

FREDRIKA If you cheated a little, it would come out.

MADAME ARMFELDT (*playing solitaire*) Solitaire is the only thing in life that demands absolute honesty. As a woman who has numbered kings among her lovers, I think my word can be taken on that point. What was I talking about?

FREDRIKA You said I should watch.

MADAME ARMFELDT Watch—what?

FREDRIKA It sounds very unlikely to me, but you said I should watch for the night to smile.

MADAME ARMFELDT Everything is unlikely, dear, so don't let that deter you. Of course the summer night smiles. Three times.

FREDRIKA But how does it smile?

MADAME ARMFELDT Good heavens, what sort of a nanny did you have?

FREDRIKA None, really. Except Mother, and the other actresses in the company—and the stage manager.

MADAME ARMFELDT Stage managers are not nannies. They don't have the talent.

FREDRIKA But if it happens—how does it happen?

MADAME ARMFELDT You get a feeling. Suddenly the jasmine starts to smell stronger, then a frog croaks—then all the stars in Orion wink. Don't squeeze your bosoms against the chair, dear. It'll stunt their growth. And then where would you be?

FREDRIKA But why does it smile, Grandmother?

MADAME ARMFELDT At the follies of human beings, of course. The first smile smiles at the young, who know nothing. (*She looks pointedly at FREDRIKA*) The second, at the fools who know too little, like Desiree.

FREDRIKA Mother isn't a fool.

MADAME ARMFELDT (*Going right on*) Um hmm. And the third at the old who know too much—like me.

FREDRIKA (*Intrigued in spite of herself, gazes out at the summer night*) Grandmother, might it really smile tonight?

MADAME ARMFELDT Why not? Now practice your piano, dear, preferably with the soft pedal down. And as a treat tonight at dinner, I shall tell you amusing stories about my liaison with the Baron de Signac, who was, to put it mildly, peculiar.