a follower of the hypnotic phenomenon? ...

[Silence.]

To what do you attribute the progressive decline of the population? ...

[Silence.]

Have you a clear opinion on state socialism? ... American capitalism? ...

Malthusianism in the theatre? ... Universal disarmament? ...

[Silence. CHAPUZOT is backed into a corner. THE INTERVIEWER grabs him, shakes him, throws him violently on the table. In a thundering voice.]

In which direction do you think literature should be oriented? ...

[He reverses his hands on his chest at each new question.]

Optimistic? ... Pessimistic? ... Humanistic? ... Symbolistic? ... Naturalistic? ...

[Silence. CHAPUZOT cowers.]

Very well! ... I interpret your silence as a complete mockery of the Press! ... I will
cook you, Mr Chapuzot! ...

[He crosses the stage to retrieve his hat and camera.]

I will cook you ... I will write ...

[A threat.]

One beer please ...

CHAPUZOT

[Suddenly himself again.]

Here ... here ...

[He serves a beer.]

THE INTERVIEWER

I'm going now.

[He drinks.]

I will interview your neighbors ... and neighbors of your neighbors ... because the
neighbors to our neighbors are our neighbors ... Goodbye.

[He goes to the door, the glass still in his hand.]

CHAPUZOT

[Counting empty glasses on the counter.]

Wait!

THE INTERVIEWER

No ... No!

CHAPUZOT

Sir! ... But sir ...

THE INTERVIEWER

No, no ... Too bad for you ... It is too late!

CHAPUZOT

But you owe me for twelve glasses of beer! ...

THE INTERVIEWER

[He stops and returns to the counter.]

The press should never pay for anything! ...

[He slams the last glass down on the counter. A tray falls, scattering glasses and bottles everywhere. As CHAPUZOT dives to save his glassware, THE INTERVIEWER makes a quick exit.]

CHAPUZOT

[In the height of panic as he stares around at the piles of shattered glass.]

In the name of God! ... In the name of ... God! ...

CURTAIN