

## CHARACTERS

GASTON  
JEANNE  
JULIETTE  
MRS. AL SMITH  
A MAID

## VILLA FOR SALE

The scene represents the salon of small villa near Nogent-sur Marne. When the curtain rises, the MAID and Juliette are discovered.

**MAID.** Won't madame be sorry ?

**JULIETTE.** Not at all. Mind you, if someone had bought it on the very day I placed it for sale, then I might have felt sorry because I would have wondered if I hadn't been a fool to sell at all. But the sign has been hanging on the gate for over a month now and I am beginning to be afraid that the day I bought it was when I was the real fool.

**MAID.** All the same, madame, when they brought you the For sale' sign, you wouldn't let them put it up. You waited until it was night. Then you went and hung it yourself, Madame .

**JULIETTE.** I know! You see, I thought that as they could not read it in the dark, the house would belong to me for one night more. I was so sure that the next day the entire world would be fighting to purchase. For the first week, I was annoyed every time I passed that ' Villa for sale' sign. The neighbours seemed to look at me in such a strange kind of way that I began to think the whole thing was going to be much more of a sell than sale . That was a month ago and now I have only one thought, that is to get the wretched place off my hands. I would sacrifice it at any price. One hundred thousand francs if necessary and that's

Only twice what it cost me. I thought I would get two hundred thousand but I suppose I must cut my loss. Besides, in the past two weeks, four people almost bought it, so I begin to feel as though it no longer belongs to me. Oh! I'm fed up with the place. Because nobody really wants it! What time did those agency people say the lady would call?

**MAID** Between four and five, Madame.

**JULETTE** Then we must wait for her.

**MAID** It was a nice little place for you to spend the weekends, Madame.

**JULIETTE** Yes ..... But times are hard and business is as bad as it can be.

**MAID** In that case, Madame, is it a good time to sell?

**JULIETTE.** No, perhaps not ... But still ... there are moments in life when it's the right time to buy, but it's never the right time to sell. For fifteen years everybody has had money at the same time and nobody has wanted to sell. Now nobody has any money and nobody wants to buy. But still.... even so ..... It would be funny if I couldn't manage to sell a place here, a stone's throw from Joinville, the French Hollywood, when all I'm asking is a paltry hundred thousand!

**MAID** That reminds me, there is a favour I want to ask you, madame.

**JULIETTE** Yes, what is it, my girl?

**MAID** Will you be kind enough to let me off between nine and noon tomorrow morning?

**JULIETTE** From nine till noon?

**MAID** They have asked me to play in a film at the Joinville Studio.

**JULIETTE** You are going to act for the cinema?

**MAID.** Yes , Madame.

**JULIETTE.** What kind of part are you going to play?

**MAID.** A maid, Madame. They prefer the real article. They say maids are born maids not made maids. They are giving me a hundred francs a morning for doing it.

**JULIETTE** One hundred francs!

**MAID** Yes, Madame. And as you only pay me four hundred a month, I can't very well refuse, can I, Madame?

**JULIETTE** A hundred francs! It's unbelievable!

**MAID** Will you permit me, Madame, to tell you something I've suddenly thought of?

**JULIETTE** What?

**MAID** They want a cook in the film as well. They asked me if I knew of anybody suitable. You said just now, Madame, that times were hard .....Would you like me to get you the engagement?

**JULIETTE** What ?

**MAID** Every little helps, Madame. Especially, Madame, as you have such a funny face.

**JULIETTE.** Thank you.

**MAID** (taking no notice). They might take you on for eight days, Madame. That would mean eight hundred francs. It's really money for nothing. You would only have to peel potatoes one minute and make an omlette the next, quite easy. I could show you how to do it, Madame.

**JULIETTE.** But how kind of you..... Thank god I'm not quite so hard up as that yet!

**MAID** Oh, madame, I hope you are not angry with me?

**JULIETTE.** Not in the least.

**MAID** You see, Madame, film acting is rather

looked up to round here Everybody wants to do it. Yesterday the butcher didn't open his shop, he was being shot all the morning. Today, nobody could find the four policemen, they were taking part in Monsieur Milton's fight scene in his new film. Nobody thinks about anything else round here now. You see, they pay so well. The manager is offering a thousand francs for a real beggar who has had nothing to eat for two days. Some people have all the luck ! Think it over, Madame,

**JULIETTE** Thanks, I will.

**MAID** If you would go and see them with your hair slicked back the way you do when you are dressing, Madame, I am sure they would engage you right away. Because really, Madame, you look too comical!

**JULIETTE.** Thank you ! (the bell rings.) I am going upstairs for a moment. If that is the lady tell her I will not be long. It won't do to give her the impression that I am waiting for her.

**MAID** Very good, Madame. (exit JULIETTE, as she runs off to open front door.) Oh, if I could become a Greta Garbo ! Why can't I ? Oh!

(Voices heard off. A second later, the MAID returns showing in GASTON and JEANNE)

**MAID** If you will be kind enough to sit down, I will tell Madame you are here.

**JEANNE** Thank you.

(Exit MAID.)

**GASTON.** And they call that a garden! Why, it's a yard with a patch of grass in the middle.

**JEANNE.** But the inside of the house seems very nice, Gaston.

**GASTON** Twenty –five yards of cretonne and a dash of paint... you can get that anywhere.

**JEANNE.** That's not fair. Wait until you've seen the rest of it.

**GASTON** Why should I ? I don't want to see the kitchen to know that the garden is a myth and that the salon is impossible.

**JEANNE.** What's the matter with it?

**GASTON** Matter? Why, you can't even call it a salon.

**JEANNE** Perhaps there is another.

**GASTON** Never mind the other. I'm talking about this one.

**JEANNE** We could do something very original with it.

**GASTON** Yes, make it an annex to the garden.

**JEANNE.** No, but a kind of study.

**GASTON** A study? Good Lord! You're not thinking of

Going in for studying are you?

**JEANNE** Don't be silly! You know perfectly well what a modern study is.

**GASTON.** No, I don't

**JEANNE** Well ... er ... it's a place where ... where one gathers ...

**GASTON.** Where one gathers what ?

**JEANNE** Don't be aggravating, please! If you don't want the house, tell me so at once and we'll say no more about it.

**GASTON.** I told you before we crossed the road that I didn't want it. As soon as you see a sign ' Villa for sale ', you have to go inside and be shown over it. It's a perfect mania with you

**JEANNE** What do you mean by a mania?

**GASTON** You women are so curious ... you can't resist the pleasure of sticking your noses into another woman's bath room... Especially if you don't know her . The truth is you are eternally hoping to ferret out some cold cream which is better than the one you use yourself.

**JEANNE** Oh dear! Oh dear !Are we looking for a Villa or are we not?

**GASTON** We are not

**JEANNE.** What do you mean : ‘We are not ’? Then we’re not looking for a villa?

**GASTON.** Certainly not. It’s just an idea you’ve had stuck in your head for the past month.

**JEANNE.** But we’ve talked about nothing else .....

**GASTON** You mean you’ve talked about nothing else. I’ve never talked about it. You see, you’ve talked about it so much that you thought that we are talking .... You haven’t even noticed that I’ve never joined in the conversation. If you say that you are looking for a villa, then that’s different!

**JEANNE.** Well... at any rate ... whether I’m looking for it or we’re looking for it, the one thing that matters anyway is that I’m looking for it for us!

**GASTON** It’s not for us ... it’s for your parents. You are simply trying to make me buy a villa so that you can put your father and your mother in it. You see, I know you. If you got what you want, do you realize what would happen? We would spend the month of August in the villa, but your parents would take possession of it every year from the beginning of April until the end of September. What’s more they would bring

The whole tribe of your sister’s children with them. No! I am very fond of your family, but not quite so fond as that.

**JEANNE.** Then why have you been looking over villas for the past week?

**GASTON.** I have not been looking over them, you have, and it bores me.

**JEANNE.** Well...

**GASTON** Well what ?

**JEANNE** Then stop being bored and buy one. That will finish it. We won’t talk about it any more.

**GASTON** Exactly!

**JEANNE** As far as that goes, what of it? Suppose I do want to buy a villa for papa and mamma? What of it?

**GASTON** My darling. I quite admit that you want to buy a villa for your father and mother. But please admit on your side that I don’t want to pay for it.

**JEANNE** There’s my dowry.

**GASTON** Your dowry! MY poor child, we have spent that long ago.

**JEANNE** But since then you have made a fortune.

**GASTON** Quite so. I have, but you haven't. Anyway, there's no use discussing it. I will not buy a villa and that ends it.

**JEANNE** Then it wasn't worth while coming in.

**GASTON** That's exactly what I told you at the door.

**JEANNE.** In that case, let's go.

**GASTON** By all means.

**JEANNE.** What on earth will the lady think of us.

**GASTON.** I have never cared such a damned little about anybody's opinion. Come along.

(He takes his hat and goes towards the door. At his moment  
**JULIETTE** enters.)

**JULIETTE.** Good afternoon, Madame... Monsieur .....

**JEANNE** How do you do, Madame?

**GASTON** Good day.

**JULEETTE** Won't you sit down ? (They all three sit.) Is your first impression a good one?

**JEANNE** Excellent

**JULIETTE.** I am not in the least surprised. It is a most delightful little place. Its appearance is modest, but it has a charm of its own. I can tell by just looking at you that it would suit

You admirably, as you suit it, if you will permit me to say so. Coming from me, it may surprise you to hear that you already appear to be at home. The choice of a frame is not so easy when you have such a delightful pastel to place in it. (*she naturally indicates JEANNE who is flattered.*) The house possesses a great many advantages. Electricity, gas, water, telephone, and drainage. The bathroom is beautifully fitted and the roof was entirely repaired last year.

**JEANNE.** Oh, that is very important, isn't it, darling?

**GASTON.** For whom?

**JULIETTE.** The garden is not very large ... it's not long and it's not wide, but ....

**GASTON** But my word, it is high!

**JULIETTE** That's not exactly what I meant. Your husband is very witty, Madame, As I was saying, the garden is not very large, but you see, it is surrounded by other gardens ....

**GASTON** On the principle of people who like children and haven't any can always go and live near a school.

**JEANNE.** Please don't joke, Gaston. What this lady says is perfectly right. Will you tell me, Madame, what price you are asking for the villa?

**JULIETTE** Well, you see, I must admit, quite frankly, that I don't want to sell it any more.

**GASTON**(rising). Then there's nothing further to be said about it.

**JULIETTE.** Please, I.....

**JEANNE** Let madame finish, darling.

**JULIETTE.** Thank you, I was going to say that for exceptional people like you, I don't mind giving it up. One arranges a house in accordance with one's own tastes – if you understand what I mean – to suit oneself, as it were – so one would not like to think that ordinary people had come to live in it. But to you, I can see with perfect assurance, I agree. Yes, I will sell it to you.

**JEANNE.** It's extremely kind of you.

**GASTON** Extremely. Yes ... but ... er what's the price, Madame?

**JULIETTE.** You will never believe it...

**GASTON** I believe in God and so you see ....

**JULIETTE** Entirely furnished with all the fixtures, just as it is, with the exception of that one little picture signed by Carot. I don't know if you have ever heard of that painter, have you .

**GASTON.** No, never

**JULIETTE.** Neither have I. But I like the colour and I want to keep it, if you don't mind. For the villa itself, just as it stands, two hundred and fifty thousand francs. I repeat, that I would much rather dispose of it at less than its value to people like yourselves, than to give it up, even for more money, to some one whom I didn't like. The price must seem...

**GASTON** Decidedly excessive .....

**JULIETTE.** Oh, no!

**GASTON** Oh, yes, Madame.

**JULIETTE** Well, really, I must say I'm ....

**GASTON** Quite so , life is full of surprises, isn't it?

**JULIETTE** You think it dear at two hundred and fifty thousands? Very well, I can't be fairer than this: make me an offer.

**GASTON** If I did, it would be much less than that.

**JULIETTE** Make it anyway.

**GASTON** It's very awkward .... I.....

**JEANNE.** Name some figures, darling .... Just to please me.

**GASTON** Well I hardly know .... Sixty thousand ....

**JEANNE** } Oh !  
**JULIETTE**

**GASTON** What do you mean by 'Oh !'? It isn't worth more than that to me.

**JULIETTE** I give you my word of honour, Monsieur, I cannot let it go for less than two hundred thousand.

**GASTON.** You have perfect right to do as you please, Madame.

**JULIETTE** I tell you what I will do. I will be philanthropic and let you have it for two hundred thousand.

**GASTON** And I will be equally good-natured and let you keep it for the same price.

**JULIETTE** In that case, there is nothing more to be said, Monsieur.

**GASTON** Good day, Madame.

**JEANNE** One minute, darling. Before you definitely decide, I would love you to go over the upper floor with me.

**JULIETTE** I will show it to you with the greatest pleasure. This way, Madame. This way, Monsieur .....

**GASTON :** No , thank you .... Really ... I have made up my mind and I'm not very fond of climbing stairs.

**JULIETTE** Just as you wish, Monsieur. (to Jeanne.) Shall I lead the way?

**JEANNE.** If you please, Madame.

(Exit JULIETTE)

**JEANNE** (to her husband.) You're not over polite, are you ?

**GASTON** Oh, my darling! For Heaven's sake, stop worrying me about this shanty. Go and examine the bathroom and come back quickly.

(Exit JEANNE *following* JULIETTE)

**GASTON** (to himself) Two hundred thousand for a few yards of land.... She must think I'm crazy.....  
(The door bell rings and, a moment later, the MAID re-enters showing in  
MRS. AL SMITH

**MAID** If Madame would be kind enough to come in.

**Mrs. A.L. SMITH** See here now, I tell you I'm in a hurry. How much do they want for this house?

**MAID** I don't know anything about it, Madame.

**MRS . A.L. SMITH** To start off with, why isn't the price marked on the signboard? You French people have cute way of Doing business! You go and tell your boss that if he doesn't come right away, I'm going. I haven't any time to waste. Any hold up makes me sick when I want something (MAID goes out.) Oh, you're the husband, I suppose. Good afternoon. Do you speak American ?

**GASTON** Sure .... You betcha .....

**MRS A.L. SMITH.** That goes by me. How much for this house

**GASTON** How much ? ... Well.... Won't you sit down ?

**Mrs. A.L. SMITH** I do things standing up.

**GASTON** Oh! Do you ?

**MRS. A.L. SMITH** Yep! Where's your wife?

**GASTON** My wife? Oh, she's upstairs.

**MRS A.L.SMITH.** Well, she can stay there. Unless you have to consult her before you make a sale?

.

**GASTON** Me ? Not on your life!

**MRS. A.L. SMITH** You are an exception. Frenchmen usually have to consult abut ten people before they get a move on. Listen ! Do you or don't you want to sell this house?

**GASTON** I? .... Oh, I'd love to !

**Mrs. A.L SMITH** Then what about it? I haven't more than five minutes to spare.

**GASTON** Sit down for three of them anyway. To begin with this villa was built by my grandfather ....

**MRS. A.L. SMITH** I don't care a darn about your grandfather!

**GASTON** Neither do I.... But I must tell you that .... er.

**MRS. A.L. SMITH** listen, just tell me the price.

**GASTON.** Let me explain that ...

**Mrs. AL SMITH .** NO!

**GASTON** We have electricity, gas, telephone ....

**MRS. AL SMITH** I don't care! What's the price?

**GASTON** But you must go over the house .....

**Mrs. A.L. SMITH** No!..... I want to knock it down and build a bungalow here.

**GASTON** Oh, I see!

**MRS. A.L. SMITH** Yep! It's the land I want. I have to be near Paramount where I'm going to shoot some films.

**GASTON** Oh!

**MRS. AL SMITH** Yep! You see I'm a big star.

**GASTON** Not really?

**Mrs. A.L. SMITH** (amiably) Yep! How do you do?  
Well now, how much?

**GASTON.** Now let's see... In that case, entirely furnished, with the exception of that little picture by an unknown artist ... it belonged to my grandfather and I want to keep it.....

**Mrs. A.L. SMITH** Say ! You do love your grandparents in Europe!

**GASTON** We have had them for such a long time!

**MRS. A.L. SMITH** You folk are queer. You think about the past all the time. We always think about the future.

**GASTON** Everybody thinks about what he's got.

**MRS. A.L. SMITH.** What a pity you don't try and copy us more.

**GASTON** Copies are not always good. We could only imitate you and imitations are no better than parodies. We are so different. Think of it..... Europeans go to America to earn money and Americans come to Europe to spend it.

**MRS. A.L. SMITH** Just the same, you ought to learn how to do business

**GASTON** We are learning now. We are practising.....

**Mrs. A.L. SMITH** Well then, how much?

**GASTON** The house ! Let me see ... I should say three hundred thousand francs.... The same for everybody, you know, Even though you are an American, I wouldn't dream of raising the price.

**MRS. A.L. SMITH** Treat me the same as anybody. Then you say it is three hundred thousand?

**GASTON** (to himself) ‘ Since you are dear bought – I will love you dear.’

**MRS. A.L. SMITH** Say you, what do you take me for?

**GASTON** Sorry. That’s Shakespeare .... I mean cash.....

**MRS. A.L. SMITH** Now I get you... cash down! Say! You’re coming on.

(She takes her cheque book from her bag.)

**GASTON** (fumbling in a drawer). Wait ... I never know where they put my pen and ink ....

**MRS. A.L. SMITH.** Let me tell you something, you’d better buy yourself a fountain pen with the money you get for the villa. What date is it today?

**GASTON** The twenty –fourth

**MRS. AL SMITH** You can fill in your name on the cheque your self. I live at the Ritz Hotel, Place Vendome. My lawyer is.....

**GASTON** Who .....?

**MRS. A.L. SMITH** Exactly.

**GASTON.** What?

**MRS A.L. SMITH** My lawyer is Mr. Who, 5, Rue Cambon. He will get in touch with yours about the rest of the transaction Good-bye.

**GASTON** Good-bye.

**MRS. A.L. SMITH** When are you leaving?

**GASTON** Well ..... er.... I don’t quite know ..... whenever you like.

**Mrs. A.L. SMITH** Make it tomorrow and my architect can come on Thursday. Good-bye. I’m delighted.

**GASTON** Delighted to hear it, Madame. (She goes and he looks at the cheque.) It’s a very good thing in business when everyone is delighted!

(At that moment, JEANNE and JULIETTE return)

**GASTON** Well?

**JEANNE.** Well ... of course ... it’s very charming...

**JULIETTE** Of course, as I told you, it’s not large place. I warned you. There are two large bedrooms and one small one.

**GASTON** Well now ! That’s something.

**JEANNE** (to her husband). You are quite right, darling. I'm afraid it would not be suitable. Thank you, Madame, we need not keep you any longer.

**JULIETTE** Oh, that's quite all right.

**GASTON.** Just a moment, just a moment, my dear. You say there are two large bedrooms and a small one.....

**JULIETTE** Yes, and two servants' rooms.

**GASTON.** Oh! There are two servants' rooms in addition, are there?

**JULIETTE** Yes.

**GASTON** But that's excellent!

**JEANNE** Gaston, stop joking!

**GASTON** And the bathroom? What's that like?

**JULIETTE** Perfect! There's a bath in it.....

**GASTON** Oh, there's a bath in the bathroom, is there?

**JULIETTE** Of course there is!

**GASTON** It's all very important. A bathroom with a bath in it. Bedrooms, two large and one small, two servants' rooms and a garden. It's really possible. While you were upstairs, I have been thinking a lot about

Your papa and mamma. You see, I am really unselfish, and then the rooms for your sister's children.... Also, my dear, I've been thinking.... and this is serious.... about our old age.... It's bound to come sooner or later and the natural desire of old age is a quiet country life ... (To JULIETTE) You said two hundred thousand didn't you?

**JEANNE** What on earth are you driving at?

**GASTON** Just trying to please you, darling.

**JULIETTE** Yes, two hundred thousand is my lowest. Cash, of course.

**GASTON** Well, that's fixed. I won't argue about it. (He takes out his cheque book.)

**JEANNE** But there are so many things to be discussed before .....

**GASTON.** Not at all. Only one thing. As I am not arguing about the price, as I'm not bargaining with you... well you must be nice to me, you must allow me to keep this little picture which has kept me company while you and my wife went upstairs.

**JULIETTE** It's not a question of value ...

**GASTON.** Certainly not .... Just as a souvenir ...

**JULIETTE** Very well, you may keep it.

**GASTON** Thank you, Madame. Will you give me a Receipt please? Our lawyers will draw up

the details of the sale. Please fill in your name ..... Let us see, it's the twenty – third isn't it?

**JULIETTE** No, the twenty – fourth .....

**GASTON** what does it matter? One day more or less.  
(She signs the receipt and exchanges it for his cheque.)  
Splendid!

**JULIETTE** Thank you, Monsieur.

**GASTON** Here is my card. Good – bye, Madame. Oh, by the way, you will be kind enough to leave tomorrow morning won't you.

**JULIETTE** Tomorrow! So soon?

**GASTON** Well, say tomorrow evening at the latest.

**JULIETTE** Yes, I can manage that, good-bye Madame.

**JEANNE** Good day, Madame

**GASTON** I'll take my little picture with me, if you don't mind (He unhooks it.) Just a beautiful souvenir, you know .....

**JULIETTE** Very well. I'll show you the garden, on the way out

(Exit JULIETTE)

**JEANNE** What on earth have you done?

**GASTON** I ? Made hundred thousand francs and a Corot!

**JEANNE** But how?

**GASTON** I'll tell you later.

CURTAIN