

# The Village Coquette

Riviere Dufresny

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THE VILLAGE COQUETTE  
OR  
THE SUPPOSED LOTTERY

By

RIVIERE DUFRESNY

Translated and Adapted by  
Frank J. Morlock  
C 1986

CHARACTERS:

The Baron

The Widow, his neighbor

Argon, another neighbor

Girard

Lucas, farmer

Lisette, the coquette

ACT I

Girard (holding two letters and reading them)

From Paris. To Monsieur Le Baron of Hamlet. Let's take care of this letter for him. He's not at home. (putting the Baron's letter in his pocket, he opens the other letter) And the other's for me, Girard. I dare to hope that the list of winning lottery numbers is in this letter. Right, my cousin, the master printer in Paris, favors the role I've taken. Love is my guide in this roguery. With this false lottery list I am going to obtain Lucas' daughter as my wife.

Widow (entering)

I am waiting for Mr. Argon. Why hasn't he come?

Girard (reading the letter)

From Paris. "My dear cousin, before having distributed the list of lottery winners, I've sent you a false list, as you asked me to do, so you can have a big joke in your village. You can make your rival believe that Farmer Lucas won the grand prize of one hundred thousand francs." With this, I hope to obtain my Lisette. Lucas, believing his fortune made, will cede me his lease on the farm. He's the type to be caught in such a snare. At bottom, it's for his own good. By making me his son-in-law, he can't lose. (to Widow) But, why are you standing around dreaming?

Widow

Because Mr. Argon is supposed to come find me.

Girard

He'll be here soon. He's still in the chateau.

Widow

I'm getting impatient.

Girard

What for? You're not excited by a tender love. It's an old lover, and you should wait without impatience, coldly.

Widow

Shut up, Girard. Shut up. You know how I value him.

Girard

To believe an old man is an old grey beard is no big crime. I honor him more, being his collector. The collection is small and for you, with all my heart, I wish I could pay him a one hundred thousand francs of income.

Widow

That would be too much for me, a former maid. That's what I was when I was in Paris. But here I have a higher rank which I obtained from my late husband, a head magistrate. Thus, I've been ennobled in this village, a fine nobility at bottom and which is worth a good bit, a nobility that one can take to Paris.

Girard

Let's renew our discussion and talk of Lisette again. Because, having so much power over her, being her neighbor, and a sort of surrogate parent, you are working hard to turn her into a coquette, instead of making her wiser.

Widow

Language of Paris. That's what will make her perfect.

Girard

Some perfection! Alas, you make her worse, when you come here to refine her wit. You make her heart more false and more vain.

Widow

At nine years, she was already a coquette in embryo. I have only pointed her in her natural direction--so her beauty will not prove worthless and she will profit by a fine marriage. I only want Lisette to be wise. She's naturally exquisite, and I've simply added to her talents all that I have learned.

Girard

With so many perfections you will make her a prodigy of coquetry.

Widow

So much the better, I tell you. That's what makes beauty and wit valued. We've argued about this so many times. By coquette I mean a girl who is very wise; who knows how to take advantage of other's foibles; who always exhibits sangfroid in the midst of dangers. One who profits from opportunity which she knows how to manage and uses her reason when we lose ours. A wise coquette is more knowing than anyone else because she is always exposed and always in a battle. One cannot deny that the strongest virtue is one that undergoes and survives the hardest tests. The coquette has prerogatives much more beautiful than

a prude's. That beautiful right is the right of being happy. A prude, in her life, marries, but once or twice, but the clever coquette never marries at all. She flatters, she raises hopes, she promises, but she never gives in--thus through her wisdom leaving each one to his love and desires, she makes pleasure last.

Girard

In my opinion Lisette is making my pain too harsh. It's useless to complain to her father, alas, complaining is no good. He scorns me.

Widow

Yes, because you are leaving your condition in life. You are soliciting my relative and you are only a flat foot.

Girard

Very flat-footed, right. But, without belittling myself. Do I owe Lucas respect? He owes me some, perhaps. But now each of us rests on his pedestal, and for a collector to be the son-in-law of a farmer, it's by right of the game.

Widow

Good. It's an old game. Regretfully, I see your scheme is in ruins. Lisette repents of having considered you, and she says she no longer intends to have Girard. Now, the proud father and daughter find that your fortune is too recent. Everywhere you find ungrateful hearts, as in the village, even with regrets. But, during some times, gamble, pilfer, respect, trim, clip, loot and loot again. By force of conceit, you will come to listen.

Girard

Today my love appears bold to you, you blame my scheme. Listen, what is the mystery? I have, for more than a month, prowled, spun around, run about. And in my absence, alas, what has happened? My eyes are opening at last. Lucas is coming. I leave you. Until we meet again.

(Exit Girard.)

Widow

Go to whatever hurries you.

(Enter Lucas.)

Lucas

O fortune, fortune, when will I catch you? You always fly from me.

Widow

Always fortune on the brain?

Lucas

Yes, for it hates me. I do this, I do that--labor all my life. Labor for this one, labor for that one. I work for thirty years. After thirty years, here I am. To labor for another, it's small palliative. To work for oneself, that takes courage. To even everything up wouldn't it be right for the others, in their turn, to work for me?

Widow

Lucas wishes to reach the heights.

Lucas

Suddenly, yes, to find myself there, as in a miracle. I've got the character for it--no matter how hazardous. I gamble, win some, lose some, it's only that it doesn't make one happy. I've played double or nothing out of boredom. I have forty tickets for this lottery.

Widow

That's a very prudent way to place money.

Lucas

Yeah. Because I love big lotteries. I am going to make my fortune that way.

Widow

You will make your fortune through your daughter. The Baron loves her more and more.

Lucas

He's becoming hot. But my daughter lacks the feeling to marry him.

Widow

She's shrewd and subtle.

Lucas

It's beginning to make him keen.

Widow

And, the Baron, who's only a village Baron, hasn't, as you know, much brains.

Lucas

Not necessary to say he's a stupid, because all the world knows it well. But Lisette can hear us. Come on, daughter, come on. Madame and I were talking about how your wit satisfies her. She said you were so subtle, said you were so knowing.

(Enter Lisette, listening.)

Lisette (pretending naivete)

Father, I don't know what she thinks of me.

Lucas

So much the worse, my daughter, so much the worse.

Widow

Today, you've joined some ornament to your simple country dress.

Lisette

It's to please the Baron, as you advised me. I am making myself over to be loved. I am obedient, and I intend, to please you, that he marry me quickly. So, that's why I added to my costume today.

Widow

You'd have made him love you, that's already done. But to make him marry you, you must double dose him with sighs, looks and little manners. Put to work my recent lessons. We shall try to please at first by simple attractions. A little affectation, lowering your gaze, being quiet, appearing embarrassed. A cold blooded man, seeing a great deal of simpering, will believe less what he sees. He will suspect, examine, and discover the pretence. But, when the dupe is taken--be

affected without fear. The grossest kinds of affectation, far from quelling, charm his passions, and he seeks out the beauty of nature.

Lucas

I don't understand half your fine preaching. (dumbfounded) But what you say must be good, for you amaze.

Widow

Lisette understand perfectly.

Lisette

Not so much as you think. You have taught me well, speaking to me of these looks which make women so refined. But I am not so refined. I cannot do as they do.

Widow

Oh, you will go far. You know how to please, and how to pretend.

Lisette

You deceive yourself. I contradict myself in no respect. I please the Baron without feigning to please him. If he is deceived, I can never be. When I speak contrary to my thought, one can see in my manner that I am embarrassed.

Widow

The Baron could, by a tender turn about, mention again the contract he made the other day. He is changeable, peevish in his tenderness. Think to profit by his day of weakness. Has he promised again today?

Lisette

Alas, no.

Widow

He must have thought it over. It's his day to be reasonable, his good day. But we will recapture him. To make him sign, it's only needful to make him wait. If something can hasten this happy day, it's pretence. Pretend a violent love.

Lisette

Alas, I will pretend badly.

Widow

Then, I am uneasy. I intend to marry as much as Lisette. Monsieur Argon occupies me and I am going to see him. If he keeps his word, it will be all over today. (exits)

Lucas

You must pretend the widder lady says, and you don't know how to pretend a pretense. You say everything that comes into your head and that's a mistake. Have the virtue to lie a bit. You don't know how, and that upsets me.

Lisette

Oh, console yourself, father. If I am still stupid, I am not really stupid. I know how to pretend better than the Widow thinks. I have some tricks she hasn't seen yet. If I always tell her I am innocent, and that, despite her lessons, I am ignorant, it's all on purpose so she will be proud of me.

Lucas

Oh, you know what you're doing and I cannot complain of you.

Lisette

You are going to see how I intend to make a fortune.

Lucas

Fortune is our master.

Lisette

It is true--it is our master. But, if he should fail me?

Lucas

Ha! Ha! I see well what you intend. So as not to lack one, you will have two.

Lisette

Yes, at least, father. That's what I'm doing. But the other has less wealth, which annoys me. For Monsieur Baron--here's what I fear--his conversation does not entirely please me. I have spoken to him a lot in pretending to be innocent. No, for marriage he has no plans. He says he wants to stay single for ten more years.

Lucas

To remain single--oh, oh. He wants to marry you, so you can remain a virgin?

Lisette

To understand him, the loves of a nobleman for girls like me does us much honor

Lucas

No, no, of these nobles, love without marriage takes honor from girls that nothing gives back.

Lisette

One has much wealth, but he will deceive me. The other hasn't very much, but he will marry me.

Lucas

The other is this Girard, correct?

Lisette

Fie!

Lucas

I'll say fie to him. If he comes round, I'll kick him out.

Lisette

Kick him out? Ah, be careful. Let him be in love--that costs nothing. If the others fail, he may make his fortune. Who knows?

Lucas

Well said. So, there's to be three for one. But, who is the new one who you say is certain?

Lisette

If he marries me, the Widow will be very chagrined.



Lucas (astonished by degrees and then understanding)  
The Devil!

Lisette  
I will take her chance.

Lucas  
Death!

Lisette  
For I will break her marriage.

Lucas  
Astounding!

Lisette  
It is going to astonish you. For I will have the wealth intended for her. I will marry her lover.

Lucas (crying out)  
My Lord! You will ruin her. She loves you as if you were her daughter.

Lisette  
Can I do otherwise? I said no, at first. I really would have preferred not to wrong her. But she has given me lessons in fortune hunting. I've got to take advantage of my youth like others. The other lesson she gave me recently was to love at first for one's profit. I love the Widow, but--

Lucas  
But, you are able to love what profits you? These lessons are her own fault, and she deserves it.

Lisette  
I'm in despair. At bottom, I have a good heart. I would prefer for her to marry the Baron.

Lucas  
Yes, for he's more rich and you will gain by the change. In the case of the three lovers, here's how it goes: The Baron's worth more than Argon, he's got six times his money. Argon's better, worth more than Girard, and Girard's better than nothing.

Lisette  
He's like nothing, yes, but with respect to the other two, we will keep your plans and mine secret.

Lucas  
Yes, better to be secret. For these two good spouses won't be married, if they know about each other.

Lisette  
The Baron's returning.

Lucas  
Yes, I am going to do what you told me.

Lisette  
Pretend to be enraged. We must see if he will marry me.

(Enter Baron.)

Lucas

Oh, that's definitive. He'll marry you to death, for he looks thoughtful.

Baron

Lucas intends to leave me. This disturbs me. How can I bear not to see Lisette any more?

Lisette (after having spoken low)

Yell very loud, then leave without speaking to him.

Lucas (loud so that the Baron hears)

Yes, I intend to leave our master, and I'm going to start going about it.

Lisette (pretending to be very angry to leave the Baron)

No! Don't leave him!

Lucas

I have told him, and I am no traitor. I've told him of it a while ago, and I'm going.

Lisette

To leave to find a master!

Lucas

As you are growing up, it's a cruelty to stay here. In a village, you lose your time and your beauty. You can merchandise your youth better in the Paris marriage market. Yes, I will take you to Paris, and very soon, because time presses. Although a vertigo irritates me momentarily, what I want is only reasonable, and I shall be as bold as brass. (pushing his hat onto his head and passing before the Baron) I am upset to leave him, but death, I shall console myself. (exits)

Baron

He was very abrupt with me on a frivolous subject. Has he gone crazy? What can he intend to do?

Lisette (twisting her handkerchief)

I will never see you any more. I am in despair.

Baron

There's always some shadow maiming fortune.

Lisette

He's wrong, for, sir, I see what he is hoping.

Baron

He would suddenly become a great lord.

Lisette (looking tenderly at the Baron)

Yes, to see me a great lady, and that is my misfortune. He imagines something that can't be. The daughter of a farmer is not for his master.

Baron

You will be with me as if you were my own child.

Lisette

Oh, sir, that's not what he has in mind.

Baron

I believe he intends to pay me less rent.

Lisette

He intends something far different.

Baron

Yes, what a repayment.

Lisette (starting to cry)

No, that's not what one day you said; that day you were full of love for me. You intended, you said, to write a promise. You no longer love me!

Baron

That day was like today. My feelings were full for you. I love you, Lisette.

Lisette

And, if I still must leave?

Baron

Of my love, you will have a sure pledge. A contract.

Lisette (stopping her tears)

Today?

Baron

A marriage contract. It's already written. I did it right away, first thing. Second thing is to sign.

Lisette

You won't sign it?

Baron

I will sign.

Lisette

But, when? For my father is taking me off. He is so proud.

Baron

My word is reliable.

Lisette

I believe you, but my father--

Baron

Yes, I will give you my oath.

Lisette (crying again)

Don't swear to me. I believe you already. But my father--

Baron

I will go appease him. I swear to you.

Lisette (crying and holding him by the arm)  
No, he's going to take me off. Of that I am sure.

Baron  
No, no. I am going to keep Lucas.

Lisette (pretending to be outré with rage against him)  
It's I who wish to leave, because you don't love me!

(Exit Baron.)

Lisette (suddenly stops crying)  
No--this is only a deceiver, who thinks me innocent. I must soon take my relative, the Widow's, lover. He has no wealth. That's my last resource. But, he's coming to the garden to speak to me. Let's continue. I played the naïve and tender. Now to play the dreamer.

(Enter Argon.)

Argon  
Yes, Lisette is going to return. (he turns to look closely at her) How pretty she is, dreaming. How many charms I see. She sighs. Good! I feel that she is for me. What are you dreaming of?

(Lisette, after having let Argon look her over, pretends to be astonished to see Argon so near her.)

Lisette  
Oh! You've startled me so! I was dreaming--that I have so much freedom--suddenly in the garden.

Argon  
That's what charmed me. You've already told me, not that I am loved, but that you will soon love me.

Lisette  
I am confused by what you are thinking. I ask pardon. To love you would be to lack respect for you.

Argon  
Lack respect? Yes, I intend to. A too respectful love obtains nothing.

Lisette  
But, I don't love. Speak more. Encourage me, then.

Argon  
To give you courage, I make a contract. But, complete my wishes.

(The Widow enters and listens.)

Argon  
Add a word to your looks, your sighs. This word is a great word. Tell me--"I love you."

Lisette  
I've told you a hundred times--and to myself, a thousand.

Argon

To yourself?

Lisette  
Alas, yes.

Argon  
What naivete!

Lisette  
Why hide it from you if it is the truth?

Argon  
Behold love. Behold pure sincerity. This calls me to love, like nature. There, Lisette, here's the role I have taken. I intend to take you, in secret, to Paris, for I will, at first, marry you secretly. Let's hide all from the Widow. She would be jealous of it. I will marry you without her knowing anything of it. In her place, in a word, you will have all my wealth.

Lisette  
I want nothing from you, but your person. Give her all your wealth.

Argon  
But, if I give it to her, what will the two of us and our children live on?

Lisette  
I don't want it for myself, but you'll need it.

Argon (taking her hand)  
There, let us separate. No, stay here.

Lisette  
I am staying.

Argon  
Go--and be in the nearby woods in an hour. (he kisses her hand) Go quickly. Wait! The marriage is made.

Lisette (perceiving the Widow)  
Ah! All is discovered.

Argon  
I am an indiscreet fool!

(Exit Lisette.)

Widow  
What have I heard? I am struck mute with shock!

Argon  
And I! I am mute with shame. From frankness, I am going to admit to you that what you have seen--I am wrong. The marriage I contracted with you ought to prevent me from making another. But, as friendship alone made ours, it would seem love is stronger. Still, I was wrong to betray you thus. But, if you know how Lisette loves me, from friendship for me, you yourself would say--marry her, sir, I freely consent. What pleasure, at my age of fifty-four years, to be loved for myself. Yes, only for my person. For she refused my wealth which I

would give, only wanting me. But, I am doubly wrong to betray you, to anger you. From prudence, I ought never to speak of Lisette. Yes, Madame, I am wrong, a hundred times wrong. But she will be my wife.

Widow

I cannot recover. This blow is overwhelming. I excuse Argon. At bottom, he loves blindly. As for me, I really deserve for Lisette to deceive me. But, for this marriage--it is necessary that I break it. Were the good Argon never to marry me, let us try to disabuse him--from friendship.

CURTAIN

ACT II

The Widow is overwhelmed with chagrin. Girard is holding in his hand a packet of letters for the Baron. He separates one letter and substitutes another.

Girard

Without breaking the seal, and without compromising myself, I half open the Baron's letter and replace the false with the true. My hand trembles for this is my first attempt in falseness.

Widow (dreaming, not listening)  
Argon will marry Lisette?

Girard

He will never marry my charming coquette. This will see to him--as I told you.

Widow

Very good! But, let me digest my spite. The one who married me, marries my coquette. Was this what I raised Lisette for? With impunity, Lisette has played me this trick, when I instructed her to pretend love. I was the plaything of her apprenticeship. I thought she would absorb no malice from the instruction I gave her. Just a little grain of it for perfection. I ought to have realized from my own example, that malice, once seeded in a woman's heart, profits, multiplies and grows like weeds.

Girard

In malice, Lisette is fertile, yet I love her, I adore her, and I will make her my wife. But, what am I saying? I ought to remember, Madame--(ironically) that you don't give Lisettes to Girards. As I am only a tax collector, I ought through respect for you, her, and myself, to let her marry your lover.

Widow

At her age, to manage, under my eyes, three lovers at the same time! Coquettes of Paris and coquettes of the country--some ready language, some trickery. My word, all is equal for coquetry.

Girard (ironically)

You intended to give her to some great lord.

Widow

Ah, I will give her to the devil, with all my heart.

Girard

I beg you for preference over him at least.

Widow

So be it but at least provide me some confidence that you will succeed.

Girard

You know all. We must lure our credulous, stupid, avaricious, and amorous Baron with this false lottery into offering Lisette marriage, and if she accepts, for Argon to see she's engaged.

Widow

Lisette ought to give up Argon for the Baron. The Baron is rich and the trick is so good.

Girard

Yes, but I mustn't lose Lisette.

Widow

If Argon is undeceived, I will be satisfied.

Girard

May he see her half-married to the Baron.

Widow

Completely married, if necessary.

Girard

Completely? Hell, no!

Widow

He's coming.

Girard

My insurance which I well know how to use--

(Enter Baron. Girard presents a packet to the Baron.)

Girard

I am returning from the post office and I have the honor to give the gentleman what he asked me to bring.

(Exit Girard.)

Baron (to Widow)

Neighbor, my love is going to make me despair. Lisette intends to leave.

Widow

I take the place of mother to her. I guarantee her tender, wise, and sincere. You don't know how much she is worth. She wants a contract, that's her only fault. And, you don't wish to make one.

Baron

I intend to marry her. Who told you otherwise? But, to do such a thing, the later the better. I will marry when I am much older.

Widow

Eh! You are old enough, sir, for a wife.

Baron

I am very irresolute. I blame myself for it. Ha, ha, good, this letter is from one of my friends. It's for the lottery we've all subscribed to.

Widow

Is it, then, published?

Baron

Yes, exactly. It's the list.

Widow

I am sure to win. A physiognomist has seen great sums of money on my face. What I must do, he told me, to earn it, is to buy a lottery. It's the most prompt way to win for a wise woman.

Baron

Hum! Hum! I know, by heart, the puzzle of each. The numbers, the names, I don't see one. Let's read-- Ah!

Widow

What's the matter?

Baron

Something I see irritates me.

Widow

What is it, then? From where does this sudden dolor come?

Baron

Lucas: one hundred thousand francs.

Widow

To the farmer, the Grand Prize? But, let's see. Reread it. Is it, indeed, his name? Lucas?

Baron

I am not the master of my scorn.

Widow

Grand Prize to Lucas? You are ruining us, traitor.

Baron

To Lucas, the Grand Prize.

Widow

You won't allow it. Oh, Fate, unjust Fate, that Lucas be enriched.

Baron

I cannot recover. His good fortune desolates me.

Widow (pretending a quick thought, accompanied by joy)

But, let us rejoice and laugh.



Baron  
Are you crazy?

Widow  
No, at first we both had a stupid inspiration. It's surprised us.

Baron  
Well?

Widow  
You are angry that chance has just enriched Lisette's fortune.  
Fortune, on the contrary, is favoring you. It has determined to make you happy.

Baron  
Oh, oh!

Widow  
For the money, and without any love, these days, the most noble marry Lisettes.

Baron  
Right, one hundred thousand francs would pay off my debts. This motive and love will excuse all.

Widow  
Yes, but you must marry instantly, before this lottery becomes known. This is delicacy. She will believe she owes your tenderness more. Lucas will get the Grand Prize, but while he is unaware of it, the fool must be taken, so that he gives all his wealth to Lisette. Wealth, present and to come.

Baron  
Yes, but be discreet. I will say that I am taking Lisette without a sou.

Widow  
The joke is that everybody will believe you're a fool.

(Enter Lisette.)

Baron  
Here, Lisette, here.

(The Widow goes to find Lisette, who listens from the depths of the theatre.)

Widow  
Your fortune is made, Lisette. It is I who am procuring it. Hug me, Lisette.

Baron  
Your tears have softened me, Lisette. I surrender. Let's sign the contract as quickly as I can inform the notary.

Lisette (aside, while the Widow and the Baron talk in low voices)  
Do they wish to deceive me? For I understand nothing. (she dreams profoundly)

(Enter Argon.)

Argon (aside)

An explanation would be very nice here.

Lisette

Ah, here they both are. All is lost. What to do?

Argon (to the Baron)

What did Girard warn me? But, it's your custom. I've often seen you boast of love. You believe yourself loved by Lisette, then, sir?

Baron

The proof of this is that I am making her my wife.

Argon

Girard made no mistake. You intend to overwhelm her with your wealth. But she cannot betray her love for me.

Baron

She hasn't any love for you. I swear it.

Argon

It's you who flatter yourself to a fault, I assure you.

Baron

I tell you, she has never loved anyone but me.

Argon

I am sure of her heart and her good faith. Decide between us to finish the dispute.

Baron

I disdain it. Repeat for the one hundredth time that you love me tenderly.

Lisette

Me, tell you that? Truly, I take little care, sir. It is from respect that I let you speak. I believed, at first, that you were boasting, to laugh. But, without offending you, sir, I will tell you, I have no love for you, nor will I ever have.

Baron

What? Why?

Widow

What does she say? Ah, how great is my shock!

Baron

What do you say?

Argon

Must she tell you again?

Baron

What? Haven't you said a hundred times that you love me?

Lisette

Me? No.

Argon (charmed)  
What naivete.

Widow (angry that Lisette has not fallen into the trap)  
What do I hear?

Baron  
What? Your tears, your sighs?

Lisette  
Were lies.

Argon  
I know my neighbor. Without a doubt, it is a dream that he has seen you in tears and heaving sighs. At his age, while sleeping, these are pleasant notions.

Baron  
But, I haven't dreamed what you have written.

Lisette  
It's my father, and Madame is there to tell you so.

Widow  
I am enraged.

Argon  
I know Lucas is ambitious. He prefers your wealth; for you're worth more to him. But, besides, I believe her--what likelihood is there that Lisette, who always says what she thinks, has spoken to you of love, when she loves me?

Lisette  
What are you saying, sir? I have believed, in good faith, that you spoke in jest that you love me; but this joke is not true.

Argon  
Eh--what?

Widow (aside, delighted)  
What is her plan? Does she dream, or is it I who dream?

Argon  
It's in vain that you still think the secret is necessary. (to Baron)  
We made a secret of our love. (to Lisette) Speak, I permit you to speak freely.

Lisette  
If you permit me to speak freely, I don't love you.

Widow  
She's frank enough about that.

Argon  
How indignant I am!

Baron

By God, I've my revenge.

Argon

But, I understand nothing. Speak clearly, I wish it. Tell them that you intended to manage us both.

Lisette

I had no intention of managing either of you, I assure you, and you can see it quite well.

Widow

That's speaking plainly.

Lisette

For, hold on, I prefer my liberty, a hundred times, to all your grand honors and quality. To be the wife of a great lord, I would be a servant. As for your kindnesses, of which I am cognizant, pardon me if I refuse them. In a word, both of you wish to marry me, but I will never marry either one of you.

Baron

There's your dismissal.

Argon

It is also yours.

Baron

I cannot recover from my astonishment.

Argon

Leave her, forget her, that's sufficient to punish her.

Baron

Well said. No more love.

Argon

Yes, we scorn Lisette

Baron (to Widow)

She has a hundred thousand francs which I still regret.

Widow (low)

Keep it up your sleeve. We are going to speak to her.

Argon (low)

Madame.

Widow

Well, sir?

Argon

Would you go get a notary to come to your house? We are going to conclude our business instantly.

(Argon exits.)

Widow (to Baron, low)

He abandons her, for you that's the main thing. I am going to rid you of a rival.

Baron

No, I don't understand at all.

Widow

Neither do I. But, prudence dictates that one go in the greatest hurry.

(Exit Baron and Widow. Argon returns from the other side, and looks to see if the Widow sees him.)

Lisette (dreaming, alone)

I think--yes, from what I've seen, I've done well, I believe. When they are with me, by themselves, as they will be, I will know what to do to have them back.

Argon (aside)

The Widow is already far away. Let's Let's penetrate this mystery. From scorn, I have banished all animosity. I return solely from curiosity, to see what reasons you will have to give me.

Lisette

Permit me to laugh, seeing you so angry. What? Didn't you see what my plan was?

Argon (enraged)

No, I didn't see it, and all subterfuge is in vain.

Lisette

I told the Baron the truth, without ruse or subterfuge, for fear he would continue in his mistake. I didn't wish to deceive him.

Argon (still enraged)

I understand perfectly. But, why speak to me as to him? To refuse me? Me? Me?

Lisette

Let's talk about him first. You see me delighted. I have punished that liar the way I have quite wanted to.

Argon (still enraged)

But me, me?

Lisette

Patience. He wanted to marry me today, and my father is on his side. And you wanted the jealous Widow to see that I love you and will marry you. If they knew that I can love you they would get me locked up.

Argon

Ha! Ha!

Lisette

Truly, I would have completely spoiled the mystery. You told me yourself before to keep quiet.

Argon

You've done very properly. Yes, you're right, and I am the fool. To deceive the Baron--yes, I see the pretence is prudent and useful.

Lisette

I believe, too, well done, at least.

Argon

How charming Lisette is. I am not blind, I see clearly that Lisette prefers me to a far richer man. What love! What wit!

Lisette

I have no wit. Love has added to my customary want of it.

Argon

We must secretly--

Lisette

Yes, but let's separate. I will go alone, in secret, to your place for a short while.

Argon

Without your father--

Lisette

He's coming. Leave me, for I tremble if the Baron and he should see us together.

(Exit Argon. Enter Lucas and the Baron.)

Lisette (aside)

Here I am sure of one, but he's my second choice. Let's retake the other one. He's back to speak to me.

Lucas

She must have gone crazy and what she said astonishes me. You say she doesn't love you and refuses to be a Baroness?

Baron (to Lisette)

You have just revived my wrath. Ah, how I ought to kill my love for you. How can you, at your age, have the audacity to give me the lie-- me, and look in my face, and tell me that you don't love me?

Lisette (pretending to have a grudge against him)

Yes, I have maintained it to your face, for it is true.

Baron

Without doubt, it happened unexpectedly to you, some vapor which disturbed your senses and memory. For how else could I believe that, after the ardent love you've shown me?

Lisette (adding to her simulated scorn)

I never loved you.

Baron

Still? I am outraged. You have told me a hundred times, and before your father.

Lisette

I never said it to you.

Baron

She makes me despair.

Lisette (softening)  
No, never, or at least--

Baron  
At least?

Lisette  
If I said it, I repent it so much. I have so much scorn, that if I said it, I will say the contrary, always to the whole wide world, to yourself, to my father. (pretending tenderness) What the world will know, that I loved you, and that, when I cried from love, you didn't want to marry me. No, no, and against you, my courage has returned. Me! I love you? I would indeed have little heart. My love was honest and yours was deceitful.

Lucas (who has softened, taken in and almost crying)  
I've seen--she's right.

Baron  
Then it's from rage, suspecting my love is not sincere, that you have told me you don't love me?

Lisette  
Yes, exactly. Am I wrong?

Baron  
You love me then?

Lisette  
Alas!

Baron  
Let's forget all this, Lisette, let's go quickly to a notary. May a contract be the prize of your sincere love. Let's hurry.

(Exit Baron.)

Lucas (transported with joy)  
Quickly, quickly!

Lisette (low to her father, holding him by the arm)  
Let's go softly.

Lucas  
I'm going to be papa to a Baroness.

Lisette  
Oh, I doubt it.

Lucas  
Why? He's making you his wife and says so.

Lisette  
No, I can see some trick.

Lucas  
He marries, and that's that.

Lisette

I don't believe a word of it, father.

Lucas

To not believe the wedding, when it's come?

Lisette

I believe he's deceiving me. First, I saw the Widow when Argon spoke of the business in a fret with Girard. Raging, despairing--and now she's just embraced me, knowing that I deceived her, she comes to caress me.

Lucas

Yes, it's treason.

Lisette

The Baron refused me. Then, suddenly, he changes and wants me.

Lucas

It's a trick.

Lisette (after having dreamed)

If the Widow and Girard, who know how to trick, said to the Baron: pretend to marry her and as soon as she agrees, won't Argon be disgusted?

Lucas

Oh--that's it! I see clearly.

Lisette (dreaming again)

For me, I don't see. For, on the other side, perhaps the Baron really wanted to marry me. That would embarrass, no, yes, the more I think about it-- May I have enough wit and not be too clever by half.

Lucas

Listen to my good advice. I have marvelous ideas. For, in the state where things are perilous, you have wit, but in a family affair, a father, as they say, is older than his daughter. Here then is my good advice. Let's go find the Baron. He's the most important.

Lisette

No.

Lucas

No?

Lisette

No.

Lucas

It's the second who is good. Lets go find Argon.

Lisette

No.

Lucas

Then I don't know any more than an animal? Oh, my third advice, it's to have a tete-a-tete.

Lisette



Go find the Baron alone.

Lucas

Yes, I understand.

Lisette

And, I alone am going to find Mr. Argon. You finish one side, I will finish the other.

Lucas

Wow! That's very good. I will marry them both before the notary.

Lisette

As for me, when both contracts are drawn up--I will see. The first one to sign--that's the one I'll take.

Lucas

You will take hastily. It's the chance of the game. Let's sign two contracts soon, for fear we will lack one.

Lisette

Mr. Argon's waiting for me. I'm off.

(Exit Lisette.)

Lucas (alone)

Go, quick, go. But how can she get that all out of her own head? I believe she must have two brains, for she always amazes me. Yes, she's only my daughter. By God, her wit is already far ahead of mine.

(Enter Girard)

Girard (aside)

Let's latch on to the father. I risk nothing, for without him the Baron can conclude nothing. By making him read this phony list, let us disturb his head. Let's throw the dice. (counterfeiting the newsboys) Lists, lists of winners!

Lucas

Lottery winners! Let's see a bit. What did you say there?

Girard

Let's see if this lottery came out good.

Lucas

What do I see there? Don't I see the seal?

Girard

Clever. Are you curious? (putting the list on the side where Lucas is not) Read here.

Lucas

Very well. But show me better then.

Girard

To an avaricious reader--oh beautiful thought. May a happy fool with a lucky number--

Lucas

Ha, ha, that's it!

Girard

Yes, it is. Hum, hum.

Lucas

Let's see that.

Girard (turning the list to the other side)

With pleasure. Let's see.

Lucas

Eh! I can't see anything that way.

Girard (turning the other side even worse)

Let's read. Let's see. Ah!

(Girard is moving and raising and lowering the paper so Lucas can't see.)

Lucas (with a little joy)

What is it? Show me then, friend.

Girard

No. I was mistaken. But, hum, hum. I hope-- (letting Lucas see the paper) God, I don't see a thing.

Lucas

Ah, by God, I see. Let's see quickly there, Girard. I see something about me.

Girard (hiding the list)

No, it's nothing at all.

Lucas (joyfully)

And I have seen. My name is there!

Girard

Take it easy. You probably have won nothing. I will give you a hundred francs at best.

Lucas

No, no. I've seen what I've seen. Lucas, it's my name.

Girard

If you have, at least I want to be reimbursed. Return my money, it's my only resource.

Lucas

All right. Show quickly.

Girard

It's one of the numbers. It's at least a thousand francs. I have seen several zeroes.

Lucas

Several zeroes? I intend to see as many as grains of sand.

Girard

You're a man insatiable for zeroes.

Lucas (joyous)

Ah, it's ten thousand francs.

Girard

Curious, yes, I see. But, if that isn't the numeral?

Lucas

By God, I'm really frightened.

Girard

Let's confirm.

Lucas (thoughtful)

Yes, there it is, the fifth.

Girard (giving the list)

Read it over, and calculate it yourself.

Lucas (taking the list, upset)

My heart beats--beats. I am quite transported. I'm afraid to have seen double, and to have counted too many. One, two, three, four, and five.

Girard

Let's say--

Lucas (upset)

One, two, three, did I say three?

Girard

Yes.

Lucas

Ah, I see the number that's formed. I'm a bit overwhelmed.

Girard

In short, Lucas has the Grand Prize?

Lucas

Ouf!

Girard (relaxing)

Relax. Take off your coat.

Lucas

The Grand Prize!

Girard

Since one is rich, one must get a little better clothes.

Lucas

One hundred thousand francs!

Girard

How much we'll drink at Lucas' place!

Lucas

Let's go quickly to Paris.

Girard

I will get you a carriage and horses.

Lucas

Ah, I believe I'll die of luxury. Let's see the lottery quickly, so I can see myself first again.

Girard

Are you going to remain a farmer?

Lucas (indignant)

Me! A farmer.

Girard

Forgive me for saying the word. I quite see the question is crazy. Well, give me your rents. You won't want them. You'll be a great lord. I am a poor devil, and your loyal friend. You will give them to me for this good news.

Lucas

Yes. Get me a carriage and horses that go very fast, very fast.

Girard

Yes, like birds. But, at first, in passing, let's stop at the notary to give me the rents. All right, father?

Lucas

Yes, I won't need it myself. I will leave you all the rents from my timberland. I am going straight to Paris to get some nobility.

CURTAIN

ACT III

Argon is trying to avoid showing himself to the Widow, who grabs him by the arm.

Widow

I will prove it all to you. Can you doubt it? But, stay one minute, at least to listen to me.

Argon

Time presses. I have Lisette and the notary together. If Lucas appears I will finish the business. In love, moments are precious to an older person.

Widow

If you marry, a quarter of an hour later, you will have time to be tired of Lisette and to repent a foolish act. Pardon the word, it's from friendship for you. My zeal is not mixed with any jealous transport. Better if you never marry me or the coquette. Be undeceived and I will be satisfied. Eh--can you remain blind. I will prove to both you and the Baron how she trapped you at once reconciling, by the same management, traitorous simplicity and naïve lies. By the cleverest

tricks and the most lively manners, she's figured out how to get love without giving any. She cold-bloodedly talks in the most tender way and pretends with effrontery to be timidly embarrassed. Tears which go right to the heart and which bother her not at all. She abuses his weakness and yours. In offering you one hand, she gives him the other. Thus a French coquette delivers perfidy with both hands, and if she needs it will find another hand for a third.

Argon

You've said it twenty times. But for the hundredth time, you still must prove it.

Widow

Speak low. I see the Baron and Lucas. Keep aside and you will perhaps be able to see that not only Lucas prefers his master to you, but also Lisette.

Argon

Let's see. I would be undeceived.

(Argon goes to the side. Enter Girard.)

Widow

Well?

Girard

Lucas is occupied with his Grand Prize.

Widow

But, does the Baron intend to marry--

Girard

Patience. I am given all the rents in advance. For it is I, who have managed all. Lucas is metamorphosized into a great lord. Since he has seen the lottery, his sudden riches trouble his head, and have changed his type. He has nothing human remaining except his form and his pride. Grave, deciding with a wink of his eye, disdaining to speak or speaking by sentence. He believes people applaud his silence. Saluting with his big head, puffed up, swollen, Lucas has become subtly inflated with a contagious disease. He can be seen thrusting his paunch two steps ahead of himself.

Widow

In that case, Girard, we must-- But Lisette is running this way. Mr. Argon is following her. Things aren't turning out right.

Girard

No.

Widow

I am going to join Argon right away. Amuse these two here.

Girard

All that one plans, does not succeed.

(Exit Widow. Lucas is walking in grandly. The Baron, hat in hand, follows Lucas, who puts his hat back on first.)

Baron

Yes, I beam with pleasure that fortune has fulfilled your wish.

Lucas

Although my fortune may be much higher than yours, I would be father and companion to you, always. (slaps him on the shoulder) For I am not proud.

Baron

Indeed, I see that, Lucas.

Girard

You see that the gentleman doesn't underrate himself. He deserves to fill a great office.

Lucas

Haven't you retained a fine place for me at the Post? For that's why I am going to Paris.

Girard

I already told you, they're looking for a carriage softer than a bed for you.

Lucas

But, what's keeping the carriage. I don't want to have to wait.

Girard

The horses will soon be here at your orders. Wait for them here. Hola, lackey, hola, some chairs.

(Lackeys enter with chairs. Lucas exchanges greetings with the Baron and seats himself first.)

Lucas

Let's not have any manners while I'm here.

Baron

Let's talk about our business.

Lucas (not replying)

I've got a great idea just now.

Baron

We were discussing--

Lucas

In seeing me, all Paris is going to feast me. The one who won the Grand Prize.

Baron

Before you leave--

Lucas

All the world will be beggars except me, because my wealth will divert me. While I am in the grain, I am going to see people cry famine. What a pleasure!

Baron

Then, Lucas, do you intend to reach a conclusion for my ardent love?

Lucas

They're going to propose to me some pretty expenses, pretty horses, and pretty families to marry into. This business will increase wealth. I'll buy whatever's for sale.

Girard

But, to ennoble you, you would have a gentleman for a son-in-law.

Baron

Lisette is waiting for us.

Lucas

I'll have all this, indeed, for when one is very rich, one attracts all that for nothing.

Baron

You promised me--

Lucas (with an important air)

Huh!

Baron

To finish--

Lucas

What?

Baron

Our business.

Lucas

What business?

Baron

Ours, I have had the notary there, to write the contract. He's waiting only for you. We are agreed between us.

Lucas

Ah, I believe that I remember something of it. Damn, when one has so much business, one thinks only of the best. Yes, we spoke of marriage, but it cannot be. There's only, but a bit--

Girard

What do I hear? What, then, you already intend to disown it?

Baron

Remember, Lucas, that I was your master.

Girard

Lucas, remember that there's great honor, a handsome alliance to have a lord for a son-in-law.

Lucas

Oh, it's money which makes the best marriages.

Baron

What, you no longer intend?

Lucas

I want no part of your lineage.

Baron  
What?

Lucas  
But, it's necessary to listen to me. I am a native of this hamlet.  
That means, that from friendship, I love your earth, your chateau.  
Yet, it's not mine if you become my son-in-law. My opinion is it would be better if you sold it to me.

Baron  
You're joking, I believe. Sell you my chateau?

Lucas  
It is all dilapidated, but I will make a lot of improvements.

Baron  
He's gone crazy.

Girard (low)  
This rascal scorns you.

Lucas  
The land will ennoble me. That's what I want of you. While at Paris I increase my money, you keep the land fallow.

Girard  
You will be his farmer.

Baron (rising)  
This is too much insolence.

Girard (to Baron)  
Sir, calm down. I promise you revenge.

Lucas (aside, also rising)  
This little gentleman, he heard all that. He owes money everywhere, but he believes he is to be respected. But, I will have his chateau. He'd better leave. He has some creditors. I will have it through the law.

Girard (after having spoken low to the Baron)  
We have done all, sir, for your good. But to revenge yourself, better say nothing.

(Enter Lisette.)

Lisette  
I have been looking for you everywhere. Ouf! I'm out of breath. To find you, father, took a lot of trouble. I have run--for they say--but I don't believe it--I heard it everywhere--the Grand Prize. These are the compliments that greet me everywhere. They say a hundred thousand francs. Is it true, father?

Lucas  
True.

Lisette (impressed)



A hundred thousand francs!

(Enter Argon and the Widow.)

Argon (who runs after her)

Well, are you fleeing from me? Speak! Since you've heard about the lottery, and you know the news, you scorn me.

Lisette

Yes.

Argon

This is a handsome fortune. But, it ought not to attract your scorn to me. Answer me, at least. Will you marry me?

Lisette

I obey my father. He has told me that he wishes to defer this business. (low to Lucas and making a sign with her eyes to him) Tell him that it's you who refuse.

Lucas

Good, good.

Lisette

That costs nothing. Get me off.

Lucas

No.

Lisette (signaling with her eyes)

Tell them something that will end my engagement, at least.

Lucas

Eh! You trouble yourself too much about them. Leave off your winking. Not necessary for any polish. You have what you need to marry.

Widow

Her father covets her, the opulent fool. Foolishness that he doesn't try to excuse.

Argon

By her own fault, she herself disabused me. As for me, so as not to risk another love trick, I'm engaging myself to you.

Widow

Friendship without love. That's what we agree makes a good marriage. Love is restless and bores itself in a household.

Baron

You would have had our wealth. You will be confounded.

Lucas

Let them say--then you will have three times more, four times more.

Lisette

Let's go quickly to Paris to be in abundance.

Lucas

Between the land and our money--there's the difference. Their land and their chateau. It's nothing but a little plot. It will never increase, no, not even an abortion. But my money is in a great adventure. It will swell at first, and then like a river, it will increase.

Lisette  
Increase.

Lucas  
Increase--it will increase.

Lisette  
Ah, how I will have lovers who will respect me. What happiness! I will see brilliant fortunes. What a following I am going to have. Lackeys, servants.

Girard  
And valets de chambre--for page--Girard.

Lucas  
Let them bring on my horses.

Widow  
They will harness you a carriage.

Girard  
Go on foot, from fear that your carriage will break down. This is going to reform the pomp of your train. (giving the list to Lisette)  
This is the true list.

Widow  
Yes, the reversal is very afflicting. But you've shone already for your money. A hundred thousand francs for you in the air.

Baron  
One hundred thousand francs to laugh at.

Lisette  
What are they talking about? What?

Lucas (looking for the place where the prize was shown in his other list)  
Eh! Go on, go on, let them talk. Here, here. It's here. For Lucas, the Grand Prize.

Baron  
You will not buy my chateau, master fool.

Lucas (troubled)  
It was there.

Girard  
The zeroes are left.

Lisette  
Oh! Father, they are mocking you.

Argon  
Yes, here's the mystery.

Widow  
You have nothing.

Girard  
But nothing--gets nothing. I made the false list, and I found wealth.  
I've gotten all of Lucas' rents. My love for you makes heroic  
sacrifices. I give them all to you, Lisette.

Argon  
Let's go to supper at my place.

Baron  
Yes, let's go.

Girard  
Yes, I have pity for the trouble in which I see you. These gentlemen,  
without their ranks. My offer ought to please you. They have made  
their fortune, and I have my fortune to make. But, I am, in a day, by  
myself, more amorous than the two of them can be in a month. They have  
not been able to acquire a young girl. But nobility acquires more than  
riches.

Lisette (to widow)  
How much I owe you, Madame! It's you who turned my spirit upside down,  
in telling me that one must be a coquette.

Widow  
I am well punished for my bad advice. I agree, I was wrong.

Lisette (to Girard)  
I listened to her. You must have a Baron, she always said. No, I would  
never have thought of anyone but you, except for her. If I had  
followed my natural inclination, from tenderness I would have chosen  
you.

Girard  
Eh! Choose me then! Lucas will consent.

Lucas (in going)  
Ouf!

Girard  
Speak

Lucas  
Ouf!

Girard  
Two times ouf, in mute language, is worth one yes.

Widow  
That's the fate of a coquette. After high prospects, one sees her,  
sooner or later, confused, confounded, and reduced to a Girard.

CURTAIN

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