

Casablanca

Written by Julius Epstein, Philip Epstein and Howard Koch
From the play by Murray Burnett and Joan Alison

Scene 1

A line traces its way across a map of Europe. The narrator tells of the tortuous route refugees must take when fleeing occupied France. It leads through Marseilles, across the Mediterranean and Oran, ending in Casablanca, where exit visas are few and far between.

Scene 2

A gendarme receives a wire and orders all police in Casablanca to search all suspicious persons for letters of transit stolen from two murdered German couriers. Two police officers arrest a man with expired papers, and when he runs they shoot him down. Bystanders observe arrested people being herded into the police station and, with painful longing, observe a plane land.

Scene 3

At the airport the plane lands and MAJOR STRASSER exits to meet the waiting Vichy officials. RENAULT informs him that the murderer of the couriers is to be arrested at Rick's Café that evening. STRASSER tells him that he has heard of Rick.

Scene 4

Inside Rick's Café that evening is a strange conglomeration of Germans, Frenchmen, traitors and refugees, all plotting various endeavors. CARL, the headwaiter, speaks to some patrons about the notable people who have been reduced to menial positions in the café. While RICK is refusing admission to the gambling casino to a person with bad credit, UGARTE enters. UGARTE reveals to RICK that he has the letters of transit, and persuades RICK to hold onto them for a few hours. RICK conceals the letters in SAM's piano during a song. FERRARI enters and attempts to buy first the café, then SAM. Both RICK and SAM decline his offer. RICK encounters YVONNE, who is drunk and makes a scene when he refuses to tell her where he was the night before. RICK gets SASHA, the bartender, to drive her home. RENAULT sees this and chides him on his flagrant waste of women. RENAULT also informs him of UGARTE's impending arrest, and warns RICK not to interfere. He also tells RICK of the arrival of VICTOR LASZLO. RICK is impressed by the name and RENAULT takes note of this. They make a wager of ten thousand francs: RICK says he will succeed in escaping, RENAULT bets against it. Worried about RICK's impartiality, RENAULT brings up his past: running guns for Ethiopia, fighting for the Loyalists in Spain. It seems that RICK is partial to underdogs. RICK tells him that he only did it for the money. Exit RENAULT.

Scene 5

UGARTE is playing roulette when the gendarmes arrest him. He asks to be allowed to cash in his chips, and after he does he bolts out the door and holds it shut behind him. When the police break through he shoots two of them and runs to RICK begging for help. RICK refuses to get involved, and UGARTE is dragged off. The café returns to normal.

Scene 6

RENAULT calls RICK to the table where he is seated with STRASSER and the rest of the Germans. He introduces him to STRASSER, who begins questioning him on his past and political beliefs. RICK professes complete neutrality on all issues, and when pressed for an opinion on VICTOR LASZLO he excuses himself and leaves. RENAULT assures STRASSER that he has nothing to worry about from RICK.

Scene 7

ILSA and LASZLO enter the café. They are there to meet UGARTE. ILSA sees SAM, who ignores her. BERGER sees them and attempts to make contact by trying to sell them a ring with the symbol of the French underground on it. LASZLO agrees to meet him at the bar later. RENAULT introduces himself to them. ILSA inquires about the piano player and he tells her that his name is SAM and that he came to Casablanca with RICK. ILSA looks thoughtful. STRASSER approaches the table and demands that LASZLO meet him in the prefect's office the next morning at ten o'clock. STRASSER and RENAULT leave, and LASZLO goes to meet BERGER at the bar.

Scene 8

LASZLO seats himself at the bar next to BERGER, who informs him of UGARTE's arrest. He also tells him of an underground meeting the next evening and requests that he attend.

Scene 9

ILSA requests that the piano player come to her table. The waiter goes to fetch him.

Scene 10

RENAULT arrives at the bar and BERGER leaves, intimidated. LASZLO attempts to leave as well, but RENAULT orders him another cocktail.

Scene 11

SAM wheels his piano over to where ILSA is seated. They say hello, and ILSA asks how RICK is, confirming that she knows him. SAM is evasive and ILSA requests that he play “As Time Goes By.” After a bit of hedging, he complies. RICK explodes into the café and begins to tell SAM that he told him never to play that song, but seeing ILSA he stops short. RENAULT and LASZLO return to the table. Introductions are exchanged and it is established that RICK and ILSA know each other, and that RICK is very impressed with LASZLO. Breaking a long-standing policy, he has a drink with them, surprising RENAULT. RENAULT is even more surprised when RICK proceeds to foot the bill. Everyone says goodbye. RENAULT reminds LASZLO of his appointment the next morning, and they drive off.

Scene 12

Inside the closed café RICK is getting drunk while SAM cleans up. RICK tells SAM that he is waiting for ILSA. SAM tries to dissuade him. RICK is not to be deterred and makes SAM play “As Time Goes By.” RICK begins to reminisce.

Scene 13

In a flashback we see RICK and ILSA together in Paris in the days before the occupation. They take boat rides and drives, and ILSA explains that the reason there is currently no man in her life is because he is dead.

Scene 14

(Flashback continued.) RICK and ILSA are in his apartment. A loudspeaker from the street announces the approach of the German army. ILSA tells RICK that due to his past it will not be safe for him to remain in Paris.

Scene 15

(Flashback continued.) A small café. SAM, RICK and ILSA are helping the owner drink all his champagne so that there will be none left for the Germans when they arrive. The loudspeaker blares again, telling the people to act happy when the Germans arrive the next day. RICK and ILSA agree to leave together the next day, and RICK proposes marriage. They will meet at the station the next day because ILSA says she has some business to attend to in town. She is strangely sad and tells RICK to kiss her as if “it were for the last time.”

Scene 16

(Flashback continued.) SAM and RICK are standing at the train station in the rain. ILSA is not there and SAM gives RICK a note she left for him. It says that although she loves him, she can never see him again. SAM drags the stunned RICK onto the train.

Scene 17

(Present day.) Rick's Café at night. RICK is now very drunk and SAM leaves as ILSA enters. She attempts to explain to RICK her motives for leaving him, but he is very bitter and tells her off. ILSA leaves without finishing her story.

Scene 18

RENAULT's office. STRASSER tells RENAULT to search Rick's Café for the missing documents, and orders that LASZLO be put under surveillance. LASZLO and ILSA enter the office. STRASSER and RENAULT inform them that there is no possibility of him being granted an exit visa unless he is willing to furnish them with a list of all the underground leaders and their whereabouts. LASZLO refuses, and when he asks to speak with UGARTE he is told that UGARTE is dead. RENAULT says that they haven't yet decided whether he killed himself or died trying to escape. LASZLO and ILSA leave, and RENAULT speculates that their next step will probably be to the black market.

Scene 19

A foreigner is informed that FERRARI has a virtual monopoly on the black market. FERRARI can be found at the Blue Parrot café.

Scene 20

The interior of FERRARI's Blue Parrot café. He is refusing ANNINA and JAN's request for a visa. Perhaps she can come to terms with RENAULT, he says. As they leave RICK enters and sits with FERRARI. FERRARI suspects that RICK has the letters, and RICK tells him that he is only there to give the police long enough to search his café. FERRARI offers to sell the letters for RICK for a share in the profit, but RICK says no. Through the window RICK sees ILSA in the street. He leaves, passing LASZLO on his way out.

Scene 21

On the street. A salesman is trying to sell ILSA a tablecloth which he begins to mark down when he realises she knows RICK. RICK walks up behind ILSA and apologizes for his behavior of the night before. He asks ILSA to tell him why she left him and she refuses, saying that he is not the same person anymore. All the same, he tells her, sooner or later she will lie to LASZLO and pay him a visit. She tells him she won't because LASZLO is her husband, and was even when she knew RICK in Paris. She turns and leaves.

Scene 22

Inside the Blue Parrot. ILSA sits at a table with LASZLO and FERRARI. LASZLO tells her that FERRARI thinks it is only possible to get an exit visa for her. FERRARI leaves to let them discuss it, but ILSA says either both of them are going or neither of them are. When they tell FERRARI their decision, he tells them that he believes that RICK has the letters of transit.

Scene 23

Inside Rick's Café much is going on. RENAULT questions RICK about the letters of transit. RICK refuses to give a straight answer. YVONNE enters with a German officer who proceeds to get in a fight with a Frenchman at the bar. RICK breaks it up and tells them if they want to talk politics they must go outside. At STRASSER's table RENAULT says that he blows with the wind politically. STRASSER intimates that it may be necessary to have LASZLO murdered. At RICK's table ANNINA asks him if RENAULT is honest. Knowing that RENAULT means to seduce her he advises her to go home instead. He gets up and leaves. ILSA and LASZLO enter and RICK seats them next to SAM. RICK enters the casino where JAN is losing at roulette. He arranges for JAN to win enough money to pay for the exit visas. LASZLO approaches RICK and asks if they can speak in private.

Scene 24

In RICK's office, LASZLO attempts to buy the letters of transit. RICK refuses to part with them at any cost, and when LASZLO asks him why, RICK tells him to ask his wife. They hear the sound of Germans singing "Wacht an Rhein" downstairs. LASZLO leads the band in La Marsillaise and the crowd joins in. STRASSER is not amused and he orders RENAULT to close the café. This RENAULT does under the pretext of illegal gambling, as he accepts his own illicit winnings. STRASSER tells ILSA that LASZLO must either return to occupied France with him or face being thrown in a French concentration camp, or worse.

Scene 25

ILSA and LASZLO's hotel room. LASZLO is preparing to go to the underground meeting as soon as the man watching them is asleep. He tells ILSA that RICK would not give him the letters and that he told him to ask her why. He asks her if she has anything to tell him and she says she doesn't. LASZLO goes to the meeting.

Scene 26

Inside RICK's closed café. RICK and CARL are closing out his books. He can afford to stay closed for three weeks, CARL says.

Scene 27

RICK's apartment. ILSA enters and asks RICK for the letters. After several ploys, all of which fail, she pulls a gun. RICK still won't give them to her and she drops the gun. She explains that LASZLO was sent to a concentration camp and she received news that he had been killed trying to escape. She had not found that he was alive until shortly before she was due to leave with RICK from Paris. She tells RICK that she doesn't have the strength to leave him again. RICK agrees to do the thinking for both of them.

Scene 28

CARL and LASZLO are sneaking into the café, hiding from the police. RICK and ILSA hear their voices and peek out. RICK makes ILSA stay in the room and goes down to speak with them. CARL tells him that the police broke up the underground meeting. RICK tells him to turn out the light at the rear entrance so that he will take ILSA home. LASZLO tells RICK that he knows that they are both in love with ILSA. He requests that RICK take the letters of transit and use them to take ILSA away from Casablanca. At this point the police break in and arrest LASZLO.

Scene 29

RENAULT's office the next morning. RICK is there trying to convince RENAULT to release LASZLO. RENAULT refuses. RICK tells him that he is leaving Casablanca with ILSA and he doesn't want STRASSER to make her stay to testify against LASZLO. He proposes a plan to incriminate LASZLO in the deaths of the couriers so that he can be sent back to the concentration camps. He tells RENAULT to release LASZLO and he will tell him to pick up the letters of transit at the café a half hour before the plane is due to leave. RENAULT can then be present to arrest him. RICK tells RENAULT not to have LASZLO followed and he agrees.

Scene 30

The Blue Parrot. RICK is selling his cafe to FERRARI on the condition that all the employees are kept on. FERRARI agrees.

Scene 31

RENAULT enters Rick's Café and prepares to arrest LASZLO. He asks RICK where the letters had been hidden and RICK tells him. As ILSA and LASZLO arrive RENAULT hides in RICK's office. ILSA enters first and she is worried because LASZLO still thinks she is leaving with him. RICK tells her not to worry. LASZLO enters and starts to pay RICK for the letters, but RICK tells him to keep his money. RENAULT arrests LASZLO for the murder of the couriers, but he barely has time to gloat before RICK pulls a gun on him. RICK forces him to call the airport and insure their place on the plane. RENAULT dials the number of the German consulate instead.

Scene 32

STRASSER is puzzled by RENAULT's call and orders a car to take him to the airport and a squad of police to meet him there.

Scene 33

At the airport, RICK has RENAULT fill out the letters of transit with the names “Mr. and Mrs. Victor Laszlo.” ILSA is stunned. RICK tells her that if she stays they will both end up in a concentration camp. They will always have Paris, he says. When LASZLO returns from loading the luggage, RICK tells him of ILSA’s visit the night before. He says he let her pretend to still be in love with him to get the letters. They get on the plane. RENAULT accuses RICK of being a sentimentalist as STRASSER pulls up, demanding to know what the phone call was all about. RENAULT tells him that ILSA and LASZLO are on the plane, and STRASSER grabs a phone to tell the tower to stop the plane. RICK tells him not to move or he will shoot him. STRASSER moves and he shoots him. The police squad arrives and RENAULT tells them that STRASSER has been shot. He pauses for a moment, then tells them to round up the “usual suspects.” RENAULT and RICK decide it is a good time to start being patriotic, and RENAULT kicks over a bottle of Vichy water as the plane takes off. RENAULT tells RICK that he might be able to get him an exit visa so he could join a free French garrison, but that the ten thousand francs which he now owes him should just about cover their expenses as fellow fugitives.

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