

FREDRIK Your dragoon and his wife are glowering at each other in the Green Salon, and all the children appear to have vanished, so when I saw you sneaking up the stairs...

DESIREE I ripped my hem on the dining room table in all that furor. Sit down.

(Patting the bed beside her, on which tumbled stockings are strewn)

FREDRIK *On* the stockings?

DESIREE I don't see why not. *(pause)* Well, we're back at the point where we were so rudely interrupted last week, aren't we?

FREDRIK Not quite. If you'll remember, we'd progressed a step further.

DESIREE How true.

FREDRIK I imagine neither of us is contemplating a repeat performance.

DESIREE Good heavens, with your wife in the house, and my lover and his wife and my daughter...

FREDRIK ...and my devoted old friend, your mother.

(They both laugh)

DESIREE *(During it, like a naughty girl)* Isn't my dragoon awful?

FREDRIK *(Laughs)* When you told me he had the brain of a pea, I think you were being generous.

(They laugh more uproariously)

DESIREE What in God's name are we laughing about? Your son was right at dinner. We don't fool that boy, not for a moment. The One and Only Desiree Armfeldt, dragging around the country in shoddy tours, carrying on with someone else's dim-witted husband. And the Great Lawyer Egerman, busy renewing his unrenewable youth.

FREDRIK Bravo! Probably that's an accurate description of us both.

DESIREE Shall I tell you why I really invited you here? When we met again and we made love, I thought: Maybe here it is at last—a chance to turn back, to find some sort of coherent existence after so many hears of muddle. *(Pause)* Of course, there's your wife. But I thought: perhaps—just perhaps—you might be in need of rescue too.

FREDRIK From renewing my unrenowable youth?

DESIRE *(Suddenly tentative)* It was only a thought.

FREDRIK When my eyes are open and I look at you, I see a woman that I have loved for a long time, who entranced me all over again when I came to her rooms... who gives me such genuine pleasure that, in spite of myself, I came here for the sheer delight of being with her again. The woman who could rescue me? Of course. *(Pause)* But when my eyes are not open—which is most of the time—all I see is a girl in a pink dress teasing a canary, running through a sunlit garden to hug me at the gate, as if I'd come home from Timbuctu instead of the Municipal Courthouse three blocks away.