

**Miro Gavran**

**GRETA GARBO'S SECRET**

**(A Play)**

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**Characters:**

**GRETA ..... 50 years old**  
**LINDA ..... 33 years old**  
**ROBERT ..... 55 years old**  
**DAVID ..... 36 years old**

**The play is set at Greta Garbo's estate in a secret location, and in New York City in the early Spring of 1955.**

**Scene 1.**  
**(Linda, Robert)**

(In Robert's New York office we see Robert sitting at his desk, holding some papers. Linda is sitting opposite him.)

ROBERT: I hope you have carefully read the draft contract.

LINDA: Yes, I have.

ROBERT: Do you have any questions or comments?

LINDA: When we first talked, I thought I would be working here in New York. But now I see that I shall have to travel to that estate every day, to that house. It's obvious that the house belongs to my patient?

ROBERT: That's right.

LINDA: That means that I'll be going to her, she won't be coming to me?

ROBERT: Exactly.

LINDA: But that's not good. I have never heard of such an arrangement, I have never heard of a psychiatrist making house-calls.

ROBERT: She is not an ordinary patient and you know it. If she were an ordinary patient, I would not be offering that you treat her and only her, and earn three times more than you have been earning to date.

LINDA: Why does the draft contract state that while I am treating her I shall not be able to have even one other patient?

ROBERT: That was her condition.

LINDA: I don't know of any case when a psychiatrist was asked to have only one patient and agreed to such an arrangement.

ROBERT: And I don't know of any case when a young psychiatrist just over thirty was offered a retainer three times higher than usual, and that she kept asking additional questions of her employer. We will pay your gasoline. The drive to the estate will take one hour, and you will need another hour for the return journey. Then

you will be obliged to be available for four hours – which does not mean that you will have to spend all that time with her. Six hours a day including travel time – those will be your working hours – and after that your time is your own, no obligations. I don't understand why you are still thinking about it. I am a business man and if anyone offered me a contract like that, I would sign it immediately, in case my prospective employer changed his mind and engaged someone else. Someone who was less sceptical and indecisive.

(Silence.)

LINDA: You're expecting me to leave all my patients and to be a psychiatrist for only one person. That is risky, really risky. You could fire me right after Day 1, and what would I do then.

ROBERT: In that case you would be paid six monthly retainers. You did read Article 10.

LINDA: Yes, I read it. My condition is that it be changed into twelve monthly retainers.

ROBERT: When we first spoke, I mentioned that you would get six monthly retainers as severance pay in the event of cancellation, and you didn't voice any objections.

LINDA: I didn't know then that I would have to travel every day, that I would be working in her home and not in my office, and that I would not be able to have even one other patient.

ROBERT: Surely it is incomparably easier for you to treat one patient rather than twenty.

LINDA: No, it's not. When you work with twenty or so, you do not become excessively attached to any of them. It's easier to keep your distance towards them. Simply put, this arrangement would not be natural, neither good for her nor for me.

ROBERT: I know that everything has its price, and your retainer is excellent.

LINDA: You speak only of money all the time.

ROBERT: Money is the prime-mover of everything.

LINDA: But it's not the only one and is no measure of happiness, unhappiness, misfortune or success. I need to know much more before I sign my name on that paper. I feel as if. . . you are keeping a lot from me, as if we did not say all that had to be said in our two prior conversations.

ROBERT: Does that mean you, too, have a lot to say to me, or to ask me?

LINDA: Exactly!

ROBERT: I still have not signed my name to this contract. To be frank, I, too, have a lot still to ask you. Perhaps even some private things that one prefers to keep to oneself. However, as you are a person who lives from delving into and rummaging through the intimacy of others, that shouldn't bother you.

(Silence.)

LINDA: Before we put our signatures to this paper, it is obvious that we both want and need a very open and perhaps unpleasant conversation.

ROBERT: Who will start?

LINDA: How many psychiatrists has she had to date?

ROBERT: What do you mean, 'how many'?

LINDA: The number! I am interested in the number. How many psychiatrists have treated her or, in other words, how many psychiatrists have been sacked to date?

ROBERT: I don't know exactly.

LINDA: I believe you do.

(Silence.)

ROBERT: I have been conducting her business for twenty years, and she has had four psychiatrists during that period. I don't know how many there were previously.

LINDA: I assume that none of them left of their own accord, but that you sacked all of them?

ROBERT: That's right.

LINDA: Can you let me have their notes?

ROBERT: There are no notes. Everything was burnt, destroyed.

LINDA: But why? That will make my job harder.

ROBERT: That was a condition. You won't be able to take any of your notes from the house, either, not even one paper that could compromise her or fall into the hands of third persons.

LINDA: I am sworn to confidentiality by the code of medicine, but our oath, and. . .

ROBERT: If you were to give even one interview to the press about her or publish a book about her – according to this contract, all your income from any undertaking whatsoever to the end of you life would be forfeit to her – and you would be financially and professionally dead. In addition – you must not say anything about her house or the estate. It must not become know that it belongs to Greta Garbo; otherwise, she would not be able to live there in privacy and peace.

LINDA: I have never revealed anything about any of my patients to anyone. Never.

ROBERT: She is a special case. She is really special. Everyone wants to learn more about her, and no-one knows anything.

LINDA: Nothing at all?

ROBERT: Nothing significant. Otherwise, I wanted to speak with you about your fiancé.

LINDA: But I haven't finished with my questions yet.

ROBERT: You will have a chance for that, but firstly I would like you to tell me if you can keep a secret from your fiancé about whom you are working for, and who your patient is. Will he agree to your travelling outside the city every day, without you telling him more?. . . I don't know why it is, but women love to confide everything to the men they make love with, and think they have to tell them everything they do, think, and feel. Men never ask this of them. . . but they still babble it all out. My people have checked everything you said about him last time – he really does work for an insurance company as a clerk and his record is absolutely clean.

LINDA: If you must know, I am the dominant one in our relationship, not him. My life is in my hands. And my fiancé is a decent and discrete person. You could simply have believed me. You didn't have to play the investigator.

ROBERT: You would have acted exactly as I did in my place.

(Silence.)

LINDA: Why have you decided on a woman after four male psychiatrists?

ROBERT: How do you know they were men?

LINDA: I assumed they were.

ROBERT: That's what she wanted. And it seemed more natural to me that a woman confides in a woman, and not a man.

LINDA: What about the last one? What was his sin?

ROBERT: He was against her moving away from New York into that house. He thought it would disturb her.

LINDA: Could you explain?.

ROBERT: She bought the house in the Autumn of 1941. She has lived there for four months. . . but he didn't visit her at all after she moved.

LINDA: And that's why her psychiatrist was sacked?

ROBERT: He was sacked because he was incapable. She only got worse and worse during the time that he was treating her, while he received his retainer as if he was successful and effective.

LINDA: In our line of work, you can never be sure about the outcome of the treatment. You can't blame the psychiatrist if the patient does not improve. . .

ROBERT: Yes, I can. Of course I can blame him. I expect you to treat her actively, and to help her to surmount her problems. Surely your job is not just to listen to the patient and the patient's woes. . . I expect you to offer solutions for her difficulties. I expect her to feel better after you sessions, not worse.

LINDA: Hm. I can see already that it won't be easy for me to co-operate with you. If I agree to take this job I shall request. . .

ROBERT: You will agree. I am sure of it. You, too, like a business challenge.

LINDA: Finally, thank goodness, you didn't mention money even once.

ROBERT: What I wanted to say was that you, too, can appreciate a well-paid professional challenge. If I hadn't tripled her income in recent years through good management, I would have been terminated long ago. She likes money just like anybody else in this world. When we do a job, only our professional efficiency can

protect us from the sack. I think that is natural and fair. That's the way it will be with you, too.

LINDA: If I accept.

ROBERT: You will accept, I have no doubt about it. The offer is so good that only a lunatic would reject it. And, to me, you seem so rational and prudent.

## Scene 2.

**(Robert, Greta, and Linda later)**

(We see a room with a divan, a table, two chairs and one armchair. There are paintings on the wall from the end of the 19th century. Greta is in the room. She is walking around in the way a visitor does when he finds himself somewhere for the first time. She approaches the fireplace and sits in the armchair. A moment later she gets up from the armchair and goes over to one of the pictures on the wall. It is a still-life. Greta looks carefully at the painting. Robert comes into the room.)

GRETA: Has she arrived?

ROBERT: Yes, she has. She's here in the hall. Should I call her in?

GRETA: Take it easy, wait a while.

ROBERT: What is it?

GRETA: I am not sure that this is a good idea.

ROBERT: What's not a good idea?

GRETA: This business with the new psychiatrist.

ROBERT: You know yourself that it is necessary.

GRETA: A new face, getting to know her, adapting to her - all over again. And I am so tired of everything and everybody.

ROBERT: In a week's time you will feel that you have known her forever.

GRETA: Worst of all is that I do not believe that she can help me. No-one can.

ROBERT: She was by far the best in her generation, and I was given outstanding references for her.

GRETA: It's not that I doubt your choice.

(Silence.)

ROBERT: How did you sleep?

GRETA: Badly. . . The first night in this house after thirteen years, among all those memories.

ROBERT: If you like, we can go back to New York this very afternoon, and come here on Saturdays or Sundays to get out of town, without sleeping over.

GRETA: No, Robert, no. There has been enough running. The only image flickering in front of my eyes over these years has been the image of this house, the only thought that has been haunting me is the question of whether things could have been different. I felt such sadness when I woke up this morning, as if I had never cried in all my life, as if all my unshed tears had come together in one sole teardrop that had to. . .

(Silence.)

ROBERT: You see how good it is that we have engaged this woman.

GRETA: I am not so sure. . . I am not so sure of anything any more. . . Come on then, bring her in.

ROBERT: Would you like me to stay with you, at least at the beginning.

GRETA: Thank you, but that won't be necessary.

(Robert goes towards the exit.)

GRETA: Wait!

(Robert pauses.)

ROBERT: Yes!

GRETA: How did you sleep?

ROBERT: Well. I always sleep well.

GRETA: This house and everything here. . . didn't it remind you of those days?

ROBERT: Yes. . . I remembered everything.

GRETA: Perhaps I should have. . .

ROBERT: Should have what?

GRETA: It's not important. Please bring her in.

ROBERT: If you don't like her, we can cancel the arrangement. But please – give her a chance. Stick it out for a week, and only then decide what you think of her.

GRETA: I shall know after only a minute. There is something that hovers around all of us, I can feel it and no-one can deceive me. I shall know immediately if I can stand having her close to me, or if she will smother me like most people do.

ROBERT: All the same – let her have that week. For my sake, please.

GRETA: I can hold out for that long, even though five minutes in the company of the wrong person can upset me and wound me.

ROBERT: She's a positive person. I even believe that you could like her.

GRETA: Let's see.

(Robert nods his head and goes out of the room into the entry hall. A few moments later, Linda comes into the room.)

LINDA: Good morning!

GRETA: Good morning!

LINDA: I am Dr Linda Stone.

GRETA: I am pleased to meet you. I'm Greta.

(Silence.)

GRETA: Robert has decided that we meet and talk in this room. I know it does not look like a psychiatrist's consulting room, but I hope that it will serve the purpose.

LINDA: It's a pleasant room.

GRETA: So you like it. But even if you didn't, you wouldn't admit it to me.

LINDA: I always say what I think.

GRETA: If that is true, I am glad to hear it.

(Silence.)

LINDA: If we were in my consulting room now, I would suggest that you lie down on this couch, that you relax and that we start.

GRETA: That I lie down on this couch?

LINDA: Yes.

GRETA: People usually talk either standing up or sitting down. A conversation is more pleasant when both collocutors are in similar positions.

LINDA: Just as you like. I insisted that Robert put a couch in the room, because all patients find it easier to relax that way. It helps to remove the tenseness.

GRETA: I am not tense.

LINDA: All the better..

GRETA: My problem is not tenseness. I don't need a psychiatrist. That was Robert's idea, he is so sweet and attentive, he worries about me as if I were his child or his sister, but I am not one of those persons who. . .

LINDA: One of which persons?

GRETA: Those who themselves invent their problems. I do not invent anything.

LINDA: Then everything will be much easier.

GRETA: Do you believe that?

LINDA: Yes, I do.

(Silence.)

LINDA: I would like you to know that I have always admired you as an actress, and had a high opinion of your roles and your films.

GRETA: Don't, please don't.

LINDA: But why?

GRETA: There's no need for that. That was all in the past, the distant past.

LINDA: I thought you were proud of all that.

GRETA: I don't have anything against those films and I am not sorry that I was in that business, but. . . that was never really me. Absolutely never. When I see who today's actors are, I am happy that I am far away now from that 'vanity fair'.

(Silence.)

LINDA: Shall we begin?

GRETA: I thought we already had.

LINDA: I meant. . . formally. . . as patient and. . .

GRETA: Wouldn't it be more pleasant for both of us that we have no official session today. Wouldn't it be better that we get to know each other on an equal footing today, and not as patient and therapist.

LINDA: I have no objections. Whatever you prefer.

GRETA: You know. . . I shall probably be opening up my soul and my privacy to you already from tomorrow. Wouldn't it be the natural thing, as your patient, that I know who it is that I am confiding in. Isn't that a precondition for our equality?

LINDA: We were taught at medical school that we should never allow our patients to enter into our world, into our privacy. We have to maintain the distance if we want to make the right decisions and assist those who are expecting our help.

GRETA: But things are different in friendship.

LINDA: That's true, friendship is different.

(Silence.)

GRETA: Would you like something to drink?

LINDA: No, thank you.

(Silence.)

GRETA: Robert told me that you have a fiancé.

LINDA: Yes, I do..

GRETA: How long have you been together?

LINDA: Is that important?

GRETA: I'm curious.

LINDA: Two years.

GRETA: Do you love him?

LINDA: Do you think I would be with him if I didn't?

GRETA: I have met a lot of couples whose staying together was more through habit than through love.

LINDA: You are thinking of married couples.

GRETA: It's the same with young men and women. People fear loneliness and agree to anything just to avoid being alone, or being abandoned. I used to despise that cowardice in both women and men.

LINDA: And now?

GRETA: Now I know what loneliness is.

LINDA: But there is not one person in this country who would not want to be in your company. I think that you must be the last person who could complain that people didn't want to spend time with her.

GRETA: You are talking like a teenager. I am not as interesting as that person on the silver screen. Yes, everybody would like to be friends with «her», but I am not «her».

LINDA: But «she» would not have existed without you.

GRETA: That's true, too. But let's get back to your fiancé. How did you meet, what attracted you to him? What set him apart from the young men to whom you paid no attentions, even they were all around you?

(Silence.)

LINDA: Forgive me, but. . .

GRETA: What is it?

LINDA: We are going down the wrong path. I must not and I cannot conduct this sort of conversation with you.

GRETA: A turtle. The behaviour of a turtle again.

LINDA: What turtle?

GRETA: A turtle withdraws into its shell and no-one can reach it. That's why turtles live for two hundred years.

LINDA: I'm sorry.

GRETA: I don't hold it against you. I'm a turtle myself. And I wish that there were more turtles in the world, and many fewer people who behave the way you have today.

LINDA: I hope you don't hold it against me.

GRETA: No, I really don't. Although I hoped to see a human being before me, and not a calculating professional.

(Silence.)

GRETA: I understand you. You want me to be what I am – a patient asking for help, a patient who is in a subordinate position in relation to her untouchable therapist.

LINDA: Believe me – that would be best for you and for me.

GRETA: It would be better and simpler for you, no doubt, but you cannot know if it would be better for me.

(Silence.)

GRETA: Do you smoke?

LINDA: No.

GRETA: Pity.

LINDA: It doesn't bother me.

GRETA: I like to smoke when I am in the company of other smokers.

(Silence.)

GRETA: So perhaps I should lie down on that couch and allow you to play the role in which you feel best.

LINDA: It is not a role. I am not «playing» anything.

GRETA: All people play a role, everyone assumes the «role» that suits them best, and, thanks to that role, life becomes a more acceptable routine. And your role is called: «serious and ambitious and responsible psychiatrist who does not show emotion in front of her patients».

LINDA: You could call it that, although it is not my role but rather my profession.

GRETA: I only hope that you don't play that role in your private life, and I hope your fiancé knows some other Linda who differs from the person standing in front of me.

(Silence.)

GRETA: The turtle could learn a thing or two from you. Robert really has found me an excellent psychiatrist. So, will we get down to work already today?

LINDA: I would be pleased to. That is why I came.

GRETA: You would be happier if I were to lie down on the couch.

LINDA: It would be easier for you, too.

GRETA: You are so sure of yourself, you even believe that you know how I shall feel when I lie down on the couch. Alright then – I'll listen to you.

**Scene 3.**  
**(Linda, David)**

(We are in Linda's apartment in New York. It is evening. Linda is reading a book. David comes into the room.)

DAVID: Here I am.

LINDA: Evening.

(David walks over to Linda and gives her a casual kiss.)

LINDA: How was it?

DAVID: Well, so-so. . . Bad actually.

LINDA: You didn't get it?

DAVID: No, I didn't. The assistant director was delighted with me, the director also liked me, but the producer decided on a well-known actor. I was so close and then – finally nothing.

LINDA: Don't look at it like that – they will remember you and perhaps call you for the next show they work on.

DAVID: I get through three rounds of auditions, give my all, for them to say finally: «Regrettably, we have decided on someone else.» I have never had such a feeling that a role was written just for my sensibilities as this one was. I have never been better. But it looks as though I am fated to spend my life in an insurance company as a petty clerk. Perhaps the best thing would be if I made peace with the fact that I shall never be a real actor, and that I shall never get out of amateur status as a beginner. Perhaps I should simply stop trying. That's the only way to protect myself from these disappointments.

LINDA: Please, David, stop it with that self-pity. I understand that you are disappointed today, but we both know that you are never going to give up the idea of acting. You have a rare talent for it, and even if I have only seen you in two plays, you were far the best in both of them, so sensitive and different from all the other actors. Your wounds will be healed already tomorrow, and you will be calling me the

day after to say that you have heard of a new audition, a new play and that you have to try again because this time 'I have a good feeling about it'. . .

DAVID: Are you consoling me or making fun of me?

LINDA: Consoling you.

DAVID: Nobody can console me after this.

(Linda goes over to him and gives him a gentle hug.)

LINDA: Don't be so sure about that.

(Linda starts gently caressing him and clinging to him.)

LINDA: Perhaps I know how to transform a bad day into a lovely evening.

DAVID: You just want to get me to think of other things.

(Linda and David fondle each other.)

LINDA: I don't want you to think at all. At least for a while.

(Suddenly, David stops.)

DAVID: But what about you? How was your day at work? If you can call it work.

LINDA: And why do you think that my job can't be called work?

DAVID: Because it is all so secretive and strange. Because you are hiding from me whom you are treating and where you are travelling to every day.

(Linda frees herself from his embrace.)

LINDA: You are starting that again.

DAVID: You would, too, if you were in my place.

LINDA: You know that I can't tell you more than I already have. That is the condition of my contract – I can't disclose the name of the person or the location of the house where I am going for these sessions.

DAVID: Surely your patient is not some Mafioso.

LINDA: No.

DAVID: But surely you can tell me more than you have. You know that I can keep a secret.

LINDA: Please stop this..

DAVID: How can I stop when it is driving me crazy? What would you do if I were to say one day: «You know what, I have changed my job, I am being paid a three

times higher retainer than before, but I can't tell anyone, not even you, where I am working, or for whom I am working.» What would you say to that? Come on, think about it..

LINDA: I would say the same as you said to me. I would say that I know how to keep a secret and that, as your girlfriend, I expect to have the right to know who you are working for.

DAVID: You see, that is why I am insisting.

LINDA: However, if I tell you I'll lose the job, and not only that. Believe me, I have a greater need to talk about it than you do. It's been a whole week, and I am going around in circles, and I even regret getting into this. I even ask myself why she engaged me when she doesn't even want me to do my job. . . but. . . I am already saying what I shouldn't. . . Please, show some understanding.

DAVID: I thought I had the right to know.

LINDA: You do, but. . . believe me, if I could I would tell you.

DAVID: I feel so stupid. Everything is getting out of my control, and you are constantly keeping me at a distance.

LINDA: What distance are you talking about?

DAVID: When I suggested a year ago that we get married, you said it was not yet the time, that I should give you more time and space, and that I had to show understanding.

LINDA: Please, David, don't start out from the beginning this evening.

DAVID: Why not? If you really love me, what could be more natural than that we get married after being together for two years, except if. . .

LINDA: Except if what?

DAVID: Except if you feel that I am not good enough for you, except if you don't respect and love me enough.

LINDA: Where is this coming from?

DAVID: Back then, a year ago, I was earning half as much as you were. Now I am earning six times less than you do. Then I at least knew where my fiancée was

working. Now I don't even know that. Perhaps you really do deserve someone who will fill you with admiration, someone who is on your level.

LINDA: Now I really must ask you to stop. I know that you are down because of the audition and I know that it is not easy for you for many reasons, but I beg you to stop with this jealousy and these accusations, because you have no reason for them whatsoever.

(Silence.)

DAVID: I thought that I at least had the right to know. . .

LINDA: If you cannot accept me as I am, with a secretive employer and job, a woman who is not yet ready to marry you, go right ahead – we can break it off, you can go home and I won't be angry at you.

(Silence.)

LINDA: A half an hour ago I was happy that you would be arriving, I could hardly wait to see you here and for us to be together. I thought we could look forward to a night that we would both enjoy.

(Silence.)

LINDA: Come on, then! You decide how this night is going to end. Do you want to break it all off or. . .

(After a short silence during which he looks unblinkingly into her eyes, David goes to Linda and hugs her firmly. They start kissing and caressing each other.)

#### **Scene 4.**

**(Greta, Linda)**

(Greta is lying on the couch. Linda is sitting in a chair placed behind Greta's head. Their session is under way.)

GRETA: When it happens that there is a clear and cloudless night without clouds, I am afraid to look up at the starry sky, at the hundreds and thousands of stars that are only a tiny part of the Cosmos. I start thinking about the endless world and about

space and how we are not at the centre of that Cosmos but are lost somewhere on the edges. Forgotten, perhaps, even by the Creator. I think about how terrible it is that the World has neither beginning nor end, and how the present that we are living is as important for that World as an ordinary droplet in the greatest waterfall. Then I start thinking about time, that there is no beginning or end to existence, and that thought about infinity drives me so crazy that I am unable to rein in my anxiety. It all frightens me.

LINDA: What exactly?

GRETA: That we can't define the borders, that we are no unimportant in time. Doesn't that frighten you? Don't you think about that?

LINDA: To be honest, I don't let it bother me. I think there is a reason for our not knowing the secrets of the genesis of the World and the secrets of time, endlessness and infinity. There is no doubt that such matters exceed our possibilities. We are limited in time and space and have to realise ourselves and our relations with others within the given world.

GRETA: I didn't expect such a response from you.

LINDA: Why not? In any case, each human being is like the Cosmos. I don't see why we should burden ourselves with things that we cannot influence, instead of improving things that we can. The small world in which we find ourselves by birth, this world that has been given to us for us to enjoy, is so rich, luxuriant and interesting that it can fill our lives with its splendour. We don't have to seek for anything outside of it.

GRETA: But so much exists outside of our lives and our narrow frames, so much lies outside of our narrow little world and we cannot pretend that it does not exist. I cannot but ask those questions and be fearful that no answers exist. When I think that the World is round – I freeze. The fact that we are floating in an endless infinity and that we can be swallowed up tomorrow by some chaos that is waiting for us on that journey, and that we are ignorant of it. . . that is terrible.

LINDA: Greta, I think it's time for you to start getting out among people again. Socialising with them. Talking about ordinary, everyday matters. Perhaps it would

be best that you get in contact with people from the film world, the people with whom you have made cinema history. You must be linked to them by lovely memories, you would have plenty to talk about and that would be much more pleasant than loneliness and talking about the infinity of the Cosmos.

GRETA: Don't try to push me into their embrace. I never respected any of them, none of them. I was surrounded by half-educated people who thought only of money and fame. I always felt awful in Hollywood. I went there as a foreigner and that's what I remained. I am happy today that I don't have to be among them, those beasts. In all those years, I never saw any of them with a book in their hands. Nobody ever.

LINDA: But they respect you. It was together with you that they created the films that are part of our memories today, an inescapable part of our culture.

GRETA: All of them. . . they all wanted something from me, they always took something from me. Never asking how I felt about it. So many of them offended me and all of those stupid films were always more important to them than the human being making them.

LINDA: But you were passionate about making movies.

GRETA: I was passionate about fleeing from poverty and films were the best way to escape. I was hungry right throughout my childhood. We ate one meal a day. Before we went to bed, we drank water in huge amounts just to cheat the hunger pangs. When the stomach is full of water it does not at first feel hunger, but you have to fall asleep quickly, very quickly. If I did not fall asleep quickly, the hunger would return even more terribly than it had been before I tried to delude it with water. We lived on the outskirts of Stockholm. Far away from the centre, in a cold flat. I loved going to school only because it was warm there, while it was unbearably grey and cold in our flat. My parents did not have money for wood or for food. I remember when I was seven years old that I thought for the first time that Mama and Papa would be less unhappy and sad if I had never been born.

LINDA: Why?

GRETA: Because they would not have had to spend the little money they had on me. They were even poorer because of me. Stockholm was a wonderful city, and on the

rare occasions that they took me to the centre, when I looked at all those luxurious mansions, I thought how strange it was that a completely different world existed not far from our depressing little flat. I thought that it was almost unreal that poverty and luxury could exist side by side and how wonderful it would be if I could jump over the fence that separated them. I wanted to cross over in any way I could, not thinking at that time that there were different reasons for sadness and misfortune on that other side.

LINDA: Did you love your parents?

GRETA: Very much. Although I was sometimes ashamed of them. I thought that everyone at school knew how poor they were. It seemed to me that they were guilty of something because of that. My mother was very kind and gentle, full of understanding for everything and everyone. But she was completely impractical. Crushed by life and obligations that were beyond her. A strange sort of sadness was reflected on my father's face. Every so often he would try to step up the ladder away from impoverishment, to do something, but each such attempt turned into a new defeat that would add another wrinkle to his serious face. When I was thirteen, Papa died. I was angry at him – he had saved himself, but he had left us at the mercy of cruel fate. We were so poor that we did not have enough money for his funeral. If a distant relative had not helped us, the saddest day in our family would even have transformed into the most shameful one. I was thirteen. I remember the rain that poured down all day, I remember Mama's grief and the emptiness I felt. I remember the muddy grave where they laid his pauper's coffin. It seemed to me that we had been abandoned by the whole world and that everything was against us. I had to leave school, the only warm sanctuary I knew, and work as a barber's assistant. I understood immediately that no-one would help me out of destitution if I did not help myself. And I took my destiny into my own hands.

LINDA: Isn't that enough reason for you to consider yourself today to be a fortunate and successful person? You left poverty behind and conquered the whole world.

GRETA: You cannot run away from your memories. From the nightmares that touch the borders of your ineffectiveness. If life wounds you only once, you remain permanently vulnerable.

### **Scene 5.**

**(Robert. Linda)**

(Robert is alone in his office. He is talking on the telephone.)

ROBERT: . . . You sent me a «consummate» Californian wine at a «consummate» price – its taste changed after a month. . . you will forgive my frankness, but the taste of consummate wines does not alter after one month. . .

(Linda comes into the room.)

ROBERT: . . . . no, we did not fail to do everything necessary. We decanted the wine into bottles on the very next day and I don't see that we left anything necessary undone. . . you have to believe me, if you want us to continue buying from you. . . there are only two solutions – either you refund our money, or send us new wine, but wine that does not go bad after one month. . . It's up to you whether we continue to be your customers in the future. I shall expect your reply by tomorrow. If I don't hear from you I shall consider that you have decided to discontinue our co-operation. . . I hope so, too. Good-bye.

(Robert puts down the receiver and takes a deep breath.)

ROBERT: Crooks! They think I am naive.

(Silence.)

ROBERT: Why did you want to talk to me?

LINDA: I am going around in circles.

ROBERT: What are you trying to say?

LINDA: I have found out from Greta all that she was prepared to tell me. All the superficial things, things that she would say to anyone with whom she has become somewhat close.

ROBERT: But that is quite a lot. For years now she has not been close to anyone. For years she has been running away from people and from confiding in anyone.

LINDA: But what I have found out is not enough for a deep insight into her world, into the reasons for her problems, which are definitely not minor.

ROBERT: Your sessions have just begun. With time you will find out everything that you need to know.

LINDA: I am afraid that I shall not. Experience teaches me that the majority of patients have their «story», a story they have partly built up about themselves, which they are prepared to communicate to their psychiatrist in such a form that the psychiatrist has to accept their system of cause and effect events in their lives, which they still observe and present in a fairly false and subjective manner. So that I could get at the real truth, I received the most help in those first contacts from close relatives of the patient. Speaking with the husband, the wife, the brother or mother of some of my patients, I would learn of certain facts that my patient intentionally hid from me, which would cast a completely new light on the «story» they served up to me. Now, since all of Greta's relatives are in Sweden, and her close friends in Hollywood, you are the only person from whom I can learn those necessary facts that will help me to arrive at the truth.

ROBERT: Surely you are not expecting me to reveal to you the 'salacious' details of her private life. I cannot tell you any more about her other than what she is prepared to tell you herself.

LINDA: Believe me, I am not an inquisitive person and I do not need what you call the 'salacious details of her private life' in order to satisfy my curiosity, but so that I can more easily differentiate the truth from falsehood, which is a pre-condition for the commencement of the effective therapy you insisted on when you hired me as her psychiatrist.

ROBERT: Dr Stone, I can only repeat that, with a little patience, you will find out everything from Greta herself, and that you really do not need me.

LINDA: We have been coming up against a brick wall in the last three sessions – she repeats what she has told me before and I feel that she has told me her «story» and that she wants me to accept that story as the only reality. As soon as I touch on something outside of that, she retires into herself and I feel that I cannot penetrate to anything significant. And there can be no successful treatment without it.

ROBERT: I think that you are exaggerating.

LINDA: At least allow that I know my job. I can understand a patient not allowing me fully to see her world and her problems, but I cannot understand that you are not willing to help me in my work. After all, you are the best and perhaps only friend left to her since she withdrew from public life, and I cannot understand that you are not concerned about her restoration to health.

ROBERT: I did not say that I was not concerned.

LINDA: I could conclude that from what you said.

ROBERT: Alright then – what interests you so much in connection with Greta?

LINDA: I am interested in the reason for her running away from this house thirteen years ago, and the reason that she has now suddenly returned to it, now after thirteen years. What happened in this house that was so fateful, that hurt her so much, that she has had insomnia and nightmares since that day.

(Silence.)

ROBERT: I don't know.

LINDA: I am sure that you do.

ROBERT: Sooner or later: you will find out yourself, she will tell you.

LINDA: Does a year have to pass before I find out something that you can tell me now in two minutes?

ROBERT: Don't put me in an uncomfortable position. You know that I cannot reveal her secrets to you.

LINDA: Why not? If you want to help her and help me, I can't understand that you won't tell me what happened in this house thirteen years ago.

ROBERT: I don't want to lose Greta's trust. She could always rely on me, on my discretion, I am probably the only person in her life who has never betrayed her confidence.

LINDA: It seems to me that your position in her life is more important to you than her good health.

ROBERT: Unkind words. Almost an accusation, but I shan't comment. In any case, if you are such a good psychiatrist as you like to think, you will very soon find out everything from Greta herself.

LINDA: I am afraid that that won't happen. I need a little help to jump over that wall that she has been building around herself for years. I am sure that something ugly happened in this house, something that shocked her and disturbed her so much, and something that she has not been able to recover from to this day. She wants to overcome that with all the strength that's in her. After all, that is why she returned to this house. That is why she engaged me to help her to put it to rest.

(Silence.)

ROBERT: I can see that you yourself are close to the answer to the question that is bothering you.

LINDA: Why can't you tell me everything then if I am so close.

ROBERT: Because it is Greta who has to tell you, and not me. I do not have the right to talk about her behind her back. Since you are a successful psychiatrist, I expect that she will tell you everything in detail, of her own volition, and that you will then efficiently help her to recover. I do not believe that it is the psychiatrist's job to listen eternally to patients and their lamentations, but rather to offer a correct solution to cure them. So, when you have a concrete proposal for Greta's recovery, then I shall gladly listen to you as her closest friend.

## **Scene 6.**

**(Greta, Linda)**

(We see Greta and Linda in what serves as the consulting room. There are three bottles of wine on the table. Both women are visibly under the influence of alcohol and neither of them has complete control of her speech.)

GRETA: I am lifting this glass to your happiness, Linda, for your thirty-third birthday. May all your dreams come true. . . however dangerous and uncomfortable that can be. I wish that good fortune accompanies you through life, and that love embraces you, because life without love.. . Long life, dear Linda.

LINDA: Cheers!

(They clink their glasses.)

LINDA: I shouldn't have any more. My head is spinning.

GRETA: Mine, too, but who cares? I drink once a month, so why should I have any inhibitions on that day. .

LINDA: And I drink only twice a year, and that's why I shouldn't.

GRETA: Yes you should – you are not working today, I gave you a day off today. We all have to relax sometimes, and run away from ourselves.

LINDA: I know, but when I drink – they say I become unpleasant, and I would not like to offend you. . . When I drink, I say more than I should.

GRETA: Say whatever you like, I have been drinking, too, and I will say whatever I like to you. I have had enough of false good manners and self-control and lies. Today is the day when you are entering the most dangerous year of your life.

LINDA: The most dangerous year? What do you mean by that?

GRETA: Jesus was crucified at the age of thirty-three. For women, that is the beginning of old age, the beginning of the end. Everything went downhill for me after thirty-three, just everything. That awful year. Life is so short. Intolerably short. We should live for eight hundred years like the heroes of the Old Testament, before the Flood. . . Eight hundred years at least.

LINDA: I would be satisfied with five hundred.

GRETA: Perhaps, at least until your four hundred and ninety-ninth birthday, and then you would say, just as I would: «I want to live for at least eight hundred years.» At least. Anything less than eight hundred is nothing. A big zero.

LINDA: Alright then, I would also accept six hundred.

GRETA: There, in half a minute you have jumped from five hundred to six hundred. I would say that you have an unstable personality for a psychiatrist.

LINDA: You think so?

GRETA: Yes, I do. But still – I am pleased that we have met and become close. Pleased that we can talk like this as if we are friends. That we can be frank about everything. . . and that you will help me to get rid of my insomnia and my nightmares. The fact that we have opened up our hearts to each other is really wonderful. You are pleased, no doubt, that, as your patient, I have accepted you so well, and completely opened up my life to you, without secrets, without concealment, without

LINDA: Well, I don't think I could fully agree with what you have just said.

GRETA: Why not?

LINDA: It would be better than I don't tell you. I have a buzzing in my head from the wine. If I say what I am thinking, we will both be sorry.

GRETA: Don't stop, now that you have started.

LINDA: No, no way.

GRETA: I am ordering you to.

LINDA: You said that today was my day off.

GRETA: Exactly, but I cannot free you of your obligations to be frank with me, even on your day off. Go on!

LINDA: You will get angry if I tell you.

GRETA: Full speed ahead. Sincerely and to the point! Don't spare either of us.

LINDA: I feel that you have not told me anything important. You expect me to solve that insomnia and the nightmares, but you have never ever told me what the underlying cause for the insomnia is, nor whom you encounter in those nightmares. Why did you come back to this house, which you ran away from thirteen years ago? How can I help you when you don't really want to tell me anything, when you hide everything? I am feeling somewhat useless.

(Silence.)

GRETA: You are being rough on me.

LINDA: Only frank.

GRETA: There are people who do not like to talk about their intimate life, people who do not like to have anyone peering into their innards.

LINDA: I know that, but without that I will not be able to help you.

GRETA: I could never open up my heart before other people and dig around in my past and my private life.

LINDA: Such people do not engage psychiatrists to listen to them. Who was the reason for you not coming to this house all these years?

GRETA: I can't talk about that.

LINDA: You will have to.

GRETA: No, I can't.

LINDA: Then what is the point of all this? You pretend that you are at the psychiatrist's, but you are not prepared to co-operate. Allow me really to earn my retainer. Who was the person who hurt you so much that you have not forgiven him to this day?

GRETA: You are being impertinent.

LINDA: I have an inkling that he left you. In all my life, I have never met a woman who had not been left by someone at least once, so I don't know why you give this so much importance. Why are you ashamed of it after all these years?

GRETA: I was not left.

LINDA: Then you left him.

GRETA: Not that either.

LINDA: What was it then?

GRETA: It's not important. . . The fact that I can't sleep and that I wake up during the night is not due to him. . . The reason lies somewhere within me, but I cannot penetrate to it, and you do not want to help me.

LINDA: Don't blame me. I shall be able to help you only when you start to co-operate, and not before.

GRETA: I should dismiss you.

LINDA: I would happily accept. This does not make any sense anyhow.

GRETA: So you would like to be dismissed and to earn twelve months' severance pay without doing any work.

LINDA: I would have nothing against that.

GRETA: I knew that, but I won't be giving you that satisfaction.

(Silence.)

LINDA: What is it that you actually want from me? You are not prepared to cooperate, but you expect help. Isn't that contradictory? Don't you have even one girlfriend with whom you can talk about your thoughts and feelings, but instead have to pay me to listen to you?

GRETA: You are impertinent and coarse. I told you: you won't be getting that unearned money. You will have to leave yourself before you extort money from me.

LINDA: Why don't you try one day at least to speak sincerely and truthfully about everything that happened.

GRETA: No! I don't want to talk about him. . . I don't want to torture myself. I shall not permit you to force me to go through all that again.

LINDA: What «all that»? Who is he?

GRETA: That is none of your business. Stop it!

LINDA: That means that he did leave you.

GRETA: He didn't leave me! He just. . . left. He left temporarily, intending to return quickly.

LINDA: But he never did?

GRETA: You really are impudent. You are making my head hurt. We are finished for today. You can go home to New York. I don't want to look at you any more today.

LINDA: He probably hated you?

GRETA: He adored me. He was so gentle and sweet.

LINDA: And how did you feel about him?

GRETA: I was happy with him, too. When I was near him I felt so fulfilled and content that I did not need anything else in this world.

LINDA: Why didn't you marry him?

GRETA: It was all because of the war. In the Autumn of Forty-one, Bill asked me to marry him. I said 'yes'. I bought this house an hour away from New York. We moved here. I left Hollywood without any regrets, I wanted to be with him all the time, and I wanted to bear his child.

LINDA: Did you turn your back on the movies because of him?

GRETA: I didn't know then that I was giving up film-making forever. I had had my fill of that job and the people and the public. I thought it would be a good idea to take a leave of absence for two or three years, and I thought it would be lovely to have a baby who looked like him.

LINDA: Why didn't you have that baby?

GRETA: A month before our wedding the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbour. President Roosevelt called the nation to war. Bill decided to join up. I begged him not to. He wouldn't listen. I told him that if he went to war he would be betraying our love, and he told me that if he did not go he would be betraying his country. We quarrelled, for the first time in our life together we quarrelled. The next day he sent me a farewell letter, he wrote that he loved me, that he adored me, that the war would soon be over and that he would be home quickly and that we would get married then, and that nothing could destroy our love. I was angry that he was leaving me. That was the first time in my life that any man had left me. Before that, I had left them. But I was soon overcome by fear instead of anger. A terrible fear. I was afraid for him and for his life. From the moment that I got up until I went to sleep at night, I could only think of him and that stupid war.

LINDA: And what happened to him in that war?

GRETA: In March of Forty-two, his ship was torpedoed. He died. He left me forever. It was as if they had killed me and not him. Everything lost all sense, everything. A pain moved into my heart and it never leaves me. A pain that is destroying me. I have lost my peace of mind, I have lost the gift of sleep. I ran away from this house, thinking that I could forget him that way. But I was wrong. He was in my dreams every night. Dreams that I did not want – a bleeding head, no eyes, and arms. A dead man who upsets me, a dead man who does not leave my life. During

the day, I think of him as he was in life. I see him as tall and handsome, laughing, always in a good mood. But at night – he transforms into the ugliest corpse who has no peace in that world, and is depriving me of mine in this world.

LINDA: Why did you come back to this house?

GRETA: I no longer had the strength to run. I thought he was haunting me in my dreams to punish me for trying to forget him and to continue my life without him.

LINDA: What do you feel towards him now?

GRETA: Grief, a deep uncontrollable sadness that floods me like an ocean and makes me feel so tiny and so helpless.

(Greta starts to weep. She bursts into uncontrolled sobs. They choke her. Linda goes over to her and hugs her.)

LINDA: You have suffered a great deal, Greta. And I know that you really loved Bill. And it is only now that I really understand you.

GRETA: It can't be understood. It was all so terrible! No-one could understand it.

LINDA: My first boyfriend, whom I loved with all my heart, my dearest. . . did not return from the war. They didn't even find his body. There was no funeral, no grave, no real farewell. . . It all. . . because of that, everything in my life remained forever unfinished. . . I don't know if you understand what I am trying to say. Since then, I have been afraid even to love, for fear of losing a love that I can no longer be sure of.

(They look at each other unblinkingly. Greta nods her head. Greta and Linda gently embrace like two sisters who wish to console each other in their common grief.)

## Scene 7

**(Linda, Robert, and Greta, later)**

ROBERT: That is out of the question. It is too risky for her.

LINDA: Have some faith in me and in my methods.

ROBERT: You could provoke the opposite effect in that way. Her condition could worsen.

LINDA: There is always an element of risk.

ROBERT: There, you see, that means that you agree with me.

LINDA: But you also agree with me that this situation is untenable. You, too, think that we must start active treatment, and that my assignment is not to be only «a shoulder to cry on». You called it something like that.

ROBERT: I don't want us to play with her destiny and her life. If anything were to happen, I would never forgive myself.

LINDA: But it is also clear to you that she need real help, that it is time for her to confront. . .

ROBERT: I care about her too much to allow experimentation with her health and her happiness.

LINDA: She did not come back to this house because she wanted everything to remain the same. But you didn't support the idea of her returning here to the house, wanting everything to remain the same and unchanged. It's clear to you, too, that her condition has lasted for far too long. I am offering a solution, but you are rejecting it out of hand. I don't have a better solution than this one, or, more precisely, I do not have any other solution.

ROBERT: It would be better to wait than to hurry and make a mistake.

LINDA: You have doubts in my judgement and my expertise.

ROBERT: It has nothing to do with my doubts or your vanity or mine. This is a question of her health, of her happiness. I know her much better than you do, and I can tell you. . . You could have told me what you had in mind. Otherwise, I would like you to discuss all your ideas with me first.

LINDA: I am convinced that the best thing at this moment is for all three of us to talk together.

ROBERT: I think that you should first talk with me about her health and her situation, and with her only after that.

LINDA: But why?

ROBERT: No doctor will tell a seriously ill patient the stark truth, before discussing that truth with the people who are closest to the patient.

LINDA: And you believe that her condition is serious?

ROBERT: I only. . .

(Greta enters.)

GRETA: Good morning!

LINDA: Good morning!

ROBERT: Linda wanted me to join you to start with.

GRETA: Why?

LINDA: I shall tell you why. When I signed the contract, Robert told me that he expected me to be like your previous psychiatrists; he told me that he expected me to produce a diagnosis after a month had passed and to lay out the method of therapy.

GRETA: Surely you don't think that you can now offer us some magical formula, or some medication of something like that?

LINDA: Actually, I do. Now that I know what went on in this house thirteen years ago, everything is easier and simpler.

GRETA: Do you really believe that you know how to help me?

LINDA: I have confidence in my methods.

ROBERT: I don't like the idea, I think it is too risky and dangerous. I am absolutely against it.

GRETA: It would be nice of you to tell me what you intend to undertake in my therapy. But I do not understand why Robert has to be informed about it. He is not your patient, I am.

LINDA: When I decide on a particular form of therapy, my method is to discuss it with the patient and someone close to the patient – a husband, wife, mother or relative. Since you do not have any family in America, Greta, I thought that Robert,

as your friend and confidant, should hear my proposal. And in the technical sense, we won't be able to implement it without his assistance.

GRETA: You are talking as if you are planning a reception or a trip or a charity drive.

LINDA: I am planning to organise something much more complex than that.

(Silence.)

GRETA: I don't understand a thing you are saying..

LINDA: We will take it slowly. From the top. Greta, you spent the loveliest moments of your life here in this house. You dreamt of turning a new page right here with the man you loved. You decided to make your home here. But it was here that you experienced the most difficult moments of your life. The moment when Bill left you and went to war, and the moment when you heard that he had been killed. Those two stressful moments were so traumatic that they almost destroyed you. You lost your peace of mind, your stability, the nightmares and the insomnia began, along with the beginning of your flight from other people, from reality and from yourself.

GRETA: Good, we know all that, so what now?

LINDA: Be patient, Greta. You see, the fact that you have decided to move into this house again after thirteen years is the best possible sign that your subconscious wants to face up to all those ugly experiences that you have had here, and is evidence of your desire to re-establish your sense of balance and harmony right here, once again to touch upon that happiness and fulfilment you had before Bill's departure for the war. In other words, you have decided to stop running.

GRETA: But this house still upsets me, I am still having nightmares and insomnia.

LINDA: That's logical, because you have not fully confronted all the phantoms that you are running away from.

GRETA: I have moved into this house, I live here, what else should I do?

LINDA: You have to meet with Bill and in that encounter you have to forgive, accept your separation, accept the pain and overcome it.

GRETA: What do you mean «meet with Bill», but there is no Bill any more?

LINDA: He is gone, but we have to «create» him. We have to give you an opportunity to experience a meeting with him once again, followed by another parting. You have to be given an opportunity to tell him all you wanted to and did not manage to. You have to «live through it» all over again, but in such a way that you see it as a game, a show, after which one goes forward, after which the actor accepts some other role rather than spinning around in the same play.

GRETA: What is it that you are actually suggesting to me?

LINDA: While we were celebrating my birthday, you told me almost everything about Bill. I want us to speak sincerely about him for days, and about everything that happened between you. I am interested in everything that you wanted to say to him at the moment he left, but still kept quiet about. Then, with your help, I shall write a play of sorts with two characters, in which the heroes will be Greta and Bill. The play will unfold here – in this house. Then we will find an actor who will «act out» the drama together with you. Once, twice or fifty times – until you start to look at those events and at your life as an ordinary play, which will affect you less and less as the days go by.

ROBERT: This is half-crazy. And dangerous. This could disturb Greta even more. I am certain that she will refuse your suggestion.

(A long silence.)

GRETA: So, you think that I should return to that time and live through «with him» once again all that was beautiful and all that was ugly.

LINDA: Yes, everything.

ROBERT: I don't think she will accept.

GRETA: It's worth thinking about.

ROBERT: Surely you won't do this. . .

(Robert turns to Linda.)

ROBERT: For this plan to be implemented, it would be necessary to bring a young man who would play Bill into the house. It would be risky for us to inform anyone about Greta's life, because he could go out in public and try to make money from her private life. You have seen how much time it took for me to conclude the contract

about discretion with you, but psychiatrists are inclined to discretion and silence by the very nature of their profession. To bring an actor into this house could be far too risky, despite the contract that I would propose to him.

GRETA: Yes, that seems to be an obstacle to me, too.

LINDA: It could not be a real actor. Actors really do find it difficult to keep secrets. But I know a man who has acted in amateur productions, and who is also very discreet and reliable.

ROBERT: How can you be sure of him? Who is he?

LINDA: My fiancé.

ROBERT: Your fiancé?

LINDA: Yes.

GRETA: Do you think he would agree?

LINDA: I hope he would.

ROBERT: But he would also have to sign that in the event of any public revelations about Greta Garbo, all his earnings until the end of his life would be forfeit to her.

LINDA: He would sign that, but, because of that, his retainer would have to be equal to mine, with the proviso that he would be paid one year's severance on the day of termination of this job.

ROBERT: You are asking too much.

GRETA: If he is the right person for this job, his retainer is not in question.

LINDA: He is a gifted actor, I have seen him in two productions. In small off-theatres. He was far the best. Otherwise, he is in his thirty-sixth year, just as Bill was when he went to war. And another thing: when you showed me Bill's photograph yesterday I was surprised at their physical similarity. It was at that moment that I thought that only my David could convincingly play the role of your Bill.

ROBERT: I suggest that we think this all over well? So that we do not act rashly.

### **Scene 8.**

**(Linda, David)**

(Linda in her apartment in New York. She is sitting at her desk, writing. David enters the room.)

LINDA: How was it?

DAVID: Excellent. I signed the contract.

(David takes the contract out of his bag and hands it to Linda. Linda leafs through it and quickly reads the text of the contract.)

LINDA: No doubt, he was tiresome in the negotiations?

DAVID: With him, you at least know what he wants and what he doesn't.

LINDA: That's true. I see he has obligated you to life-long silence.

DAVID: He told me to tell all my friends that I was leaving on a trip, and that when it all starts I should not leave my apartment except to travel to the estate, that I have to live only for the job, that I must not allow everyday life to drag me away from that story that I am going to enter. The fee is huge, and if the contract is terminated I am to be paid six months' severance.

LINDA: I told him twelve months. We agreed on twelve. You shouldn't have accepted.

DAVID: Why? What could be better? I'll be acting with Greta Garbo. With the greatest screen actress of all time. I couldn't even dream of such an opportunity!

LINDA: You can't really call it acting in the true sense of the word. It will be a simulation of life, a simulation of her life. Nobody must ever find out about it.

DAVID: Unfortunately. If I could only tell everyone I know. I am so excited. So happy. If you had told me then that you were treating Greta Garbo, I would have understood everything. We would not have quarrelled and I would not have been so suspicious and jealous. I am sorry.

LINDA: Everything's alright.

DAVID: I shall give notice tomorrow. Robert told me that I have to start tomorrow learning the role. He told me that you had written the play about her and that Bill, and that I have to rehearse my role with you, while Garbo will rehearse with him, and that we will start the performance in a week's time.

LINDA: I would not call it a performance.

DAVID: Where is the text?

LINDA: I am just polishing it. Two days ago I thought it was ready, but I remembered a couple of additional details today. You will get the second version tomorrow.

DAVID: And this Bill character, what sort of a person was he?

LINDA: I think that he was a very positive guy.

DAVID: It's hardest to play a positive character.

LINDA: But he wasn't without faults. He was a little stubborn. . . I would even say that he did not understand the most important truth in life.

DAVID: And that is?

LINDA: That love is more important than anything else.

DAVID: Now you are being pathetic.

LINDA: That's not pathos. It is simply so. People spend their entire lives on irrelevant things, and never understand what the essence of life is.

DAVID: You have to tell me everything you find out about him so that I can bring him realistically to life. I have to be familiar with his entire life so that I can convincingly show only a small part of it.

(Linda takes a photograph out of a drawer and hands it to David. David takes the photograph and examines it carefully.)

DAVID: I can't believe it. We could be brothers. Great. I shall be convincing both visually and psychologically. This will be my best role.

LINDA: David.

DAVID: Yes!

LINDA: This won't be theatre, darling. This is too serious. I am risking a great deal. I want to help Greta, I know what she has been through and I hope that this therapy will help her. . . But you can never be sure how things will unfold in this profession. I would not like anything to go wrong.

DAVID: Do you think that I will mess something up?

LINDA: No. No, I don't think that. I just want you to understand that this is not a game but an attempt to help a woman who is seriously ill, a woman who does not manage to get in touch with the present and the future, because she is firmly locked in an excerpt from her past. We have a seriously ill patient, darling, and we have to do everything in our power to help her.

DAVID: So that means that I am not supposed to be happy that I will be a part of all this?

LINDA: I didn't say that.

### **Scene 9.**

**(Greta, Linda)**

(In the 'consultation room' – the lights are illuminating only one small circular space. Linda and Greta are playing part of the «production». Linda is holding the text of the «play», and Greta knows her «part» by heart.)

LINDA AS BILL: Richard and John were there. They invited me for a drink. I thought we would be there only a while, but – we started to talk about the war, about Hitler and the Japanese. It just went on. Richard talked about our military industry, and about the new airplanes and ships. I'm sorry, but I did tell you that I would probably be late.

GRETA: I thought that would probably happen. Everyone is obsessed with this war and no conversations can be held without it.

LINDA AS BILL: These are such times. What did you do while I wasn't here?

GRETA: Robert brought me the wedding dress catalogues.

(Suddenly the lights illuminate the entire room and Linda puts down the text and gets up from her chair..)

LINDA: Can we take a small break?

GRETA: Of course.

LINDA: It is so unusual for me to be speaking Bill's words here with you, and when I rehearse with David, then I speak your words. It is confusing somehow.

GRETA: Does he know the text by heart?

LINDA: He almost knows it all. He made one or two mistakes yesterday. I think you will both be ready by the day after tomorrow.

GRETA: I am so fearful of all this. This meeting with Bill. . . But then again, I can hardly wait for us to face each other and to say to each other what needs to be said.

LINDA: There is nothing to be afraid of. In any case, you have been living with this all these years. It is time for you to bring out into the light of day everything that you encounter in your dreams and memories.

GRETA: I'm not sure. As that day and that «encounter» grow nearer, the restlessness and the excitement and fear keep growing within me.

(Silence.)

GRETA: Perhaps it would be better that we give up the idea altogether.

LINDA: We could of course do that, if you like – but I think that it is time for you to confront your past, and then to learn to live in the present.

GRETA: Perhaps you are right.

(Silence.)

GRETA: I have become so accustomed to these conversations with you. . . I want you to know that I appreciate all that you are doing for me. You really are different from all the psychiatrists I have met up until now. You instil trust in people. You can be believed.

LINDA: I am pleased that you feel like that. I hope that I shall never let you down.

## Scene 10.

**(Greta, Robert, Linda, David)**

(Greta and Robert are in the 'consulting room'.)

ROBERT: Are you ready?

GRETA: Yes, I am.

ROBERT: Should I go to get them?

GRETA: Wait! I want you here. I want you to watch, too.

ROBERT: Do you think that Linda will agree to that?

GRETA: She will have to. Don't leave me. Don't leave me today.

ROBERT: I won't, but. . . before we start I have to tell Linda that you are insisting on me being present.

GRETA: Alright.

(Robert goes towards the exit, but Greta's next sentence stops him.)

GRETA: Do you remember that day?

ROBERT: What day?

GRETA: The day that Bill left.

ROBERT: Yes, I remember it.

GRETA: It was sunny, like today. Cold, but sunny.

ROBERT: I do remember that day.

(Silence.)

ROBERT: Greta!

GRETA: Yes.

ROBERT: Whatever happens in your life, I want you to know that I am always here. . . somewhere close to you. You will always be able to rely on me, always, until my death. I shall always be your friend.

GRETA: Thank you, Robert.

(Robert exists. A moment later he comes back into the room with Linda.)

LINDA: May we begin?

GRETA: Is he ready?

LINDA: Yes, he is.

GRETA: I want Robert to be here today, too. I want him to see everything, too.

LINDA: It is not customary for anyone except the psychiatrist to watch a psychodrama as it unfolds.

GRETA: Robert is not just anyone.

LINDA: Alright. We will watch together. Shall I go to get him? So that we start.

GRETA: Let's start.

(Linda goes out and quickly returns.)

LINDA: He will knock on this door in a moment and the story will begin.

(Linda and Robert go to the opposite part of the stage and sit down on two chairs. With the change in the lighting, Linda and Robert are left in the dark, while Greta is located at the centre of the beam of light that lights her up clearly. A knocking on the door is heard.)

GRETA: Come in!

(David comes into the room. He is dressed in the fashion from the beginning of World War II. He is holding a bouquet of roses.)

GRETA: Finally! Where have you been so long?

DAVID AS BILL: I dropped in to the club.

(He offers her the flowers.)

DAVID AS BILL: These are for you!

GRETA: Thank you. They are lovely. Your hands are cold.

DAVID AS BILL: It's cold outside.

GRETA: You forgot your gloves.

DAVID AS BILL: I noticed that when I was half-way there. It was too late to come back.

GRETA: I knew you would go to the club. You were hungry for male conversation and male company. Perhaps you have found me a bit boring these last few days.

DAVID AS BILL: You know you never could and never will be boring to me. And you know that I am never happier than when I am near you.

(Silence.)

DAVID AS BILL: Richard and John were there. They invited me for a drink. I thought we would be there only a while, but – we started to talk about the war, about Hitler and the Japanese. It just dragged on. Richard talked about our military industry, and about the new airplanes and ships. I'm sorry, but I did tell you that I would probably be late.

GRETA: I thought that would probably happen. Everyone is obsessed with this war and no conversation can be held without it.

DAVID AS BILL: These are such times. What did you do while I wasn't here?

GRETA: Robert brought me the wedding dress catalogues. With hundreds of wedding dresses. I could barely decide on the four loveliest, but now I have to choose one of them. Believe me, it won't be an easy decision. All four of them are fantastic. You will have to help me choose.

DAVID AS BILL: Greta!

GRETA: What is it?

DAVID AS BILL: You see. . . I think. . . I wanted to talk all that over with you again.

GRETA: All what?

DAVID AS BILL: About our wedding.

GRETA: Haven't we decided about it?

DAVID AS BILL: Yes, we have. . . but that was before the war began.

GRETA: We both feel the same way as we did then. Or perhaps. . .

DAVID AS BILL: Of course we feel the same, but. . .but now, when people are going off to war, I think it would be tasteless to organise a big wedding, to celebrate and dance while people are dying.

GRETA: Do you think that the French and the English did not get married during the Thirty Years War. Life must never stop, whatever is happening in the world.

DAVID AS BILL: I agree with that, but. . .

GRETA: Alright, if you insist, we will not have a big wedding but just a small ceremony among a small circle of our closest friends. I agree that people would perhaps hold it against me at this moment, as a native Swede in the middle of America, if I were to put on a lavish wedding, but I can't see any reason for us being

ashamed of our happiness and our love. We are not to blame that the war started. Love happened to us when it wanted to, and not because we wanted it that way.

DAVID AS BILL: Greta, I have to admit something to you.

(Silence.)

GRETA: What is it?

DAVID AS BILL: We will have to postpone the wedding for a short time.

GRETA: Why?

DAVID AS BILL: I joined up today.

GRETA: Impossible!

DAVID AS BILL: I wasn't at the club today. I did talk with John and Richard, but not at the club. The two of them also joined as volunteers.

GRETA: You are joking!

DAVID AS BILL: No, I'm not.

GRETA: How could you? We agreed that you wouldn't, you promised me.

DAVID AS BILL: I didn't promise anything. You told me last week that you objected to me joining up, but I didn't promise you anything. I only said that I would think about it. And I did.

GRETA: Without talking it over with me?

DAVID AS BILL: Forgive me, but I knew you would object, so I avoided a conversation about it

GRETA: That is not the way that adult, responsible people behave. The two of us have built something together, you proposed to me and I agreed to marry you. Forgive me, but didn't we agree that we would go through life together, and didn't that mean that we would make our decisions together?

DAVID AS BILL: When we spoke about it all, there was no war. This is the country in which we want to build our future and raise our children. It has been attacked and it is my duty and my responsibility to defend it and the freedom that we care about.

GRETA: You can't just leave me.

DAVID AS BILL: I have no intention of leaving you. I am not giving up our marriage or our life together or our love. It will all be waiting for us, but after the

war. If you really love me you will wait until I return, just as millions of women in America are waiting for their husbands and their young men.

GRETA: Listen to me, I shall not permit it. I don't want anything to happen to you, I cannot live without you, and I just can't. You know that I know the most influential people in Washington. All I have to do is pick up the phone and ask them to cancel everything that you have done today.

DAVID AS BILL: No, Greta, I don't want you to do that. I can't betray my friends nor my country.

GRETA: You don't love me as much as I love you.

DAVID AS BILL: Please don't make accusations against me in such a terrible way, and don't ask that we measure who loves whom the most. We love each other so much that it cannot be measured. Please, stop making it so difficult for me and help me to bear this temporary separation with the least pain possible, make this torture easier for me.

GRETA: Listen, Bill, if you go to war, then it is over between us. That will be the end of our love.

DAVID AS BILL: I couldn't withdraw my decision, even if I wanted to.

GRETA: You could if you really cared about me.

DAVID AS BILL: Of course I care about you, but I also care about this country that gave me life and reared me. I cannot be selfish and egotistical now. Please, Greta, don't you be either.

GRETA: Listen well – if you go to war that is the end of us. I don't want to be the girl or wife of a soldier who is on the battlefield. I don't want to. You have to decide, it's either me or this stupid war.

DAVID AS BILL: Please, don't do this to me.

GRETA: I told you: it's either me or the war. There is no third possibility. And it has to be now, I want to know now what my fate is. Decide now and stop playing with me.

(A prolonged silence.)

DAVID AS BILL: I have never loved anyone the way I love you. I can understand your disappointment and your anger, but I have given my word that I shall put on a uniform tomorrow and go to fight against this evil. Don't ask me to choose between you and my country, because I cannot stop loving either you or my country. I hope you will understand one day and forgive me, and I hope you will take me into your arms when I return. But for now, farewell, dear Greta.

(DAVID AS BILL goes towards the exit.)

GRETA: Damn you and the love that bound us together! Damn you to eternity, you bastard, you disgusting selfish bastard!

(Greta shrieks like a wounded she-wolf. Her angry words transform into a scream, weeping and sobbing.)

GRETA: Disgusting selfish beasts. . . Damnation to you and that war. . .

(The lights go down, and Linda goes to Greta and hugs her.)

LINDA: Everything will be alright. . . everything will be alright.

GRETA: Selfish egoist. . .thinking only of himself. . . he tore my heart out. . .

LINDA: Cry it out, just cry.

GRETA: It hurts. . .so much. . . it all hurts as it did that day.

## **Scene 11.**

**(Greta, Linda)**

(We see Greta alone in the 'consulting room'. She is singing one of Sinatra's songs from the mid-Forties. Linda appears at the door. Greta stops singing.)

LINDA: Please don't stop.

GRETA: I haven't sung for a long time. A very long time. I won't continue. . . because I don't like singing when other people are present.

LINDA: How are you?

GRETA: I feel a bit unusual.

LINDA: How did you sleep?

GRETA: Better than usual.

LINDA: I agreed with David that he should come in half an hour. . . so that I could talk with you now. I thought we would repeat today what we did yesterday. If you have no objections.

GRETA: No objections. None at all.

LINDA: I would suggest that only I watch today. Without Robert.

GRETA: I agree. I needed him here yesterday, but I am not frightened today as I was yesterday. I believe that I shall «act it out» today with much less agitation.

LINDA: That is my objective. The objective of all this is that you distance yourself from what once was, and that you invest less emotion in this «production» with every passing day, until you can file it all in a drawer that we call «THE PAST», and that it can no longer injure you emotionally.

(Silence.)

GRETA: I hope that it will be like that.

(Silence.)

GRETA: When I woke up this morning, I realised something else. . . something very important.

LINDA: What was it?

GRETA: I realised that I had not only «lived» my previous life yesterday, but that I had acted yesterday for the first time after a long fourteen years. . . and that, to my surprise, it suited me. I enjoyed doing it.

LINDA: That's good,.

GRETA: Yes, and I felt good doing it.

(Silence.)

GRETA: When did it stop hurting you?

LINDA: What are you referring to?

GRETA: Your first young man. How long did it take you to get over his death.

(Silence.)

LINDA: I did not go out anywhere for two years, and I did not socialise with anyone. I even dropped out of medical school for a year. . . I simply did not have the necessary

concentration. I went to my uncle's farm. He lives in California. I helped him with work on the land, around the animals – that was the only thing that could calm me down. Nature and animals. Apart from my uncle, no-one on the farm knew anything about my story, and he was very discreet. Little by little I returned to normal life.

(Silence.)

GRETA: What about now. . . when you think of him now?

LINDA: I do think of him, but. . . it doesn't upset me any more. I know that it is part of my life. . . like when I think of my late grandmother. . . I was a little girl when she died, I loved her very much and I missed her terribly. But now – I like to think of her, but that thought is no longer accompanied by sadness. Gran has her place in my life, but only in the past. And now it's like that with him, too.

GRETA: But, after you lost your young man, and after you got over the loss, did you ever fall in love again with the same fierce passion. . .

(Silence.)

LINDA: That is too intimate a question.

GRETA: I have told you everything about me.

LINDA: Never again. . . I have never succeeded in renewing that sincerity and joy in myself. . . I don't know if you can understand.

GRETA: I understand you, I understand very well

## **Scene 12.**

**(Greta, David)**

(Greta is alone in the 'consulting room'. There is a knock on the door.)

GRETA: Come in!

(David comes in.)

DAVID: Good morning!

GRETA: Good morning!

(Silence.)

GRETA: Where is Linda?

DAVID: She is not well. She has the flu. She asked me to call you and to tell you that she won't be able to come for a few days. I thought it was better for me to come here to tell you, rather than telephoning.

(Silence.)

GRETA: Good. That is much better. Won't you sit down.

DAVID: Thank you!

(Silence.)

GRETA: You know what, when I saw you the first time, when you appeared in that doorway, I had the feeling that it was really Bill standing in front of me. You look very much like him.

DAVID: Robert said the same thing. I am content if I haven't disappointed you.

GRETA: Far from that.

DAVID: You know that I have only acted in amateur productions, and when Linda made the offer I thought – it will be the same as acting in a play.

GRETA: Yes, it is acting for you, but, for me, it is life, my life.

DAVID: Please excuse me if I expressed myself awkwardly.

GRETA: No, it's alright. And it is better for all of us that you have approached in that way. . . without tension. Perhaps it is thanks to that that you are so convincing.

DAVID: I am so pleased that you like me. . . I mean to say that you like the way I act. As far as I am concerned, you are the greatest actress of all time and I cannot begin to tell you how much this all means to me. I am so happy to have met you. And that we together. . . even if it is your life. . . I mean, that you are still acting. And with me. It is such an honour for me, such a pleasure.

GRETA: But I am not acting. I am living it. And I am doing it with pleasure – even though my heart breaks when you leave me at the end of the scene.

(Silence.)

GRETA: When it is all over, when my sobbing dies down, I am easily consoled because I know that you will be coming again the next day, and that I shall once again experience meeting Bill. And be close to him again. He always used to calm me, I

felt different when I was with him, and with him I was some other me. With him, I liked myself more.

(Silence.)

DAVID: The fact that Linda is not here should not be a reason for us to miss today's play. I looked forward to today's day, I really did. I would like it if we could do our play.

GRETA: I'm not sure that Linda would agree with that. I don't know if we can do it alone?

DAVID: Do you doubt yourself or me?

GRETA: I don't doubt anyone, only. . . To be frank, I, too, was disappointed that we would have to skip today.

DAVID: There, you see, we feel the same and think the same.

(Silence.)

DAVID: There is something that I have to admit to you. The last few days I have often thought that your story could have ended differently. I don't think it was necessary for things to end the way they did.

GRETA: What are you trying to say?

DAVID: If you had been more convincing, if you had managed to change his mind . . . Or if he had been only a little more flexible, everything could have been different. You know, I shall speak openly, I really enjoy this playing with you, it is as though we are actually living what was between the two of you.

GRETA: I am also taking delight in each new day, but that ending – you and I having to live through that cruel leave-taking. . . it is not just and it hurts me again and again.

DAVID: I suppose that you, too, would be happier if we played a different ending.

GRETA: Ah. . . I don't know what you are trying to say.

DAVID: I have wanted us to try to play a different ending, I have wanted to experience it. . . I must admit that I wrote a different version of the ending last night and I would like you to read it and for us to play it together.

(David hands Greta the paper..)

DAVID: It's a short text.

(Greta takes the paper and reads it carefully. When she finishes, she raises her head and looks doubtfully at David.)

GRETA: I think that Linda would be against this.

DAVID: We don't have to tell her. Do this for me and for you – let us see how we would have felt if it had ended differently.

(Silence.)

GRETA: Alright. Will we start from the beginning or should we just play the ending?

DAVID: Let us try it from just before the end, from my sentence: «I couldn't withdraw my decision. . . .»

GRETA: Good..

(David takes up the position he had in the «play» while he was saying the sentence in question. The lighting changes..)

DAVID AS BILL: I couldn't withdraw my decision, even if I wanted to.

GRETA: You could if you really cared about me.

DAVID AS BILL: Of course I care about you, but I also care about this country that gave me life and reared me. I cannot be selfish and egotistical now. Please, Greta, don't you be either.

GRETA: Listen well – if you go to war that is the end of us. I don't want to be the girl or wife of a soldier who is on the battlefield. I don't want to. You have to decide, it's either me or this stupid war.

DAVID AS BILL: Please, don't do this to me.

GRETA: I told you: it's either me or the war. There is no third possibility. And it has to be now, I want to know now what my fate is. Decide now and stop playing with me.

(A prolonged silence.)

DAVID AS BILL: Would you really leave me if I went to war?

GRETA: Yes.

DAVID AS BILL: If that's the way it is then I will stay with you, because I cannot imagine losing you, I cannot imagine my life without you.

GRETA: Oh, dear God, thank you!

(They move towards each other and embrace with a passionate kiss. They kiss for a long time. They pause for a moment, and separate. Greta goes towards the table, and then stops. She turns towards David and in a moment they are in a fierce embrace again and start kissing again with renewed intensity. Greta starts to remove his clothes, and he starts removing Greta's. Loud music and darkness!)

### Scene 13.

**(Greta, Robert, and David, later)**

(We come across Robert and Greta in the middle of a conversation in the 'consulting room'.)

ROBERT: But that is so ill-advised, Greta, you need to take some time, you cannot be rash with any decision or you may regret it later.

GRETA: I regret that I have not already stepped out of this vicious circle. I thought you would be pleased to hear this, to see that I am well again and happy, that I am alive again.

ROBERT: But I am pleased. . . it's only this is all so hasty, your psychiatrist is on sick leave, and he is her fiancé after all, as well as being fourteen years younger than you are. Forgive me, but I find all of this very confusing. I don't know what to think or what to say.

GRETA: You weren't so worried about me even when I was depressed. You have become used to me being sad, running away from people, and not living in the present but in the past. He doesn't care about my age, and I don't care about his. We love each other. Don't you understand that we really love each other?

ROBERT: All I would like is that you talk with your psychiatrist as soon as possible. Let us hear her opinion.

GRETA: She is not in a position to see me objectively any more. David is her fiancé, and now he loves me. I am not sure that she can continue being my psychiatrist and I am not sure that I still need a psychiatrist at all.

ROBERT: Greta, I beg you, despite the changed circumstances, don't give up your therapy. You must not break off your sessions with Linda.

GRETA: I have not broken them off intentionally, but because Linda became ill.

ROBERT: She rang yesterday to say that she will be coming tomorrow or the day after. Please don't make any major decisions before you talk with Linda. Please.

GRETA: Alright, I can talk with her when she gets better, but that won't shake me in my decision to live my life in the right way. You will have to enquire about what prices are now in the movie industry.

ROBERT: Are you planning to produce a film?

GRETA: Of course. Didn't you say that I should look for somewhere to invest the money we made selling those shares in Texas?

ROBERT: Yes, but films are risky. It's impossible to get a good return on the money invested without a big star. Who will be acting in that film?

GRETA: A big star. A person you have been trying for years to convince she should return to the screen.

ROBERT: Surely you don't mean. . . ?

GRETA: Yes, I do. I am going back to screen acting. David has written a brilliant script. And he will be in the film with me. It is such a dramatic story. It will be a big surprise. My comeback in the best possible way.

ROBERT: Greta, this is all good to hear, but I would be careful in your place. I would not rush in before I had spoken to an experienced producer and director.

GRETA: There was a time when you were the one who tried the most to convince me to return to acting.

ROBERT: And I still think it's a good idea. . . It's only that now, after all these years, it can't be done in a hasty manner. It mustn't go wrong. You don't have the right to failure.

(Silence.)

GRETA: You think I am too old.

ROBERT: That is not what I said. You are still beautiful and I have no doubt that the fans would be delighted to see you on the screen again, but don't forget that. . .

(At that moment, David walks in to the room.)

DAVID: Good day, Greta, good day, Robert!

ROBERT: Good day.

(David goes to Greta and kisses her cheek, and she kisses him back.)

GRETA: I have just told Robert that we have decided to go into the film business.

DAVID: Only I shall need another ten days to polish the script. Well, Robert, are you happy to hear that Greta is going back to her job?

ROBERT: Well yes. . . she has told me. . . it could be. . . people will be surprised.

DAVID: It will be a sensation. An Atom Bomb. All the world will write about it. And my script is so good, so interesting and dynamic. It will be a great hit.

ROBERT: Greta tells me that you will be acting in it, too.

DAVID: That's right. A medium-sized role. There, you see, acting has brought Greta and me together in life, and I have no doubt we will be equally convincing as a couple in the screen.

GRETA: Robert thought that I should not break off the sessions with Linda.

DAVID: That's what you thought?

ROBERT: Yes. Decisions should not be made rashly. Greta has had psychiatric care for years and that should. . .

DAVID: I don't think she needs that any more. I think the sessions should be discontinued. Here, I have just written a letter explaining to Linda what has happened while she has been away. . . she still doesn't know anything. . . when she reads what I have written about the love that has blossomed between Greta and I, I think she herself will decide to stop coming here and working as Greta's psychiatrist.

(David takes an envelope from the pocket of his jacket and hands the letter to Robert.)

DAVID: Could you please deliver this to her today.

ROBERT: I have important meetings all day today, and I am having dinner this evening with the people who handle our business in Denver.

GRETA: Cancel the dinner!

DAVID: That's right. Cancel the dinner. She must get this letter as soon as possible. By the end of the day, at the latest.

**Scene 14.**

**(Linda, Robert)**

(It is night. Linda is holding the letter in her hand.)

LINDA: What a swine! A disgusting male swine! He writes to me about his love for Greta, and I know that his desire to enter the film world is behind it all.

ROBERT: The two of them are planning to make a film together. Based on his script.

LINDA: His script?

ROBERT: Yes, his script.

LINDA: That stupid story doesn't deserve even to be on day-time television, let alone be made as a film. She is not normal and neither is he. Apart from that – she is a sick woman, she is a patient, while he was only an assistant in the process of my therapy – he shouldn't have dared to start up a love affair with her. That is the same as a doctor seducing a patient.

ROBERT: That's what I think.

LINDA: Greta believes that she is with Bill. She believes that she has renewed her relationship with Bill, and not that she has started an affair with David. It's obvious that things happened while I was sick that never should have happened. I was already suspicious that he went to the estate every day, even though I told me that it was unnecessary.

ROBERT: I am also very worried about all this. I have been taking care of Greta and all her business affairs for twenty long years now. I carefully put her money only into safe investments, and the two of them now want gamble it all on this film in which she is going to act in her fiftieth year. Instead of going back to the screen ten years ago, when she could have. There are so many new young actresses in America today, that I am very concerned about it all. It's risky. In any case, her last film was such a

flop that, together with the death of her young man, it was the main reason for her flight from Hollywood.

LINDA: What if we report him to the police because of all this?

ROBERT: You can't go the police and say: I would like to report this man because he has seduced Greta Garbo, who has been living on the edge of reality for years. The police will laugh at us, I will be dismissed, and you will be shamed as a psychiatrist who lost control of her psychiatric experiment, and of her fiancé whom she herself thrust into the arms of a film star.

LINDA: But, what can we do? We can't sit around and do nothing.

ROBERT: Exactly. Both of us will be out on the street very soon. And your dear David will be the one who throws us there.

LINDA: Don't call him my 'dear David'. That deceitful, fame-seeking, disgusting. . .

ROBERT: Alright, alright – your anger will get us nowhere. I would even venture to say that it could harm us.

LINDA: Then you think of something that will get us out of this situation.

ROBERT: And I am going to.

LINDA: Do you have an idea?

ROBERT: Yes, I do. This is it. The best thing that you and I can do is to pretend that we have accepted the fact that the two of them, how can I put it, that they have become a couple with a fine future in front of them. You must not show any jealousy towards David, but pretend that you are happy because of their happiness. At the same time, you must continue your psycho-sessions with Greta starting tomorrow. I hope you are up to it.

LINDA: I am better now. But how can I turn up in that house and stand before her after all this. I am hurt and it will be difficult for me to hide my emotions.

ROBERT: Clench your teeth.

LINDA: I don't know whether I shall be able to.

ROBERT: And then, little by little, as Greta's rapture passes, you will have to help her to realise that David is a man who wants to take advantage of her, and nothing more. Help her to understand that he is not her resurrected young man, Bill, but a

failed actor who is prepared to do anything through a woman who loves him so naively and senselessly.

LINDA: It's a good idea. A wise approach. But what if I can't, what if all of this does not succeed.

ROBERT: Then we move to the fight for survival, no holds barred.

### **Scene 15.**

**(Greta, Linda, David later, Robert)**

(In the 'consulting room' we find Greta and Linda in the midst of a conversation that is not going smoothly somehow, as if both of them are embarrassed being together, face to face.)

GRETA: I am really pleased that you have come and that you are feeling better.

LINDA: So am I.

GRETA: With flu, it is best to stay in bed until it is over. Just as you have done.

LINDA: I agree.

GRETA: Would you like some tea?

LINDA: No, thank you.

(Silence.)

GRETA: You have probably heard. . . I assume you know what has happened in your absence?

LINDA: I received David's letter last night.

GRETA: I hope you are not angry at me.

LINDA: No, not at all. Things were obviously meant to be that way.

GRETA: It just happened to us, without planning. Some things happen without our wanting them to.

LINDA: I know, and I don't hold it against you.

GRETA: David has told me how your relationship has been going through a crisis for some time now, he told me how frightened you are of marriage, and how you were not prepared for your life together.

LINDA: He told you that?

GRETA: Yes, he did. And if one has such a situation, then it is better to break it off.

LINDA: I agree.

GRETA: I am awfully pleased that you do not hold a grudge against me.

LINDA: I have no grudge against David nor against you. What is important now is that we continue with our sessions.

GRETA: You think that I still need them?

LINDA: Definitely.

GRETA: But I feel excellent.

LINDA: For that very reason. We have to work on it so that that the good situation becomes permanent. What is important is that the depression, the nightmares, and the insomnia never return. Don't you agree?

GRETA: Yes, I agree. . . Do you believe that I could once again be as I was?

LINDA: Everything is possible. Wise people visit a psychiatrist when a problem appears, while the wisest go to a psychiatrist when there is no problem yet. It is called: prevention.

GRETA: Perhaps you are right.

LINDA: Of course I'm right. We have to continue with our session every day, and we will be able to reduce my visits to twice a week only when we are convinced that there is no danger of remission.

GRETA: Yes, that is probably what we should do.

(At that moment David strides into the room and speaks to Linda in an angry tone.)

DAVID: What nonsense is this? What are you doing here?

(Robert follows him into the room.)

DAVID: Didn't you read my letter?

LINDA: I read it.

DAVID: I believe that you understood it. . . I believe that you can understand.

LINDA: I understood everything.

DAVID: Then why. . . what are you doing here?

LINDA: I came to work as usual.

DAVID: Greta no longer needs a psychiatrist.

LINDA: I don't agree.

DAVID: She is happy and content.

LINDA: I know that, and it makes me happy. And I hope it will stay like that in the future. But until I get confirmation that this new condition is permanent, she must remain under my care.

DAVID: I am absolutely against it.

LINDA: Greta agrees with me. Isn't that so, Greta?

GRETA: Yes, it is. . . I don't have any objections to Linda and I meeting over the next few days, and talking about everything at the appointed time as we used to.

DAVID: I would like that time to be kept for talking with me about the script, while all your time and energy will be needed in a few weeks time for pre-production on the film.

LINDA: It is important that Greta does not rush into anything and that she has enough time for herself and her inner life.

DAVID: What's most important for Greta is that she devotes herself to work, and not to poking around in the past.

LINDA: Professional care cannot do her any harm.

GRETA: Excuse me, but this noise is making my head ache. I shall leave you to agree on what we should do, and I am going for a walk in the garden. I need some fresh air.

(Greta leaves.)

ROBERT: I agree with Linda. It is really important that Greta has psychiatric supervision. It is important that this current improvement is not threatened by anything.

(Silence.)

DAVID: Robert, there is only one thing that you have to worry about, and that is – to prepare the wedding for five hundred guests. Both Greta and I want that wedding to take place in a month's time, here on the estate.

ROBERT: A wedding?

DAVID: Yes, a wedding. Greta needs life and the film and not empty, futile psychosessions. . .

LINDA: Don't you even feel a little uncomfortable? You sent me a letter instead of coming to see me at home, looking me in the eye and telling me that you wanted us to break up.

DAVID: In any case, that's not important any more. Just as it is not important that you rejected all my requests that you marry me. Were we supposed to be engaged for the next twenty years? But I don't want to waste words on all that. Greta is my future now, and you are my past and I no longer care about it.

LINDA: You know that Greta is a patient and that your relationship began under unusual circumstances. It is all questionable from the moral point of view, and it is more than questionable for Greta's health.

ROBERT: I agree with Linda.

DAVID: Listen to me, you two. I shall soon be throwing you out of Greta's life because the two of you are proven leeches that live off the blood of others. You don't care about her health but only about your own benefit. She will have a new life with me, and all the two of you can offer is a dangerous return to the past. I don't believe in your good intentions and I won't allow you to spoil our plans. I know that you are both jealous of me, but you better accept the fact that Greta has chosen me, and not you.

(David leaves the room and slams the door behind him.)

LINDA: Bastard!

ROBERT: He is more cunning and dangerous than I thought.

LINDA: So what now?

ROBERT: Now the battle for survival begins.

LINDA: What do you mean?

ROBERT: We don't have much time.

**Scene 16.**

**(Robert, Greta)**

(Robert pours himself a glass of wine and takes a sip. He then walks to the desk and starts looking through some papers. Greta comes into the room.)

GRETA: There, I'm back.

ROBERT: How was it?

GRETA: Lovely, I really enjoyed the walk by the river and the fresh air. Has David arrived?

ROBERT: Unfortunately, he won't be coming today.

GRETA: Why?

ROBERT: He phoned half an hour ago to say that he had received a telegram. His mother has died.

GRETA: How, when?

ROBERT: It was sudden, unexpected. She had been healthy. It seems that her heart gave out. He had to travel urgently. His folks live on a farm, two hundred miles from Minneapolis. He said he will be away for at least ten days.

GRETA: Oh, I am sorry. How did he take it?

ROBERT: Hard, I think. He was in a state of shock. Since his father is an invalid in a wheelchair, he will have to make arrangements for him. Until now, his mother has been running the farm and taking care of his father. I sent Peter to take David \$2 000. He asked me to, and I agreed. I hope you approve?

GRETA: Of course, in such a situation. I really am sorry. Now we will probably have to postpone the wedding for a while.

ROBERT: No doubt.

(Greta sighs deeply and sits in an armchair.)

GRETA: Whenever things start going well in my life, something bad suddenly comes along, just so that I don't get used to it.

ROBERT: We can't influence these things.

GRETA: Instead of spending pleasant time with Robert, I can only look forward to being bored waiting, followed by conversations about death and dying.

ROBERT: It doesn't have to be like that.

GRETA: What do you mean?

ROBERT: I know it will be hard for you without him. I spoke with Dr Stone and she agreed that you should not have to spend these days in mourning. I rang my sister, it's only a two hours drive to her farm. Stay there, enjoy the natural surroundings until David returns. No-one will bother you at my sister's and you will have peace and quiet. You have had a lot of excitement these last few weeks, too much has been going on – more than in the last ten years. I think you need a rest from everything and time to think about what has been happening.

GRETA: So Linda thinks it would be good for me?

ROBERT: You are her only patient. She needs a rest from you, too, and from what she went through with David. And I would welcome the time to revise some of our business deals. We have to think about new investments. . . In a word – a rest would do us all good.

GRETA: Perhaps you're right. I am so unused to excitement and to unexpected events, while lately everything has been so intensive and unexpected. Your sister knows how to keep quiet, and I have always enjoyed her company. The weather is improving – I could do some riding, read some novels. . . Poor David, all he can look forward to at the moment is the funeral, family problems, and mourning.

ROBERT: In any case, there is nothing you can do to help him. The best thing is for him to do it all alone.

### **Scene 17.**

**(Robert, Linda, and David later)**

(Robert and Linda are in the 'consulting room'.)

LINDA: Don't you think it might be too risky.?

ROBERT: I know such people. I am almost sure what his reaction will be.

LINDA: I am afraid that he won't agree.

ROBERT: He will have to.

LINDA: But what if he refuses?

ROBERT: It's up to me to make it impossible for him ever to have a chance to contact her again. That story has to be ended for him from now on. She is too unstable, her reactions have always been unpredictable and that's why I cannot leave him any opportunity ever to bother her again, or to make her uncertain of herself.

LINDA: But how. . .

(At that point in Linda's sentence, the door suddenly opens. David strides into the room.)

DAVID: Where's Greta?

ROBERT: Hello, David.

DAVID: Where is she?

ROBERT: She's not here.

DAVID: Where is she? Why are there new guards at the gates to the estate? They only let me through after I showed them identification. What's going on?

ROBERT: I have hired new people because Greta needs more discretion, more security and protection. There has been too much excitement over the last few weeks for her health and her nerves. I have to protect her from that.

DAVID: I demand to speak to her immediately!

ROBERT: That can't be done. She is travelling.

DAVID: Where has she gone?

ROBERT: How was it at your mother's funeral? You have come back earlier than you planned?

DAVID: There wasn't any funeral. And you know, no doubt, that the telegram was a hoax. My mother is alive.

ROBERT: Oh, what wonderful news!

DAVID: Someone is playing with me, and whoever it is will pay dearly for it.

(David turns towards Linda.)

DAVID: If Greta is travelling, what are you doing here?

LINDA: I am discussing her further therapy with Robert.

DAVID: What therapy? What are you two plotting?

ROBERT: In consultation with two other psychiatrists, Greta is on her way to a sanatorium where no-one will bother her. Everything that has been happening over the last few days has had a bad effect on her mental state. I would even go so far as to say that what happened with you has upset her the most.

DAVID: You will concede that, as her future husband, I am the one best able to decide what is best for her. So I am asking you to tell me immediately where she is at this moment.

(Silence.)

ROBERT: My dear David, firstly, I am delighted that your mother is alive and well. And secondly – you will never ever get an opportunity to speak to Greta again.

DAVID: What are you talking about? How dare you?

ROBERT: Take it easy, my friend.

DAVID: Don't you call me friend! I demand an explanation this very minute!

ROBERT: If you will just calm yourself I shall explain everything. Your position will be clear to you very quickly. So, as I said – these new security men, whom I have shown your photograph and ordered never to allow you in to see me, have been told to shoot at you the next time that you come near this estate. Namely, after having read Dr Stone's report on the therapy with the aid of psycho-drama, the psychiatrists have concluded together with Dr Stone that you have abused your position as a person participating in the therapeutic procedure and have seduced an unstable patient, and they have further concluded that it is exceptionally important for her mental health that she never comes in contact with you again, because she sees in you the person from her past «played» by you, and not you yourself.

DAVID: I shall sack you, and sack you today. You will pay for this!

ROBERT: You are the one who is going to be sacked, this very instant. However, since both Dr Stone and the two psychiatrists thought that you should not only be sacked but also taken to court for malfeasance in the therapeutic procedure, I think we have to agree on whether you are prepared to face a court and jail, or if we can settle this in another way.

DAVID: You are utter scum! I will. . .

ROBERT: David, that's enough! One more sentence in that tone and I shall call the security men. You'll finish up in jail before the day is out – I swear it. Be reasonable and listen to me. And then you can decide whether you want to declare war on us, or if we should declare a truce.

DAVID: That means that you are part of this plot with him.

LINDA: Listen to Robert, even though you don't even deserve this conversation or our patience.

DAVID: You will live to regret this. But alright – I am prepared to listen to what Robert has to say.

ROBERT: As you know, you signed a contract with me that you would assist in the process of Miss Greta Garbo's therapy. You are aware that I am the only person authorised to conduct all her business affairs. Since I have decided, subsequent to consultation with the psychiatric team, that you have become detrimental to Miss Garbo's health, I have decided to terminate the contract. As you know, you undertook to maintain life-long secrecy or, in the event of a breach of the confidentiality clause, to forfeit all your earnings to her until the end of your life.

DAVID: But she wants to marry me. She wants me to be her Bill and I don't see anything bad in that, there are no elements here for criminal prosecution. She loves me, I love her, and I am even dearer to her than Bill was.

ROBERT: Bill was as much a scoundrel as you are.

DAVID: How can you speak like that about a man who gave his life for his country?.

ROBERT: Gave his life for his country? Please don't make me laugh. He was a military deserter who is living today with his wife and two sons not far from San Francisco. That man never even got a whiff of the war.

DAVID: What are you talking about?

ROBERT: I am talking about the degenerate who hid the fact from Greta that he had a wife and two small children. He wanted to get his hands on her money, and drag her away from the screen and from business. They did not get out of bed for months. He promised her marriage, but forgot to mention the fact that he already had a wife. Luckily, I had him investigated and found out all about him. I arranged that he be sent a draft notice – when he received it, he burst into tears from fear. He came to me for help in how to avoid army service. He was afraid for his miserable little life. He was prepared to do anything, just so long as he did not have to go to war. We did not like each other and that was the first time that we spoke openly. I told him that I knew about his wife and children, and told him openly that I wanted him out of Greta's life forever. I put down \$50 000 in front of him and told him that I expected him to disappear forever. I told him that the money could be his if he wrote to Greta in his own hand that he loved his country more than he did her, and that he was going to war. I promised him that two of my men would stage his accidental wounding in a hunting accident, which would free him from his military service obligation. I also told him that Greta would receive a letter from the front in two to three months, saying that he had been killed. He had to change his name, leave New York and never say a word to anyone about having known Greta Garbo. I warned him that the same people who testified that he had been wounded in a hunting accident, would also testify, if necessary, that it was a case of self-wounding with the objective of desertion. That little bastard took all the money and disappeared from Greta's life, believing quite correctly that he had made a good deal.

DAVID: But our acting about him. . . that was all different.

ROBERT: You are an intelligent man, David, and I am surprised that you have not noticed that Greta sees life essentially differently from what it actually is. When her last film flopped, when she became fearful about her age and the upcoming young actresses, she simply lost her sense of reality. She had always felt that it was some sort of handicap that she had never created a family. Luckily, she always had me close by. I have been and remained her reliable support and firm defence against all

the swindlers who would want to rob her and hurt her emotionally. To put it briefly, I have never allowed any of you to come so close to her that you cause her pain. For a moment there you avoided my control, but I will easily have you thrown into jail if you do not agree to my conditions.

(Silence.)

DAVID: What conditions?

(Robert takes two envelopes out of his jacket and places them on the table.)

ROBERT: Here we have two envelopes. The first one contains \$50 000. There are two letters in the second one. In the first letter, you admit that you have abused your position as a man who participated in Greta Garbo's therapy, and that you had wanted to take advantage of that fact but, that after being warned by doctors, you have repented. This is a termination of the contract by mutual consent and an undertaking on confidentiality that you confirm once again to observe to the end of your life. This is a typed private letter that you will transcribe by hand in which you write to Greta that you did sincerely love her but that you must tell her, with sadness in your heart, that you are leaving for India permanently and that you will never return to America. You write that after your mother's death you have thought about your life and realised that you are not capable of married life, and that you have always dreamt of travel and study of the Indian desert.

DAVID: The Indian desert?

ROBERT: That's right. India is far enough away that she won't want to go searching for you, while the desert sounds so adventurous. I think that after she cries over you for a month or two that you will become a beautiful memory, which she will be able to discuss at length with her psychiatrist, without any danger to her health. Of course, you do undertake in the first document to move away from New York and never to come closer to Greta Garbo than one hundred miles.

DAVID: You think you can buy me off with crumbs, with small change? When we marry, everything that is hers will become mine. I know what a fortune is in question here.

ROBERT: Listen, David – we are playing for all or nothing. You disgust me and you deserve to go to jail, but I don't want Greta's name dragged through the courts and that is the only reason that I am offering you this brilliant opportunity to earn \$50 000 instead of going to jail. And since you are a petty confidence trickster with a badly tied tie, I have no doubt that you will accept this generous offer.

DAVID: I must speak with Greta.

ROBERT: Alright then. If you won't accept, I shall call security and they will call the police...

(Robert takes the envelope with the money from the table, but just as he starts to put it in his jacket pocket, David interrupts him in a loud voice.)

DAVID: Wait!

ROBERT: Yes?

DAVID: I'll sign. I need that money.

ROBERT: I thought so..

(Robert again throws the envelope holding the money onto the desk, and then pushes the papers for signature over to David.)

ROBERT: Let's do it immediately!

DAVID: I just want to count the money first.

LINDA: You really are disgusting! A miserable creep! You are not a man, you are. . .

DAVID: I am not interested in what you have to say! And your words can't offend me. In any case, we will never see each other again.

LINDA: Thank God for that.

### **Scene 18.**

**(Greta, Linda, and Robert later)**

(Greta and Linda are in the 'consulting room'. Greta is lying on the couch. Linda is sitting on a chair placed behind her.)

GRETA: . . . It was a year after my arrival in America and the producer had invited me to a concert. The Royal Philharmonic Orchestra was doing a tour here, he knew that I enjoyed classical music, so he wanted to make me happy. I had not been in a good mood during that time, we were working long hours, one shoot had just been wrapped and we were preparing for another one. On the whole, when I feel pressure I am often overtaken by such a mood. . . I think you understand me. But I was delighted with the idea of the concert. The atmosphere in the concert hall was wonderful. Elegant women, elegant men, brilliant musicians, just everything was special, and it all had the atmosphere of Europe, which I was missing painfully at that time. The repertoire was wonderful, the performance was wonderful, the audience was wonderful, and you could see the glow of joy on the conductor's face because of the success of the evening. That inspired mood took hold of me, right up until the moment when they played Beethoven's second last sonata. Do you know it, can you remember it?

LINDA: Yes, I do. I love classical music.

GRETA: There is something so profound in it, so moving. Anyway, after a minute or two, tears started flowing down my face. I did not sob, there was no association with anything particular, no memories had been awoken, it was simply that the music had such power over me – it spoke directly to my emotions. I cried and cried. When the producer noticed what was happening with me, he turned slightly towards me and asked me what was wrong. I couldn't answer him. My throat just wouldn't listen. I turned my head away. I was helpless. Later they played the works of other composers, but I remained in the embrace of Beethoven's sonata that did not want to leave my head. I couldn't stop the tears even after the concert was over. The producer thought that someone had perhaps offended me that day, or that I had heard bad news. But, without many questions, he drove me home to my apartment and left me to my loneliness and tears. It was all repeated a few months later, when I heard the sound of organ music filling a large old sacral building. The music was probably by some early composer – I couldn't recognise the theme. It simply happened – the tears started flowing and I couldn't stop them however much I tried. I suddenly learnt

that music was stronger than I was, and that I have to keep away from it. I understood that only a single composition could disarm me, subordinate me to it, and make me incapable of doing any serious work that day. Since then I have experienced music in a twofold way – both as God's most beautiful creation, and as something disturbing. Like some force that you should hide from.

(Silence.)

GRETA: I miss him, I miss him very much. I think of him constantly. Already a month has passed since he sent me that farewell letter, but I still. . . It would be easier for me if he had said all that in rough words. . . Why on earth has he chosen India. . . I could never understand such men and their thirst for adventure, and proving themselves as men. He has hurt me, and left me. . .

LINDA: Perhaps his mother's death shocked him.

GRETA: That is not the way to leave a woman you love, a woman you are planning to marry. If he had at least come to me like a man to say goodbye, so that we could have talked. . . But then again, when I remember that he sent the farewell letter to you by way of Robert. . . I was to blame for that break-up of yours. I really am sorry that I stole David away from you then.

LINDA: I'm not sorry. Not at all.

GRETA: You really don't hold it against me?

LINDA: I was shocked and hurt then, but I am grateful today that he is out of my life.

(Silence.)

GRETA: Perhaps I should leave the estate and go back to New York. I miss the fuss and bustle, all that vitality. Then is nothing nicer than to put on a blonde wig and sunglasses with large frames and, masked so that no-one can recognise me, to wander for hours through the streets of that wonderful city.

(Silence.)

GRETA: Linda, you are a good listener.

LINDA: I'm glad you think so..

GRETA: Were you inclined to that before?

LINDA: To what?

GRETA: Listening to others.

LINDA: I don't understand.

GRETA: Before you started this work, did you have the gift of listening to people?

LINDA: Yes, always.

GRETA: Then you have chosen the right profession.

LINDA: I believe I have.

(Silence.)

GRETA: That's enough for today. You are free. Please tell Robert that I need him.

LINDA: Yes, I shall.

(Linda takes her papers from the desk.)

GRETA: Is today Thursday or Friday?

LINDA: Friday.

GRETA: Then I wish you a pleasant weekend.

LINDA: I wish you the same. Good-bye.

GRETA: Until Monday.

(Linda leaves. Greta takes a cigarette-holder, inserts her cigarette and lights it. A moment later Robert comes in.)

ROBERT: How was it?

GRETA: Unnecessary, as always.

ROBERT: I would say that you feel better after these sessions.

GRETA: Not better, not worse – but at least I have an audience. A paid audience who knows how to listen. When I was making movies, the public paid to see and hear me in them, but now I pay to be listened to.

(Robert hands her a book.)

ROBERT: I have brought you the novel you asked for.

GRETA: Ah, «Gone with the Wind». Thank you. I have read it twice, but it's time to keep company again with this wonderful story.

ROBERT: I prefer the film.

GRETA: Because you don't like reading.

(Silence.)

GRETA: Have you heard any news of him?

ROBERT: Nothing, unfortunately. It's as if the earth swallowed him up – my people are doing the rounds of the travel agencies night and day, but. . . if we at least knew whether he travelled by ship or by plane. His name does not appear anywhere, there is not the smallest trace of him. And even if we do find him, I doubt that he would agree to come back here.

(Silence.)

GRETA: It is as though you are pleased that he left?

ROBERT: What are you trying to say?

GRETA: You didn't like him?

ROBERT: I didn't hate him. It was simply that – I did not respect him. That is the whole truth. I am sorry on your behalf that he ran off in such a way. It is all the same to me. But, perhaps he will appear in that doorway one day, perhaps he will return when he has had his fill of elephants and over-spiced Indian food.

GRETA: He won't be back. Never again.

ROBERT: Why do you think that?

GRETA: David has gone forever. I knew he would go, sooner or later, but I enjoyed the game while it lasted. I would have liked it if we could have spent another month or two preparing for our wedding, I would have liked it if you had let us continue to dream about the film, which we both knew from the beginning would never be shot. I would have liked it if I could have been a woman in those wonderful days before the wedding itself. You did not have to take it all away from me, Robert. You should have let it last a little longer. I have nothing left from the past, and I am aware that I cannot and should not make any more movies, and I am still sufficiently rational to know that I am not a person who could be somebody's wife. But, still, you should have allowed that game to last, that acting which I was starting to enjoy so much.

(Silence.)

ROBERT: Forgive me, but with you I have never known where the border is.

GRETA: What border?

ROBERT: The border that separates acting from reality.

GRETA: Well, not even I have been always certain about that. Not even me. That is why my life has slipped through my hands. Only because of that. . . You took away that small joy, that game that could have made my life easier. You drove away all of them who could have made the duration of existence more bearable.

ROBERT: Not all of them. I never drove away the most important person.

GRETA: Who was that?

ROBERT: I am still here. While you have me, you are not alone, and you are not unprotected.

GRETA: Thank you, darling, but. . . you are so boring.

ROBERT: I know I am. But that is why I am so reliable and faithful. And that's what is needed most in the years in front of us.

GRETA: So that's what the ideal marriage looks like.

ROBERT: Something like that.

GRETA: And I thought that I was missing out on something in life.

ROBERT: When I was young, I also thought that something must exist that was more valuable and reliable than boredom. It is only now that I realise how naive I was.

GRETA: That means that you are mine forever.

ROBERT: Till death do us part.

(They both burst out in uncontrolled laughter.)

**- THE END -**