

A Little Night Music

CAST OF CHARACTERS

MADAME ARMFELDT
DESIRÉE ARMFELDT, *her daughter, an actress*
FREDRIKA ARMFELDT, *Desirée's daughter*
FREDRIK EGERMAN, *a lawyer*
ANNE EGERMAN, *his second wife*
HENRIK EGERMAN, *his son*
COUNT CARL-MAGNUS MALCOLM, *a dragoon*
COUNTESS CHARLOTTE MALCOLM, *his wife*
PETRA, *the Egerman maid*
FRID, *Madame Armfeldt's butler*
MALLA, *Desirée's maid*
BERTRAND, *Madame Armfeldt's page*
OSA, *Madame Armfeldt's maid*
MR. LINDQUIST
MRS. NORDSTROM
MRS. ANDERSSON
MR. FURLANSON
MRS. SEGSTROM

MUSICAL NUMBERS

Overture

MR. LINDQUIST, MRS. NORDSTROM,
MRS. ANDERSSSEN, MR. ERLANSON, MRS. SEGSTROM

ACT I

"Night Waltz"

COMPANY

"Now"

FREDRIK

"Later"

HENRIK

"Soon"

ANNE, HENRIK, FREDRIK

"The Glamorous Life"

FREDRIKA, DESIRÉE, MALIA, MADAME
ARMFELDT, MRS. NORDSTROM, MRS. SEGSTROM,
MRS. ANDERSSSEN, MR. LINDQUIST, MR. ERLANSON

"Remember?"

MR. LINDQUIST, MRS. NORDSTROM, MRS. SEGSTROM,
MR. ERLANSON, MRS. ANDERSSSEN

"You Must Meet My Wife"

FREDRIK, DESIRÉE

"Liaisons"

MADAME ARMFELDT

"In Praise of Women"

CARL-MAGNUS

"Every Day a Little Death"

CHARLOTTE, ANNE

"A Weekend in the Country"

COMPANY

ACT II

"The Sun Won't Set"

MRS. ANDERSSSEN, MRS. SEGSTROM,
MRS. NORDSTROM, MR. LINDQUIST, MR. ERLANSON

"It Would Have Been Wonderful"

FREDRIK, CARL-MAGNUS

"Night Waltz II"

MRS. NORDSTROM, MR. ERLANSON,
MR. LINDQUIST, MRS. SEGSTROM, MRS. ANDERSSSEN

"Perpetual Anticipation"

MRS. NORDSTROM, MRS. SEGSTROM,
MRS. ANDERSSSEN

"Send in the Clowns"

DESIRÉE

"The Miller's Son"

PETRA

Finale

COMPANY

Time: Turn of the Century
Place: Sweden

Overture

Before the houselights are down, MR. LINDQUIST appears and sits at the piano. He removes his gloves, plunks a key, and begins to vocalize. MRS. NORDSTROM enters, hits a key on the piano, and vocalizes with him. MRS. ANDERSSSEN, MR. ERLANSON and MRS. SEGSTROM come out and join the vocalizing.

MEN:

La, la la la

La, la la la

WOMEN:

La, la la la

La, la la la

MRS. NORDSTROM:

The old deserted beach that we walked —
Remember?

MR. ERLANSON:

Remember?

The café in the park where we talked —
Remember?

MRS. ANDERSSSEN:

Remember?

The tenor on the boat that we chartered,
Belching "The Bartered
Bride" —

ALL:

Ah, how we laughed,
Ah, how we cried,

MR. LINDQUIST:

Ah, how you promised
And
Ah, how
I lied.

OTHER MEMBERS OF QUINTET:

La, la la la

Ah . . .

Lie . . . lie . . . lie . . .

MRS. SEGSTROM:

That dilapidated inn —
Remember, darling?

MR. ERLANSON:

The proprietress's grin,
Also her glare.

MRS. NORDSTROM:

Yellow gingham on the bed —
Remember, darling?

MR. LINDQUIST:

And the canopy in red,
Needing repair.

ALL:

Soon, I promise.
Soon I won't shy away,
Dear old —
Soon. I want to.
Soon, whatever you say.
Even

WOMEN:

Now,
When we're close and
We

MEN:

Now, when we touch,

Touch,
And you're kissing my
Brow,
I don't mind it
Too much.
And you'll have to

Touching my brow,
Ahhhh . . .

ALL:

Admit I'm endearing,
I help keep things humming,
I'm not domineering,
What's one small shortcoming?

And

Unpack the luggage, la la la
Pack up the luggage, la la la
Unpack the luggage, la la la
Hi-ho, the glamorous life!

Unpack the luggage, la la la
Pack up the luggage, la la la
Unpack the luggage, la la la
Hi-ho, the glamorous life!

MR. LINDQUIST:
Ahhhhh . . .

OTHER MEMBERS OF QUINTET:
Unpack the luggage, la la la
Pack up the luggage, la la la

MRS. NORDSTROM:
Ahhhh . . .

OTHER MEMBERS OF QUINTET:
Unpack the luggage, la la la
Hi-ho, the glamorous life!

ALL:

Bring up the curtain, la la la
Bring down the curtain, la la la
Bring up the curtain, la la la
Hi-ho, hi-ho
For the glamorous life!

(After the applause, the QUINTET starts to waltz. The show curtain flies out revealing the main characters doing a strangely surreal waltz ["Night Waltz"] of their own, in which partners change partners and recouple with others. The QUINTET drifts up into the waltzing couples, and reappears to hum accompaniment for the last section of the dance. FREDRIKA wanders through the waltz, too, watching)

ACT I

Prologue

At the end of the opening waltz, MADAME ARMFELDT is brought on in her wheelchair by her butler, FRID. In her lap is a tray containing a silver cigarette box, a small vase with four yellow bud-roses, and the cards with which she is playing solitaire. She is watched by FREDRIKA ARMFELDT, 13 — a grave, very self-contained and formal girl with the precise diction of the convent-trained.

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

MADAME ARMFELDT (*Continuing to play*): Solitaire is the only thing in life that demands absolute honesty. As a woman who has numbered kings among her lovers, I think my word can be taken on that point.

(She motions to FRID, who crosses down and lights her cigarette)

What was I talking about?

FREDRIKA: You said I should watch.

MADAME ARMFELDT: Watch — what?

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

MADAME ARMFELDT: Everything is unlikely, dear, so don't let

that deter you. Of course the summer night smiles. Three times.

FREDRIKA: But how does it smile?

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

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

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

FREDRIKA: But if it happens — how does it happen?

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

FREDRIKA: But why does it smile, Grandmother?

MADAME ARMFELDT: At the follies of human beings, of course. The first smile smiles at the young, who know nothing.

(She looks pointedly at FREDRIKA)

The second, at the fools who know too little, like Desirée.

FREDRIKA: Mother isn't a fool.

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

(The game is over without coming out. Annoyed at the cards, MADAME ARMFELDT scatters them at random, and barks at FRID)

Frid, time for my nap.

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

MADAME ARMFELDT: Why not? Now, practice your piano, dear, preferably with the soft pedal down. And as a treat

tonight at dinner, I shall tell you amusing stories about my liaison with the Baron de Signac, who was, to put it mildly, peculiar.

(FRID wheels her off and FREDRIKA goes to sit at the piano)

Scene 1

THE EGERMAN ROOMS

Two rooms: the parlor and the master bedroom, indicated on different levels. ANNE EGERMAN, a ravishingly pretty girl of 18, is on the bed. She goes to the vanity table, toys with her hair, and then enters the parlor. HENRIK EGERMAN, her stepson, a brooding young man of 19, is seated on the sofa, playing his cello. Beside him on the sofa is a book with a ribbon marker. ANNE looks at HENRIK, then leans over the sofa to get his attention.

ANNE: Oh Henrik, dear, don't you have anything less gloomy to practice?

HENRIK: It isn't gloomy, it's profound.

ANNE (*Reaches down, takes HENRIK's book, and begins reading from it*): "... in discussing temptation, Martin Luther says: 'You cannot prevent the birds from flying over your head, but you can prevent them from nesting in your hair.'" Oh dear, that's gloomy too! Don't they teach you anything at the seminary a little more cheerful?

HENRIK (*Grand*): A man who's going to serve in God's Army must learn all the ruses and stratagems of the Enemy.

ANNE (*Sitting, giggling*): And which of your professors made that historic statement?

HENRIK (*Caught out*): Pastor Ericson, as a matter of fact. He says we're like generals learning to win battles against the devil.

(Her ball of silk falls off her lap)

ANNE: Oh dear, my ball!

(HENRIK bends down to pick up the ball. He stands beside her, obviously overwhelmed by her nearness. ANNE pats her lap)

You can put it there, you know. My lap isn't one of the Devil's snares.

(Flushing, HENRIK drops the ball into her lap and moves away from her)

HENRIK: Anne, I was wondering — could we go for a walk?

ANNE: Now?

HENRIK: I've so much to tell you. What I've been thinking, and everything.

ANNE: Silly Henrik, don't you realize it's almost tea-time? And I think I hear your father.

(She rises, puts down the ball of silk)

I'm sure you've made the most wonderful discoveries about life, and I long to talk, but — later.

(FREDRIK enters, followed by PETRA, 21, the charming, easy-going maid)

Fredrik, dear!

HENRIK (*Mutters to himself*): Later.

ANNE: Look who's come home to us — holier than ever.

FREDRIK: Hello, son. How was the examination?

HENRIK: Well, as a matter of fact . . .

FREDRIK (*Breaking in*): You passed with flying colors, of course.

ANNE: First on the list.

HENRIK (*Trying again*): And Pastor Ericson said . . .

FREDRIK (*Breaking in*): Splendid — you must give us a full report. Later.

ANNE: He'd better be careful or he'll go straight to heaven before he has a chance to save any sinners.

FREDRIK: Don't tease him, dear.

ANNE: Oh, Henrik likes to be teased, don't you, Henrik? Fredrik, do you want your tea now?

FREDRIK: Not now, I think. It's been rather an exhausting day in Court and as we have a long evening ahead of us, I feel a little nap is indicated.

(He produces theater tickets from his pocket)

ANNE (*Grabbing at them, delighted as a child*): Tickets for the theater!

FREDRIK: It's a French comedy. I thought it might entertain you.

ANNE: It's *Woman of the World*, isn't it? With Desirée Armfeldt! She's on all the posters! Oh, Fredrik, how delicious!

(To HENRIK, teasing)

What shall I wear? My blue with the feathers —

(FREDRIK pours water)

genuine angel's feathers — ? Or the yellow? Ah, I know. My pink, with the bosom. And Henrik, you can do me up in the back.

(She goes into the bedroom)

FREDRIK: I'm sorry, son. I should have remembered you were coming home and got a third ticket. But then per-

haps a French comedy is hardly suitable.

(FREDRIK *takes a pill*)

HENRIK (*Outburst*): Why does everyone laugh at me? Is it so ridiculous to want to do some good in this world?

FREDRIK: I'm afraid being young in itself can be a trifle ridiculous. Good has to be so good, bad so bad. Such superlatives!

HENRIK: But to be old, I suppose, is not ridiculous.

FREDRIK (*Sigh*): Ah, let's not get into that. I love you very much, you know. So does Anne — in her way. But you can't expect her to take your mother's place. She's young too; she has not yet learned . . .

HENRIK: . . . to suffer fools gladly?

FREDRIK (*Gentle*): You said that, son. Not I.

ANNE: Fredrik!

(As FREDRIK moves into the bedroom, HENRIK picks up his book and reads. ANNE is sitting on the bed, buffing her nails)

You were sweet to think of the theater for me.

FREDRIK: I'll enjoy it too.

ANNE: Who wouldn't — when all the posters call her The One And Only Desirée Armfeldt?

(FREDRIK begins to try to kiss her. She rattles on)

I wonder what it would feel like to be a One and Only! The One and Only — Anne Egerman!

(She leaves FREDRIK on the bed and moves to the vanity table. As aware as he is of her rejection)

Poor Fredrik! Do I still make you happy? After eleven months? I know I'm foolish to be so afraid — and you've been so patient, but, soon — I promise. Oh, I know you think I'm too silly to worry, but I do . . .

(As FREDRIK looks up to answer, she gives a little cry)
Oh no! For heaven's sakes, can that be a pimple coming?
(FREDRIK, deflated, begins to sing as he undresses)

FREDRIK:

Now, as the sweet imbecilities
Tumble so lavishly
Onto her lap . . .

ANNE: Oh Fredrik, what a day it's been! Unending drama!
While Petra was brushing my hair, the doorbell . . .
(Throughout the song, she continues chattering in pantomime when not actually speaking)

FREDRIK:

Now, there are two possibilities:
A, I could ravish her,
B, I could nap.

ANNE: . . . that grumpy old Mrs. Nordstrom from next door.
Her sister's coming for a visit . . .

FREDRIK:

Say it's the ravishment, then we see
The option
That follows, of course:

ANNE: . . . do hope I'm imperious enough with the servants.
I try to be. But half the time I think they're laughing at
me . . .

FREDRIK:

A, the deployment of charm, or B,
The adoption
Of physical force.

Now B might arouse her,
But if I assume
I trip on my trouser
Leg crossing the room . . .

Her hair getting tangled,
Her stays getting snapped,
My nerves will be jangled,
My energy sapped . . .

Removing her clothing
Would take me all day
And her subsequent loathing
Would turn me away —
Which eliminates B
And which leaves us with A.

ANNE: Could you ever be jealous of me? . . .

FREDRIK:

Now, insofar as approaching it,
What would be festive
But have its effect?

ANNE: Shall I learn Italian? I think it would be amusing, if
the verbs aren't too irregular . . .

FREDRIK:

Now, there are two ways of broaching it:
A, the suggestive
And B, the direct.

ANNE: . . . but then French is a much chic-er language. Every-
one says so. Parlez-vous Français? . . .

FREDRIK:

Say that I settle on B, to wit,
A charmingly
Lecherous mood . . .

A, I could put on my nightshirt or sit
Disarmingly,
B, in the nude . . .
That might be effective,

My body's all right,
But not in perspective
And not in the light . . .

I'm bound to be chilly
And feel a buffoon,
But nightshirts are silly
In midafternoon . . .

Which leaves the suggestive,
But how to proceed?
Although she gets restive,
Perhaps I could read . . .

In view of her penchant
For something romantic,
De Sade is too trenchant
And Dickens too frantic,
And Stendhal would ruin
The plan of attack,
As there isn't much blue in
The Red and the Black.

De Maupassant's candor
Would cause her dismay.
The Brontës are grander
But not very gay.
Her taste is much blander,
I'm sorry to say,
But is Hans Christian Ander-
Sen ever risqué?
Which eliminates A.

(Exits upstage)

ANNE: And he said, "You're such a pretty lady!" Wasn't that
silly? . . .

FREDRIK *(As he walks back on in nothing but his long underwear)*:
Now, with my mental facilities

Partially muddied
And ready to snap . . .

ANNE (*At the jewel box now*): . . . I'm sure about the bracelet.
But earrings, earrings! *Which* earrings? . . .

FREDRIK:
Now, though there are possibilities
Still to be studied,
I might as well nap . . .

ANNE: Mother's rubies? . . . Oh, the diamonds are — Agony!
I know . . .

FREDRIK (*Getting into bed*):
Bow though I must
To adjust
My original plan . . .

ANNE: Desirée Armfeldt — I just know she'll wear the most
glamorous gowns! . . .

FREDRIK:
How shall I sleep
Half as deep
As I usually can? . . .

ANNE: Dear, distinguished old Fredrik!

FREDRIK:
When now I still want and/or love you,
Now, as always,
Now,
Anne?

(*FREDRIK turns over and goes to sleep. They remain frozen.*
PETRA enters the parlor)

PETRA: Nobody rang. Doesn't he want his tea?

HENRIK (*Still deep in book*): They're taking a nap.

PETRA (*Coming up behind him, teasingly ruffling his hair*): You
smell of soap.

HENRIK (*Pulling his head away*): I'm reading.

PETRA (*Caressing his head*): Do those old teachers take a scrubbing brush to you every morning and scrub you down like a dray horse?

(*Strokes his ear*)

HENRIK (*Fierce*): Get away from me!

PETRA (*Jumping up in mock alarm*): Oh what a wicked woman I am! I'll go straight to hell!

(*Starting away, she goes toward the door, deliberately wiggling her hips*)

HENRIK (*Looking up, even fiercer*): And don't walk like that!

PETRA (*Innocent*): Like — what?

(*Wiggles even more*)

Like this?

HENRIK (*Pleadingly*): Stop it. Stop it!

(*He rises, goes after her, clutches her, and starts savagely, clumsily, to kiss her and fumble at her breasts. She slaps his hand*)

PETRA: Careful!

(*Breaks away*)

That's a new blouse! A whole week's wages and the lace extra!

(*Looks at him*)

Poor little Henrik!

(*Then affectionately pats his cheek*)

Later! You'll soon get the knack of it!

(*She exits. HENRIK puts down the book, gets his cello and begins to sing, accompanying himself on the cello*)

HENRIK:

Later . . .

When is later? . . .

All you ever hear is "Later, Henrik! Henrik, later . . ."

"Yes, we know, Henrik.
Oh, Henrik —
Everyone agrees, Henrik —
Please, Henrik!"
You have a thought you're fairly bursting with,
A personal discovery or problem, and it's
"What's your rush, Henrik?
Shush, Henrik —
Goodness, how you gush, Henrik —
Hush, Henrik!"
You murmur,
"I only . . .
It's just that . . .
For God's sake!"
"Later, Henrik . . ."

"Henrik" . . .
Who is "Henrik"? . . .
Oh, that lawyer's son, the one who mumbles —
Short and boring,
Yes, he's hardly worth ignoring
And who cares if he's all dammed —
(Looks up)
— I beg your pardon —
Up inside?
As I've
Often stated,
It's intolerable
Being tolerated.
"Reassure Henrik,
Poor Henrik.
Henrik, you'll endure
Being pure, Henrik."

Though I've been born, I've never been!
How can I wait around for later?

I'll be ninety on my deathbed
And the late, or rather later,
Henrik Egerman!

Doesn't anything begin?

(ANNE, *in the bedroom, gets up from the vanity table and stands near the bed, singing to FREDRIK*)

ANNE:

Soon, I promise.
Soon I won't shy away,
Dear old —

(*She bites her lip*)

Soon. I want to.
Soon, whatever you say.
Even now,
When you're close and we touch,
And you're kissing my brow,
I don't mind it too much.
And you'll have to admit
I'm endearing,
I help keep things humming,
I'm not domineering,
What's one small shortcoming?
And think of how I adore you,
Think of how much you love me.
If I were perfect for you,
Wouldn't you tire of me
Soon,
All too soon?
Dear old —

(*The sound of HENRIK's cello. FREDRIK stirs noisily in bed.
ANNE goes into the parlor*)

Henrik! That racket! Your father's sleeping!

(*She remains, half-innocent, half-coquettish, in her negligee. For a second, ANNE watches him. She closes her nightgown at the neck and goes back into the bedroom*)

ANNE (*Back at the bed*):

Soon —

HENRIK:

“Later” . . .

ANNE:

I promise.

HENRIK:

When is “later?”

(*Simultaneously*)

ANNE:

Soon

I won't shy

Away,

Dear old —

HENRIK:

“Later, Henrik, later.”

All you ever hear is,

“Yes, we know, Henrik, oh,

Henrik,

Everyone agrees, Henrik,

please, Henrik!”

(FREDRIK *stirs. Simultaneously*)

ANNE:

Soon,

I want to.

Soon,

Whatever you

Say.

HENRIK:

“Later” . . .

When is “later”?

All you ever

Hear is

“Later, Henrik,

Later.”

As I've often

Stated:

When?

FREDRIK:

Now,

As the sweet

imbecilities

Trip on my trouser leg,

Stendhal

eliminates

A,

But

When?

Even Now, When you're close And we touch	Maybe Soon, soon I'll be ninety And Dead.	Maybe Later.
And you're kissing My brow, I don't mind it	I don't mind it	When I'm kissing Your brow And I'm stroking your head,
Too much,	Too much,	You'll come into my bed.
And you'll have to admit I'm endearing, I help Keep things	Since I have to Admit I find peering	And you have to Admit I've been hearing
Humming, I'm	Through life's	All those tremu- lous cries
Not domineering, What's one small	Gray windows Impatiently Not very cheering. Do I fear death?	Patiently, Not interfering With those tremu- lous thighs.
Shortcoming? And Think of how I adore you, Think of how Much you love me. If I were perfect For you, Wouldn't you tire Of me Later?	Let it Come to me Now, Now, Now, Now.	Come to me Soon, Soon, Soon, Soon.
	Come to me Soon. If I'm	Come to me Soon,

We will, Later.	Dead, I can Wait.	Straight to me, never mind
We will . . . Soon.	How can I Live until Later?	How. Darling, Now — I still want and/or Love You,
Soon.	Later . . .	Now, as Always, Now, (<i>He does a kiss</i>) Desirée.
Soon.	Later . . .	

(ANNE stares out, astonished, as the lights go down and the bedroom and parlor roll off. FREDRIKA, still at the piano, is playing scales)

FREDRIKA (*Sings*):

Ordinary mothers lead ordinary lives:
Keep the house and sweep the parlor,
Cook the meals and look exhausted.
Ordinary mothers, like ordinary wives,
Fry the eggs and dry the sheets and
Try to deal with facts.

Mine acts.

(DESIRÉE sweeps on with MALLA, her maid, in tow. MALLA carries a wig box, suitcase, and parasol)

DESIRÉE (*As FREDRIKA reads a letter from her*):

Darling, I miss you a lot
But, darling, this has to be short
As Mother is getting a plaque
From the Halsingborg Arts Council

Amateur Theatre Group.
Whether it's funny or not,
I'll give you a fuller report
The minute they carry me back
From the Halsingborg Arts Council
Amateur Theatre Group . . .
Love you . . .

(The QUINTET appears)

QUINTET:

Unpack the luggage, la la la
Pack up the luggage, la la la
Unpack the luggage, la la la
Hi-ho, the glamorous life!

MRS. SEGSTROM:

Ice in the basin, la la la

MR. ERLANSON:

Cracks in the plaster, la la la

MRS. ANDERSSON:

Mice in the hallway, la la la

ALL THE QUINTET:

Hi-ho, the glamorous life!

MEN:

Run for the carriage, la la la

WOMEN:

Wolf down the sandwich, la la la

ALL THE QUINTET:

Which town is this one? La la la
Hi-ho, the glamorous life!

(FRID wheels MADAME ARMFELDT onstage)

MADAME ARMFELDT:

Ordinary daughters ameliorate their lot,

Use their charms and choose their futures,
Breed their children, heed their mothers.
Ordinary daughters, which mine, I fear, is not,
Tend each asset, spend it wisely
While it still endures . . .

Mine tours.

DESIRÉE (*As MADAME ARMFELDT reads a letter from her*):

Mother, forgive the delay,
My schedule is driving me wild.
But, Mother, I really must run,
I'm performing in Rottvik,
And don't ask where is it, please.
How are you feeling today
And are you corrupting the child?
Don't. Mother, the minute I'm done
With performing in Rottvik,
I'll come for a visit

And argue.

MEN:

Mayors with speeches, la la la

WOMEN:

Children with posies, la la la

MEN:

Half-empty houses, la la la

ALL THE QUINTET:

Hi-ho, the glamorous life!

MRS. NORDSTROM:

Cultural lunches,

ALL THE QUINTET:

La la la

MRS. ANDERSSEN:

Dead floral tributes,

ALL THE QUINTET:

La la la

MR. LINDQUIST:

Ancient admirers,

ALL THE QUINTET:

La la la

Hi-ho, the glamorous life!

FREDRIKA:

Mother's romantic, la la la

MADAME ARMFELDT:

Mother's misguided, la la la

DESIRÉE:

Mother's surviving, la la la
Leading the glamorous life!

(Holds up a mirror)

Cracks in the plaster, la la la
Youngish admirers, la la la
Which one was that one? La la la
Hi-ho, the glamorous life!

DESIRÉE *and* QUINTET:

Bring up the curtain, la la la
Bring down the curtain, la la la
Bring up the curtain, la la la
Hi-ho, the glamorous . . .
Life.

Scene 2

STAGE OF LOCAL THEATER

The show curtain is down. Two stage boxes are visible. Sitting in one are MR. LINDQUIST, MRS. NORDSTROM, and MR. ERIANSON. ANNE and FREDRIK enter, and speak as they walk to their box.

ANNE: Does she look like her pictures?

FREDRIK: Who, dear?

ANNE: Desirée Armfeldt, of course.

FREDRIK: How would I know, dear?

ANNE (*Pause*): I only thought . . .

FREDRIK: You only thought — what?

ANNE: Desirée is not a common name. I mean, none of your typists and things are called Desirée, are they?

FREDRIK: My typists and things in descending order of importance are Miss Osa Svensen, Miss Ona Nilsson, Miss Gerda Bjornson, and Mrs. Amalia Lindquist.

(A PAGE enters, and knocks three times with the staff he is carrying. The show curtain rises revealing the stage

behind it, a tatty Louis XIV "salon," as PAGE exits. For a moment it is empty. Then two LADIES, in rather shabby court costumes, enter)

FIRST LADY (MRS. SEGSTROM): Tell me something about this remarkable Countess, Madame.

SECOND LADY (MRS. ANDERSSON): I shall try as best I can to depict the personality of the Countess, Madame, although it is too rich in mysterious contradictions to be described in a few short moments.

FIRST LADY: It is said that her power over men is most extraordinary.

SECOND LADY: There is a great deal of truth in that, Madame, and her lovers are as many as the pearls in the necklace which she always wears.

FIRST LADY: Your own husband, Madame, is supposed to be one of the handsomest pearls, is he not?

SECOND LADY: He fell in love with the Countess on sight. She took him as a lover for three months and after that I had him back.

FIRST LADY: And your marriage was crushed?

SECOND LADY: On the contrary, Madame! My husband had become a tender, devoted, admirable lover, a faithful husband and an exemplary father. The Countess's lack of decency is most moral.

(The PAGE re-enters)

PAGE: The Countess Celimène de Francen de la Tour de Casa.

(The COUNTESS — DESIRÉE — makes her sensational entrance. A storm of applause greets her. FREDRIK claps. ANNE does not as she glares at the stage. During the applause, DESIRÉE makes a deep curtsey, during which, old pro that

she is, she cases the house. Her eye falls on FREDRIK. She does a take and instantly all action freezes)

MR. LINDQUIST (*Sings*):

Remember?

MRS. NORDSTROM (*Sings*):

Remember?

(MR. LINDQUIST and MRS. NORDSTROM *leave the stage box*)

The old deserted beach that we walked —

Remember?

MR. LINDQUIST:

Remember?

The café in the park where we talked —

Remember?

MRS. NORDSTROM:

Remember?

MR. LINDQUIST:

The tenor on the boat that we chartered,

Belching "The Bartered

Bride" —

BOTH:

Ah, how we laughed,

Ah, how we cried.

MR. LINDQUIST:

Ah, how you promised and

Ah, how I lied.

MRS. NORDSTROM:

That dilapidated inn —

Remember, darling?

MR. LINDQUIST:

The proprietress's grin,

Also her glare . . .

MRS. NORDSTROM:

Yellow gingham on the bed —
Remember, darling?

MR. LINDQUIST:

And the canopy in red,
Necding repair?

BOTH:

I *think* you were there.

(They return to the stage box and the action continues)

ANNE (*Fierce, to FREDRIK*): She looked at us. Why did she look at us?

DESIRÉE (*To SECOND LADY*): Dear Madame Merville, what a charming mischance to find you here this evening.

FREDRIK: I don't think she looked especially at us.

ANNE:

She did! She peered,
then she smiled.

SECOND LADY:

Charming, indeed, dear
Celimène.

SECOND LADY: May I be permitted to present my school friend from the provinces? Madame Vilmorac — whose husband, I'm sure, is in dire need of a little expert polishing.

FIRST LADY: Oh, dear Countess, you are all but a legend to me. I implore you to reveal to me the secret of your success with the hardier sex!

ANNE: She smiled at us!

(Grabs FREDRIK's opera glasses and studies the stage)

DESIRÉE: Dear Madame, that can be summed up in a single word —

ANNE: She's ravishingly beautiful.

FREDRIK: Make-up.

DESIRÉE: — dignity.

TWO LADIES: Dignity?

ANNE (*Turning on FREDRIK*): How can you be sure — if you've never seen her?

FREDRIK: Hush!

DESIRÉE (*Playing her first-act set speech*): Dignity. We women have a right to commit any crime toward our husbands, our lovers, our sons, as long as we do not hurt their dignity. We should make men's dignity our best ally and caress it, cradle it, speak tenderly to it, and handle it as our most delightful toy. Then a man is in our hands, at our feet, or anywhere else we momentarily wish him to be.

ANNE (*Sobbing*):

I want to go home!

FREDRIK:

Anne!

ANNE: I want to go home!

FREDRIK: Anne!

(She runs off, FREDRIK following)

Scene 3

THE EGERMAN ROOMS

In the parlor, PETRA, lying on the couch, is calmly re-arranging her blouse. HENRIK, in a storm of tension, is pulling on his trousers. On the floor beside them is a bottle of champagne and two glasses.

HENRIK: We have sinned, and it was a complete failure!
(Struggling with his fly buttons)

These buttons, these insufferable buttons!

PETRA: Here, dear, let me.

(She crosses, kneels in front of him, and starts to do up the fly buttons)

Don't you worry, little Henrik. Just let it rest a while.

(She pats his fly)

There. Now you put on your sweater and do a nice little quiet bit of reading.

(She gets his sweater from the back of a chair and helps him into it. ANNE enters, still crying. She sees HENRIK and PETRA, lets out a sob, and runs into the bedroom. FREDRIK enters. Perfectly calm, to FREDRIK)

My, that was a short play.

FREDRIK: My wife became ill; I had to bring her home.

(He gives HENRIK a look, sizing up the situation approvingly, before following ANNE into the bedroom)

Anne!

(HENRIK starts again toward PETRA, who avoids him)

PETRA: No, lamb. I told you. Give it a nice rest and you'll be surprised how perky it'll be by morning.

(She wiggles her way out. FREDRIK has now entered the bedroom; ANNE is no longer visible — as if she had moved into an inner room. In the parlor, HENRIK picks up the champagne bottle and glasses and puts them on the table)

ANNE *(Off, calling)*: Fredrik!

FREDRIK: Yes, dear.

ANNE: Did you have many women between your first wife and me? Sometimes when I think of what memories you have, I vanish inside.

FREDRIK: Before I met you I was quite a different man. Many things were different. Better?

(ANNE comes back into the bedroom)

Worse? Different, anyway.

ANNE: Do you remember when I was a little girl and you came to my father's house for dinner and told me fairy tales? Do you remember?

FREDRIK: Yes, I remember.

ANNE *(Sitting on FREDRIK's lap)*: Then you were "Uncle Fredrik" and now you're my husband. Isn't that amusing? You were so lonely and sad that summer. I felt terribly sorry for you, so I said: "Poor thing, I'll marry him." Are you coming to bed yet?

FREDRIK: Not just yet. I think I'll go for a breath of fresh air.

ANNE: That wasn't an amusing play, was it?

FREDRIK: We didn't see that much of it.

ANNE: I wonder how old that Armfeldt woman can be. At least fifty — don't you think?

FREDRIK: I wouldn't say that old.

ANNE: Well, goodnight.

FREDRIK: Goodnight.

(As FREDRIK moves into the parlor, MR. LINDQUIST and MRS. NORDSTROM appear. There is a musical sting and FREDRIK and HENRIK freeze)

MRS. NORDSTROM (*Sings*):

Remember?

MR. LINDQUIST (*Sings*):

Remember?

BOTH:

Remember?

Remember?

(FREDRIK unfreezes, clasps his hands together and goes into the parlor. HENRIK looks anxiously at his father)

HENRIK: Is she all right now?

FREDRIK: Oh yes, she's all right.

HENRIK: It wasn't anything serious?

FREDRIK: No, nothing serious.

HENRIK: You don't think — a doctor? I mean, it would be terrible if it was something — serious.

FREDRIK: Pray for her, son. Correction — pray for me. Goodnight.

HENRIK: Goodnight, father.

(FREDRIK *exits*, and MRS. NORDSTROM and MR. LINDQUIST
sweep downstage)

MRS. NORDSTROM (*Sings*):

The local village dance on the green —
Remember?

MR. LINDQUIST (*Sings*):

Remember?
The lady with the large tambourine —
Remember?

MRS. NORDSTROM:

Remember?
The one who played the harp in her boa
Thought she was so a-
Dept.

BOTH:

Ah, how we laughed,
Ah, how we wept.
Ah, how we polka'd

MRS. NORDSTROM:

And ah, how we slept.
How we kissed and how we clung —
Remember, darling?

MR. LINDQUIST:

We were foolish, we were young —

BOTH:

More than we knew.

MRS. NORDSTROM:

Yellow gingham on the bed,
Remember, darling?
And the canopy in red —

MR. LINDQUIST:

Or was it blue?

(MRS. NORDSTROM *and* MR. LINDQUIST *are joined by* MRS. SEGSTROM, MRS. ANDERSSSEN *and* MR. ERLANSON, *who appear downstage*)

MRS. SEGSTROM:

The funny little games that we played —
Remember?

MR. ERLANSON:

Remember?
The unexpected knock of the maid —
Remember?

MRS. ANDERSSSEN:

Remember?
The wine that made us both rather merry
And, oh, so very
Frank —

ALL:

Ah, how we laughed.
Ah, how we drank.

MR. ERLANSON:

You acquiesced

MRS. ANDERSSSEN:

And the rest is a blank.

MR. LINDQUIST:

What we did with your perfume —

MR. ERLANSON:

Remember, darling?

MRS. SEGSTROM:

The condition of the room
When we were through . . .

MRS. NORDSTROM:

Our inventions were unique —
Remember, darling?

MR. LINDQUIST:

I was limping for a week,
You caught the flu . . .

ALL:

I'm *sure* it was —
You.

(They drift off as DESIRÉE's digs come on)

Scene 4

DESIRÉE'S DIGS

FREDRIK *walks on, as DESIRÉE, in a robe, enters, munching a sandwich and carrying a glass of beer.*

FREDRIK: They told me where to find you at the theater.

DESIRÉE: Fredrik!

FREDRIK: Hello, Desiréc.

(For a moment they gaze at each other)

DESIRÉE: So it *was* you! I peered and peered and said: "Is it . . . ? Can it be . . . ? Is it possible?" And then, of course, when you walked out after five minutes, I was sure.

FREDRIK: Was my record that bad?

DESIRÉE: Terrible. You walked out on my Hedda in Halsingborg. And on my sensational Phaedra in Ekilstuna.

FREDRIK *(Standing, looking at her)*: Fourteen years!

DESIRÉE: Fourteen years!

FREDRIK: No rancor?

DESIRÉE: Rancor? For a while, a little. But now — no rancor, not a trace.

(Indicating a plate of sandwiches)

Sandwich?

FREDRIK *(Declining)*: Hungry as ever after a performance, I see.

DESIRÉE: Worse. I'm a wolf. Sit down.

(Pouring him a glass of schnapps)

Here. You never said no to schnapps.

(FREDRIK sits down on the love seat. She stands, looking at him)

FREDRIK: About *this* walking out! I'd like to explain.

DESIRÉE: The girl in the pink dress, I imagine.

FREDRIK: You still don't miss a thing, do you?

DESIRÉE: Your wife.

FREDRIK: For the past eleven months. She was so looking forward to the play, she got a little overexcited. She's only eighteen, still almost a child.

(A pause)

I'm waiting.

DESIRÉE: For what?

FREDRIK: For you to tell me what an old fool I've become to have fallen under the spell of youth, beginnings, the blank page.

(Very coolly, DESIRÉE opens the robe, revealing her naked body to him)

DESIRÉE: The page that has been written on — *and* rewritten.

FREDRIK *(Looking, admiring)*: With great style. Some things — schnapps, for example — improve with age.

DESIRÉE: Let us hope that proves true of your little bride.

(She closes the wrapper and stands, still very cool, looking at him)

So you took her home and tucked her up in her cot with her rattle and her woolly penguin.

FREDRIK: Figuratively speaking.

DESIRÉE: And then you came to me.

FREDRIK: I wish you'd ask me why.

DESIRÉE (*Dead pan*): Why did you come to me?

FREDRIK: For old times' sake? For curiosity? To boast about my wife? To complain about her? Perhaps — Hell, why am I being such a lawyer about it?

(*Pause*)

This afternoon when I was taking my nap . . .

DESIRÉE: So you take afternoon naps now!

FREDRIK: Hush! . . . I had the most delightful dream.

DESIRÉE: About . . . ?

FREDRIK: . . . you.

DESIRÉE: Ah! What did we do?

FREDRIK: Well, as a matter of fact, we were in that little hotel in Malmö. We'd been basking in the sun all day.

DESIRÉE (*Suddenly picking it up*): When my back got so burned it was an agony to lie down so you . . . ?

FREDRIK: As vivid as . . . Well, *very* vivid! So you see. My motives for coming here are what might be called — mixed.

(*DESIRÉE suddenly bursts into laughter. Tentative*)

Funny?

DESIRÉE (*Suddenly controlling the laughter, very mock solemn*): No. Not at all.

(*There is a pause, distinctly charged with unadmitted sex*)

FREDRIK (*Looking around, slightly uncomfortable*): How familiar all this is.

DESIRÉE: Oh yes, nothing's changed. Uppsala one week.
Örebro the next. The same old inevitable routine.

FREDRIK: But it still has its compensations?

DESIRÉE: Yes — no — no — yes.

FREDRIK: That's a rather ambiguous answer.

(Pause)

You must, at least at times, be lonely.

DESIRÉE (*Smiling*): Dear Fredrik, if you're inquiring about my love life, rest assured. It's quite satisfactory.

FREDRIK: I see. And — if I may ask — at the moment?

DESIRÉE: A dragoon. A very handsome, very married dragoon with, I'm afraid, the vanity of a peacock, the brain of a pea, but the physical proportions . . .

FREDRIK: Don't specify the vegetable, please. I am easily deflated.

(They both burst into spontaneous laughter)

Oh, Desirée!

DESIRÉE: Fredrik!

(Another charged pause. FREDRIK tries again)

FREDRIK: Desirée, I . . .

DESIRÉE: Yes, dear?

FREDRIK: I — er . . . That is . . .

(Loses his nerve again)

Perhaps a little more schnapps?

DESIRÉE: Help yourself.

(FREDRIK crosses to the writing desk, where, next to the schnapps, is a framed photograph of FREDRIKA. He notices it)

FREDRIK: Who's this?

DESIRÉE (*Suddenly rather awkward*): That? Oh — my daughter.

FREDRIK: Your daughter? I had no idea . . .

DESIRÉE: She happened.

FREDRIK: She's charming. Where is she now?

DESIRÉE: She's with my mother in the country. She used to tour with me, and then one day Mother swept up like the Wrath of God and saved her from me — You never knew my mother! She always wins *our* battles.

(Wanting to get off the subject)

I think perhaps a little schnapps for me too.

FREDRIK: Oh yes, of course.

(FREDRIK pours a second schnapps. The charged pause again)

DESIRÉE *(Indicating the room)*: I apologize for all this squalor!

FREDRIK: On the contrary, I have always associated you very happily with — chaos.

(Pause)

So.

DESIRÉE: So.

FREDRIK *(Artificially bright)*: Well, I think it's time to talk about my wife, don't you?

DESIRÉE: Boast or complain?

FREDRIK: Both, I expect.

(Sings)

She lightens my sadness,
She livens my days,
She bursts with a kind of madness
My well-ordered ways.
My happiest mistake,
The ache of my life:
You must meet my wife.

She bubbles with pleasure,

She glows with surprise,
Disrupts my accustomed leisure
And ruffles my ties.
I don't know even now
Quite how it began.
You must meet my wife, my Anne.

One thousand whims to which I give in,
Since her smallest tear turns me ashen.
I never dreamed that I could live in
So completely demented,
Contented
A fashion.

So sunlike, so winning,
So unlike a wife.
I do think that I'm beginning
To show signs of life.
Don't ask me how at my age
One still can grow —
If you met my wife,
You'd know.

DESIRÉE: Dear Fredrik, I'm just longing to meet her. Sometime.

FREDRIK:

She sparkles.

DESIRÉE:

How pleasant.

FREDRIK:

She twinkles.

DESIRÉE:

How nice.

FREDRIK:

Her youth is a sort of present —

DESIRÉE:

Whatever the price.

FREDRIK:

The incandescent — what? — the —

DESIRÉE (*Proffering a cigarette*):

Light?

FREDRIK (*Lighting it*):

— Of my life!

You must meet my wife.

DESIRÉE:

Yes, I must, I really must. Now —

FREDRIK:

She flutters.

DESIRÉE:

How charming.

FREDRIK:

She twitters.

DESIRÉE:

My word!

FREDRIK:

She floats.

DESIRÉE:

Isn't that alarming?

What is she, a bird?

FREDRIK:

She makes me feel I'm — what? —

DESIRÉE:

A very old man?

FREDRIK:

Yes — no!

DESIRÉE:

No.

FREDRIK:

But —

DESIRÉE:

I must meet your Gertrude.

FREDRIK:

My Anne.

DESIRÉE:

Sorry — Anne.

FREDRIK:

She loves my voice, my walk, my mustache,
The cigar, in fact, that I'm smoking.
She'll watch me puff until it's just ash,
Then she'll save the cigar butt.

DESIRÉE:

Bizarre, but
You're joking.

FREDRIK:

She dotes on —

DESIRÉE:

Your dimple.

FREDRIK:

My snoring.

DESIRÉE:

How dear.

FREDRIK:

The point is, she's really simple.

DESIRÉE (*Smiling*):

Yes, that much seems clear.

FREDRIK:

She gives me funny names.

DESIRÉE:

Like — ?

FREDRIK:

“Old dry-as-dust.”

DESIRÉE:

Wouldn't she just?

FREDRIK:

You must meet my wife.

DESIRÉE:

If I must —

(Looks over her shoulder at him and smiles)

Yes, I must.

FREDRIK:

A sea of whims that I submerge in,
Yet so lovable in repentance.
Unfortunately, still a virgin,
But you can't force a flower —

DESIRÉE (*Rises*):

Don't finish that sentence!
She's monstrous!

FREDRIK:

She's frightened.

DESIRÉE:

Unfeeling!

FREDRIK:

Unversed.
She'd strike you as unenlightened.

DESIRÉE:

No, I'd strike her first.

FREDRIK:

Her reticence, her apprehension —

DESIRÉE:

Her crust!

FREDRIK:

No!

DESIRÉE:

Yes!

FREDRIK:

No!

DESIRÉE:

Fredrik . . .

FREDRIK:

You must meet my wife.

DESIRÉE:

Let me get my hat and my knife.

FREDRIK:

What was that?

DESIRÉE:

I must meet your wife.

FREDRIK:

Yes, you must.

DESIRÉE:

Yes, I must.

DESIRÉE (*Speaks*): A virgin.

FREDRIK: A virgin.

DESIRÉE: Eleven months?

FREDRIK: Eleven months.

DESIRÉE: No wonder you dreamed of me!

FREDRIK: At least it was you I dreamed of, which indicates a kind of retroactive fidelity, doesn't it?

DESIRÉE: At least.

FREDRIK (*Suddenly very shy*): Desirée, I —

DESIRÉE: Yes?

FREDRIK: Would it seem insensitive if I were to ask you — I
can't say it!

DESIRÉE: Say it, darling.

FREDRIK: Would you . . .

(He can't)

DESIRÉE: Of course. What are old friends for?

*(She rises, holds out her hand to him. He takes her hand,
rises, too)*

Wait till you see the bedroom! Stockings all over the
place, a rather rusty hip-bath — and the Virgin Mary over
the headboard.

*(They exit, laughing, into the bedroom. MADAME ARM-
FELDT appears and sings, with one eye on the room)*

MADAME ARMFELDT:

At the villa of the Baron de Signac,
Where I spent a somewhat infamous year,
At the villa of the Baron de Signac
I had ladies in attendance,
Fire-opal pendants . . .

Liaisons! What's happened to them,
Liaisons today?
Disgraceful! What's become of them?
Some of them
Hardly pay their shoddy way.

What once was a rare champagne
Is now just an amiable hock,
What once was a villa at least
Is "digs."

What once was a gown with train
Is now just a simple little frock,
What once was a sumptuous feast
Is figs.

No, not even figs — raisins.

Ah, liaisons!

Now let me see . . . Where was I? Oh, yes . . .

At the palace of the Duke of Ferrara,
Who was prematurely deaf but a dear,
At the palace of the Duke of Ferrara
I acquired some position
Plus a tiny Titian . . .

Liaisons! What's happened to them,
Liaisons today?

To see them — indiscriminate

Women, it

Pains me more than I can say,

The lack of taste that they display.

Where is style?

Where is skill?

Where is forethought?

Where's discretion of the heart,

Where's passion in the art,

Where's craft?

With a smile

And a will,

But with more thought,

I acquired a chateau

Extravagantly o-

Verstaffed.

Too many people muddle sex

With mere desire,

And when emotion intervenes,

The nets descend.
It should on no account perplex,
Or worse, inspire.
It's but a pleasurable means
To a measurable end.
Why does no one comprehend?
Let us hope this lunacy is just a trend.
Now let me see . . . Where was I? Oh, yes . . .

In the castle of the King of the Belgians
We would visit through a false chiffonier.
In the castle of the King of the Belgians
Who, when things got rather touchy,
Deeded me a duchy . . .

Liaisons! What's happened to them,
Liaisons today?
Untidy — take my daughter, I
Taught her, I
Tried my best to point the way.
I even named her Desirée.

In a world where the kings are employers,
Where the amateur prevails and delicacy fails to pay,
In a world where the princes are lawyers,
What can anyone expect except to recollect
Lia . . .

(She falls asleep. FRID appears and carries her off. A beat)

CARL-MAGNUS (*Off*): All right, all right. It's broken down. So
do something! Crank it up — or whatever it is!

(FREDRIK and DESIRÉE appear at the bedroom door, FREDRIK in a bathrobe, DESIRÉE in a negligee)

FREDRIK: What can it be?

DESIRÉE: It can't!

FREDRIK: The dragoon?

DESIRÉE: Impossible. He's on maneuvers. Eighty miles away.
He couldn't . . .

CARL-MAGNUS (*Off, bellowing*): A garage, idiot! That's what they're called.

DESIRÉE: He could.

FREDRIK: Is he jealous?

DESIRÉE: Tremendously.

(Suppresses a giggle)

This shouldn't be funny, should it?

FREDRIK: Let him in.

DESIRÉE: Fredrik . . .

FREDRIK: I am not a lawyer — nor are you an actress — for nothing. Let him in.

(DESIRÉE goes to open the door. CARL-MAGNUS enters, immaculate but brushing imaginary dust from his uniform. He is carrying a bunch of daisies)

DESIRÉE (*With tremendous poise*): Carl-Magnus! What a delightful surprise!

(Totally ignoring FREDRIK, CARL-MAGNUS bows stiffly and kisses her hand)

CARL-MAGNUS: Excuse my appearance. My new motorcar broke down.

(Hand kiss. Presents the daisies)

From a neighboring garden.

DESIRÉE (*Taking them*): How lovely! Will you be staying long?

CARL-MAGNUS: I have twenty hours leave. Three hours coming here, nine hours with you, five hours with my wife and three hours back.

(Still ignoring FREDRIK)

Do you mind if I take off my uniform and put on my robe?

DESIRÉE: Well — at the moment it's occupied.

CARL-MAGNUS (*Not looking at FREDRIK*): So I see.

DESIRÉE: Mr. Egerman — Count Malcolm.

FREDRIK: Sir.

CARL-MAGNUS (*Still ignoring FREDRIK*): Sir.

FREDRIK: I feel I should give you an explanation for what may seem to be a rather unusual situation.

(*With tremulous aplomb*)

For many years, I have been Miss Armfeldt's mother's lawyer and devoted friend. A small lawsuit of hers — nothing major, I'm happy to say — comes up in Court tomorrow morning and at the last minute I realized that some legal papers required her daughter's signature. Although it was late and she had already retired . . .

DESIRÉE: I let him in, of course.

CARL-MAGNUS (*Turning the icy gaze on her*): And then?

DESIRÉE: Ah, yes, the — the robe. Well, you see . . .

FREDRIK: Unfortunately, sir, on my way to the water-closet — through Miss Armfeldt's darkened bedroom — I inadvertently tripped over her hip-bath and fell in. Miss Armfeldt generously loaned me this garment while waiting for my clothes to dry in the bedroom.

CARL-MAGNUS: In that case, Miss Armfeldt, I suggest you return to the bedroom and see whether this gentleman's clothes are dry by now.

DESIRÉE: Yes. Of course.

(*She crosses between FREDRIK and CARL-MAGNUS and exits. Pacing, CARL-MAGNUS begins to whistle a military march. FREDRIK counters by whistling a bit of Mozart*)

CARL-MAGNUS: Are you fond of duels, sir?

FREDRIK: I don't really know. I haven't ever tried.

CARL-MAGNUS: I have duelled seven times. Pistol, rapier, foil. I've been wounded five times. Otherwise fortune has been kind to me.

FREDRIK: I must say I'm impressed.

CARL-MAGNUS (*Picking up fruit knife*): You see this fruit knife? The target will be that picture. The old lady. Her face. Her eye.

(Throws knife, which hits target)

FREDRIK (*Clapping*): Bravo.

CARL-MAGNUS: Are you being insolent, sir?

FREDRIK: Of course — sir.

(DESIRÉE returns from the bedroom. She is carrying FREDRIK's clothes in a soaking wet bundle. She has dipped them in the hip-bath)

DESIRÉE: They're not *very* dry.

FREDRIK: Oh dear me, they're certainly not, are they?

CARL-MAGNUS: A predicament.

FREDRIK: Indeed.

CARL-MAGNUS: I imagine, Miss Armfeldt, you could find this gentleman one of my nightshirts.

FREDRIK: Thank you, thank you. But I think I'd prefer to put on my own — er — garments.

(FREDRIK takes the wet bundle from DESIRÉE)

CARL-MAGNUS: Unfortunately, sir, you will not have the time for that.

(To DESIRÉE)

Perhaps you could tell him where to look.

DESIRÉE: Oh yes, yes. The left hand — no, the right hand

bottom drawer of the — er —

(Indicating a chest of drawers)

. . . thing.

(FREDRIK gives her the wet clothes)

FREDRIK *(Hesitating, then)*: Thank you.

(He goes into the bedroom. While he is away, DESIRÉE and CARL-MAGNUS confront each other in near-silence: CARL-MAGNUS whistles a bit of the march that he whistled at FREDRIK earlier. FREDRIK returns in a nightshirt, carrying the robe, which he holds out to CARL-MAGNUS)

Your robe, sir.

(CARL-MAGNUS receives it in silence. FREDRIK puts on the nightcap that goes with the nightshirt)

Well — er — goodnight. Miss Armfeldt, thank you for your cooperation.

(FREDRIK takes the wet bundle from DESIRÉE and exits)

CARL-MAGNUS *(Sings, to himself)*:

She wouldn't . . .

Therefore they didn't . . .

So then it wasn't . . .

Not unless it . . .

Would she?

She doesn't . . .

God knows she needn't . . .

Therefore it's not.

He'd never . . .

Therefore they haven't . . .

Which makes the question absolutely . . .

Could he?

She daren't . . .

Therefore I mustn't . . .

What utter rot!

Fidelity is more than mere display,

It's what a man expects from life.

*(The unit that DESIRÉE is sitting on starts to ride off as
CHARLOTTE, seated at her breakfast table, rides on)*

Fidelity like mine to Desirée

And Charlotte, my devoted wife.

Scene 5

BREAKFAST ROOM IN MALCOLM COUNTRY HOUSE

Breakfast for one (CHARLOTTE'S) — and an extra coffee cup — stands on an elegant little table. Music under.

CHARLOTTE: How was Miss Desirée Armfeldt? In good health, I trust?

CARL-MAGNUS: Charlotte, my dear. I have exactly five hours.

CHARLOTTE (*Dead pan*): Five hours this time? Last time it was four. I'm gaining ground.

CARL-MAGNUS (*Pre-occupied*): She had a visitor. A lawyer in a nightshirt.

CHARLOTTE: Now, *that* I find interesting. What did you do?

CARL-MAGNUS: Threw him out.

CHARLOTTE: In a nightshirt?

CARL-MAGNUS: In *my* nightshirt.

CHARLOTTE: What sort of lawyer? Corporation, maritime, criminal — testamentary?

CARL-MAGNUS: Didn't your sister's little school friend Anne Sorensen marry a Fredrik Eggerman?

CHARLOTTE: Yes, she did.

CARL-MAGNUS: Fredrik Egerman . . .

(Sings)

The papers,
He mentioned papers,
Some legal papers
Which I didn't see there . . .
Where were they,
The goddamn papers
She had to sign?

What nonsense!
He brought her papers,
They were important,
So he had to be there . . .
I'll kill him . . .
Why should I bother?
The woman's mine!

Besides, no matter what one might infer,
One must have faith to some degree.
The least that I can do is trust in her
The way that Charlotte trusts in me.

(Speaks)

What are you planning to do today?

CHARLOTTE: *After the five hours?*

CARL-MAGNUS: Right now. I need a little sleep.

CHARLOTTE: Ah! I see. In that case, my plans will have to be changed. What will I do?

(Sudden mock radiance)

I know! Nothing!

CARL-MAGNUS: Why don't you pay a visit to Marta's little school friend?

CHARLOTTE: Ah ha!

CARL-MAGNUS: She probably has no idea what *her* husband's up to.

CHARLOTTE: And I could enlighten her. Poor Carl-Magnus, are you *that* jealous?

CARL-MAGNUS: A civilized man can tolerate his wife's infidelity, but when it comes to his mistress, a man becomes a tiger.

CHARLOTTE: As opposed, of course, to a goat in rut. Ah, well, if I'm back in two hours, that still leaves us three hours. Right?

CARL-MAGNUS (*Unexpectedly smiling*): You're a good wife, Charlotte. The best.

CHARLOTTE: That's a comforting thought to take with me to town, dear. It just may keep me from cutting my throat on the tram.

(CHARLOTTE *exits*)

CARL-MAGNUS:

Capable, pliable . . .
Women, women . . .
Undemanding and reliable,
Knowing their place.
Insufferable, yes, but gentle,
Their weaknesses are incidental,
A functional but ornamental
(*Sips coffee*)

Race.
Durable, sensible . . .
Women, women . . .
Very nearly indispensable
Creatures of grace.
God knows the foolishness about them,

But if one had to live without them,
The world would surely be a poorer,
If purer,
Place.

The hip-bath . . .
About that hip-bath . . .
How can you slip and trip into a hip-bath?
The papers . . .
Where were the papers?
Of course, he might have taken back the papers . . .
She wouldn't . . .
Therefore they didn't . . .
The woman's mine!

(He strides off)

Scene 6

THE EGERMAN ROOMS

*In the bedroom, ANNE, in a negligee, sits on the bed while
PETRA combs her hair.*

ANNE: Oh, that's delicious. I could purr. Having your hair
brushed is gloriously sensual, isn't it?

PETRA: I can think of more sensual things.

ANNE (*Giggles, then suddenly serious*): Are you a virgin, Petra?

PETRA: God forbid.

ANNE (*Sudden impulse*): I am.

PETRA: I know.

ANNE (*Astonished and flustered*): How on earth can you tell?

PETRA: Your skin, something in your eyes.

ANNE: Can everyone see it?

PETRA: I wouldn't think so.

ANNE: Well, that's a relief.

(Giggles)

How old were you when —

PETRA: Sixteen.

ANNE: It must have been terrifying, wasn't it? *And disgusting.*

PETRA: Disgusting? It was more fun than the roly-coaster at the fair.

ANNE: Henrik says that almost everything that's fun is automatically vicious. It's so depressing.

PETRA: Oh him! Poor little puppy dog!

ANNE (*Suddenly imperious*): Don't you dare talk about your employer's son that way.

PETRA: Sorry, Ma'am.

ANNE: I forbid anyone in this house to tease Henrik.

(Giggles again)

Except me.

(ANNE goes to the vanity, sits, opens the top of her robe, studies her reflection in the table-mirror)

It's quite a good body, isn't it?

PETRA: Nothing wrong there.

ANNE: Is it as good as yours?

(Laughing, she turns and pulls at PETRA, trying to undo PETRA's uniform)

Let me see!

(For a moment, PETRA is shocked. Laughing, ANNE continues; PETRA starts laughing too. They begin struggling playfully together)

If I was a boy, would I prefer you or me? Tell me, tell me!

(Still laughing and struggling they stumble across the room and collapse in a heap on the bed)

You're a boy! You're a boy!

PETRA (*Laughing*): God forbid!

(As they struggle, the front doorbell rings)

ANNE (*Sits up*): Run, Petra, run. Answer it.

(PETRA climbs over ANNE to get off of the bed. As PETRA hurries into the parlor and exits to answer the door, ANNE peers at herself in the mirror)

Oh dear, oh dear, my hair! My — everything!

(PETRA returns to the parlor with CHARLOTTE)

PETRA: Please have a seat, Countess. Madame will be with you in a minute.

(CHARLOTTE looks around the room — particularly at FREDRIK's picture. PETRA hurries into the bedroom. Hissing)
It's a Countess!

ANNE: A Countess?

PETRA: Very grand.

ANNE: How thrilling! Who on earth can she be?

(After a final touch at the mirror, she draws herself up with great dignity and, with PETRA behind her, sweeps into the parlor. At the door, she stops and stares. Then delighted, runs to CHARLOTTE)

Charlotte Olafsson! It is, isn't it? Marta's big sister who married that magnificent Count Something or Other — and I was a flower girl at the wedding.

CHARLOTTE: Unhappily without a time-bomb in your Lilly-of-the-Valley bouquet.

ANNE (*Laughing*): Oh, Charlotte, you always did say the most amusing things.

CHARLOTTE: I still do. I frequently laugh myself to sleep contemplating my own future.

ANNE: Petra. Ice, lemonade, cookies.

(PETRA leaves. Pause)

CHARLOTTE: Well, dear, how are you? And how is your marriage working out?

ANNE: I'm in bliss. I have all the dresses in the world and a maid to take care of me and this charming house and a husband who spoils me shamelessly.

CHARLOTTE: That list, I trust, is in diminishing order of priority.

ANNE: How dreadful you are! Of course it isn't. And how's dear Marta?

CHARLOTTE: Ecstatic. Dear Marta has renounced men and is teaching gymnastics in a school for retarded girls in Bettelheim. Which brings me or . . .

(Glancing at a little watch on her bosom)

. . . rather should bring me, as my time is strictly limited — to the subject of men. How do you rate your husband as a man?

ANNE: I — don't quite know what you mean.

CHARLOTTE: I will give you an example. As a man, my husband could be rated as a louse, a bastard, a conceited, puffed-up, adulterous egomaniac. He constantly makes me do the most degrading, the most humiliating things like . . . like . . .

(Her composure starts to crumble. She opens a little pocket-book and fumbles)

ANNE: Like?

CHARLOTTE: Like . . .

(Taking tiny handkerchief from purse, dabbing at her nose and bursting into tears)

Oh, why do I put up with it? Why do I let him treat me like — like an intimidated corporal in his regiment? Why? Why? Why? I'll tell you why. I despise him! I hate

him! I *love* him! Oh damn that woman! May she rot forever in some infernal dressing room with lipstick of fire and scalding mascara! Let every billboard in hell eternally announce: Desirée Armfeldt in — in — in *The Wild Duck*!

(Abandons herself to tears)

ANNE: Desirée Armfeldt? But what has she done to you?

CHARLOTTE: What has she *not* done? Enslaved my husband — enslaved yours . . .

ANNE: Fredrik!

CHARLOTTE: He was there last night in her bedroom — in a nightshirt. My husband threw him out into the street and he's insanely jealous. He told me to come here and tell you . . . and I'm actually *telling* you! Oh what a monster I've become!

ANNE: Charlotte, is that the truth? Fredrik was there — in a nightshirt?

(CHARLOTTE sobs)

CHARLOTTE: My husband's nightshirt!

ANNE: Oh I knew it! I was sure he'd met her before. And when she *smiled* at us in the theater . . .

(She begins to weep)

CHARLOTTE: Poor Anne!

(PETRA enters with the tray of lemonade and cookies and stands gazing at the two women in astonishment)

PETRA: The lemonade, Ma'am.

ANNE: *(Looking up, controlling herself with a great effort, to the weeping CHARLOTTE)*: Lemonade, Charlotte?

CHARLOTTE *(Looking up too, seeing the lemonade)*: Lemonade! It would choke me!

(Sings)

Every day a little death
In the parlor, in the bed,
In the curtains, in the silver,
In the buttons, in the bread.
Every day a little sting
In the heart and in the head.
Every move and every breath,
And you hardly feel a thing,
Brings a perfect little death.

He smiles sweetly, strokes my hair,
Says he misses me.
I would murder him right there,
But first I die.
He talks softly of his wars,
And his horses
And his whores,
I think love's a dirty business!

ANNE: So do I!

CHARLOTTE:
I'm before him
On my knees
And he kisses me.

ANNE:
So do I . . .

CHARLOTTE:
He assumes I'll lose my reason,
And I do.
Men are stupid, men are vain,
Love's disgusting, love's insane,
A humiliating business!

ANNE:
Oh, how true!

CHARLOTTE:
Ah, well . . .
Every day a little death,

ANNE:

Every day a little death,

CHARLOTTE:

In the parlor, in the bed,

ANNE:

On the lips and in the eyes,

CHARLOTTE:

In the curtains,

In the silver,

In the buttons,

In the bread.

Every day a little sting

In the heart

And in the head.

Every move and

Every breath,

And you hardly feel a

Thing,

Brings a perfect little

Death.

(After the number, HENRIK enters, taking off his hat and scarf)

HENRIK: Oh, excuse me.

ANNE *(Trying to rise to the occasion)*: Charlotte, this is Henrik Egerman.

HENRIK *(Bows and offers his hand)*: I am happy to make your acquaintance, Madame.

CHARLOTTE: Happy! Who could ever be happy to meet *me*?

(Holding HENRIK's hand, she rises and then drifts out. ANNE falls back sobbing on the couch. HENRIK stands, gazing at her)

HENRIK: Anne, what is it?

ANNE: Nothing.

HENRIK: But what did that woman say to you?

ANNE: Nothing, nothing at all.

HENRIK: That can't be true.

ANNE: It is! It is! She — she merely told me that Marta Olafsson, my dearest friend from school is — teaching gymnastics . . .

(Bursts into tears again, falls into HENRIK's arms. HENRIK puts his arms around her slowly, cautiously)

HENRIK: Anne! Poor Anne! If you knew how it destroys me to see you unhappy.

ANNE: I am not unhappy!

HENRIK: You know. You must know. Ever since you married Father, you've been more precious to me than . . .

ANNE *(Pulls back, suddenly giggling through her tears)*: . . . Martin Luther?

(HENRIK, cut to the quick, jumps up)

HENRIK: Can you laugh at me even now?

ANNE *(Rises)*: Oh dear, I'm sorry. Perhaps, after all, I am a totally frivolous woman with ice for a heart. Am I, Henrik?
Am I?

(PETRA enters)

MADAME ARMFELDT *(Off)*: Seven of Hearts on the Eight of Spades.

ANNE *(Laughing again)*: Silly Henrik, get your book, quick,

and denounce the wickedness of the world to me for at least a half an hour.

(ANNE runs off as the bedroom and parlor go. HENRIK follows her, as does PETRA, carrying the lemonade tray)

MADAME ARMFELDT (*Off*): The Ten of Hearts! Who needs the Ten of Hearts!!

Scene 7

ARMFELDT TERRACE

MADAME ARMFELDT *is playing solitaire, with FRID standing behind her. FREDRIKA sits at the piano, playing scales.*

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

FREDRIKA: Yes, Grandmother.

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

FREDRIKA: Why not, Grandmother?

MADAME ARMFELDT: They are all insane.

FREDRIKA: All of them?

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

DESIRÉE (*Off*): Who's home?

FREDRIKA (*Jumps up, thrilled*): Mother!

(DESIRÉE enters and FREDRIKA rushes to her, throwing herself into DESIRÉE's arms)

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

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

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

MADAME ARMFELDT: Yes.

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

MADAME ARMFELDT: If you've come to take Fredrika back, the answer is no. I do not object to the immorality of your life, merely to its sloppiness. Since I have been tidy enough to have acquired a sizeable mansion with a fleet of servants, it is only common sense that my granddaughter should reap the advantages of it.

(*To FREDRIKA*)

Isn't that so, child?

FREDRIKA: I really don't know, Grandmother.

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

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

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

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

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

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

MADAME ARMFELDT: I am deeply suspicious, but very well.

DESIRÉE (*Producing a piece of paper*): Here's the address.

MADAME ARMFELDT (*Taking it*): I shall send 'round a formal invitation by hand.

(She snaps her fingers for FRID. As he wheels her off)

Needless to say, I shall be polite to your guests. However, they will not be served my best champagne. I am saving that for my funeral.

(FREDRIKA runs to DESIRÉE; they embrace, and freeze in that pose. We see, in another area, PETRA bringing ANNE an invitation on a small silver tray)

PETRA:

Look, Ma'am,
An invitation.
Here, Ma'am,
Delivered by hand.
And, Ma'am,
I notice the station-
ery's engraved and very grand.

ANNE:

Petra, how too exciting!
Just when I need it!
Petra, such elegant writing,
So chic you hardly can read it.
What do you think?
Who can it be?
Even the ink —
No, here, let me . . .
"Your presence . . ."

Just think of it, Petra!
"Is kindly . . ."
It's at a chateau!
"Requested . . ."
Et cet'ra, et cet'ra,
". . . Madame Leonora Armf —"
Oh, no!
A weekend in the country!

PETRA:
We're invited?

ANNE:
What a horrible plot!
A weekend in the country!

PETRA:
I'm excited.

ANNE:
No, you're not!

PETRA:
A weekend in the country!
Just imagine!

ANNE:
It's completely depraved.

PETRA:
A weekend in the country!

ANNE:
It's insulting!

PETRA:
It's engraved.

ANNE:
It's that woman,
It's that Armfeldt . . .

PETRA:

Oh, the actress . . .

ANNE:

No, the ghoul.
She may hope to
Make her charm felt,
But she's mad if she thinks
I would be such a fool
As to weekend in the country!

PETRA (*Ironically*):

How insulting!

ANNE:

And I've nothing to wear!

BOTH:

A weekend in the country!

ANNE:

Here!

(ANNE gives the invitation back to PETRA)

The last place I'm going is there!

(ANNE and PETRA exit. DESIRÉE and FREDRIKA unfreeze
and begin to move downstage)

DESIRÉE: Well, dear, are you happy here?

FREDRIKA: Yes. I think so. But I miss us.

DESIRÉE: Oh, so do I!

(Pause)

Darling, how would you feel if we had a home of our very own with me only acting when I felt like it — and a man who would make you a spectacular father?

FREDRIKA: Oh I see. The lawyer! Mr. Egerman!

DESIRÉE: Dear child, you're uncanny.

(DESIRÉE and FREDRIKA freeze once again. FREDRIK, ANNE,
and PETRA enter)

PETRA (To FREDRIK):

Guess what, an invitation!

ANNE:

Guess who, begins with an "A" . . .

Armfeldt —

Is that a relation

To the decrepit Desirée?

PETRA:

Guess when we're asked to go, sir —

See, sir, the date there?

Guess where — a fancy chateau, sir!

ANNE:

Guess, too, who's lying in wait there,

Setting her traps,

Fixing her face —

FREDRIK:

Darling,

Perhaps a change of pace . . .

ANNE:

Oh, no!

FREDRIK:

A weekend in the country

Would be charming,

And the air would be fresh.

ANNE:

A weekend

With that woman . . .

FREDRIK:

In the country . . .

ANNE:

In the flesh!

FREDRIK:

I've some business
With her mother.

PETRA:

See, it's business!

ANNE:

. . . Oh, no doubt!
But the business
With her mother
Would be hardly the business I'd worry about.

FREDRIK *and* PETRA:

Just a weekend in the country,

FREDRIK:

Smelling jasmine . . .

ANNE:

Watching little things grow.

FREDRIK *and* PETRA:

A weekend in the country . . .

ANNE:

Go!

FREDRIK:

My darling,
We'll simply say no.

ANNE:

Oh.

(They exit. FREDRIKA and DESIRÉE unfreeze)

FREDRIKA: Oh, Mother, I know it's none of my business, but
. . . that dragoon you wrote me about — with the mustache?

DESIRÉE: Oh, him! What I ever saw in him astounds me.

He's a tin soldier — arms, legs, brain — tin, tin, tin!
(*They freeze on the downstage bench. ANNE and CHARLOTTE enter*)

ANNE:

A weekend!

CHARLOTTE:

How very amusing.

ANNE:

A weekend!

CHARLOTTE:

But also inept.

ANNE:

A weekend!
Of course, we're refusing.

CHARLOTTE:

Au contraire,
You must accept.

ANNE:

Oh, no!

CHARLOTTE:

A weekend in the country . . .

ANNE:

But it's frightful!

CHARLOTTE:

No, you don't understand.
A weekend in the country
Is delightful
If it's planned.
Wear your hair down
And a flower,
Don't use make-up,

Dress in white.
She'll grow older
By the hour
And be hopelessly shattered by
Saturday night.
Spend a weekend in the country.

ANNE:

We'll accept it!

CHARLOTTE:

I'd a feeling
You would.

BOTH:

A weekend in the country!

ANNE:

Yes, it's only polite that we should.

CHARLOTTE:

Good.

(ANNE and CHARLOTTE disappear. DESIRÉE and FREDRIKA unfreeze)

FREDRIKA: Count Malcolm's insanely jealous, isn't he? You don't suppose he'll come galloping up on a black stallion, brandishing a sword?

DESIRÉE: Oh dear, I hadn't thought of that. But no, no, thank heavens. It's his wife's birthday this weekend — sacred to domesticity. At least we're safe from him.

(They freeze. CARL-MAGNUS enters; CHARLOTTE follows opposite to meet him)

CARL-MAGNUS:

Well?

CHARLOTTE:

I've an intriguing little social item.

CARL-MAGNUS:

What?

CHARLOTTE:

Out at the Armfeldt family manse.

CARL-MAGNUS:

Well, what?

CHARLOTTE:

Mercy a weekend,
Still I thought it might am-
Use you to know who's invited to go,
This time with his pants.

CARL-MAGNUS:

You don't mean — ?

CHARLOTTE:

I'll give you three guesses.

CARL-MAGNUS:

She wouldn't!

CHARLOTTE:

Reduce it to two.

CARL-MAGNUS:

It can't be . . .

CHARLOTTE:

It nevertheless is . . .

CARL-MAGNUS:

Egerman!

CHARLOTTE:

Right! Score one for you.

CARL-MAGNUS (*Triumphantly*):

Aha!

CHARLOTTE (*Triumphantly*):

Aha!

CARL-MAGNUS (*Thoughtfully*):

Aha!

CHARLOTTE (*Worriedly*):

Aha?

CARL-MAGNUS:

A weekend in the country . . .

We should try it —

CHARLOTTE:

How I wish we'd been asked.

CARL-MAGNUS:

A weekend in the country . . .

Peace and quiet —

CHARLOTTE:

We'll go masked.

CARL-MAGNUS:

A weekend in the country . . .

CHARLOTTE:

Uninvited —

They'll consider it odd.

CARL-MAGNUS:

A weekend in the country —

I'm delighted!

CHARLOTTE:

Oh, my God.

CARL-MAGNUS:

And the shooting should be pleasant

If the weather's not too rough.

Happy Birthday,

It's your present.

CHARLOTTE:

But —

CARL-MAGNUS:

You haven't been getting out nearly enough,
And a weekend in the country —

CHARLOTTE:

It's perverted!

CARL-MAGNUS:

Pack my quiver and bow.

BOTH:

A weekend in the country —

CARL-MAGNUS:

At exactly 2:30, we go.

CHARLOTTE:

We can't.

CARL-MAGNUS:

We shall.

CHARLOTTE:

We shan't.

CARL-MAGNUS:

I'm getting the car
And we're motoring down.

CHARLOTTE:

Yes, I'm certain you are
And I'm staying in town.

(ANNE, FREDRIK, and PETRA appear)

CARL-MAGNUS:

Go and pack my suits!

ANNE:

We'll go.

CHARLOTTE:

I won't!

PETRA:

Oh, good!

CARL-MAGNUS:
My boots!
Pack everything I own
That shoots.

CHARLOTTE:
No!

CARL-MAGNUS:
Charlotte!

CHARLOTTE:
I'm thinking it out.

CARL-MAGNUS:
Charlotte!

CHARLOTTE:
There's no need to shout.

CARL-MAGNUS:
Charlotte!

CHARLOTTE:
All right, then,

BOTH:
We're off on our way,

FREDRIK:
We will?

ANNE:
We should.
Pack everything white.

PETRA:
Ma'am, it's wonderful news!

FREDRIK:
Are you sure it's all right?

ANNE:
We'd be rude to refuse.

FREDRIK:
Then we're off!

PETRA:
We are?

FREDRIK:
We'll take the car.

ALL THREE:
We'll bring champagne
And caviar!
We're off on our way,

What a beautiful day
For

What a beautiful day
For

ALL:

A weekend in the country,
How amusing,
How delightfully droll.
A weekend in the country
While we're losing our control.
A weekend in the country,
How enchanting
On the manicured lawns.
A weekend in the country,
With the panting and the yawns.
With the crickets and the pheasants
And the orchards and the hay,
With the servants and the peasants,
We'll be laying our plans
While we're playing croquet
For a weekend in the country,
So inactive that one has to lie down.
A weekend in the country
Where . . .

(HENRIK *enters*)

HENRIK:

A weekend in the country,
The bees in their hives,
The shallow, worldly figures,
The frivolous lives.
The devil's companions
Know not whom they serve.
It might be instructive
To observe.

(DESIRÉE and FREDRIKA *unfreeze*)

DESIRÉE: However, there is one tiny snag.

FREDRIKA: A snag?

DESIRÉE: Lawyer Egerman is married.

FREDRIKA: That could be considered a snag.

DESIRÉE: Don't worry, my darling. I was not raised by your Grandmother for nothing.

(DESIRÉE holds out her arm, and FREDRIKA runs to her. Together, they walk upstage as we see, for the first time, the facade of the Armfeldt mansion. FRID stands at the door, and once DESIRÉE and FREDRIKA have entered, he closes it behind them)

CARL-MAGNUS:
Charlotte!

FREDRIK:
We're off!

HENRIK:
A weekend in the
Country,
The bees in their
Hives . . .

CHARLOTTE:
I'm thinking it out.

PETRA:
We are?

CARL-MAGNUS:
Charlotte!

FREDRIK and ANNE:
We'll take the car.

CHARLOTTE:
There's no need
To shout.

ALL THREE:
We'll bring
Champagne and
Caviar!

MRS. SEGSTROM and
MRS. ANDERSSEN:
We're off! We are?
We'll take the car.

MRS. NORDSTROM
and MR. ERLANSON:
A weekend of
playing
Croquet
A weekend of
strolling
The lawns,

MR. LINDQUIST:
Confiding our
motives

And hiding our
yawns,

MRS. ANDERSSEN and
MRS. SEGSTROM:
We'll

Bring
Champagne

And caviar!

CARL-MAGNUS, CHARLOTTE,
FREDRIK, ANNE, *and* PETRA:
We're off and away,
What a beautiful day!

QUINTET:
The weather is spectacular!

ALL:

With riotous laughter
We quietly suffer
The season in town,
Which is reason enough for
A weekend in the country,
How amusing,
How delightfully droll!
A weekend in the country,
While we're losing our control.
A weekend in the country,
How enchanting
On the manicured lawns.
A weekend in the country,
With the panting and the yawns.
With the crickets and the pheasants
And the orchards and the hay,
With the servants and the peasants,
We'll be laying our plans
While we're playing croquet
For a weekend in the country,
So inactive that one has to lie down.
A weekend in the country
Where . . .
We're twice as upset as in
Twice as upset as in
Twice as upset as in
Twice as upset as in . . .

(All, simultaneously)

QUINTET:
Twice as upset as in,

Twice as upset as in,
Twice as upset as in,
Twice as upset as in,
Twice as upset as in,
Twice as upset as in,
Twice as upset as in,
Twice as upset as in,
Twice as upset as in —

ANNE:

Twice as upset as in town.
A weekend!
A weekend!
A weekend!
A weekend!
A weekend!
A weekend out of —

CHARLOTTE:

Twice as upset . . .
We're uninvited,
Uninvited,
Uninvited —
We should stay in —

PETRA:

Twice as upset . . .
A weekend!
A weekend!
A weekend!
A weekend!
A weekend!
A weekend!
A weekend out of —

ALL:

Town!

FREDRIK:

Twice as upset . . .
Are you sure you want to go?
Are you sure you want to go?
Are you sure you want to go
Away and leave,
Go and leave — ?

CARL-MAGNUS:

Twice as upset . . .
Charlotte, we're going,
Charlotte, we're going,
Charlotte, we're going,
Charlotte, out of —

HENRIK:

Shallow, worldly
People going,
Shallow people
Going out of —

(*Curtain*)

ACT II

Entr'acte

After a musical entr'acte, the QUINTET enters.

MRS. ANDERSSEN:

The sun sits low,
Diffusing its usual glow.
Five o'clock . . .
Twilight . . .
Vespers sound,
And it's six o'clock . . .
Twilight
All around,

ALL:

But the sun sits low,
As low as it's going to go.

MR. ERLANSON:

Eight o'clock . . .

MR. LINDQUIST:

Twilight . . .

WOMEN:

How enthralling!

MR. ERLANSON:

It's nine o'clock . . .

MR. LINDQUIST:

Twilight . . .

WOMEN:

Slowly crawling

Towards

MR. ERLANSON:

Ten o'clock . . .

MR. LINDQUIST:

Twilight . . .

WOMEN:

Crickets calling,

ALL:

The vespers ring,

The nightingale's waiting to sing.

The rest of us wait on a string.

Perpetual sunset

Is rather an unset-

Tling thing.

(The show curtain rises on Scene 1)

Scene 1

THE ARMFELDT LAWN

FRID *is serving champagne to DESIRÉE and MALLA. FREDRIKA, upstage, is playing croquet with the help of BERTRAND, MADAME ARMFELDT's page. FRID returns to MADAME ARMFELDT. OSA, MADAME ARMFELDT's maid, passes with a tray of cookies, and FREDRIKA takes one. DESIRÉE gets a mallet and begins to play croquet.*

MADAME ARMFELDT: To lose a lover or even a husband or two during the course of one's life can be vexing. But to lose one's teeth is a catastrophe. Bear that in mind, child, as you chomp so recklessly into that ginger snap.

FREDRIKA: Very well, Grandmother.

MADAME ARMFELDT (*Holding up her glass to FRID*): More champagne, Frid.

(FRID *gets a fresh bottle*)

One bottle the less of the Mumms '87 will not, I hope, diminish the hilarity at my wake.

(DESIRÉE *sits on the rise. FRID opens the bottle with a loud pop!*)

QUINTET:

The sun won't set.

It's useless to hope or to fret.
It's dark as it's going to get.
The hands on the clock turn,
But don't sing a nocturne
Just yet.

(Off, we hear a car-horn)

DESIRÉE: They're coming!

MADAME ARMFELDT: Nonsense!

DESIRÉE: But they are!

MADAME ARMFELDT: Impossible. No guest with the slightest grasp of what is seemly would arrive before five-fifteen on a Friday afternoon.

(We hear the car-horn again, and this time it's louder)

Good God, you're right!

DESIRÉE: Malla!

(DESIRÉE runs up into the house, followed closely by MALLA and OSA. BERTRAND exits with the croquet set)

MADAME ARMFELDT: Frid! We cannot be caught squatting on the ground like Bohemians!

(FRID scoops her up and carries her into the house. FREDRIKA follows. The QUINTET runs on to collect the furniture and props left on stage. They freeze for a moment at the sound of the car-horn, and then all run off. A beat later, CARL-MAGNUS's sports car drives on. CARL-MAGNUS is driving; CHARLOTTE sits beside him. CARL-MAGNUS stops the car and gets out)

CHARLOTTE *(Looking around)*: Happy birthday to me!

CARL-MAGNUS *(Inspecting a wheel)*: What was that?

CHARLOTTE: I merely said . . . oh, never mind.

CARL-MAGNUS: If that damn lawyer thinks he's going to get away with something — Haha!

CHARLOTTE: Haha! indeed, dear.

(CARL-MAGNUS helps CHARLOTTE out of the car)

CARL-MAGNUS: Watch him, Charlotte. Watch them both like
a . . .

CHARLOTTE: Hawk. I know, dear. You're a tiger, I'm a hawk.
We're our own zoo.

(As she speaks, a touring car sweeps on from the opposite side. It is driven rather erratically by FREDRIK with ANNE beside him. HENRIK and PETRA are in the back seat with a pile of luggage. The car only just misses CARL-MAGNUS's car as it shudders to a stop. Recognition comes. FREDRIK gets out of his car)

FREDRIK: Good day, sir. I was not aware that you were to be a fellow guest.

(FREDRIK opens the car door and helps ANNE out. HENRIK helps PETRA out of the back seat)

CARL-MAGNUS: Neither is Miss Armfeldt. I hope our arrival will in no way inconvenience you.

FREDRIK: Not at all, not at all. I am happy to see that you have gotten through yet another week without any serious wounds.

CARL-MAGNUS: What's that? Wounds, sir?

FREDRIK: Rapier? Bow and arrow? Blow dart?

(At this point, ANNE and CHARLOTTE see each other. They run together. On the way, ANNE drops her handkerchief)

ANNE *(Hissing)*:

So you did come?

(Pause)

Talk later.

CHARLOTTE *(Hissing)*:

So you did come?

(Pause)

Talk later.

(HENRIK, tremendously solicitous, holds out the handkerchief to ANNE)

HENRIK: Your handkerchief, Anne.

ANNE (*Taking it, moving away*): Thank you.

HENRIK: You must have dropped it.

(PETRA taps HENRIK on the shoulder)

PETRA: Your book, Master Henrik.

HENRIK (*Taking it*): Thank you.

PETRA (*With soupy mock-solicitousness*): You must have dropped it.

(PETRA moves to get the luggage. FRID, seeing and immediately appreciating PETRA, goes to her)

FRID: Here. Let me.

PETRA (*Handing him two suitcases*): Let you — what?

(PETRA, with one suitcase, enters the house, followed by FRID, who is carrying two. HENRIK is moodily drifting away as DESIRÉE emerges from the house. She is followed by FREDRIKA, and smiling dazzlingly for the EGERMANS)

DESIRÉE: Ah, here you all are . . .

(CARL-MAGNUS clears his throat noisily. The smile dies)

Count Malcolm!

CARL-MAGNUS (*Bowing frigidly over her hand*): My wife and I were in the neighborhood to visit her cousin. Unhappily, on arrival, we discovered the chateau was quarantined for . . .

(Snaps his fingers at CHARLOTTE)

CHARLOTTE: Plague.

CARL-MAGNUS: Since I am due back to maneuvers by dawn, we venture to propose ourselves for the night.

DESIRÉE (*Concealing no little fluster*): Well, yes. Indeed. Why not? Mother will be honored! — surprised, but honored.

(DESIRÉE crosses to CHARLOTTE, and sweeps past her, barely touching her hand)

Countess Malcolm, I presume?

CHARLOTTE (*As DESIRÉE sweeps past her*): You do indeed, Miss Armfeldt.

DESIRÉE: And Mr. Eggerman! How kind of you all to come. Mother will be overjoyed.

FREDRIK (*Bending over her hand*): It is your mother who is kind in inviting us. Allow me to present my rather anti-social son, Henrik.

(Points to the drifting away HENRIK, who turns to acknowledge her)

And this is my wife.

(He presents ANNE)

DESIRÉE: How do you do?

ANNE (*Icy*): How do you do?

DESIRÉE (*Indicating FREDRIKA*): And this is my daughter.

(Pause)

You must all be exhausted after your journeys; my daughter will show you to your rooms. Mother likes dinner at nine.

(FREDRIKA leads them into the house: CHARLOTTE, then ANNE, then HENRIK, then OSA. FREDRIKA returns to the terrace. Simultaneously, both FREDRIK and CARL-MAGNUS turn, both with the same idea: to get DESIRÉE alone)

CARL-MAGNUS and FREDRIK: Where shall I put the car?

(They exchange a hostile glare)

DESIRÉE (*Even more flustered*): Ah, the cars, the cars! Now let me see.

CARL-MAGNUS (*Hissing*): I must speak to you at once!

DESIRÉE (*Whispering*): Later.

(Out loud)

How about the stables? They're straight ahead.

FREDRIK (*Hissing*): I must speak to you at once!

DESIRÉE (*Whispering*): Later.

(*Reassured, CARL-MAGNUS and FREDRIK return to their cars.
Calling after him*)

You can't miss them, Mr. Egerman. Just look for the weather vane. A huge tin cockerel.

(*Spinning to FREDRIKA, pulling her downstage*)

Disaster, darling!

FREDRIKA: But what are you going to do? The way he glared at Mr. Egerman! He'll kill him!

DESIRÉE: Let us keep calm.

(*FREDRIK and CARL-MAGNUS, both with auto-cranks in hand, start back toward DESIRÉE*)

FREDRIKA (*Noticing*): They're coming back!

DESIRÉE (*Totally losing her calm*): Oh no! Oh God!

(*DESIRÉE starts to run up to the house*)

FREDRIKA (*Calling after her*): But what should I say?

DESIRÉE: Anything!

(*She runs into the house, as FREDRIK and CARL-MAGNUS, gazing after DESIRÉE in astonishment, come up to FREDRIKA*)

FREDRIKA (*On the spot but gracious, seemingly composed*): Mr. Egerman — Count Malcolm . . . Mother told me to tell you that she suddenly . . .

(*She breaks*)

. . . oh dear, oh dear.

(*She scurries up into the house. The two men react, then, ignoring each other, return to their cars. They each crank their cars and get into them. The cars back out offstage.*)

MR. ERLANSON and MRS. NORDSTROM enter)

MRS. NORDSTROM:

The sun sits low

And the vespers ring,

MR. ERLANSON:

And the shadows grow
And the crickets sing,
And it's . . .

MRS. NORDSTROM:

Look! Is that the moon?

MR. ERLANSON:

Yes.
What a lovely afternoon!

MRS. NORDSTROM:

Yes.

MR. ERLANSON:

The evening air
Doesn't feel quite right

MRS. NORDSTROM:

In the not-quite glare
Of the not-quite night,
And it's . . .
Wait! Is that a star?

MR. ERLANSON:

No.
Just the glow of a cigar.

MRS. NORDSTROM:

Oh.

(They exit)

Scene 2

ANOTHER PART OF THE GARDEN

ANNE *leads* CHARLOTTE *on*. *Both women carry parasols.*

ANNE: . . . After I spoke to you, I thought: I will go! I won't! Then I thought: Why not? We'll go to that awful woman's house and I'll say to her: "How dare you try to steal my husband? At your age you should have acquired at least some moral sense." And then — then in the motorcar coming here, I thought: Oh dear, I'll never have the courage and maybe it's all my fault. And oh, I want to go home.

(Bursts into sobs)

CHARLOTTE: Have no fears. Miss Armfeldt has met her match.

ANNE *(Astonished, even through tears)*: She has? Who?

CHARLOTTE: Me. When I told my husband, he instantly became a tiger — his word, of course — and then, as if from heaven, a plan flashed into my mind.

(Pause)

Do you feel up to hearing my plan, dear?

(ANNE gives a little nod)

I shall make love to your husband.

ANNE (*Aghast*): You too?

CHARLOTTE: Confident of my own charms, I shall throw myself into your husband's arms. He will succumb. Why not? Carl-Magnus, in a storm of jealousy, will beg my forgiveness and swear eternal fidelity. And as for Miss Desirée Armfeldt, she will be back peddling her dubious commodities elsewhere. At least, that is the plan.

ANNE (*Suddenly forgetful of her tears*): Oh how amusing. How extremely amusing. Poor old Fredrik. And it serves him right, too.

CHARLOTTE: I am not sure I appreciate that remark, dear.
(FREDRIK *appears, walking toward them*)

FREDRIK: Ah, here you are, ladies.

CHARLOTTE (*Sudden devastating smile at FREDRIK*): Oh, Mr. Egerman! If you'll pardon my saying so, that's a simply ravishing cravat.

FREDRIK (*Slightly bewildered*): It is?

CHARLOTTE (*Taking FREDRIK's left arm; ANNE takes his right arm*): I can't remember when I have seen so seductive a cravat.

(*As ANNE suppresses giggles, they all walk off together. As ANNE, CHARLOTTE, and FREDRIK exit, MR. LINDQUIST and MRS. SEGSTROM appear*)

MR. LINDQUIST:

The atmosphere's becoming heady,
The ambiance thrilling,

MRS. SEGSTROM:

The spirit unsteady,
The flesh far too willing.

MR. LINDQUIST:

To be perpetually ready
Is far from fulfilling . . .

MRS. SEGSTROM:

But wait —
The sun
Is dipping.

MR. LINDQUIST:

Where?
You're right.
It's dropping.
Look — !
At last!
It's slipping.

MRS. SEGSTROM:

Sorry,
My mistake,
It's stopping.

(They exit)

Scene 2A

ANOTHER PART OF THE GARDEN

FREDRIKA *enters*.

FREDRIKA: Oh, I do agree that life at times can seem complicated.

(HENRIK *enters behind her*)

HENRIK: Complicated! If only you knew! Oh, Miss . . . Miss . . .

FREDRIKA: Armfeldt. I am not legitimate.

HENRIK: I see. Oh, Miss Armfeldt, all my life, I've made a fiasco of everything. If you knew how poor an opinion I have of myself! If you knew how many times I wish I had been one of the spermatazoa that never reached the womb.

(*He breaks from her*)

There, there! You see? I've done it again!

FREDRIKA: Mr. Egerman, I have toured with mother, you know. I'm broadminded.

HENRIK: You are? Then in that case, might I make a confession to you?

FREDRIKA: Of course.

HENRIK: I hate to burden you on so slight an acquaintance,
but bottling it up inside of me is driving me insane.

(Pause. With great effort)

Oh, Miss Armfeldt, for the past eleven months, although
I am preparing to enter the Ministry, I —

(He can't get it out)

FREDRIKA: What, Mr. Egerman?

HENRIK: I have been madly, hopelessly in love with my step-
mother. Do you realize how many mortal sins that in-
volves? Oh, damn everything to hell! I beg your pardon.

*(They link arms and walk off. MR. LINDQUIST, MRS.
SEGSTROM, MR. ERLANSON, MRS. ANDERSSSEN and MRS.
NORDSTROM enter and sing)*

QUINTET:

The light is pink
And the air is still
And the sun is slinking
Behind the hill.
And when finally it sets,
As finally it must,
When finally it lets
The moon and stars adjust,
When finally we greet the dark
And we're breathing Amen —

MRS. ANDERSSSEN:

Surprise of surprises,
It instantly rises
Again.

(The QUINTET exits)

Scene 3

ARMFELDT TERRACE

Both dressed for dinner, FREDRIK and CARL-MAGNUS are discovered; FREDRIK downstage, CARL-MAGNUS pacing on the porch. FREDRIK has a cigar and a small liqueur glass; CARL-MAGNUS carries a champagne glass.

FREDRIK (*Sings, to himself*):

I should never have
Gone to the theatre.
Then I'd never have come
To the country.
If I never had come
To the country,
Matters might have stayed
As they were.

CARL-MAGNUS (*Nods*): Sir . . .

FREDRIK (*Nods*): Sir . . .

(To himself again)

If she'd only been faded,
If she'd only been fat,
If she'd only been jaded
And bursting with chat,

If she'd only been perfectly awful,
It would have been wonderful.

If . . . if . . .

If she'd been all a-twitter

Or elusively cold,

If she'd only been bitter,

Or better, looked passably old,

If she'd been covered with glitter

Or even been covered with mold,

It would have been wonderful.

But the woman was perfection,

To my deepest dismay.

Well, not quite perfection,

I'm sorry to say.

If the woman were perfection,

She would go away,

And that would be wonderful.

(*To CARL-MAGNUS*)

Sir . . .

CARL-MAGNUS: Sir . . .

If she'd only looked flustered

Or admitted the worst,

If she only had blustered

Or simpered or cursed,

If she weren't so awfully perfect,

It would have been wonderful.

If . . .

If . . .

If she'd tried to be clever,

If she'd started to flinch,

If she'd cried or whatever

A woman would do in a pinch,

If I'd been certain she never

Again could be trusted an inch,

It would have been wonderful.
But the woman was perfection,
Not an action denied,
The kind of perfection
I cannot abide.
If the woman were perfection,
She'd have simply lied,
Which would have been wonderful.

FREDRIK:

If she'd only been vicious . . .

CARL-MAGNUS:

If she'd acted abused . . .

FREDRIK:

Or a bit too delicious . . .

CARL-MAGNUS:

Or been even slightly confused . . .

FREDRIK:

If she had only been sulky . . .

CARL-MAGNUS:

Or bristling . . .

FREDRIK:

Or bulky . . .

CARL-MAGNUS:

Or bruised . . .

BOTH:

It would have been wonderful.

CARL-MAGNUS:

If . . .

BOTH:

If . . .

FREDRIK:

If she'd only been willful . . .

CARL-MAGNUS:

If she only had fled . . .

FREDRIK:

Or a little less skillful . . .

CARL-MAGNUS:

Insulted, insisting . . .

FREDRIK:

In bed . . .

CARL-MAGNUS:

If she had only been fearful . . .

FREDRIK:

Or married . . .

CARL-MAGNUS:

Or tearful . . .

FREDRIK:

Or dead . . .

BOTH:

It would have been wonderful.
But the woman was perfection,
And the prospects are grim.
That lovely perfection
That nothing can dim.
Yes, the woman was perfection,
So I'm here with him . . .

CARL-MAGNUS: Sir . . .

FREDRIK: Sir . . .

BOTH:

It would have been wonderful.

(FREDRIKA enters from the house)

FREDRIKA: Excuse me, Count Malcolm, but Mother says she would like a word with you in the green salon.

(CARL-MAGNUS, *glaring triumphantly at FREDRIK, strides into the house. FREDRIKA stands and grins shyly at FREDRIK, then follows CARL-MAGNUS into the house. DESIRÉE enters*)

DESIRÉE: Fredrik, you wanted a moment alone with me, I believe. Here it is.

FREDRIK (*Puzzled*): But that child said . . .

DESIRÉE: Oh, that was just Fredrika's little stratagem.

FREDRIK: Fredrika? Your child is called Fredrika?

DESIRÉE: Yes.

FREDRIK: Ah!

DESIRÉE: Really, Fredrik, what vanity. As if you were the only Fredrik in the world.

(*Brisk*)

Now, what is it you want to tell me?

FREDRIK: As a matter of fact, I thought you should know that my wife has no inkling of the nightshirt episode. So we should be discreet.

DESIRÉE: Dear Fredrik, of course. I wouldn't dream of giving that enchanting child a moment's anxiety.

FREDRIK: Then you do see her charm?

DESIRÉE: How could anyone miss it? How lovely to see you, Fredrik.

FREDRIK: In spite of Count Malcolm's invasion? You're sure we're not complicating . . .

CARL-MAGNUS (*Off*): Desirée!

FREDRIK: Oh God! Something tells me I should make myself scarce.

CARL-MAGNUS (*Off*): Desirée!

FREDRIK: Later, perhaps?

DESIRÉE: Any time.

FREDRIK: In your room?

DESIRÉE: In my room.

(FREDRIK looks around for a place to hide. He finds the statue, puts his glass on it, and hides behind it. He douses his cigar in another glass resting on the statue)

CARL-MAGNUS (*Comes out of the house*): Desirée!

DESIRÉE (*Calling, excessively sweet*): Here, dear!

CARL-MAGNUS: That child said the green salon.

DESIRÉE: She did? How extraordinary.

CARL-MAGNUS: Where's that goddamn lawyer?

DESIRÉE (*Airy*): Mr. Egerman? Oh, somewhere about, no doubt.

CARL-MAGNUS: What's he doing here anyway?

DESIRÉE: He's visiting my mother, of course. He told you. They're the most devoted old friends.

CARL-MAGNUS: That had better be the truth. If I catch him so much as touching you, I'll call him out — with rapiers!

(*Glares*)

Where is your bedroom? Readily accessible, I trust.

DESIRÉE (*Aghast*): But, Carl-Magnus!

(FRID enters from the house, crosses downstage)

With your wife here . . . !

CARL-MAGNUS: Charlotte is irrelevant. I shall visit your bedroom at the earliest opportunity tonight.

FRID: Madame, Count Malcolm! Dinner is served.

(As he moves past them to pick up FREDRIK's glass, he sees FREDRIK behind the statue. Totally unaware of complications)

Dinner is served, Mr. Egerman.

(FRID exits up into the house)

DESIRÉE *(Rising to it)*: Ah, there you are, Mr. Egerman!

(FREDRIK comes out from behind the statue, laughing)

Gentlemen, shall we proceed?

(Gives one arm to each as they start up into the house and freeze in place)

Scene 4

THE DINING ROOM

As the dining room table and guests come on, MRS. NORDSTROM, MRS. SEGSTROM and MRS. ANDERSSSEN sing.

MRS. NORDSTROM:

Perpetual antici-
pation is
Good for the soul
But it's bad for the
heart.
It's very good for
practicing

Self-control.
It's very good for
Morals,
But bad for morale.
It's very bad.
It can lead to

Going quite mad.
It's very good for

MRS. SEGSTROM:

Perpetual antici-
Pation is good for

The
Soul, but it's bad
For the
Heart.

It's very good for
Practicing self-
Control. It's very
good for

Morals but bad
For morale. It's

MRS. ANDERSSSEN:

Per-
Petual antici-
pation is good

Reserve and	Too unnerving.	For The soul, but
Learning to do	It's very good,	It's Bad for the Heart.
What one should. It's very good.	Though, to have Things to contem-	It's Very good, Though, To learn to Wait.
Perpetual antici- pation's A delicate art.	Plate. Perpetual antici- pation's a	Perpetual Anticipation's A
Playing a role,	Delicate art.	Delicate art.
Aching to start,	Playing a role,	Playing a role,
Keeping control	Aching to start,	Aching to start,
While falling apart,	Keeping control	Keeping control
Perpetual antici- pation is	While falling Apart,	While falling Apart,
Good for the soul	Perpetual antici- pation is good	Perpetual Anticipation Is bad for
But it's bad for The heart.	But it's bad for The heart.	The heart.

(The dining room table has moved onstage with MADAME ARMFELDT already seated in place, facing the audience in

solitary splendor. The table is elaborately dressed with fruit and floral pieces and expensive dinnerware. There are also two large candelabra, one at each end of the table. Parallel to the table and upstage of it, the line of servants has come on: BERTRAND, OSA, PETRA, and FRID. OSA and PETRA stand with trays as FRID and BERTRAND light the candelabra.

Once the table is in place, FREDRIK and CARL-MAGNUS move up to it with DESIRÉE. FREDRIK pulls out a chair for DESIRÉE and she sits. FREDRIK gets ANNE and seats her. CHARLOTTE enters, CARL-MAGNUS seats her on the extreme right end of the table. He then moves to the extreme left, and sits down next to DESIRÉE. HENRIK sits between DESIRÉE and ANNE, FREDRIK between ANNE and CHARLOTTE. The guests all sit facing upstage. FRID and BERTRAND pour, and MADAME ARMFELDT raises her glass. The others follow her. When the glasses come down, there is a burst of laughter and noise from the guests. FREDRIKA, seated at the piano, "accompanies" the scene)

DESIRÉE: . . . So you won the case after all, Mr. Egerman!
How splendid!

FREDRIK: I was rather proud of myself.

DESIRÉE: And I'm sure you were tremendously proud of him too, Mrs. Egerman.

ANNE: I beg your pardon? Oh, I expect so, although I don't seem to remember much about it.

(CHARLOTTE extends her glass; BERTRAND fills it)

FREDRIK: I try not to bore my wife with my dubious victories in the courtroom.

DESIRÉE: How wise you are. I remember when I was her age, anything less than a new dress, or a ball, or a thrilling piece of gossip bored me to tears.

FREDRIK: That is the charm of youth.

CHARLOTTE: Dearest Miss Armfeldt, do regale us with more fascinating reminiscences from your remote youth.

CARL-MAGNUS: Charlotte, that is an idiotic remark.

FREDRIK: A man's youth may be as remote as a dinosaur, Countess, but with a beautiful woman, youth merely accompanies her through the years.

CHARLOTTE: Oh, Mr. Egerman, that is too enchanting!
(*Leaning over her chair*)

Anne, dear, where on earth did you find this simply adorable husband?

ANNE (*Leans. In on the "plan," of course, giggling*): I'm glad you approve of him.

CHARLOTTE (*To HENRIK*): Your father . . .
(*HENRIK leans*)

is irresistible.

(*CARL-MAGNUS leans*)

I shall monopolize him for the entire weekend.

(*DESIRÉE leans. Then, to ANNE*)

Will you lease him to me, dear?

ANNE (*Giggling*): Freely. He's all yours.

(*FREDRIK looks at ANNE, then at CHARLOTTE, then leans*)

. . . unless, of course, our hostess has other plans for him.

DESIRÉE (*Smooth, getting out of her seat*): I had thought of seducing him into rolling the croquet lawn tomorrow, but I'm sure he'd find the Countess less exhausting.

CHARLOTTE (*Rising*): I wouldn't guarantee that!
(*Clapping her hand over her mouth*)

Oh, how could those wicked words have passed these lips!

CARL-MAGNUS (*Astonished, rising*): Charlotte!

CHARLOTTE: Oh, Carl-Magnus, dear, don't say you're bristling!

(To FREDRIK, who has also risen. From here the two of them move to the music in a stylized fashion)

My husband, Mr. Egerman, is a veritable porcupine. At the least provocation he is all spines — or is it quills? Beware. I am leading you down dangerous paths!

CARL-MAGNUS (*Frigid*): I apologize for my wife, sir. She is not herself tonight.

FREDRIK (*Both amused and gracious*): If she is this charming when she is *not* herself, sir, I would be fascinated to meet her when she *is*.

CHARLOTTE: Bravo, bravo! My champion!

(HENRIK and ANNE get up from the table and join the stylized dance)

May tomorrow find us thigh to thigh pushing the garden roller in tandem.

FREDRIK (*Turning it into a joke*): That would depend on the width of the rollers.

(To DESIRÉE)

Miss Armfeldt, as a stranger in this house, may I ask if your roller . . .

CARL-MAGNUS (*Instantly picking this up*): Stranger, sir? How can you call yourself a stranger in *this* house?

FREDRIK (*Momentarily bewildered*): I beg your pardon?

CARL-MAGNUS (*Triumphantly sure he has found FREDRIK and DESIRÉE out, to MADAME ARMFELDT*): I understand from your daughter, Madame, that Mr. Egerman is an old friend of yours and consequently a frequent visitor to this house.

MADAME ARMFELDT (*Vaguely aware of him, peering through a lorgnette*): Are you addressing me, sir? Whoever you may be.

CARL-MAGNUS: I am, Madame.

MADAME ARMFELDT: Then be so kind as to repeat yourself.

DESIRÉE (*Breaking in*): Mother, Count Malcolm —

MADAME ARMFELDT (*Overriding this, ignoring her, to CARL-MAGNUS*): Judging from the level of the conversation so far, young man, you can hardly expect me to have been paying attention.

(CARL-MAGNUS *is taken aback*)

CHARLOTTE: Splendid! The thrust direct! I shall commend that remark and wreak havoc with it at all my husband's regimental dinner parties!

(*The guests waltz slowly for a moment. Finally MADAME ARMFELDT tings on a glass with her fork for silence*)

MADAME ARMFELDT (*As FRID and BERTRAND serve*): Ladies and gentlemen, tonight I am serving you a very special dessert wine. It is from the cellars of the King of the Belgians who — during a period of intense intimacy — presented me with all the bottles then in existence. The secret of its unique quality is unknown, but it is said to possess the power to open the eyes of even the blindest among us . . .

(*Raising her glass*)

To Life!

(*The guests all raise their glasses*)

THE GUESTS: To Life!

MADAME ARMFELDT: And to the only other reality — Death!

(*Only MADAME ARMFELDT and CHARLOTTE drink. A sudden chilly silence descends on the party as if a huge shadow had passed over it. The guests slowly drift back to the table in silence. At length the silence is broken by a little tipsy giggle from CHARLOTTE*)

CHARLOTTE: Oh I *am* enjoying myself! What an unusual sensation!

(Raises her glass to DESIRÉE)

Dearest Miss Armfeldt, at this awe-inspiring moment — let me drink to *you* who have made this evening possible. The One and Only Desirée Armfeldt, beloved of hundreds — regardless of course of their matrimonial obligations!

(Hiccups)

CARL-MAGNUS: Charlotte, you will go to your room immediately.

(There is general consternation)

FREDRIK: Miss Armfeldt, I'm sure the Countess —

ANNE: Oh dear, oh dear, I am beside myself.

HENRIK *(Suddenly jumping up, shouting, smashing his glass on the table)*: Stop it! All of you! Stop it!

(There is instant silence)

FREDRIK: Henrik!

HENRIK *(Swinging to glare at him)*: Are you reproving *me*?

FREDRIK: I think, if I were you, I would sit down.

HENRIK: Sit, Henrik. Stand, Henrik. Am I to spend the rest of my life at your command, like a lapdog? Am I to respect a man who can permit such filthy pigs' talk in front of the purest, the most innocent, the most wonderful . . . ? I despise you all!

ANNE *(Giggling nervously)*: Oh, Henrik! How comical you look!

DESIRÉE *(Smiling, holding out her glass to him)*: Smash this, too. Smash every glass in the house if you feel like it.

HENRIK *(Bewildered and indignant)*: And you! You're an artist! You play Ibsen and — and Racine! Don't any of the great truths of the artists come through to you at all? Are you no better than the others?

DESIRÉE: Why don't you just laugh at us all, my dear?
Wouldn't that be a solution?

HENRIK: How can I laugh, when life makes me want to
vomit?

(He runs out of the room)

ANNE: Poor silly Henrik. Someone should go after him.
(She gets up from the table, starts away)

FREDRIK *(Standing, very authoritative)*: Anne. Come back.
(Meekly, ANNE obeys, sitting down again at the table.
Total silence. FREDRIK sits. Then, after a beat, a hiccup
from CHARLOTTE)

DESIRÉE: Dear Countess, may I suggest that you try holding
your breath — for a very long time?
(The lights go down on the scene, and the table moves off)

Scene 5

ARMFELDT GARDEN

HENRIK *runs on and stands near the bench in despair.*
FREDRIKA, *at the piano, sees him.*

FREDRIKA (*Stops playing*): Mr. Egerman!
(HENRIK *ignores her*)

Mr. Egerman?
(HENRIK *looks up*)

HENRIK: I have disgraced myself — acting like a madman, breaking an expensive glass, humiliating myself in front of them all.

FREDRIKA: Poor Mr. Egerman!

HENRIK (*Defending himself in spite of himself*): They laughed at me. Even Anne. She said, "Silly Henrik, how comical you look!" Laughter! How I detest it! Your mother — everyone — says, "Laugh at it all." If all you can do is laugh at the cynicism, the frivolity, the lack of heart — then I'd rather be dead.

ANNE (*Off*): Henrik!

HENRIK: Oh God! There she is!
(*He runs off*)

ANNE (*Off*): Henrik, dear!

FREDRIKA (*Calls after him*): Mr. Egerman! Please don't do anything rash!

(ANNE *runs on*)

Oh, Mrs. Egerman, I'm so terribly worried.

ANNE: You poor dear. What about?

FREDRIKA: About Mr. Egerman — Junior, that is.

ANNE: Silly Henrik! I was just coming out to scold him.

FREDRIKA: I am so afraid he may do himself an injury.

ANNE: How delightful to be talking to someone younger than myself. No doubt he has been denouncing the wickedness of the world — and quoting Martin Luther? Dearest Fredrika, all you were witnessing was the latest crisis in his love affair with God.

FREDRIKA: Not with God, Mrs. Egerman — with you!

ANNE (*Totally surprised*): Me!

FREDRIKA: You may not have noticed, but he is madly, hopelessly in love with you.

ANNE: Is that really the truth?

FREDRIKA: Yes, he told me so himself.

ANNE (*Thrilled, flattered, perhaps more*): The poor dear boy! How ridiculous of him — and yet how charming. Dear friend, if you knew how insecure I constantly feel, how complicated the marriage state seems to be. I adore old Fredrik, of course, but . . .

FREDRIKA (*Interrupting*): But Mrs. Egerman, he ran down towards the lake!

ANNE (*Laughing*): To gaze over the ornamental waters! How touching! Let us go and find him.

(ANNE takes FREDRIKA's arm and starts walking off with her)

Such a good looking boy, isn't he? Such long, long lashes . . .
(They exit giggling, arm-in-arm)

Scene 5A

ANOTHER PART OF THE GARDEN

FRID runs on from behind a screen, followed by a more leisurely PETRA. They have a bottle of wine and a small bundle of food with them.

PETRA: Who needs a haystack? Anything you've got to show, you can show me right here — that is, if you're in the mood.

FRID (*Taking her into his arms*): When am I not in the mood?

PETRA (*Laughing*): I wouldn't know, would I? I'm just passing through.

FRID: I'm in the mood.

(*Kiss*)

I'm in it twenty-four hours a day.

(*Kiss. FREDRIKA runs across stage*)

FREDRIKA: Mr. Eggerman!

PETRA: Private here, isn't it?

(*ANNE runs across stage*)

ANNE: Henrik! Henrik!

PETRA: What *are* they up to?

FRID: Oh, them! What are they ever up to?
(ANNE runs back across)

ANNE: Henrik!
(FREDRIKA runs back across)

FREDRIKA: Mr. Egerman!

FRID: You saw them all at dinner, dressed up like waxworks, jabbering away to prove how clever they are. And never knowing what they miss.
(Kiss)

ANNE (*Off*): Henrik!

FRID: Catch one of them having the sense to grab the first pretty girl that comes along — and do her on the soft grass, with the summer night just smiling down.
(Kiss)

Any complaints yet?

PETRA: Give me time.

FRID: You've a sweet mouth — sweet as honey.
(*The lights dim on them as they lower themselves onto the grass. We now see HENRIK, who has been watching them make love. After an anguished moment, he runs straight up into the house, slamming the doors behind him*)

Scene 6

DESIRÉE'S BEDROOM

DESIRÉE *sits on the bed, her long skirt drawn up over her knees, expertly sewing up a hem. FREDRIK enters and clears his throat.*

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

DESIRÉE: I ripped my hem on the dining room table in all that furore.

FREDRIK (*Hovering*): Is this all right?

DESIRÉE: Of course. Sit down.

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

FREDRIK: *On* the stockings?

DESIRÉE: I don't see why not.

(There is a long pause)

Well, we're back at the point where we were so rudely interrupted last week, aren't we?

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

DESIRÉE: How true.

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

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

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

(They both laugh)

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

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

(They laugh more uproariously)

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

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

DESIRÉE: Shall I tell you why I really invited you here? When we met again and we made love, I thought: Maybe here it is at last — a chance to turn back, to find some sort of coherent existence after so many years of muddle.

(Pause)

Of course, there's your wife. But I thought: Perhaps — just perhaps — you might be in need of rescue, too.

FREDRIK: From renewing my unrenovable youth?

DESIRÉE (*Suddenly tentative*): It was only a thought.

FREDRIK: When my eyes are open and I look at you, I see a woman that I have loved for a long time, who entranced me all over again when I came to her rooms . . . who gives me such genuine pleasure that, in spite of myself, I came here for the sheer delight of being with her again. The woman who could rescue me? Of course.

(*Pause*)

But when my eyes are not open — which is most of the time — all I see is a girl in a pink dress teasing a canary, running through a sunlit garden to hug me at the gate, as if I'd come home from Timbuktu instead of the Municipal Courthouse three blocks away . . .

DESIRÉE (*Sings*):

Isn't it rich?
Are we a pair?
Me here at last on the ground,
You in mid-air.
Send in the clowns.

Isn't it bliss?
Don't you approve?
One who keeps tearing around,
One who can't move.
Where are the clowns?
Send in the clowns.

Just when I'd stopped
Opening doors,
Finally knowing
The one that I wanted was yours,
Making my entrance again
With my usual flair,
Sure of my lines,
No one is there.

(FREDRIK *rises*)

Don't you love farce?
My fault, I fear.
I thought that you'd want what I want —
Sorry, my dear.
But where are the clowns?
Quick, send in the clowns.
Don't bother, they're here.

FREDRIK: Desirée, I'm sorry. I should never have come. To
flirt with rescue when one has no intention of being
saved . . . Do try to forgive me.

(*He exits*)

DESIRÉE:

Isn't it rich?
Isn't it queer?
Losing my timing this late
In my career?
And where are the clowns?
There ought to be clowns.
Well, maybe next year . . .
(*The lights iris out on DESIRÉE*)

Scene 7

THE TREES

As DESIRÉE's bedroom goes off, HENRIK emerges from the house, carrying a rope. He runs downstage with it. ANNE and FREDRIKA run on; when HENRIK hears them, he runs behind a tree to hide.

ANNE (*As she runs on*): Henrik!

(*To FREDRIKA*)

Oh, I'm quite puffed! Where can he be?

(*Noticing FREDRIKA's solemn face*)

Poor child, that face! Don't look so solemn. Where would you go if you were he?

FREDRIKA: Well, the summer pavilion? And then, of course, there's the stables.

ANNE: Then you go to the stables and I'll take the summer pavilion.

(*Laughing*)

Run!

(*She starts off*)

Isn't this exciting after that stodgy old dinner!

(*They run off, and HENRIK runs back on. He stops at the tree, stands on the marble bench, and, after circling the*

noose around his neck, throws the other end of the rope up to the tree limb. ANNE can be heard calling "Henrik!" HENRIK falls with a loud thud, as ANNE enters)

ANNE: What an extraordinary . . . ! Oh, Henrik — how comical you look!

(Pulling him up by the noose still around his neck)

Oh, no! You didn't!

(Pause)

For me?

(She gently removes the noose from his neck)

Oh, my poor darling Henrik.

(She throws herself into his arms)

Oh, my poor boy! Oh, those eyes, gazing at me like a lost Saint Bernard . . .

(They start to kiss passionately)

HENRIK: I love you! I've actually said it!

ANNE *(Returning his kisses passionately)*: Oh how scatter-brained I was never to have realized. Not Fredrik . . . not poor old Fredrik . . . not Fredrik at all!

(They drop down onto the ground and start to make passionate love. The trees wipe them out, revealing PETRA and FRID. FRID is asleep)

PETRA *(Sings)*:

I shall marry the miller's son,
Pin my hat on a nice piece of property.
Friday nights, for a bit of fun,
We'll go dancing.
Meanwhile . . .

It's a wink and a wiggle
And a giggle in the grass
And I'll trip the light Fandango,
A pinch and a diddle
In the middle of what passes by.

It's a very short road
From the pinch and the punch
To the paunch and the pouch and the pension.

It's a very short road
To the ten-thousandth lunch
And the belch and the grouch and the sigh.

In the meanwhile,
There are mouths to be kissed
Before mouths to be fed,
And a lot in between
In the meanwhile.

And a girl ought to celebrate what passes by.

Or I shall marry the businessman,
Five fat babies and lots of security.
Friday nights, if we think we can,
We'll go dancing.

Meanwhile . . .

It's a push and a fumble
And a tumble in the sheets
And I'll foot the Highland Fancy,
A dip in the butter
And a flutter with what meets my eye.

It's a very short fetch
From the push and the whoop
To the squint and the stoop and the mumble.

It's not much of a stretch
To the cribs and the croup
And the bosoms that droop and go dry.

In the meanwhile,
There are mouths to be kissed
Before mouths to be fed,
And there's many a tryst
And there's many a bed
To be sampled and seen

In the meanwhile.
And a girl has to celebrate what passes by.
Or I shall marry the Prince of Wales —
Pearls and servants and dressing for festivals.
Friday nights, with him all in tails,
We'll have dancing.
Meanwhile . . .

It's a rip in the bustle
And a rustle in the hay
And I'll pitch the Quick Fantastic,
With flings of confetti
And my petticoats away up high.
It's a very short way
From the fling that's for fun
To the thigh pressing under the table.
It's very short day
Till you're stuck with just one
Or it has to be done on the sly.
In the meanwhile,
There are mouths to be kissed
Before mouths to be fed,
And there's many a tryst
And there's many a bed.
There's a lot I'll have missed
But I'll not have been dead when I die!
And a person should celebrate everything
Passing by.

And I shall marry the miller's son.
(She smiles, as the lights fade on her)

Scene 8

ARMFELDT HOUSE AND GARDEN

FREDRIKA *is lying on the grass reading.* MADAME ARMFELDT *is seated in a huge wingchair upstage.* DESIRÉE, *on the bed, is writing in her diary.* CARL-MAGNUS *paces on the terrace and then goes into the house.* MRS. SEGSTROM *and* MR. LINDQUIST *are behind trees,* MR. ERLANSON *and* MRS. ANDERSSEN *are behind opposite trees.* CHARLOTTE *sits downstage on a bench.* *After a beat, FREDRIK enters, sees the figure on the bench. Is it ANNE? He hurries toward her.*

FREDRIK: Anne? — Oh, forgive me, Countess. I was looking for my wife.

CHARLOTTE (*Looking up, through sobs*): Oh, Mr. Egerman, how can I face you after that exhibition at dinner? Throwing myself at your head!

FREDRIK: On the contrary, I found it most morale-building.
(*Sits down next to her*)

It's not often these days that a beautiful woman does me that honor.

CHARLOTTE: I didn't.

FREDRIK: I beg your pardon?

CHARLOTTE: I didn't do you that honor. It was just a charade. A *failed* charade! In my madness I thought I could make my husband jealous.

FREDRIK: I'm afraid marriage isn't one of the easier relationships, is it?

CHARLOTTE: Mr. Egerman, for a woman it's impossible!

FREDRIK: It's not all that possible for men.

CHARLOTTE: Men! Look at you — a man of an age when a woman is lucky if a drunken alderman pinches her derriere at a village fete! And yet, you have managed to acquire the youngest, prettiest . . . I hate you being happy. I hate *anyone* being happy!

(HENRIK and ANNE emerge from the house, carrying suitcases. They start stealthily downstage)

HENRIK: The gig should be ready at the stables.

ANNE (*Giggling*): Oh Henrik, darling, I do hope the horses will be smart. I so detest riding in a gig when the horses are not smart.

(HENRIK stops, pulls her to him. They kiss)

MRS. SEGSTROM (*Turns, looking onstage, sings*):

Think of how I adore you,
Think of how much you love me.
If I were perfect for you,
Wouldn't you tire of me
Soon . . . ?

HENRIK: Let all the birds nest in my hair!

ANNE: Silly Henrik! Quick, or we'll miss the train!

(*They are now downstage. Unaware of FREDRIK and CHARLOTTE, they move past them. For a long moment, FREDRIK and CHARLOTTE sit, while FREDRIK's world tumbles around his ears*)

CHARLOTTE: It was, wasn't it?

FREDRIK: It was.

CHARLOTTE: Run after them. Quick. You can catch them at the stables.

FREDRIK (*Even more quiet*): After the horse has gone?

(*Pause*)

How strange that one's life should end sitting on a bench in a garden.

MR. ERLANSON (*Leans, looking onstage, sings*):

She lightens my sadness,

She livens my days,

She bursts with a kind of madness

My well-ordered ways.

My happiest mistake,

The ache of my life . . .

(FREDRIK and CHARLOTTE remain seated as the lights come up on DESIRÉE's bedroom. CARL-MAGNUS enters)

DESIRÉE: Carl-Magnus, go away!

CARL-MAGNUS (*Ignoring her, beginning to unbutton his tunic*):

I'd have been here half an hour ago if I hadn't had to knock a little sense into my wife.

DESIRÉE: Carl-Magnus, do not take off your tunic!

CARL-MAGNUS (*Still ignoring her*): Poor girl. She was somewhat the worse for wine, of course. Trying to make me believe that she was attracted to that asinine lawyer fellow.

DESIRÉE: Carl-Magnus, listen to me! It's over. It was never anything in the first place, but now it's OVER!

CARL-MAGNUS (*Ignoring this, totally self-absorbed*): Of all people — that lawyer! Scrawny as a scarecrow and without a hair on his body, probably.

(*He starts removing his braces*)

DESIRÉE (*Shouting*): Don't take off your trousers!

CARL-MAGNUS (*Getting out of his trousers*): Poor girl, she'd slash her wrists before she'd let any other man touch her. And even if, under the influence of wine, she did stray a bit, how ridiculous to imagine I would so much as turn a hair!

(As he starts to get out of his trouser leg, he stumbles so that he happens to be facing the "window." He stops dead, peering out)

Good God!

DESIRÉE: What is it?

CARL-MAGNUS (*Peering*): It's her! And him! Sitting on a bench! She's touching him! The scoundrel! The conniving swine! Any man who thinks he can lay a finger on *my* wife!

(Pulling up his pants and grabbing his tunic as he hobbles out)

DESIRÉE: Carl-Magnus, what are you doing?

CARL-MAGNUS: My duelling pistols!

(And he rushes out. DESIRÉE runs after him)

DESIRÉE: Carl-Magnus!

(The bed rolls off and the lights go down on the bedroom and up on MADAME ARMFELDT and FREDRIKA)

MADAME ARMFELDT: A great deal seems to be going on in this house tonight.

(Pause)

Child, will you do me a favor?

FREDRIKA: Of course, Grandmother.

MADAME ARMFELDT: Will you tell me what it's all for? Having outlived my own illusions by centuries, it would be soothing at least to pretend to share some of yours.

FREDRIKA (*After thought*): Well, I think it must be worth it.

MADAME ARMFELDT: Why?

FREDRIKA: It's all there is, isn't it? Oh, I know it's often discouraging, and to hope for something too much is childish, because what you want so rarely happens.

MADAME ARMFELDT: Astounding! When I was your age I wanted everything — the moon — jewels, yachts, villas on the Riviera. And I got 'em, too, — for all the good they did me.

(Music. Her mind starts to wander)

There was a Croatian Count. He was my first lover. I can see his face now — such eyes, and a mustache like a brigand. He gave me a wooden ring.

FREDRIKA: A wooden ring?

MADAME ARMFELDT: It had been in his family for centuries, it seemed, but I said to myself: a wooden ring? What sort of man would give you a wooden ring, so I tossed him out right there and then. And now — who knows? He might have been the love of my life.

(FREDRIKA falls asleep, resting her head against MADAME ARMFELDT's knee. In the garden, FREDRIK and CHARLOTTE pause)

CHARLOTTE: To think I was actually saying: How I hate you being happy! It's — as if I carry around some terrible curse.

(CARL-MAGNUS enters from house, runs down steps)

Oh, Mr. Egerman . . . I'm sorry.

(CHARLOTTE breaks from FREDRIK with a little cry. FREDRIK, still dazed, merely turns, gazing vaguely at CARL-MAGNUS)

CARL-MAGNUS (*Glaring, clicks his heels*): Sir, you will accompany me to the pavilion.

(CHARLOTTE looks at the pistol. Slowly the wonderful truth begins to dawn on her. He really cares! Her face breaks into a radiant smile)

CHARLOTTE: Carl-Magnus!

CARL-MAGNUS (*Ignoring her*): I think the situation speaks for itself.

CHARLOTTE (*Her ecstatic smile broadening*): Carl-Magnus, dear, you won't be *too* impulsive, will you?

CARL-MAGNUS: Whatever the provocation, I remain a civilized man.

(*Flourishing the pistol*)

The lawyer and I are merely going to play a little Russian Roulette.

CHARLOTTE: Russian Roulette?

CARL-MAGNUS (*To FREDRIK*): Well, sir? Are you ready, sir?

FREDRIK (*Still only half aware*): I beg your pardon. Ready for what??

CHARLOTTE (*Thrilled*): Russian Roulette!

FREDRIK: Oh, Russian Roulette. That's with a pistol, isn't it? And you spin the . . .

(*Indicating*)

Well, why not?

(*Very polite, to CHARLOTTE*)

Excuse me, Madame.

(CARL-MAGNUS clicks his heels and struts off. FREDRIK follows him off slowly)

MR. LINDQUIST (*Sings*):

A weekend in the country . . .

MR. LINDQUIST and MRS. ANDERSSEN:

So inactive

MR. LINDQUIST, MRS. ANDERSSEN *and* MR. ERLANSON:

That one has to lie down.

ALL THE QUINTET:

A weekend in the country

Where . . .

(FRID and PETRA enter, unobserved, and lean against a tree. Gunshot)

We're twice as upset as in town!

(The QUINTET scatters and runs off, except for MRS. ANDERSSEN, who stands behind a tree. DESIRÉE runs out of the house and down to CHARLOTTE)

DESIRÉE: What is it? What's happened?

CHARLOTTE: Oh, dear Miss Armfeldt, my husband and Mr. Eggerman are duelling in the pavilion!

DESIRÉE: Are you insane? You let them do it?

(She starts to run to the pavilion. CARL-MAGNUS enters, carrying FREDRIK over one shoulder. Quite roughly, he tosses him down on the grass, where FREDRIK remains motionless)

DESIRÉE: You lunatic! You've killed him! Fredrik!

CHARLOTTE: Carl-Magnus!

CARL-MAGNUS: My dear Miss Armfeldt, he merely grazed his ear. I trust his performance in the Law Courts is a trifle more professional.

(He clears his throat. To CHARLOTTE)

I am prepared to forgive you, dear. But I feel this house is no longer a suitable place for us.

CHARLOTTE: Oh yes, my darling, I agree!

CARL-MAGNUS: You will pack my things and meet me in the stables. I will have the car ready.

CHARLOTTE: Yes, dear. Oh, Carl-Magnus! You became a tiger for me!

(*They kiss*)

MRS. ANDERSSEN (*Sings*):

Men are stupid, men are vain,
Love's disgusting, love's insane,
A humiliating business . . .

MRS. SEGSTROM:

Oh, how true!

(CARL-MAGNUS *and* CHARLOTTE *break the kiss*. CARL-MAGNUS *exits*. CHARLOTTE *runs up to the house*)

MRS. ANDERSSEN:

Aaaah,

(*When CHARLOTTE closes the house doors*)

Well . . .

DESIRÉE: Fredrik? Fredrik!

FREDRIK (*Stirs, opens his eyes, looks dazedly around*): I don't suppose this is my heavenly reward, is it?

DESIRÉE: Hardly, dear, with *me* here.

FREDRIK (*Trying to sit up, failing, remembering*): Extraordinary, isn't it? To hold a muzzle to one's temple — and yet to miss! A shaky hand, perhaps, is an asset after all.

DESIRÉE: Does it hurt?

FREDRIK: It hurts — spiritually. You've heard, I imagine, about the evening's other event?

DESIRÉE: No, what?

FREDRIK: Henrik and Anne — ran off together.

DESIRÉE: Fredrik!

FREDRIK: Well, I think I should get up and confront the world, don't you?

DESIRÉE (*Sings*):

Isn't it rich?

FREDRIK:

Are we a pair?
You here at last on the ground.

DESIRÉE:

You in mid-air.

(Speaks)

Knees wobbly?

FREDRIK: No, no, it seems not. In fact, it's hardly possible,
but . . .

DESIRÉE (*Sings*):

Was that a farce?

FREDRIK:

My fault, I fear.

DESIRÉE:

Me as a merry-go-round.

FREDRIK:

Me as King Lear.

(Speaks)

How unlikely life is! To lose one's son, one's wife, and
practically one's life within an hour and yet to feel —
relieved. Relieved, and, what's more, considerably less
ancient.

(He jumps up on the bench)

Aha! Desirée!

DESIRÉE: Poor Fredrik!

FREDRIK: No, no, no. We will banish "poor" from our vocab-
ulary and replace it with "coherent."

DESIRÉE (*Blank*): Coherent?

FREDRIK: Don't you remember your manifesto in the bed-
room? A coherent existence after so many years of mud-
dle? You and me, and of course, Fredrika . . .

(They kiss. The music swells. Sings)

Make way for the clowns.

DESIRÉE:

Applause for the clowns.

BOTH:

They're finally here.

(The music continues)

FREDRIK: How does Malmö appeal to you? It'll be high sun-burn season.

DESIRÉE: Why not?

FREDRIK: Why not?

DESIRÉE: Oh God!

FREDRIK: What is it?

DESIRÉE: I've got to do Hedda for a week in Halsingborg.

FREDRIK: Well, what's wrong with Purgatory before Paradise? I shall sit through all eight performances.

(They go slowly upstage. FREDRIKA wakes up)

FREDRIKA: Don't you think you should go to bed, Grandmother?

MADAME ARMFELDT: No, I shall stay awake all night for fear of missing the first cock-crow of morning. It has come to be my only dependable friend.

FREDRIKA: Grandmother —

MADAME ARMFELDT: What, dear?

FREDRIKA: I've watched and watched, but I haven't noticed the night smiling.

MADAME ARMFELDT: Young eyes are not ideal for watching. They stray too much. It has already smiled. Twice.

FREDRIKA: It has? Twice? For the young — and the fools?

MADAME ARMFELDT: The smile for the fools was particularly broad tonight.

FREDRIKA: So there's only the last to come.

MADAME ARMFELDT: Only the last.

(MADAME ARMFELDT dies. We become more aware of the underscoring, the same used under the opening waltz. HENRIK and ANNE suddenly waltz on, and then all of the other couples, at last with their proper partners, waltz through the scene. The trees close in, and MR. LINDQUIST appears at the piano. He hits one key of the piano, just as he did at the opening. And the play is over)