

THE GRANDE DAME

CAPSULE

Over her long career, she has reached the top of this hollow, glittering industry: and she retains her place there by force of will – respected by all, feared by many. Only she knows for sure the sacrifices she has made to get there – and where the bodies are buried. But when you're at the top, there's only one way to go... and the camera becomes less and less kind, as the years go by...

MEETING GOTTFRIED

A little while ago you started holding monthly salons – gatherings of delightful people, thinkers, creative types, those with interesting opinions – united of course by their admiration and love for you. These evenings sped by delightfully, especially for you as patroness.

You were surprised to see Gottfried appear: by himself, not as a guest of one of the regulars. You wouldn't have imagined he'd even have heard about the events: isn't he supposed to be always busy?

He was charm itself, kissing your hand, listening deferentially. You could sense, though, that some of the others were uneasy at his presence. Particularly as he offered no thoughts or opinions of his own; just smiling politely and enigmatically.

Towards the end, he turned to you. His eyes were gleaming brightly. "Here's a philosophical conundrum. If a person doesn't believe in the world they are in – if they judge it to be a construct, a dream, a fable – are they obliged to act morally within it? When they eventually return to their own world – as they are confident will happen – might their actions in that false world be held against them, or not?"

You were not at all sure what he was driving at, but you nodded graciously, as if to acknowledge the point. He continued "Dear lady, I think I have something that might interest you – something novel, a new kind of role, that would suit you well. Would you care to read it over for me?"

The promised script never arrived. But somehow you found yourself on location at Stolen Moments, nonetheless. Intrigued, and wary.

BACKGROUND

You've been in the film industry since its early days, and have seen the lows and highs, and ridden the waves of fashion and taste – always maintaining your place at the top. A legend of the silver screen, your legacy is secure.

But from the top, the only way is downwards – or so it seems. Age is finally catching up with you – you've postponed it for so long, but your body has started to rebel. And so has your spirit. Can you really summon up the energy to rule over a film location, one more time? Surely you must! – because, to surrender to the years would be... you don't know what that might mean.

Over the years, you've loved and lost, you've broken hearts and had your own heart broken. The fire and passion is not so strong in you now as it was – but it still flickers, and might still burn. You don't feel ready for the romantic scrapheap just yet.

Younger actors, and film crew, naturally look up to you – respecting your experience and reputation. You know that advice is rarely truly welcome, so you give it judiciously. But there are some people who you keep a fond eye on – who you think of as protégés. And others who you can see are trouble – who need to be dealt with firmly. If Gottfried and his directing staff aren't up to the job of keeping order, you are quite happy to do it for them. Not many people dare to disobey you, when you sharpen your voice.

- ☹ What is your name (real name and/or stage name)?
- ☹ Where are you from?
- ☹ How old are you?
- ☹ What was your family background like?
- ☹ How has your relationship/sexual history been?
- ☹ What's your current living situation like?
- ☹ How do you feel about your gender?
- ☹ How do you feel about your sexuality?
- ☹ Is there anyone outside the set of *Stolen Moments* who's important to you?
- ☹ What's the most significant memory from your childhood?

PRIMARY RELATIONSHIPS

THE FADING STAR

He was once as big a star as you – together you lit up the firmament and the screen. You made sweet music together, on camera and in life – you were inseparable partners.

It ended, as these things do; and since then, he has faded away somewhat. But you still have an affection for him; and still, in certain lights, the brightness within him fights its way through, and quickens your heart.

THE GOOD-TIME GIRL

She came from nothing, and made a name for herself in this difficult business – playing roles that many actresses wouldn't have wanted. People think that she doesn't care what she does – you can see that she's a smart girl, who's decided where she wants to make her compromises. She reminds you of your younger self, in a way; although things are so different these days, of course.

You've looked out for her, and helped in her career when you could. You treat her almost like your own child, some have unkindly said: not that you have ever had the chance to see how you would have been with a real daughter or son.

THE PUBLICIST

He's the son of your late, beloved, cousin, and you've ended up supporting him – at considerable expense. He's a weak soul, who would never survive in the real world: you've found him work of a sort, and paid his expenses and his bills.

You don't even resent it, normally: it's just a duty that you took on when your cousin died. And he's certainly grateful enough: otherwise you would have cut him off right away. And the poor lad can't help being such a fragile weed – at least, you don't suppose he can. But you do sometimes wonder how long this is going to go on for. Is he expecting you to provide for him in your will?

THE VETERAN

You've worked together over many years – you've seen him evolve from a burning young star into a cuddly old legend. He gets cast when directors want wisdom – that calm gaze, that steady expression, that warm, gentle voice, that speaks the truths of the ages.

You wish you had been able to adapt to age quite so easily! Instead, here you are still fighting to hold it back. It's different for men, of course: but you dearly hope that, before the years inevitably catch up with you, you can learn some of his wise ways.

OTHER RELATIONSHIPS

Positive

THE LOCATION MANAGER – he's a marvel, so quick and efficient. He really gets things done. But you worry about his obsessive control. What will happen if he ever cracks?

THE MAKEUP ARTIST – her delicate attentions help to preserve your beauty.

Negative

THE SIDEKICK – the son of two great actors who were your friends. But he's just a feeble failure, who doesn't have what it takes to become a *real* star.

ANGEL

You're everyone's favourite old trouper – relied on for solid and inspiring performances, and a golden thread reaching back to the greats of the past. You look out for those around you – keep the set functioning smoothly and efficiently, defusing clashes of personality. You're a great example of how to grow old gracefully.

DEVIL

Your patience is not limitless. You have a bark, and a bite, that you are willing and ready to use when you think someone deserves to receive them. Your appreciation of your own worth is considerable – and you insist on being paid the respect that you're due.

ROLE

You thought nothing could surprise you in films any more, but this is a different kind of role that Gottfried wants you to play. An older woman, of course – but not one whose life is in irrevocable decline. Instead, she sees a possible road ahead to what might be a new chapter – a new meaning. Do you dare to take her down it?

Out of character

Your task in Act 1 is to create and rehearse scenes from Stolen Moments, together with your fellow-actors. You should also meet with THE HAIRSTYLIST, THE MAKEUP ARTIST, and THE COSTUME DESIGNER to discuss your character's needs; and you should get your portrait taken by THE STILLS PHOTOGRAPHER. During Act 2, you will probably be expected to continue this work.

DILEMMA

You've been doing this for so long, you aren't sure you know how to stop, even if you wanted to. But to collapse at the wheel would be so undignified. Should this be your last film? Should you carry on seeking more roles, while you become frailer and weaker? Should you try and find something else to do with what remains of your life? The future is uncertain.