

NEXT SEAT

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FADE IN

EXT. MOVIE THEATER - DAY

A poster reads with an image of GREAT GARBO:

MATINEE RETROSPECTIVE with TWO FACED WOMAN and AS YOU DESIRE ME.

INT, MOVIE THEATER - DAY

WALTER, in his thirties, walks down the aisle with a shoulder bag in the empty theater.

He sits down in a seat in the middle of a row.

CARRIE, in her thirties, walks down the aisle as she looks for a seat.

She finds a seat to sit in a few rows back from Walter.

She gets up to move back down the aisle closer to Walter.

She slowly scoots into Walter's row until next to Walter.

CARRIE

Excuse me, but do mind if I sit here?

WALTER

No.

CARRIE

How was "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.

He walks up the aisle towards the exit.

INT. THEATER LOBBY CONCESSIONS COUNTER - DAY

Walter receives popcorn and a soda from an ATTENDANT.

INT. THEATER - DAY

Walter walks down the aisle with the refreshments.

He sits in a seat further away from Carrie.

CARRIE

I'm sorry if I sat too close.

WALTER

Don't worry about it. I was planning to move seats anyway.

CARRIE

No, you weren't.

WALTER

Yes, I was. How do you know?

CARRIE

I know. I invaded your space.

WALTER

Then, why did you do it? The rest of the theater is empty.

CARRIE

I like the view from this seat better. Besides, I asked you first.

WALTER

Well, what am I supposed to say, no? You paid your money, you can sit anywhere you want, accept on my lap.

CARRIE

I wasn't trying to sit on your lap, just in the seat next to you.

WALTER

Well, it seemed too close, that's why I left. Look, it's no big deal. You like that seat, so stay there. I just felt like moving. I don't know you. You don't know me. Let's keep it at that and enjoy "As You Desire Me", coming up.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CARRIE

You don't have to be so hostile!

WALTER

I'm not. I just want to be left alone.

CARRIE

Where have I heard that before?

WALTER

Very funny.

CARRIE

Yes, Greta laughs in "Ninotchka". Did you like that film?

WALTER

Yes, I've seen all of her films.

CARRIE

So have I. What was your favorite?

WALTER

Camille.

CARRIE

Queen Christina is mine.

Carrie notices something next to the seat.

CARRIE (CONT'D)

Oh, you forgot your bag.

Walter moves to retrieve the shoulder bag.

WALTER

Thanks.

CARRIE

You're welcome.

He moves back to his seat

CARRIE (CONT'D)

That's a beautiful bag. I have one like that. That's something Greta would have liked.

WALTER

What's that supposed to mean?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CARRIE

It's very smart, urbane, simply sophisticated. It would look good on your shoulder or on Greta's or any other woman's for that matter.

WALTER

Are you saying I'm a woman?

CARRIE

No.

JOHN

You said and I quote, "it would look good on my shoulder or any other woman's."

CARRIE

You seem a little defensive about your masculinity.

WALTER

I'm not defensive! I just didn't like the way you put that!

CARRIE

How could I have put it better?

WALTER

You could have said it looks good on my shoulder and it would look good on a woman's also.

CARRIE

You're right. That is clearer about what I meant. Your bag has bisexual appeal. Both masculine and feminine qualities.

WALTER

Yes, fine. I had never thought about it before, but you might be right.

CARRIE

Oh, you know I'm right.

WALTER

No! I don't know you're right. It's a matter of opinion. Let's just drop it!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CARRIE

Being sensitive and appreciating nice things does not make you feminine.

WALTER

I know that, but what makes you think I'm sensitive?

CARRIE

It's obvious. We wouldn't be arguing if you weren't.

WALTER

And we wouldn't be arguing if you hadn't sat so close to me.

CARRIE

You're probably right again. I invaded your space and I'm sorry I called you sensitive.

WALTER

There's nothing wrong with being sensitive. But, you don't know me. I don't like it when strangers make snap judgments about me.

CARRIE

That's true. I should never have assumed you are sensitive. I jump at things too fast sometimes.

WALTER

That's OK. I guess it's a sensitive issue with me...I mean, yeah I can be sensitive sometimes, but I don't like being told that. It's irritating.

CARRIE

That's honest. I think a lot of people feel that way. It's probably much easier and less stressful being insensitive.

WALTER

So, now I'm insensitive?

CARRIE

No, but you didn't like sensitive, so maybe you're the other.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

WALTER

Maybe, I'm not either, but a mixture.  
Are you sensitive?

CARRIE

Yes, sometimes, but it depends on the  
situation.

WALTER

That's what I'm talking about. We are  
capable of being either one depending  
on what's happening.

CARRIE

What are you being right now?

WALTER

I hope I'm being insensitive, because  
I would like us to stop talking and go  
back to being strangers. Look, I don't  
know where you're going with this and  
I don't care, so let's drop it.

CARRIE

You are more convincing when you're  
sensitive.

WALTER

You just won't give up will you?

CARRIE

OK, OK., I could change the subject.

WALTER

I'm sure of that.

CARRIE

Garbo was bi-sexual, you know.

WALTER

That's what they say.

CARRIE

Are you?

WALTER

Here we go again. Look, I just came  
here to enjoy these old films by  
myself. I don't know what you came  
here for, and I hope you find it. But,  
it's not going to be with me.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CARRIE  
You didn't answer my question.

WALTER  
And I'm not going to! It's none of  
your damned business!

CARRIE  
(Yells)  
I'm not some kind of a slut! I was  
just being friendly! So, just bug off!

WALTER  
No problem!

He walks off towards the exit.

CARRIE  
Who are you calling a bitch!

He turns around.

WALTER  
I didn't call you that.

CARRIE  
That's what you were thinking! It's  
all in your attitude.

WALTER  
What are you some kind of a mind  
reader?

CARRIE  
I don't read minds. I read attitudes.

WALTER  
Well, it just so happens that I  
usually never use that word. But,  
what's the point of calling you that?  
Number one, you're acting like one.  
It's obvious. Number two, since you're  
so smart, you probably know you are  
one.

CARRIE  
A what?

WALTER  
A bitch!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CARRIE

Now do you feel better? It's a good release, right?

WALTER

You're crazy! What did you come here for?

CARRIE

To see a film, stupid!

WALTER

So, now I'm stupid.

CARRIE

Well, you called me a bitch.

WALTER

But, stupid is worse. I'd rather be called a bitch.

CARRIE

You're a bitch!

WALTER

Good. Now we're equal. Stupid is stupid. Bitches are many other things.

CARRIE

You're a stupid bitch!

JOHN

OK., fine. That's all right. I'd rather be a stupid bitch, than just plain stupid. I've been called worse. Do me a favor?

CARRIE

What?

WALTER

Leave me alone!

CARRIE

No problem.

Walter sits in a seat further way.

He and Carrie look tensely straight ahead towards the movie screen.

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CONTINUED:

The lights fade.

The movie doesn't start.

CARRIE (CONT'D)

Hello! Are you going to show the film?

WALTER

Is there a manager around?

VOICE (OS)

We are having difficulty with our 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 so much in a Garbo film. It's mostly about atmosphere, setting, and costumes.

CARRIE

No, it's not. 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.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CARRIE

Here we go again. Why are you picking at my words?

WALTER

I'm not. But you're simply wrong about the importance of plot in Garbo films.

CARRIE

What make you an expert?

WALTER

I'm gay.

CARRIE

(laughs)

Well, I'm not, and I think my opinion is just as good as yours. How does being gay make you an expert?

WALTER

It's in the genes.

CARRIE

This is dumb. Why don't we go back to not speaking?

Walter moves to a seat closer to Carrie.

WALTER

Look, I was just being funny, and I wanted to find a way to tell you my situation.

CARRIE

Why?

WALTER

Weren't you trying to come on to me?

CARRIE

What makes you think that?

WALTER

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

CARRIE

I always sit in about the same seat in a theater. It's sort of a habit or phobia. Your seat just happened to be

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CARRIE (CONT'D)

next to it. It wasn't a calculated way to get to know you. I like to come to the movies alone sometimes. It isn't always a social thing for me.

WALTER

Oh, I see. Maybe, I was being a little paranoid.

CARRIE

So, you're gay?

WALTER

Look, I'm sorry I said that. It's wrong. Yes, that's part of my life, but not all about who I am. That whole thing is on hold right now, anyway. I'm kind of burned out and confused, but that's OK., because it's giving me time to think and figure things out. In other words, my love life is kind of quiet. No, not quiet, but silent.

CARRIE

Sometimes, silence can be very powerful. It creates a space for new energies. (Pause.) I didn't think you were what you said you are.

WALTER

Do you want me to thank you?

CARRIE

No. I just didn't have that feeling about you.

WALTER

Then, why did you ask me if I was bisexual?

CARRIE

That's not the same as gay.

WALTER

You're damn right it's not! It's sucks! If anybody says to me they are bisexual, you know what I say?

CARRIE

No.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

WALTER

Bye, Bye.

CARRIE

Why?

WALTER

Because it's just an excuse to be non-committal and it turns me off.

CARRIE

Now, I know why you got so snippy when I asked the bisexual question.

WALTER

Why would you care one way or the other? You came to see a film not to socialize, or so you said.

CARRIE

That's true, but I still get feelings about the people around me.

WALTER

Does this change your opinion of me?

CARRIE

No, I still think you're arrogant and stubborn.

WALTER

There's some truth to that.

CARRIE

No, actually I don't like it.

WALTER

What?

CARRIE

You being what you say you are. I think less of you.

WALTER

What? Less of a man?

CARRIE

No. Less of what we can be together.

WALTER

Because, we're not going to bed?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CARRIE

Yes, that has a lot to do with it.  
There's nothing wrong with any of  
this. I have gay friends. But, I feel  
cheated right now.

WALTER

I don't understand.

CARRIE

I thought you were one thing. Now, I  
find out you're not. This limitation  
is a disappointment.

WALTER

This is not a limitation.

CARRIE

No, not to you. But it is to me. I  
have to make an adjustment. You don't.

WALTER

But I thought...

The lights come up as ALONDA, an elderly elegant woman who  
resembles an older Greta Garbo stands in the aisle.

ALONDA

Excuse me! I'm the theater manager.  
Again, I apologize about the delay.  
It's been a rough day. First, the reel  
broke, now the projector is in  
trouble, and the PA system is out, so  
that's why I'm here. Please be  
patient. Now, in the meantime, the  
snack bar is working. And for your  
inconvenience, 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. OK.,  
that's all. Enjoy the show or  
whatever!

Alonda nervously exits.

Carrie and Walter react with humor about Alonda.

WALTER

Didn't you tell me being here tonight  
is not a social thing? It's just about  
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

WALTER (CONT'D)  
seeing some films?

CARRIE  
Yes, that's part of it.

WALTER  
What's the other part? What's this  
about making an adjustment? We're  
strangers for God sake.

CARRIE  
Yes, it's like curiosity. That's how  
you grow.

WALTER  
So, you want to get to know me right?

CARRIE  
Maybe, but it's not that important.  
It's becoming too strange. I've  
bothered you enough.

JOHN  
Well, we've come this far. Don't you  
want to tell me about this adjustment  
thing?

CARRIE  
No, I'm sorry.

WALTER  
Are you sure?

CARRIE  
Yes.

Walter picks up his things.

He walks up the aisle towards the exit.

At the exit, he turns around.

He walks back into the theater.

He sits down in his original seat next to Carrie.

WALTER  
This is my favorite seat too. My name  
is Walter.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

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. I have a confession to make.

WALTER

Do I look like a priest?

CARRIE

I'm sure you know this, but I sat next to you because I thought you were an interesting man.

WALTER

Thanks, but just not the kind you thought.

CARRIE

No, you are more than I thought.

WALTER

Well, it's a likewise feeling.

CARRIE

Good. That's nice. All right, now tell me what you do?

WALTER

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

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CARRIE

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

WALTER

Yes, that's wild. We probably know some of the same people.

WALTER (CONT'D)

Do you have a significant other or life partner or something like that?

CARRIE

Yes, I have a nice appetizer.

WALTER

What?

CARRIE

What can I say? He's a wonderful appetizer! It's just that I'd like an entree and a dessert also. A complete meal. But I don't know if it's possible. Oh, that's a long ongoing story. Do you have someone special in your life?

WALTER

No, not now. Not that way. But I was with someone for a few years, but that's gone. He was definitely a complete meal.

CARRIE

This is quite a switch.

WALTER

What do you mean?

CARRIE

Things started out pretty tense between us. Now it seems to be going in the other direction. Why did you come back to sit next to me?

WALTER

I wanted to exorcise your loneliness by keeping you company.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CARRIE

Now that's crap and you know it.

WALTER

Just kidding.

CARRIE

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

WALTER

Well, I just thought that here you and I are alone in this theater. We're both Garbo fans. It just made sense to come back here. I didn't want to miss an opportunity, I guess.

CARRIE

Opportunity?

WALTER

To live a piece of life. Take a chance. Get to know someone I might not ordinarily.

CARRIE

So, what makes me out of the ordinary for you?

WALTER

You're a woman.

CARRIE

Yes.

WALTER

Don't you see, if you were a man we would be gone by now out having coffee or a drink. A lot of buttons get pushed and systems go on when it's a man. It's different when it's a woman.

CARRIE

My buttons got pushed because of you being a man. Yours don't get pushed because I'm a woman. At least one set got pushed.

WALTER

It might be better this way. Less explosive.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CARRIE

It's already been explosive.

WALTER

That's what I mean. We would probably blow each other up, if there was a physical turn on. Too powerful or too passionate. I've been there before.

CARRIE

Me too, but it's hard to predict about all that. It might be just the right amount of voltage. But, why speculate about something that just isn't there?

WALTER

Yeah. But, it doesn't matter that you're a woman and I'm a man and that our attractions are different. We have a reason to connect.

CARRIE

What's that?

WALTER

Greta Garbo. Need I say more?

CARRIE

What else is there?

Walter ponders about something.

He goes into his bag to pull out a piece of paper.

WALTER

I want to read something I just wrote down today. I don't usually do this, but something told me to put it on paper. He reads:

I'm "flying". I'm not straight, gay, bent, crooked, pretty, ugly, evil, good. I'm just looking to touch some kind of spirit. Something which may last beyond. Touching and feeling filled with passion and sensation is never forgotten. That is clear, has been recorded and will happen again. Now, it's time to go forward, not to be better, but to embrace. Oh, what I have said is here for now, but why

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

WALTER (CONT'D)  
does ETERNITY come to mind. (Pause.)  
That's all.

CARRIE  
Well, thank you. That says a lot.

Alonda enters with a large purse in a more confused state than before.

ALONDA  
Look, I'm sorry, but Ms. Greta Garbo will not appear today, except in your dreams! Forget it! It's not possible. So, here are your free passes. Thank you so much!

Carrie and Walter gather up their belongings.

WALTER  
Come on, let's go get a drink.

CARRIE  
Sure, why not.

Walter takes the passes from Alonda.

Carrie with Walter exit the theater.

Alonda sits in a seat.

She pulls out a flask from her purse.

She sips with relief from the day.

FADE OUT