

# THE COSTUME DESIGNER

## CAPSULE

**She has dressed a thousand stellar performances, her painstakingly hand-sewn creations turning base flesh into screen divinity. As a girl she was apprenticed to a Milan couturier, but an unhappy experience caused her to shift careers – fashion’s loss was cinema’s gain. She dresses quietly, even dowdily, herself – but that exterior belies a passionate hedonism.**

## MEETING GOTTFRIED

*You were crouched in the yard at the back of the salon, hunched over, as small as you could be – crying bitterly. Your hands were still bleeding from the beating that Madame gave you. The snow was gradually reddening underneath you: the cold, distant, winter sunlight had not melted it at all.*

*You sensed rather than felt a shadow fall across you, and tensed, thinking it might be one of the other apprentices come to mock you or beat you again. But it was a man’s voice that spoke.*

*“You are in the darkness, child. But it will not last forever. You will be led into the light once more.”*

*You tried to ignore him, still sobbing into your clenched fists. After a time you felt the shadow pass on, and you were a little warmer. Your hands stopped bleeding, and some of the pressure lifted from you. You straightened up, uncurling your spine.*

*There were a business card lying on the ground beside you. On the back was the name of a film costume design studio, and the note “Take her on – she has talent, I trust her. G.” On the front was Gottfried’s own name, printed in high relief, in an elaborate gothic type.*

## BACKGROUND

You were quiet when you were young – your parents used to wonder about you, although perhaps also you were a relief after your noisy siblings. You liked sitting in a room where others were talking – usually working on something with your hands. Making dolls, dressing them – your stitches were neat and precise.

You went to work for a couturier as soon as you were able – the money was good, for a poor girl like you. Your skill was recognized, and you progressed from sewing to helping with designs. But you lost your place, after being accused of stealing – it was a disaster. Your name was blackened, and you knew you could never work in the fashion industry again.

A fortunate encounter got you your first piece of work in film costuming. You took to it quickly – it suited your combination of imaginative vision, and fast hands. And you loved the way that the glamour of the screen spilled backwards into the studio, and the set – the possibilities for enjoyment, for indulgence, were remarkable. And you have taken joyful advantage of them.

Now you are well-known within the film industry, and anonymous outside it. Not everyone appreciates your work as much as they should: but enough do to make you feel rewarded. You have started to wonder, though, lately. Could there be more in life for you – somehow, somewhere?

- ☹ What is your 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 ASSISTANT DIRECTOR**

He's worked with you on all of Gottfried's recent productions. The great man seems to trust him... but you find him tough and demanding. He never seems to be satisfied with your work, always insisting that you could do better, or do more. Maybe it's just a personality clash – he seems to want you to push yourself forward more, to be more confident and expressive.

It's really uncomfortable. This isn't the work you do and it isn't who you are. And privately it makes you angry that he would want you to be something different when you were hired for who you are.

### **THE INVESTOR**

A link to your former life – she was a patron of the couture atelier where you were apprenticed. Seeing her brings back unhappy memories: even though she was kind enough to you, back then, and appreciated your work. And it seems that she still appreciates your talent – she has asked you to make garments for her.

You have tried to explain that you now work in costume, which is quite different: but she is wealthy, and insistent. And as she has reminded you, she is aware of where you came from and what you were accused of – things she must know that you've left behind. Does she think that she can buy you? Or blackmail you? How can you put the past behind you, while this woman is here?

### **THE JOURNEYING HERO**

He's always been kind and gentle towards you, but recently you've started to wonder whether there is more to his attention than simple warmth of spirit. You would almost think that he admires you – that he wants you – were it not for the difference in your social positions.

His background is aristocratic, and you know well that nobles don't think of partnering with working people like yourself – unless it is solely to use and then discard them. Even though he now has a job himself, he still comes from a title and a castle – and even though you are respected in the industry, you still have thin, common blood in your veins. You know that anything between you has to end unhappily: but can you resist?

## **THE SCRIPTWRITER**

You were astonished to hear her name, after so many years: your older sister. You lost touch with your family after losing your job in the fashion house – you were too ashamed to face them, after what had been said about you. The last you'd heard, she was working as a newspaper reporter.

As a child, you were a little nervous of her, sometimes – she was so loud, vibrant, alive. Now, she looks very different – haunted. What can have happened to her? Do you dare ask? Does your shared blood still mean anything? What might she think of you, as you are now?

## **OTHER RELATIONSHIPS**

### **Positive**

THE DIVA – she appreciates your work, and you feel she sees you as a person.

THE PUBLICIST – another one who understands the fulfilment of providing service in the background, while others take the light.

### **Negative**

THE STILLS PHOTOGRAPHER – why does he get all the credit for how wonderful the stars look, in his pictures, when it's you who has dressed them?

## **ANGEL**

You have a tremendous skill, and people need you – you've devoted your life to helping them. Thanks to you, great things have been achieved. Why disturb the status quo?

## **DEVIL**

You long to really let your hair down – to enjoy yourself, and maybe just to see what happens. How much do you really care about your career in costume?

## TASK

The costumes are all ready and just have to be fitted – that’s no trouble. But that means you have time on your hands – and the most exciting people in the world around you, to indulge it with. Can you fit your zest for hedonism into your self-effacing professionalism? Can you make your work and your personal life fit together comfortably, instead of being in tension?

### **Out of character**

*Your task in Act 1 is to work with the actors to decide upon their costumes and how they will look on screen. You may need to seek guidance from THE ASSISTANT DIRECTOR, THE SCRIPTWRITER and/or THE ART DIRECTOR about the general structure and look of the film, but the actors themselves will be your main guides as to what they think they should look like: question them about their roles, and how best to bring out their characteristics. Your work will complement that of THE HAIRSTYLIST and THE MAKEUP ARTIST, of course. During Act 2, you will probably be expected to continue revising and improving the costumes.*

## DILEMMA

You’ve risen to the peak of your profession by creating beauty in others. But what might you have done – what might you still be able to do – if you allowed your creativity to express itself via a project of your own? Could you *trust* yourself – could you *back* yourself – to *be* yourself?