

Fans

by Steven Burton

INT. SMALL MOVIE THEATRE LOBBY - AFTERNOON

CARRIE with a newspaper walks by Lobby Cards that read: "GRETA GARBO" Retrospective "Two Faced Woman" and "As You Desire Me".

FLASH scene from the film "Camille" of GRETA GARBO as Carrie walks through a theater lobby.

INT. THEATRE

WALTER sits alone in an empty theatre towards the front.

INT. THEATRE ENTRANCE

Carrie enters, looks around at the emptiness with Walter.

INT. THEATRE

Carrie tentatively sits in a back row seat.

She gets up.

INT. AISLE

Carrie walks, pauses at the row with Walter, and then slides into it.

She slides closer to Walter, when he becomes aware of her.

She carefully sits in the seat next to him.

CARRIE

Excuse me, but do mind if I sit here?

WALTER (Looks forward.)

No.

CARRIE

How was "Two Faced Woman"?

FLASH scene from the film "Two Faced Woman".

WALTER

Not bad.

CARRIE

Her last, but not her best. I think you'll like the next one, "As You Desire Me", better.

WALTER

Maybe.

Walter gets up.

Carrie looks at the newspaper.

INT. AISLE

Walter walks towards the exit.

INT. CLOSEUP ON SCRIPT DIALOGUE

WALTER (OS)

Excuse me.

INT. CONCESSION COUNTER

Walter stands to be waited on.

BRAD, a handsome young man looks up from a script.

BRAD

Yes, may I help you?

WALTER

A large popcorn and coke please.

BRAD

No problem.

Brad prepares the refreshments.

WALTER

Not very crowded here today.

Brad brings him the refreshments.

BRAD

Tuesday afternoons are usually like this for the classics. A private screening.

WALTER

Are you bored?

BRAD

No, it's a nice change from when it's hectic. And, I keep busy anyway.

WALTER

Yes, I noticed the script, but I won't tell.

BRAD

Not a problem. It's for an audition.

WALTER

Good luck or break a leg.

BRAD

Thanks.

INT. AISLE

Walter walks slowly with refreshments as if to look for another seat.

INT. THEATRE

Walter sits behind Carrie further away but within speaking distance.

Carrie looks up from the newspaper.

CARRIE (Looks at him.)

I'm sorry if I sat too close. I just like this seat. It's a weird habit.

WALTER

No problem. I'm not that particular, but it seemed too close.

CARRIE

Well, I did ask you first.

WALTER

Yes, and I appreciate that.

The lights fade.

Flash on the opening scene of "As You Desire Me" and then cuts off.

INT. PROJECTION BOOTH

JANE, the projectionist, with frustration looks towards the equipment.

JANE

What the hell!

She moves away towards a wall telephone.

INT. THEATER

The lights come up with an announcement over the P.A. system.

JANE (OS)

We are having difficulty with the reel of "As You Desire Me." If we are unable to show it, another film will be substituted. We apologize for the inconvenience, and hope you are enjoying the Greta Garbo retrospective.

CARRIE

Damn!

WALTER

I hope they get it fixed. It's one of my favorites.

CARRIE

I've never seen it.

WALTER

It's the only one in which Greta is a Platinum blond.

CARRIE

Is the story good?

WALTER

No, but that doesn't matter as much in a Garbo film. They are mostly about atmosphere, sets, and costumes.

CARRIE

But, a good film has to have an engaging story to drive it. Otherwise, there's nothing.

WALTER

A film is not a car that has to be driven.

CARRIE

Nice line. I'll have to remember that. Are you an expert?

WALTER

No, just an opinion.

CARRIE

Well then, what is your opinion on whether Garbo was bi-sexual?

WALTER

There are rumors, but why does it matter?

CARRIE

Just fun gossip!

WALTER

It's not that fun!

CARRIE

Oh, another opinion?

WALTER

No, I...

CARRIE

Ok, sorry I brought it up. I had no idea sexual preference was a sensitive issue.

WALTER

It's not, but you seem a little pushy!

FLASH on Jane in the projection booth as she slams the wall phone down in frustration.

CARRIE

What makes you think that?

WALTER

You sat right next to me, when all these other seats were available!

CARRIE

I told you before it's a favorite seat, and I'm friendly with no apologies. There are far worst things to be!

FLASH on Jane in the projection booth as she opens a door.

WALTER

Ok, maybe I over reacted, so let's just watch the film.

With quiet tension in the air, Carrie and Walter look ahead towards the screen.

A distant "Excuse me" interrupts.

They both turn around.

INT. AISLE

ALONDA, an elegant woman who looks similar to an older Greta Garbo, stands to address them.

Carrie and Walter struggle to keep from laughing.

FLASH on scene from the film "Ninotchka" as Greta Garbo laughs.

ALONDA

This is my theatre with apologies about the delay. We've had a difficult day. A perfect storm. All these years this has never happened. First, the reel broke, now the projector is in trouble, and the P.A. system is out, so that's why I'm here. The projectionist is working to get it fixed. Now, in the meantime, the snack bar is working. Also, two free passes each - one for each inconvenience will be waiting for you at the door when you leave. In other words, a total of four split between the two of you. Enjoy the show or whatever!

She exits.

Carrie and Walter continue to silently share the humor.

WALTER

I hope it shows for your sake, but I think one show was enough for me this day. Take care.

CARRIE

You too.

Walter moves away.

INT. AISLE

Walter walks slowly towards the exit and then turns around.

After a quick decision, he walks back into the theatre.

He slowly approaches Carrie's row, and then slides towards her until up close.

WALTER

Do you mind if I sit here?

CARRIE

No.

He sits in the chair next to her.

WALTER
My name is Walter.

CARRIE
Carrie.

WALTER
So you like Garbo?

CARRIE
You might say that. It's sort of an
obsession.

WALTER
Me too. I wonder why?

CARRIE
There's no explaining it. It's just a
feeling, I guess.

WALTER
We're simply fans.

CARRIE
Yes. (Pause.) I have a confession to
make.

WALTER
Do I look like a priest?

CARRIE
I sat next to you because you looked
interesting.

WALTER
Thank you and I came back here because
of your interestingness.

CARRIE
Good. That's nice. What do you do?

WALTER

I'm a freelance photographer for fashion layouts mostly. You've probably seen some of my work in magazines.

CARRIE

Damn, it's a small word. I'm on the design staff of George Gillen. I'm surprised we haven't met before.

WALTER

Yes, we probably know some of the same people.

CARRIE

This is quite a switch.

WALTER

What do you mean?

CARRIE

Things started out a little tense between us. Now it seems to be going in the other direction. Were there other reasons you came back to sit next to me?

WALTER

I wanted to exorcise your loneliness by keeping you company.

CARRIE

Now that's crap....!

WALTER

Just kidding.

CARRIE

Thank God. Otherwise, I would move to another seat.

WALTER

Well, I didn't want to miss an opportunity.

CARRIE
Opportunity?

WALTER
To miss out on something new.

CARRIE
Ok, that sounds good.

WALTER
I have been isolating myself because of a sudden recent loss. The love of my life, now gone.

CARRIE
Oh, that's hard to deal with. I've been through that too. Sorry to hear that.

WALTER
Thanks. Hopefully time will help to bring new people in my life. Not to replace, but new directions or something like that. Oh, maybe this doesn't make any sense.

CARRIE
Yes, it does. Moving forward will help to heal.

WALTER
I hope so. Ted is gone. The best person so far in my life.

CARRIE
I had no idea.

WALTER
How could you if you just met me.

CARRIE
No, I'm talking about that stupid bisexual crack.

WALTER
Oh, that didn't bother me. Some people are gay and others are not. I am, that's all.

CARRIE

Nicely put. A simple statement without judgement or concern.

WALTER

Well, now you know everything about me.

CARRIE

No, I don't. Just scratched the surface. There is a lot more.

WALTER

Yes, there is and the same could be said about you.

CARRIE

And everybody else.

INT. THEATRE AISLE

Alonda enters with a shoulder bag and a soda in a covered container.

ALONDA

I'm sorry, but Ms. Greta Garbo will not appear today, except in your dreams. It's not possible. So, here are your free passes.

She gestures the passes towards Carrie and Walter.

ALONDA

Thank you so much!

INT. THEATRE

Carrie and Walter look at each other with mutual resolution, and then get ready to leave.

WALTER

Do you know where Greta lived here in the city?

CARRIE

Somewhere on the eastside I think.

WALTER

East 52nd street looking out over the river. I could show you if you want.

CARRIE

Sounds good, instead of a movie today we can have a field trip.

INT. THEATRE LOBBY

Jane is comforted by Brad.

BRAD

Don't worry. It's just one of those days. Besides, congratulations for your film getting in the festival!

JANE

Thanks. That is something to look forward to.

He embraces her.

INT. THEATRE

While together, Carrie and Walter exit as they take the passes from Alonda.

INT. THEATRE LOBBY

Carrie and Walter in conversation walk closely towards the front door.

Jane and Brad are in a passionate kiss, and then switch to hug as Carrie and Walter pass them.

INT. MOVIE THEATRE

Alonda sits in a back row seat and then proceeds to relax in the empty theater.

She opens her bag to pull out a silver flask.

She opens the soda and then pours from the flask into it.

With a distant look, she sips with enjoyment.

FLASH on the final scene from the film "Queen Christina" as Greta Garbo looks out from the bow of the ship.

EXT. SIDEWALK

Carrie and Walter walk together away from the theatre.

FADE OUT