

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 hardWould 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 n 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