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In One Bed... and Out the Other

by Mawby Green
and Ed Feilbert

Based on the French farce
Une Nuit Chez Vous... Madame!
by Jean de Letraz

A SAMUEL FRENCH ACTING EDITION



New York Hollywood London Toronto

SAMUELFRENCH.COM

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CHARACTERS

MAURICE

HUGUETTE DUBOIS

GASTON DUBOIS

DIDIER

CLARA

ROSINE

AUNT ALICE

The action takes place in Paris in the drawing room of Monsieur and Madame Dubois. The time is the present.

ACT ONE

An autumn afternoon

ACT TWO

Only a few minutes later

ACT THREE

After dinner

In One Bed . . . and Out the Other

ACT ONE

SCENE: *The drawing room of MONSIEUR and MADAME DUBOIS' large and rambling garden apartment in Paris.*

A door downstage right leads to the study. Further upstage along the right wall is a fireplace. The right wall angles upstage and left forming a large archway, with a platform below reached by a single step. Upstage through the archway are double doors, which lead to other parts of the apartment: the main entrance, kitchen, etc. In front of the double doors is a hall leading off stage right to the dining room. Against the wall left of the archway are a straightback chair and a cabinet. The wall then recesses into French windows, giving on to a terrace. The French windows are essentially stage center. Left of the French windows is a long platform reached on either side by circular stairs of three steps each. The right circular stairs come down at approximately left center; the left circular stairs come down at far left and face on stage. Upstage center

on the platform is the door to MADAME DUBOIS' boudoir. Angled at the left end of the platform is the door to the DUBOIS' bedroom.

The furnishings are warm and inviting. Below the platform is a long sofa with a coffee table in front. Behind the sofa is a pedestal holding a vase of red roses. Downstage center is a low octagonal table. Two comfortable chairs occupy the space at right center. In front of these chairs is a hassock. A telephone, bell and a vase with a single red rose are on the cabinet. In the archway, at the left, is a small stand with a very tall rubber plant. Wall brackets are right and left and a chandelier hangs in the center of the room.

TIME: *An autumn afternoon.*

As the curtain rises, MAURICE, wearing the white gloves and long apron of a servant, enters from the hall awkwardly carrying a tray with coffee service for two. He is in a bad humor. He puts down the tray on the coffee table, then pulls off his gloves and throws them on a chair.

MAURICE. What a job! What a life! What am I doing here? (*He goes to the telephone but before dialing looks to see that no one is coming.*) Hello? . . . Yes, everything's fine. Just fine! But I warn you I'm not putting up with this another day! Jump in your car and wait at the cafe across the street until I signal . . . I'll wave my handkerchief . . . They're about to have coffee and take a siesta . . . Do they go straight to sleep? What else does one do

when one takes a siesta? . . . You would but they're married. Goodbye! I hear them coming! (*He replaces the receiver.*) Me, a servant! It's incredible! (*He shouts down the hall.*) The coffee's ready! (GASTON and HUGUETTE DUBOIS enter. *She is chic and beautiful but very bourgeois. He is neither chic nor beautiful, just bourgeois. They are bored from the monotony of wedded bliss.*)

HUGUETTE. (*To MAURICE.*) Must you shout, Didier? Really, we are not what you would call exacting employers, but we do feel a servant should serve with servility. (*She sits on the far left of the sofa.*)

MAURICE. My view precisely!

GASTON. How lucky for us! Are these your gloves?

MAURICE. Yes.

GASTON. What are they doing on that chair?

MAURICE. Nothing.

GASTON. Pick them up!

MAURICE. With pleasure! (*He picks up his gloves, puts them under his arm, then picks up the tongs to put the sugar into the cups.*)

GASTON. And put them on! Put them on even when you're using the tongs to put the sugar into the cups. (*He sits on the far right of the sofa.*)

MAURICE. (*Aside.*) I'd like to put them . . . (*He drops the sugar tongs and as he picks them up, drops his gloves. As he straightens up, he bumps into the tray.*)

GASTON. Oh, leave it alone! You give me the shakes! Get out of here! (*As MAURICE starts to leave.*) Didier!

MAURICE. M'sieur?

GASTON. I stopped you in order to have the pleasure of telling you again to get out of here!

MAURICE. Very well! (*He waits.*) May I go?

GASTON. (*Raising his voice.*) I ordered you to go!

MAURICE. (*Sweetly sarcastic.*) That's what I thought you said the first time! (*He goes out down the hall.*)

GASTON. He's impossible!

HUGUETTE. (*Serving the coffee.*) Then why did you engage him? Why did you dismiss Joseph while I was away on holiday?

GASTON. (*A bit constrained.*) He'd taken to drink.

HUGUETTE. To drink? Joseph, who drank nothing but water?

GASTON. You've heard of galloping consumption? He got spontaneous alcoholism. Shall we change the subject?

HUGUETTE. If you wish, dear.

GASTON. We used to have the cat to talk about but since he scooted over the fence, we've nothing to discuss but the servant problem.

HUGUETTE. (*After a brief silence.*) Well, go on.

GASTON. No, it's your turn. You go on. (*Another silence.*)

HUGUETTE. (*An amiable reproach.*) So you have nothing you want to say to me?

GASTON. Business is good.

HUGUETTE. Oh.

GASTON. Wood is selling well. Logs particularly . . . round ones for fires. Nothing can take the place of a log . . . and they never go out of style. Yesterday's log looks like today's and today's log looks like tomorrow's because wood is wood and wood is eternal. Yes, it's a miracle the way trees grow log-shaped. There's nothing anybody can do about it.

HUGUETTE. Nothing.

GASTON. Trees grow log-shaped. (*Another silence.*)

HUGUETTE. Say something charming.

GASTON. What?

HUGUETTE. Tell me you love me.

GASTON. (*Mechanically, as he sips his coffee.*) I adore you. What about you?

HUGUETTE. Oh, yes.

GASTON. (*With no enthusiasm.*) It's wonderful we're so happy.

HUGUETTE. Deliriously happy.

GASTON. We longed for the perfect home . . . and we have it.

HUGUETTE. (*With a pout.*) Well, to be honest, I'm not mad keen about this furniture.

GASTON. You're not mad keen? I am surprised. After all, this furniture belonged to my father and mother.

HUGUETTE. I know, Gaston, but I do think I'd be happier with something different.

GASTON. What, for instance?

HUGUETTE. I don't know. Have you any ideas?

GASTON. None. (*They fall silent and gaze vacantly into space. GASTON whistles between his teeth.*)

HUGUETTE. Shall we take our siesta?

GASTON. Yes, I could use forty winks. (*They rise and go up the stairs towards their bedroom. MAURICE comes in from the hall.*) You may clear away, we've finished.

MAURICE. (*Peevishly.*) Oh, well, if you insist!

GASTON. What do you mean 'if I insist'? Huguette, I think I had better have a word with Didier.

HUGUETTE. Very well, Gaston. (*She goes into the bedroom.*)

GASTON. (*Coming down the right stairs.*) Now listen to me. I'm a patient man . . .

MAURICE. Yes, m'sieur . . .

GASTON. . . . but you're making me lose my temper! Do you realize that?

MAURICE. (*Very chummy.*) I certainly do and I feel that in your place . . .

GASTON. Never mind my place. Think of hanging on to your own. Have I made myself clear?

MAURICE. Perfectly.

GASTON. Good. (*He goes up the stairs. MAURICE carries the tray to the cabinet.*)

MAURICE. Oh, that reminds me, I forgot to tell you, Gaston . . .

GASTON. (*Correcting him.*) I forgot to tell *monsieur*!

MAURICE. You did? What? What did you forget to tell me, old boy?

GASTON. Old boy! Old boy! (*Charging down the stairs.*) You are discharged! Leave the house!

MAURICE. (*Blithely ignoring him.*) I forgot to tell monsieur that I found a gold cigarette case under this cushion.

GASTON. What cigarette case?

MAURICE. This one. (*He takes it from his pocket.*) It has a lovely name engraved on it . . . Clara.

GASTON. (*Alarmed.*) What did you say? Clara?

MAURICE. Yes, Clara.

GASTON. Give me that case!

MAURICE. M'sieur. (*He gives him the case.*)

GASTON. My God! What a thing to have lying around! (*He quickly pockets it.*)

MAURICE. Clara . . . hmm . . . not much like madame's name, is it?

GASTON. Didier, I discharged Joseph because he showed no discretion. He couldn't keep his mouth shut.

MAURICE. Really, monsieur, there's no reason for you to give me explanations.

GASTON. (*Giving him a fifty franc note.*) How about this? (MAURICE *looks at the denomination. It's not too bad, so he slips it into his pocket.*) The neighbors may try to imply I entertained a young lady here, while my wife was away on holiday. If they do, simply shrug your shoulders.

MAURICE. (*Shrugging shoulders.*) Like this, monsieur?

GASTON. Higher! (MAURICE *shrugs higher.*) That's it.

MAURICE. And if these same neighbors try to imply that this young lady was named Clara, how shall I frame my reply?

GASTON. Shrug higher!

MAURICE. A most suitable answer, monsieur! (*He shrugs still higher.*)

GASTON. And in appreciation of your understanding, I am personally going to give you a monthly bonus.

MAURICE. How much?

GASTON. How much?! How much?! I'm giving you a monthly bonus out of the goodness of my heart and you want to know . . .

MAURICE. (*Flatly.*) How much. A manservant likes to find himself a Clara once in awhile too, you know.

GASTON. (*Furiously.*) Oh you . . . you . . . !! (HUGUETTE *enters from the bedroom.*)

HUGUETTE. What's keeping you, Gaston?

GASTON. Nothing, my dear.

HUGUETTE. Have you finished your talk with Didier?

GASTON. Yes, I straightened him out. I'm hoping he'll stay with us a long time.

MAURICE. That depends.

HUGUETTE. On what? (*She comes down the stairs.*)

MAURICE. One or two conditions.

HUGUETTE. Which are?

MAURICE. I'd like my own bathroom for one thing.

HUGUETTE. Really?

MAURICE. Yes, madame. I've been feeling I must have one for the last three minutes.

HUGUETTE. Anything else?

MAURICE. A radio, stereo, color TV . . .

GASTON. (*To the audience.*) You are listening to a program called 'The Big Squeeze.'

MAURICE. Well, m'sieur?

GASTON. You shall have them.

HUGUETTE. Oh, Gaston, I must say . . . !

GASTON. No, you mustn't say I'm too generous. It's my nature to be kind. Now let us siesta, my sweet. (*HUGUETTE goes back into the bedroom.*)

MAURICE. And about time too! (*GASTON glowers at MAURICE before following HUGUETTE out.*) Now for the other one! (*He goes to the French windows and waves his handkerchief.*) Look! I'm waving my handkerchief! . . . (*He starts for the double doors.*) Imagine what my friends would say if they saw me in this get-up! Me . . . Maurice . . . the Vicomte de Corneblanche! (*DIDIER comes in through the French windows as MAURICE steps into the archway. DIDIER is handsome and debonair.*)

DIDIER. Good afternoon, my man!

MAURICE. (*Turning around.*) What are you doing coming in through there? I was going to open the door.

DIDIER. Ah, but that's the advantage of a garden apartment. The husband goes out through the front door as the lover comes in through the window.

MAURICE. What are you talking about? There's no lover. And the husband is in there! (*He points to the*

bedroom. DIDIER *hangs his hat on MAURICE's hand as if it were a peg.*)

DIDIER. Yes, the bedroom. And that's the boudoir next to it. That's the study, of course. Yes, thanks to you, I feel I've lived in this apartment for years, though I've never set foot in the place before.

MAURICE. I'm glad you're satisfied. Now what about the second installment? The other five hundred francs. That was our agreement.

DIDIER. You shall have it.

MAURICE. Oh, if only I hadn't lost so much at the Races.

DIDIER. (*Ironically.*) It's a good thing you did. Otherwise, how could I help you?

MAURICE. By forcing me to take this job as a servant! Tell me, why do I have to pay for your paltry thousand francs with this hideous humiliation?

DIDIER. Oh, just an idea I had.

MAURICE. (*To the audience.*) Another crackpot idea from a novelist who turns his life into a novelette.

DIDIER. (*As though imparting a great secret.*) The reason I asked you to come here is because I'm in love with the mistress of this house.

MAURICE. You can't be serious! In love with Huguette Dubois?

DIDIER. Madly.

MAURICE. A woman you haven't spoken to?

DIDIER. That's right.

MAURICE. A woman you haven't seen?

DIDIER. That's wrong. I have seen Huguette Dubois. I follow her from a distance, worshipping the ground she walks on.

MAURICE. (*To the audience.*) I told you. Crackpot.

DIDIER. Well, to be absolutely truthful, I don't

know yet whether I love her but I do know I want her. And what's more, I shall get her!

MAURICE. You're barking up the wrong tree. Huguette Dubois is fidelity personified. You'll never get her to come to your apartment alone.

DIDIER. I know that. That's why I decided to move in here.

MAURICE. You're crazy! Move in here? I bet you never pull that one off.

DIDIER. A thousand francs, double or nothing.

MAURICE. It's a bet!

DIDIER. Oh, Maurice, thanks to you I know everything there is to know about Huguette. Her likes and dislikes, her temperament, her passion for red roses . . . that she's virtuous and bored. How can I lose?

MAURICE. Why didn't you tell me I was plotting against myself? (DIDIER *laughs*.) Go ahead, laugh! (*He imitates DIDIER's laugh.*) But you don't think I used my own name when I applied for this post, do you? Not me . . . Maurice, the Vicomte de Cornéblanche.

DIDIER. I should hope not.

MAURICE. But you need an identity card . . .

DIDIER. Of course.

MAURICE. So I used yours . . . borrowed from your pocket.

DIDIER. What!

MAURICE. (*Delighted.*) Surprised? I took this job in your name . . . Didier . . . Didier Larue. How do you like that?

DIDIER. Well, all that means, Maurice, is that over the years you have managed to borrow everything I own, including my name.

MAURICE. They heard us. They're coming. (GASTON comes in from the bedroom, followed by HUGUETTE.)

GASTON. Monsieur?

DIDIER. Monsieur . . . (*He bows.*) Madame. Your man informed me you were resting, so I'm doubly sorry for disturbing you without an appointment.

GASTON. May I ask your name?

DIDIER. Why, I am Maurice, the Vicomte de Corneblanche . . . (*MAURICE chokes back his indignation.*) and I am honored to pay my respects.

GASTON. May I ask the reason for your unexpected call?

DIDIER. Yes, indeed. But it's rather personal . . .

GASTON. (*To MAURICE.*) Didier, you may go.

MAURICE. (*Deeply mortified.*) Very well, monsieur . . . (*As he passes DIDIER.*) since the Vicomte feels my presence is superfluous. (*He goes out down the hall.*)

DIDIER. I'm sure you understand I wouldn't come here like this without a good reason.

GASTON. Of course. It's going to be a cold winter and you want to make certain you're kept warm.

DIDIER. (*Looking at HUGUETTE.*) Well, that's one way of looking at it.

GASTON. You want to buy logs for your fire.

DIDIER. Well, no, monsieur. I'm here on a purely sentimental matter.

GASTON. How can it possibly concern us?

DIDIER. Fate, monsieur. Fate has decreed that you and your wife should be involved in this drama of my life. When I awoke this morning, I realized I had only one choice: come to see you . . . or die!

GASTON. Won't you sit down?

DIDIER. Thank you! You see, I once lived in this apartment.

HUGUETTE. Really? How delightful!

DIDIER. No, madame. How tragic. For here, under

this roof, I spent my most golden hours . . . with a woman I adored. But then we drifted apart and I realized . . . too late, as always . . . that life meant nothing without her.

HUGUETTE. And the lady?

DIDIER. She feels the same. I'm sure of it.

GASTON. Then why were you thinking of dying this morning?

DIDIER. Because last night I spoke to her. She said that if we were back in the magic of our old surroundings, the love that flickers might flare up again. But she feels it will only happen here . . . in this paradise of love.

HUGUETTE. It's like a novelette.

DIDIER. A very short novelette. I know what she suggests is impossible so there is nothing left for me to do but fade out of her life forever.

HUGUETTE. (*To GASTON.*) The poor boy!

DIDIER. When I leave here, I shall drive my car straight into a tree!

GASTON. Find an oak. It's harder than chestnut.

HUGUETTE. What exactly can we do for you?

DIDIER. If I could . . . no, the idea's ridiculous.

HUGUETTE. Tell me.

DIDIER. If only I could come back here for one night, madame.

HUGUETTE. For one night?

DIDIER. At a time.

GASTON. Monsieur, that's all very well but we're not prepared to move out just to please you.

DIDIER. Of course not! And you mustn't dream of it. It's unthinkable. (*He takes out an envelope from his pocket.*) Since I have no family, will you hand this envelope over to my lawyer?

GASTON. What's in it?

DIDIER. My will. May I entrust it to you, madame?

HUGUETTE. Oh no! I couldn't! It's too frightful! . . . Gaston, I've had an inspiration! We don't have to lend him the whole apartment. We can lend him this room. Then he can invite this lady without disturbing us.

DIDIER. What a gracious, lovely idea! I was hoping against hope it might occur to you.

HUGUETTE. It did! Oh, it did!

DIDIER. Ah, madame, we are so alike: you too feel with the heart.

HUGUETTE. I do! Oh, I do!

GASTON. Have you ever tried selling insurance, monsieur?

DIDIER. (*Choosing to misunderstand.*) Then you agree? How wonderful!

HUGUETTE. Oh, Gaston, I can't tell you how happy you've made me. (*She kisses him on the brow.*)

GASTON. (*Begrudgingly.*) Well, if it's a matter of saving his life . . .

DIDIER. And I'm sure you won't mind if I make a few changes.

GASTON. Such as?

DIDIER. Nothing really. Bring in some new furniture.

GASTON. New furniture?

HUGUETTE. Of course, new furniture! Why not? (*MAURICE enters from the hall and hands GASTON a business card.*)

MAURICE. A gentleman, m'sieur. I showed him into the study.

GASTON. (*After looking at the card.*) Will you excuse me?

DIDIER. By all means! Make yourself at home!
(GASTON *does a "double-take."*)

GASTON. (*To HUGUETTE.*) It's one of my biggest accounts! (*From the Christmas carol, "Good King Wenceslas," he sings:*) 'He's gathering winter fu-u-el!' (*He goes into the study happily.*)

HUGUETTE. (*To MAURICE.*) Didier, Monsieur de Corneblanche will be staying with us. See that he's made comfortable.

MAURICE. (*Flabbergasted.*) What? Monsieur de Corneblanche is moving in here?

DIDIER. That is correct, Didier. But I won't be needing your services for the moment. You may go.

MAURICE. (*Controlling himself with difficulty.*) Very well, monsieur. (*To the audience.*) There goes my one thousand francs.

DIDIER. (*Aside, to MAURICE.*) Doubled!

MAURICE. (*Dolefully.*) Oh! (*He goes out down the hall.*)

HUGUETTE. How do you propose changing this room?

DIDIER. Why, to suit her.

HUGUETTE. How thoughtful of you!

DIDIER. Yes, everything I do will be to satisfy her. Will you help me?

HUGUETTE. How do you mean?

DIDIER. Tell me, do you like it frilly or clean cut?

HUGUETTE. What?

DIDIER. Your bedroom.

HUGUETTE. Oh, I prefer it frilly.

DIDIER. So does she. What's your favorite color?

HUGUETTE. Cyclamen. I adore cyclamen.

DIDIER. You don't say! Her favorite, too.

HUGUETTE. So you intend turning this room into a bedroom?

DIDIER. We turned every room into a bedroom, madame!

HUGUETTE. How exciting!

DIDIER. Then you'll help me?

HUGUETTE. Oh, yes! It will be so stimulating after the humdrum way we drag along here. (MAURICE comes in with a vase of red roses. To MAURICE.) What is it, Didier?

MAURICE. Flowers for madame.

HUGUETTE. Is there a card?

MAURICE. No, madame.

HUGUETTE. Whoever could have sent them?

DIDIER. I took the liberty. I mean, as a gesture of appreciation in case madame had been so kind as to hand the will over to my lawyer.

HUGUETTE. How lovely they are! Red roses!

MAURICE. They'd have looked nice on your coffin, monsieur. (*He goes out through the double doors.*)

DIDIER. My beloved's favorite flowers.

HUGUETTE. Mine, too!

DIDIER. (*In mock surprise.*) This time I refuse to believe it! You don't say! (MAURICE re-enters.)

MAURICE. I should like to say a visitor has arrived. A lady.

DIDIER. Then I must go and see about the furniture. Madame, I don't know how to thank you.

HUGUETTE. Make her happy. That's all I ask.

DIDIER. Make who happy?

HUGUETTE. Why . . . the lady you're going to love here, of course.

DIDIER. You can rely on me for *that*, madame. I shall do everything I can . . . leave no bed unturned. I mean 'au revoir,' madame . . . (*He goes out swiftly through the French windows. HUGUETTE goes up to the windows and stands there lost in a dream.*)

MAURICE. Madame has not forgotten the visitor?

HUGUETTE. What's that? Oh, yes, of course. Did she give her name?

MAURICE. Yes. She is Clara . . . Madame Clara Gauthier.

HUGUETTE. I don't know her.

MAURICE. (*Downstage, "shrugging higher" to the audience.*) No, I know you don't.

HUGUETTE. Oh, good heavens! She may be the lady Monsieur de Corneblanche is expecting. And now he's gone! Ask her to come in.

MAURICE. Yes, madame. (*He leaves through the double doors.*)

HUGUETTE. How lovely they are! Red roses! He's perfectly right. Done over, this could be a most charming room. (*MAURICE re-enters.*)

MAURICE. Madame Clara Gauthier! (*CLARA, a dazzling girl, rushes in.*)

CLARA. Here I am! I couldn't wait . . . (*She stops short, embarrassed at seeing HUGUETTE.*) Oh, madame . . .

HUGUETTE. Come in.

CLARA. Thank you. Oh, dear. I'm afraid I didn't expect . . .

HUGUETTE. To see me here?

CLARA. No, I don't think I did. I hardly know what to say . . .

HUGUETTE. Then don't say anything. I can guess who you are.

CLARA. You can?

HUGUETTE. Yes, I'm sure of it.

CLARA. Oh.

MAURICE. (*Who has been eavesdropping.*) Clara!

What a lovely summer pastime! (*He leaves through the double doors.*)

HUGUETTE. It's not the first time you've been in this room, is it?

CLARA. No . . . I can't say it is.

HUGUETTE. It must be full of memories for you.

CLARA. Very full.

HUGUETTE. I know how your emotions must be fluttering . . .

CLARA. Like a frightened bird.

HUGUETTE. Then let me put you at ease. I am the soul of discretion so don't let my presence embarrass or inhibit you in any way whatever. You must make yourself completely at home.

CLARA. How kind, how very kind!

HUGUETTE. Your lover is waiting for you impatiently!

CLARA. Oh, such ecstasy! No one has ever given me more wonderful news!

HUGUETTE. Here, in this room, you'll be able to . . . Yes. I place it entirely at your service.

CLARA. I don't know how to put my thanks into words.

HUGUETTE. Don't try. What a pleasure it will be to help do over this room for you! What joy to make you both happy! I want you to believe that.

CLARA. I do. Oh, I do! (*GASTON sweeps in from the study.*)

GASTON. (*Enthusiastically.*) Well, I've done it again! Another big ord . . . (*He catches sight of CLARA and flaps around the room.*) Oh! . . . Oh! . . . Oh! . . . Oh!

CLARA. (*Seeing him.*) Ah!

GASTON. Huguette?

HUGUETTE. Yes?

GASTON. Didier told me . . . told me you had a visitor . . . and so I . . .

HUGUETTE. How thoughtful to come in so quickly.

GASTON. Yes. I . . . I wonder if I might have a word in private with madame. (*He indicates CLARA.*)

HUGUETTE. Of course. And I don't have to tell you, I shall be delighted with anything you plan for her pleasure.

GASTON. (*Amazed.*) You will?

HUGUETTE. Yes. Anything at all! (*She goes into the boudoir, after a beaming smile for CLARA.*)

CLARA. Gaston!

GASTON. Clara!

CLARA. Are you pleased to see me again?

GASTON. I'm beside myself. But you should have warned me you were coming.

CLARA. Did I pick an awkward time?

GASTON. . . . No. Not at all. But I'd like to have been here when you arrived.

CLARA. It wasn't necessary. I was made more than welcome by that charming woman. Who is she?

GASTON. Oh, just my wi . . . why, why she's Huguette. A relative.

CLARA. A nice relative. Gaston?

GASTON. Yes?

CLARA. I have something serious to tell you. I'm not sure how you'll take it.

GASTON. Go ahead, Clara.

CLARA. It's done! I've done it!

GASTON. Done what?

CLARA. I've got my divorce!

GASTON. (*He tries to smile in spite of his dismay. He looks sick and sinks to the octagonal table.*) You have? What wonderful news.

CLARA. So you see, everything I told you this summer was true. I couldn't take a lover until I was legally free from my husband. And now that I am, with a clear conscience I can say: Take me, I'm yours.

GASTON. (*He is tempted, rises, then remembers his wife.*) But surely, Clara, not in here! Come, let's go!

CLARA. Where?

GASTON. Wherever you say. But not here!

CLARA. What's wrong with here?

GASTON. Well, you see I have my . . . my relative in the apartment. Wouldn't it be cozier if we found some out of the way place . . . for just the two of us?

CLARA. And disappoint your nice relative? After she's told me to make myself completely at home . . . in this room, which she's going to do over to suit us?

GASTON. (*Wide-eyed.*) She said that?

CLARA. Yes.

GASTON. Do it over to suit us?

CLARA. Yes, just for me and the man I love.

GASTON. How curious. Did she seem well?

CLARA. Quite well. Gaston?

GASTON. Yes, Clara?

CLARA. When I let you bring me here this summer, it was only because I was lonely . . . at loose ends with myself.

GASTON. Well, I tried to tie you together again, the best way I knew how.

CLARA. How I struggled not to give in then and there! (*She straightens his tie.*)

GASTON. (*Terrified his wife may return.*) Yes, you're a very sensual woman.

CLARA. (*Roughly tightening the knot of his tie.*) Intensely sensual! You don't know what it's like for

a woman to be both sensual and moral . . . to want to give herself one moment . . . and save herself the next. It's a torture I never want to suffer again!

GASTON. Oh, Clara, you're irresistible! Your eyes, your lips . . .

CLARA. (*Huskily.*) My bags are in the taxi. Fetch them.

GASTON. But . . . you're not thinking of moving in now?

CLARA. Of course I am. You told me you were free, didn't you? When you wanted me to give myself to you? Well, I believed you. And now I'm counting on you! (*She sits on the octagonal table.*)

GASTON. (*Mournfully.*) Oh, good.

CLARA. (*Reassured.*) Yes, isn't it?

GASTON. I'll fetch your bags. (*He doesn't budge.*)

CLARA. What are you waiting for, Gaston?

GASTON. Well, you see, there are times when one is free and then there are other times when one isn't quite so free.

CLARA. Meaning? (*She rises.*)

GASTON. During the summer people go away to escape the hot city . . . women mostly . . . then their husbands . . .

CLARA. Husbands? (*Raising her voice.*) Are you trying to tell me you're a husband? (*GASTON nods.*) A married husband?

GASTON. Don't shout! Please don't shout!

CLARA. It's terrible! You lied to me!

GASTON. I hardly knew you.

CLARA. You deceived me, Gaston. Deceived me! Oh, what am I going to do?

GASTON. I can recommend a hotel . . . on the Place Pigalle. It's on the shady side . . .

CLARA. So that's it! That's your plan. A shady hotel for shady ladies! No! I've never lived in that fashion and I don't intend to start now!

GASTON. Sh! Sh! Calm yourself!

CLARA. Calm myself! For months I've waited for this moment . . . this hour of love's fulfillment. I come to you trembling with desire. I say, 'Take me!' And what do you tell me? 'I'm married, go to Pig Alley!'

GASTON. Clara! Please, Clara!

CLARA. Where's your wife?

GASTON. Here . . . somewhere . . . in the next room, I'm afraid. (*He collapses on the sofa.*)

CLARA. I see . . . it's Huguette! (*GASTON nods.*) But if she's your wife, why did she offer us this room?

GASTON. Are you certain about that, Clara?

CLARA. Certainly I'm certain. She even offered to re-do it.

GASTON. Oh, now I know! (*He rises.*) Don't you see? She mistook you for someone else.

CLARA. Yes. Another of your mistresses.

GASTON. No, not my mistress! Another man's . . .

CLARA. Another . . . Oh! You men! If you had your way, you'd make mistresses of us all!

GASTON. You're right, Clara! (*He tries to pull her out of the room.*) We men are nothing but a bunch of bounders. And you'd be right if you bounded right out of here.

CLARA. Oh no! It's your fault I'm here and I'm staying. (*She sits on the octagonal table.*)

GASTON. But, Clara, don't you see . . . (*He kneels at her side.*) you're rushing us straight into calamity!

CLARA. Who cares? You deserve it.

GASTON. Listen to me, Clara.

CLARA. No! I'm not budging. And that's final!

GASTON. Wait! There is a way out. (*He rises.*) The previous tenant of this apartment asked us to lend him a room to entertain an old girl friend. He's on a sentimental pilgrimage.

CLARA. Are you sure it's not dope?

GASTON. My wife thinks you're this girl. That's why she made you so welcome.

CLARA. Oh, so that was it.

GASTON. Yes. And we won't disillusion her. You'll be this other girl. (*He kneels again at her side.*) It means you can stay here until I find a little place you can call your own.

CLARA. But what about this tenant?

GASTON. I'll arrange everything with him. He's a romantic in love with a dream of yesterday, so he's no threat to you or to me either. Well? What do you say? (*Taking her hand.*) Adultery can still be beautiful inside the home.

CLARA. (*Slapping his hand.*) Gaston!

GASTON. Please, Clara. Please.

CLARA. Well . . . only as a temporary measure . . . until I can think more clearly.

GASTON. Oh, thank you, Clara darling! (*CLARA rises.*)

CLARA. Oh, by the way, what's his name?

GASTON. Whose name?

CLARA. My old lover's. The one you're giving me.

GASTON. Oh, yes. Him. It's Maurice, the Vicomte de Corneblanche.

CLARA. (*Impressed.*) A Vicomte did you say?

GASTON. (*Rushing up the stairs to the boudoir.*) One of the best. A direct descendant of Joan of Arc. Huguette! Huguette! (*HUGUETTE enters from the*

boudoir.) Huguette, it's all arranged. Everything's going to work out nicely.

HUGUETTE. (*Coming down the stairs.*) Oh, I'm so happy!

GASTON. (*Happily following her down the stairs.*) If you're happy, dear, it makes me even happier. (*He rings for the manservant.*)

HUGUETTE. And to think this charming romance is going to be acted out under our roof! Doesn't it stir a little something in you, Gaston?

GASTON. It certainly does. I can feel the return of summer surging through my blood.

HUGUETTE. (*To CLARA.*) It must give you a funny feeling to be back in this apartment.

CLARA. You have no idea how funny it is. (*MAURICE comes in through the double doors unnoticed.*) For years I've lived to love but one man . . . one man only . . . the Vicomte de Corneblanche. My Maurice!

MAURICE. (*Startled.*) What?

HUGUETTE. Really, Didier!

MAURICE. She said Maurice.

HUGUETTE. And what has that to do with you?

GASTON. Yes, what has that to do with you? Bring in the luggage! I'll take care of the taxi. After you, Madame Gauthier. (*GASTON and CLARA go out through the double doors.*)

MAURICE. (*Aside.*) She adores me. This woman adores me! Whoever would have thought it! (*He leaves through the double doors.*)

HUGUETTE. (*Alone, admiring the roses.*) Love! What a beautiful thing is love! (*Unseen by HUGUETTE, DIDIER comes in through the French windows. He is carrying an overnight bag.*)

DIDIER. I have returned!

HUGUETTE. Oh! You startled me.

DIDIER. I'm so impatient to see my love again I can't waste time going round to the front door. (HUGUETTE takes his overnight bag and puts it at the foot of the right stairs.)

HUGUETTE. Well, monsieur, I'm happy to tell you you won't have long to wait.

DIDIER. What do you mean?

HUGUETTE. The lady you worship is ready to put an end to your torture.

DIDIER. Is that true?

HUGUETTE. I give you my word.

DIDIER. You mean that? Why, it's a miracle! I was afraid it might take more than one night. Ah, madame! Dear, dear madame! (He takes her hands joyfully.)

HUGUETTE. She just arrived. Not ten minutes ago.

DIDIER. (Stunned.) What's that? She just arrived?

HUGUETTE. Yes.

DIDIER. Who?

HUGUETTE. Who do you think? The lady you shared this apartment with.

DIDIER. The lady I shared . . . ?

HUGUETTE. Yes, and she still loves you.

DIDIER. She still loves me.

HUGUETTE. You look surprised.

DIDIER. Yes! . . . no . . . not really . . . (All at sea.) Then she's here? You're quite sure she's here?

HUGUETTE. (Going to the French windows.) Yes. She's getting her things from the taxi. (MAURICE comes through the double doors with two suitcases.) And there they are.

DIDIER. (Aside.) Well, I'll be damned!

HUGUETTE. (To MAURICE.) Put them here for the time being. Now I must have a word with the cook . . .

(*To DIDIER.*) as I hope you'll both have dinner with us tonight.

MAURICE. (*Very much the man of the world.*) Both of us? Tonight? We'd be delighted!

HUGUETTE. (*To MAURICE.*) Didier! Are you completely out of your mind? (*To DIDIER.*) If you'll excuse me . . .

DIDIER. Of course. (*HUGUETTE goes out down the hall.*)

MAURICE. Didier! Guess what's happened to me!

DIDIER. To you? To me!

MAURICE. I'm worshipped by a woman who's never seen me.

DIDIER. And I'm meeting a woman who doesn't exist . . . who was pure imagination on my part!

MAURICE. I knew I was attractive to women but I didn't realize I was that attractive.

DIDIER. You don't think it's an hallucination?

MAURICE. I don't know and I'm not stopping to find out. I should have listened to my Aunt Alice ages ago when she warned me against you.

DIDIER. If you had, you'd be living in some chateau miles from nowhere raising pigs.

MAURICE. Indeed I would. That's why I'm going to Poitou.

DIDIER. To Poitou?

MAURICE. Yes. My Aunt Alice has a rich little orphan picked out for me . . . Rosine Rose . . . and she's been waiting years for me . . . sight unseen . . . for her Prince Charming to bring her to fulfillment.

DIDIER. You poor devil. I can just see your Rosine: straight as a pole; flat as a pancake!

MAURICE. Yes . . . but this pancake is spread with

jam . . . and ready to marry me. And if it weren't for you, I'd be in Poitou now . . . fulfilling!

DIDIER. But what about this other woman who worships you?

MAURICE. She'll have to find someone else. I can't go around fulfilling every woman I've never met. (GASTON comes in through the double doors.)

GASTON. (To MAURICE.) Now then, Didier!

DIDIER. Yes?

GASTON. I said Didier.

DIDIER. Oh, yes. Him. (To MAURICE.) Now then, Didier!

MAURICE. What? Who? Oh, that's me.

GASTON. Yes, that's you. There are still two suitcases and a hat box. (Pause.) Well, get them!

MAURICE. All right, I'll get them! But you have given me your last order! (He leaves through the double doors. GASTON is furious but gets himself under control.)

GASTON. (Approaching a delicate matter.) Monsieur . . . you'll admit asking me to lend you this room was an unusual request.

DIDIER. Indeed it was.

GASTON. But I granted it, didn't I, without hesitation?

DIDIER. And I'm most grateful.

GASTON. Well, I think this break in routine may amuse my wife.

DIDIER. I do hope so, monsieur.

GASTON. She's not as easy to please as you might think. You have to know how to take her.

DIDIER. I'll try hard, to the best of my ability.

GASTON. Thank you. I can see you're a man I can trust . . . and one good turn deserves another . . .

DIDIER. Oh, absolutely! And the first chance I get, I'll put you on to something good too!

GASTON. That's the idea! I'm going to take you into my confidence.

DIDIER. As you wish, monsieur.

GASTON. I don't want my wife to cheat on me.

DIDIER. (*With mock concern.*) Good Lord, no! You certainly don't.

GASTON. And if you were not here, I'd run that risk.

DIDIER. If I were *not* here?

GASTON. Yes, thanks to you, I may never be a deceived husband.

DIDIER. Well, I certainly didn't come here with the idea of preventing your wife from cheating . . . but go on, I'm listening.

GASTON. To my wife, my middle name is 'Fidelity.' If she knew I was contemplating an affair, she'd take her revenge.

DIDIER. Beat you to the bedpost, as it were.

GASTON. But I have a head start. This summer I brought home a young lady. Nothing happened, unfortunately, but she feels she has an option on me and has come here to pick it up. By a stroke of luck, Huguette has mistaken her for the girl you're expecting.

DIDIER. Ah, I'm beginning to understand.

GASTON. What's more, Clara has agreed to go along with the idea . . . that you be her ex-lover. Of course, when your real love shows up, we may be in a bit of a spot.

DIDIER. Oh, don't let that worry you. We can get around that when the time comes.

GASTON. Then you'll go along with me?

DIDIER. Monsieur, I couldn't refuse you anything and that's a fact!

GASTON. There are too few gentlemen left in this world! I couldn't face having my wife cheat on me first. I'd rather die . . . Quiet! Our women!

DIDIER. Our women? Not yet, Gaston . . . but soon! (*Elbowing him in the ribs.*) Soon! (*GASTON echoes his "soons" and they laugh conspiratorially. HUGUETTE and CLARA enter through the double doors.*)

HUGUETTE. She's delightful! Gaston, the more you get to know Madame Gauthier, the greater the pleasure.

GASTON. I can well imagine!

HUGUETTE. (*To CLARA, and pointing to DIDIER.*) And there he is!

DIDIER. (*He turns, and his voice breaks with emotion.*) Clara!

CLARA. (*With the same over-ripe emotion.*) Maurice!

DIDIER. You! Wonderful you! (*They stagger towards each other like long-lost lovers.*)

CLARA. You! At last! I thought I'd never see you again!

DIDIER. It seemed too much ever to hope for. And now here we are . . . back in our dear old mating place! (*They sit on the hassock, wrapped up in each other.*)

CLARA. The very nest. It makes the heart run wild, doesn't it?

HUGUETTE. (*To CLARA.*) You've had such a long journey, my dear, why don't you make use of my boudoir?

CLARA. (*Without taking her eyes off DIDIER.*) Thank you. I'd love to.

GASTON. (*To DIDIER.*) And why don't you get ac-

quainted with my dressing room? As you're going to be here for a spell, we must all learn to rub along together.

DIDIER. Oh, not all together. Just two at a time.

GASTON. (*To the audience.*) Nice fellow, that.

HUGUETTE. (*Above CLARA and DIDIER, who are still seated on the hassock.*) Go ahead . . . behave as if we weren't here. Kiss like the lovebirds you used to be.

DIDIER. Shall we, Clara?

CLARA. Why not, Maurice?

DIDIER. (*To GASTON.*) All right with you?

GASTON. (*Suffering.*) How can I stop you? (*He sits on the octagonal table. A long kiss. HUGUETTE smiles tenderly. GASTON looks over at the kissing couple, then front, several times, in agony as the kiss goes on and on.*) Is it nice?

DIDIER. Delicious! You have no idea! Simply delicious! Another!

GASTON. (*Sharply.*) No more! (*He rises.*)

HUGUETTE. (*Pushing GASTON back down.*) But of course, more! More! We love it! (*Snuggling GASTON.*) Don't we, Gaston? (*GASTON groans. DIDIER and CLARA resume their kissing. HUGUETTE looks at GASTON, who manages to smile.*)

CLARA. You kiss as divinely as ever. (*They resume their kissing.*)

HUGUETTE. (*To GASTON.*) Love can be so beautiful!

GASTON. (*Rises; to DIDIER, annoyed.*) When you're ready!

HUGUETTE. (*To CLARA.*) This way, my dear.

CLARA. (*Woozy from the kissing.*) I won't be long, Maurice, dearest! (*HUGUETTE and CLARA go up the stairs.*)

DIDIER. (*Rises.*) Hurry back, you lovely darling!

HUGUETTE. And here is the door. But how foolish of me. You must know every inch around here.

CLARA. I thought I did. But I'm not quite myself.
(CLARA and HUGUETTE go into the boudoir. DIDIER starts up the right stairs after them.)

GASTON. (*Rushing up the left stairs; to DIDIER.*) And we go this way, if you don't mind.

DIDIER. (*Outside the bedroom door.*) Some girl, this Clara of ours.

GASTON. (*Annoyed.*) Ours!

DIDIER. On the surface, I mean. Ours on the surface. And some surface, I might add. Fine frame, silken hair, bountiful breasts.

GASTON. (*Eagerly.*) Are they? Are they really bountiful?

DIDIER. Firm and round. As firm and round as the logs you sell.

GASTON. (*Impressed.*) As good as that, hm? Still, you can't throw them on a fire on a cold day.

DIDIER. Well, *I* wouldn't.

GASTON. You took your part quite well.

DIDIER. Oh, that was nothing. I can do much better.
(*He heads for the boudoir.*)

GASTON. (*Stopping him.*) Stop! What you did was good enough! (*They go into the bedroom as MAURICE shows in an enchanting girl of about twenty.*)

MAURICE. Mademoiselle . . . if you will come this way . . .

GIRL. Is Madame Dubois at home?

MAURICE. Yes. But I'm afraid she has guests.

GIRL. I must see her. It's most important.

MAURICE. I'll tell her you're here. If you would be so good as to wait in the adjoining room . . . (*With*

the disdain of a superior manservant.) this one **has** been loaned out.

GIRL. Very well.

MAURICE. Who shall I say is calling?

GIRL. Mademoiselle Rosine Rose.

MAURICE. (*Thunderstruck.*) Rosine! But I thought . . .

ROSINE. Yes?

MAURICE. Nothing. You said your name was . . .

ROSINE. Rosine Rose. And don't be afraid to disturb Madame Dubois . . . she's a close friend of the family. (*She goes into the study.*)

MAURICE. (*In shock.*) No! Impossible! Not Rosine! Not my Rosine! (*DIDIER re-enters and comes down the stairs for his suitcase.*) Didier! Guess what's happened now . . . guess what's happened to me!

DIDIER. To you? To me! It's fabulous!

MAURICE. It's frightful! Another girl has just arrived. (*DIDIER does a "take."*)

DIDIER. Another girl?

MAURICE. It's her! My Rosine. My millions have arrived!

DIDIER. No!

MAURICE. Yes! They just walked through that door. And I can't collect because you installed me as a servant to friends of her family. What am I going to do?

DIDIER. I can't stop to tell you now. Gaston has just thrown Clara into my arms.

MAURICE. Clara?

DIDIER. She's dynamite!

MAURICE. But Huguette?

DIDIER. She's a time bomb!

MAURICE. (*Plaintively.*) Yes, but what about my Rosine?

DIDIER. I'll tell you later, Maurice. After I light her fuse! (*Laughing, he goes into the bedroom with his suitcase.* MAURICE, *stunned, turns to the audience.*)

BLACKOUT

CURTAIN

ACT TWO

SCENE: *The same.*

TIME: *A few minutes only have elapsed since Act One.*

As the curtain rises, HUGUETTE is chatting with an agitated ROSINE ROSE.

HUGUETTE. Then your guardian doesn't know you're here?

ROSINE. No. Last night I had words with him so I decided to come to Paris.

HUGUETTE. Oh? You and your guardian don't get on well?

ROSINE. No. All I hear is 'mustn't.' Mustn't do this, Rosine. Mustn't do that, Rosine. Mustn't, mustn't, mustn't, Rosine. Oh, Huguette, I had to get away.

HUGUETTE. But without telling anyone? Rosine, do you realize what you've done?

ROSINE. I don't care what I've done!

HUGUETTE. But aren't you about to be engaged?

ROSINE. For nineteen years I've been about to be engaged. We have a friend, Alice de la Granville, and while I was still in the cradle, she and my guardian decided I should marry her nephew.

HUGUETTE. Don't you like him? (MAURICE comes in from the hall. As an excuse to eavesdrop, he dusts around with a feather duster.)

ROSINE. I don't know. I've never seen him. He lives in Paris and has never made the slightest attempt to know me. Not even yesterday, my twentieth birthday. And he was sent a special invitation to the party.

HUGUETTE. Perhaps he was unavoidably detained. (MAURICE *nods in agreement.*)

ROSINE. For nineteen years? He's no good. He's unstable and he's mean. (MAURICE'S *face drops.*) He thinks nothing of making a fool of me so I'm going to strike back . . . take a lover!

MAURICE. (*Mournfully.*) Oh!

HUGUETTE. I trust our conversation interests you?

MAURICE. Oh, it does!

HUGUETTE. Really!

MAURICE. Honest and truly! (*Aside.*) Cheating on me! And before we're married! Oh! (*He dusts the doorway and enters the study.*)

HUGUETTE. (*Sits on the sofa.*) Take a lover? Who?

ROSINE. It doesn't matter. I'll settle for the first man I meet. (*Seated on the sofa.*) Do you know the moment I left the station I went straight up to a man. I accosted him on the street.

HUGUETTE. What?

ROSINE. I said, 'Take me home with you. I want to punish my fiance.'

HUGUETTE. And what did he say?

ROSINE. 'I'm terribly sorry, mademoiselle, but I have a wife, a mistress and, at the moment, I'm obliging my secretary.'

HUGUETTE. The men in Paris are awfully busy. (*GASTON comes in from the hall, a telegram in his hand.*) Oh, Gaston. (*She rises.*)

ROSINE. (*Rising.*) Hello, Monsieur Dubois.

GASTON. (*Not recognizing her.*) Mademoiselle?

HUGUETTE. Oh, Gaston, don't you remember Rosine? She was one of my bridesmaids.

GASTON. Of course, I remember you. I could hardly take my eyes off you on my wedding day!

HUGUETTE. (*With a playful pout.*) And me? You didn't look at me at all?

GASTON. Well, I had every reason to believe I'd be seeing more of you later. (*He starts for the stairs.*)

HUGUETTE. Gaston! Rosine is in Paris for a few days. I don't want her to go to a hotel so I'm putting her up here.

GASTON. Here?

HUGUETTE. Any reason we can't?

GASTON. What? Oh no, darling. (*To ROSINE.*) Delighted to have you. The more the merrier. Will you excuse me? A telegram for one of our guests. (*He goes into the bedroom.*)

ROSINE. Oh? You have other guests?

HUGUETTE. Yes, a true love story. (*She rings the bell.*) I'll tell you all about it. (*MAURICE comes in.*)

MAURICE. (*Gloomily.*) Madame rang?

HUGUETTE. Before you pack your things, bring in mademoiselle's suitcase.

MAURICE. What? Mademoiselle is staying here?

HUGUETTE. What has that to do with you? Come along, Rosine. I've never had such an insufferable servant.

ROSINE. Yes, he is insufferable. (*They go into the boudoir.*)

MAURICE. Insufferable? Me? Irresistible me insufferable? (*DIDIER comes in swiftly from the bedroom.*)

DIDIER. Maurice! Maurice!

MAURICE. What is it?

DIDIER. A catastrophe!

MAURICE. For whom?

DIDIER. For me.

MAURICE. Good news at last!

DIDIER. You're involved too!

MAURICE. (*His face drops.*) Oh!

DIDIER. (*Handing MAURICE the open telegram.*) It's from your Aunt Alice de la Granville.

MAURICE. So now you're reading my telegrams!

DIDIER. It was given to me. After all, I am Maurice de Corneblanche!

MAURICE. (*Reads the telegram.*) Oh, my God! I gave Aunt Alice this address but I never dreamed she'd look me up.

DIDIER. And she's already here in Paris!

MAURICE. Yes, searching for my Rosine . . .

DIDIER. And when your Aunt Alice descends on this apartment, she'll know I'm not her precious Maurice and I'll be shown the door just as I was set to spend the night!

MAURICE. What about me? Operating as a servant right under Auntie's nose. I'll be disinherited.

DIDIER. Wait! Everything can still be all right!

MAURICE. How?

DIDIER. Disappear.

MAURICE. Disappear?

DIDIER. You wanted to leave, didn't you? Well, go!

MAURICE. No. I can't now.

DIDIER. Can't? Why?

MAURICE. Rosine is going to stay here. She's out for revenge. I can't let her out of my sight!

DIDIER. Then you're not going to leave?

MAURICE. No! Everything's changed. When that doorbell rings, you'll answer it!

DIDIER. Me?

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