

MADAME ARMFELDT Child, I am about to give you your advice for the day.

FREDRIKA Yes, Grandmother.

MADAME ARMFELDT Never marry—or even dally with—a Scandinavian.

FREDRIKA Why not, Grandmother?

MADAME ARMFELDT They are all insane.

FREDRIKA All of them?

MADAME ARMFELDT Uh-hum. It's the latitude. A winter when the sun never rises, a summer when the sun never sets, are more than enough to addle the brain of any man. Further off, further off. You practically inhaled the queen of diamonds.

DESIREE *(Off)* Who's home?

FREDRIKA *(Jumps up, thrilled)* Mother!

DESIREE Darling, you've grown a mile; you're much prettier, you're irresistible! Hello, Mother.

MADAME ARMFELDT *(unfriendly)* And to what do I owe the honor of this visit?

DESIREE I just thought I'd pop out and see you both. Is that so surprising?

MADAME ARMFELDT Yes.

DESIREE You're in one of your bitchy moods, I see.

MADAME ARMFELDT If you've come to take Fredrika back, the answer is no. I do not object to the immorality of your life, merely to its sloppiness. Since I have been tidy enough to have acquired a sizable mansion with a fleet of servants, it is only common sense that my granddaughter should reap the advantages of it. *(To FREDRIKA)* Isn't that so, child?

FREDRIKA I really don't know, Grandmother.

MADAME ARMFELDT Oh, yes you do, dear. Well, Desiree, there must be something you want or you wouldn't have "popped out." What is it?

DESIREE All right. The tour's over for a while, and I was wondering if you'd invite some people here next weekend.

MADAME ARMFELDT If they're actors, they'll have to sleep in the stables.

DESIREE Not actors, Mother. Just a lawyer from town and his family—Fredrik Egerman.

MADAME ARMFELDT In my day, one went to lawyers' offices but never consorted with their *families*.

DESIREE Then it'll make a nice change, dear, won't it?

MADAME ARMFELDT I am deeply suspicious, but very well. I shall send 'round a formal invitation by hand. Needless to say, I shall be polite to your guests. However, they will not be served my best champagne. I am saving that for my funeral.