

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

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

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

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

**Desiree:** Of course. Sit down. (Patting the bed beside her, on which tumbled stockings are strewn)

**Frederik:** On the stockings?

**Desiree:** 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?

**Frederik:** Not quite. If you remember, we'd progressed a step further.

**Desiree:** How true.

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

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

**Frederik:** ...and my devoted old friend, your mother. (They both laugh)

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

**Frederik:** (Laughs) When you told me he had the brain of a pea, I think you were being generous.  
(They laugh more uproariously)

**Desiree:** What in God's name are we laughing about? Your son was right at dinner. We don't fool that boy, not for a moment. The One and Only 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 unrenewable youth.

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

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

**Frederik:** From renewing my unrenewable youth?

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

**Frederik:** 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'd come home from Timbuktu instead of the Municipal Courthouse three blocks away...