



THE CON COMMANDMENTS

by Dave Proctor

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The Con

Commandments

A play by Dave Proctor

Characters (10M & 3 F)

Victor Lustig	A man in his mid-thirties. He has a 5cms scar on his left cheek
Old Victor	As an old man
Dan Collings	A dapper well-dressed man of a similar age. American accent
Waiter	A French Waiter
Frau Von Meyer	An aristocratic woman
Five men	Scrap merchants, Well dressed
André Poisson	Scrap merchant, not as well dressed
M. Poisson	André Poisson's wife
Maid	Hotel Maid

A two Act play

Run time: approximately one hour fifteen minutes.

The Con Commandments

Announcer

This performance is an imagined re-enactment of real events that took place almost a hundred years ago.

We take you back to Paris, France in the year Nineteen twenty-five.

Curtain opens

The Scene is the terrace of a French café.

Victor and Dan are well dressed suited men, wearing straw boaters

They are sitting at a table.

Act One

Scene One

- Dan I still cannot believe you pulled that off.
You had Al Capone over for More than a thousand dollars. I
mean how did you get away with that?
And more importantly why?
Do you know what he does to people, he is not exactly a
friendly guy.
- Victor Why? Why? Well, it's what I do. And life would be so much less
fun if we didn't take risks. And do you know the beauty of the
situation?
- Dan No, Go on.
- Victor He didn't realise he'd been scammed. Which makes it all the
sweeter a prize.
- Dan How did you manage to scam him and him not even realise it

Victor Ah, Daniel, it was a wonderful little game. You see I got Mister Alphonse Capone to invest in a business proposition. A mere fifty thousand dollars. I told him that he would double his money in two months.

Well of course, in his coarse way, he advised me of my future, if I were trying to scam him.

So I merely put the money in the bank for the two months, then gave it back to him, every single cent, apologising that I had not been able to proceed with the investment.

Dan I am confused, so you gave him all of his money back. So how did you make anything?

Victor Well apart from the interest from the bank, which was a handy little sum, I can assure you, Mister Capone realised what a lovely honest chap, I was and as I rightly predicted, to thank me for being so honest and returning his money to him, he gave me one thousand dollars.

Dan Wow.

Waiter approaches

Waiter Messieurs?

Victor Une Bouteille de vin rouge et deux verres, s'il vous plaît.
 monsieur..

Waiter Oui monsieur,

Waiter leaves

Victor Do you know how many times I've been to prison?

Never. Oh yes, I've been arrested and brought before the court,
but they have never, ever found enough evidence to convict me.

You know the most important lesson to succeed in this game, is
to know your subjects, play to their greed and weaknesses and
then to plan your moves to the ultimate degree.

Leave nothing to chance.

Let me give you a couple of examples of my work.

I started off working, as it were, on the Cruise liners crossing from Europe to America. I started off gambling. I was good, I studied the games, I learnt them properly,

The other players were just rich idiots, who didn't know the first thing about cards, so I earned quite a good living.

Whilst befriending these gullible fools, I came up with a scheme. I would pose as a producer of Broadway musicals, then prey on people's secret desires to be in show business by getting them to invest in non-existent productions.

Dan Mmm interesting.

Victor Now, One of my favourite schemes, which I invented by the way, involved selling unsuspecting marks a box that I told them was a machine that could duplicate any currency bills that was inserted into it, with the only catch being that the device needed six hours to print an identical copy.

Referred to as the "money box" or "Rumanian Box", the scheme involved a specially designed mahogany box, which I had designed.

The box's design featured two slots to take in bills and paper to "print" the duplicate.

A copy machine, huh as if such a thing were possible!

There was a complex arrangement of levers and mechanisms that had to be "operated" to make the duplicates.

In order to convince the mark it truly worked, I would ask them to give me a one hundred dollar bill. I put this into this device along with the paper and then waited with them until the "duplicate" was made.

When it had, I would even take the mark to a bank to authenticate the note.

In reality, the mark would be unaware of the fact that I had put a genuine note into the device. So of course, the bank tellers would verify the note!

Once the mark was convinced and full of greed, I would refuse to sell them the box until they offered me a high price for it, sometimes up to thirty thousand dollars.

Now before it was sold, I would pack the box with additional genuine notes, so as to buy time to make my escape, before the mark realised they had been conned

A smart woman approaches. Victor stands and kisses her hand

Victor Frau Von Meyer, Guten abend, Wie Gehst?

Frau Ah Sehr Gut, Danke Count Lustig. Ich bin nur zwei Tage in der Stadt, wir sollten uns treffen, wenn ich zurückkomme

At the same time, the waiter brings over the bottle of wine with two glasses on a tray.

Victor Merci Monsieur

Frau Von Meyer. Ich freue mich darauf.

Victor then gives a sharp head bow (in German fashion). The Frau leaves and Victor sits down

Dan I didn't know you were a Count.

Victor smiles

Victor There's a lot people do not know about me. I tell people I was born in the small town of Arnau, now called Hostinné which is in, what is now Czechoslovakia, but curiously there does not seem to be any record of me there, why even my school records have disappeared.

Actually, I have many names, all borne out by my many passports, of course, but no-one knows my real name.

One day I might be a Count, another a busboy in a hotel, another a bank manager or another a Priest.

It is how I practise my art.

Dan Right, so what do I call you.

Victor Whatever I tell you to on the day. You need to listen and to Learn.
But today you can just call me Count Victor Lustig or Sir.
For now Dapper Dan, I will introduce you as my private Secretary.

Did you bring a pen and paper?

Dan Yeah got them here.

Victor Right, as part of your education, and to understand how I work,
Here are my commandments for our profession.

The Con Commandments

I will need you to write them down and then most importantly,
not only learn them but to take them to heart, so you never fail
to follow their guidance.

Number one. Be a patient listener. Always remember it is this,
not fast-talking, that gets a con-man his coups.

People expect a conman to be some snake oil salesman type, full of quick patter.

If you are the opposite they may never suspect you.

Number two. Never look bored. Always appear interested in what your subject is saying.

Number three. Wait for the other person to reveal any political opinions, then agree with them.

Number Four. Let the other person reveal religious views, then have the same ones.

Number Five. Hint at sex talk, but don't follow it up unless the other person shows a strong interest.

Number Six. Never discuss illness, unless some special concern is shown.

Number Seven. Never pry into a person's personal circumstances. Remember as you gain their trust, they'll tell you everything eventually anyway.

Number Eight. Never boast - just let your importance be quietly

How could you describe it. Obvious, yes quietly obvious.

Number Nine. Never be untidy.

Number ten. Never get drunk.

And lastly. Never get jealous

Alright, you got all that.?

Dan Yes, I think so.

Victor Then whilst we savour this fine wine. I would like you to read
these instructions and learn them by heart. I, meanwhile,
intend to read my newspaper.

*For the next few moments. Victor has the large newspaper in front of his face, whilst
Dan reads the notepad, Mouthing the text. and pacing up and down reciting and
Somewhat comedically, enacting the commandments*

Victor Incredible, The French never cease to amaze me.

Dan What's that?

Victor The French, they are such aloof cretins, so pompous.

Dan What makes you say that?

Victor Well, this article here. It is some half-wit reporter complaining that the Eiffel Tower is too expensive for the City to maintain, that it is rusty and is already a hazardous eyesore.

He then cites all the great and the good, who say it was an ugly monstrosity from when it went up thirty-odd years ago.

He even quotes Alexander Dumas, you know the famous French author, Saying how it does not compare to their other great Parisian monuments, how it is so ugly and industrial and how it does not blend into the city.

A load of snobs, pompous snobs.