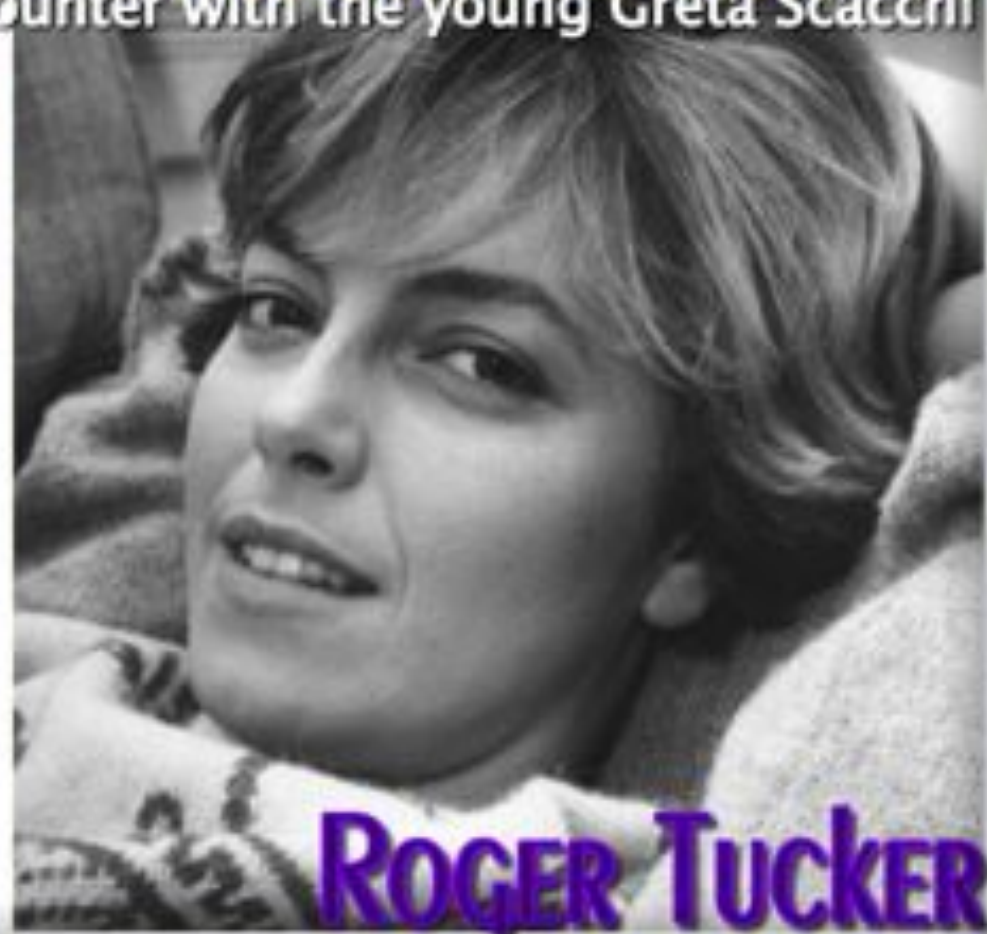




THE IDOL OF MISCHIEF

my encounter with the young Greta Scacchi



ROGER TUCKER

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by

Roger Tucker

contact: info@rogertucker.co.uk
www.rogertucker.co.uk



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My encounter with the young Greta Scacchi

I had long been an admirer of the intimate portrait of Greta Garbo given by Cecil Beaton in his diaries. One day it occurred to me that the time had come for me to give an account of the Greta, divine or otherwise, in my life ...

I was casting a femme fatale for a new detective series and had seen all the likely girls in London without finding the answer. One day I was talking over the problem with my agent of the time, Duncan Heath. In a very circumspect way he mentioned a girl he had just taken on from Bristol Old Vic Theatre School, called Greta Scacchi. He confided that her graduation piece had been terrible, and she had done absolutely nothing since; she was mad as a hatter but he thought she had something. He floated a picture across the desk to me. I said I'd see her.

*the door bust open and in came a
jumble of blond hair and old
clothes*

The door bust open and in came a jumble of blond hair and old clothes. She was late and out of breath. Soon enough I would learn that Greta is always late but always apologises prettily. She

original casting picture



plonked herself on the chair in front of my desk and immediately took charge of the situation. This is not a technique I would advise any young actor to adopt as it can be extremely annoying, but Greta had the charm to get away with it.

"What's all this about, then?" she demanded. I told her that I was casting the final episode of a new peak-time TV series to be called *Bergerac*; it would be set on the island of Jersey, and follow the investigations of a police detective in the fictional department, *Le Bureau des Etrangers*. Her face fell. "Oh," she said, "I thought it was going to be a period piece. I've always wanted to be in one of the BBC's period dramas." Again, this is not an approach that I would advise any young actor to adopt.

Knocked sideways by this cheek I began to treat her in a more off-hand manner, which she seemed to find amusing. The script called for the character to have been a model; I had been told that Greta had done some modelling so I requested that she bring along her book. Most girls have a zippered portfolio with pictures in plastic packets arranged in strategic order. What Greta brought was a tatty cardboard folder stuffed with a loose bunch of photos and bits and pieces in permanent danger of

falling out.

"What's all this, then?" I asked her. She

Greta's Modelling Card



front



back

leaned over and started to pick through the contents; several pictures were of her mother whom, she said, was far more beautiful than her; one was of her pet snake which she had in Australia; there were some her friend had taken

and several she quickly pushed aside before I could look at them. There were also several Italian magazine covers and pictures ripped from the insides along with the usual modelling prints and composites.

In fact, Greta's modelling pictures covered a surprising range, from girl-next-door munching

*something in her reflected the way
I saw myself – a child-like naivety
behind a devil-may-care front*

an apple, to the diva who-must-be-obeyed. She had begun modelling in Milan and continued with the top London agency, Models 1. But she thought modelling was stupid and told me that the only reason she had ever done it was to raise money to pay her own way through drama

college. I thought that was an impressive commitment.

We read a few scenes together, which were okay — nothing more; then I thanked her and dismissed her with the usual "we'll be in touch with your agents." Just as she was getting up to go she noticed the location pictures pinned to a board behind my desk and stopped to scrutinise them. She said that she loved to travel but had never been to Jersey. As she turned away she looked back and said that if I wanted her she would love to go, and with that swept out leaving the door open behind her.

I sat staring at the empty space. She had not at all been what I was expecting. I was expecting someone who was groomed and sophisticated, cool and in control. She was not my ideal fantasy made real, as, no doubt, she was for many men. But she had struck a chord with me. Something in her, perhaps, reflected the way



outside Bristol Old Vic Theatre School

I saw myself — a child-like naivety behind a devil-may-care front. After a moment I turned to

if I wanted her he would back me to the hilt but that it was not going to be easy. My only hope

after I had put down the phone I realised what had just happened ...

my P.A. who had sat through all the casting sessions with me. "What d'you think?" I asked. She looked back at me as if I had completely lost my marbles, and then she exclaimed, "I think she's absolutely wonderful!"

As I had been forewarned, Greta had no Equity ticket — which was the union membership card that would allow her to work. At that time the union completely ruled the roost and this was a major obstacle. Their



view was that new graduates from drama school should do menial jobs or bit parts in provincial theatre, fringe companies and the like, for two years before being granted the full membership which would allow them to compete for plumb rolls in TV and the West End. Exceptions were rarely made. I went to consult with my producer.

At the helm of the show was the distinguished producer, Robert Banks Stewart. We had worked together on a number of occasions before, and I knew that he was one of the very few producers who was prepared to go out on a limb to make each and every episode of his series as good as he possibly good. I told him about the new girl I had discovered. He said that

would be to prove that I was otherwise unable to cast the part.

I set to compiling a list of the considerable number of girls I had seen together with the reason that they were unsuitable for the role.

Greta's modelling experience was a real plus. Few of the young actresses that I had seen had the height to convince, though I was not confident that the Equity gatekeepers would think that this was a good enough reason. In the

meantime my P.A. took a call from Greta asking if I had made up my mind because another director was asking her to go for meetings in Germany. She left a personal number and asked if I would call her direct as soon as I knew the way things would likely turn out. I sent a message back that I would contact her before the end of the week.

It was past nine in the evening on the Friday night before I got round to ringing Greta. I explained the situation to her and told her that we would fight all the way. I then urged her not to go to Germany because I was sure that we would win through. This was a gross overrating of our chances, but I was not going to lose her to another director at this stage of the game. She agreed to

stay put and then suggested that she come round to my flat so that we could go through things. I told her that there was no need as I already had all the information I needed. It was only after I had put down the phone that I realised what had just happened.

The following week I met again with Robert Banks Stewart. He was certain that the union were stalling. He had met with Equity representatives and formally argued the case, but had heard nothing since despite two follow-up

I soon discovered Greta really did have nothing to wear

phone calls. Our time was running out. With production dates rapidly approaching they took it that we would soon be forced to make alternative arrangements. The one factor in our favour was that the shoot would take place in Jersey, and this was outside Equity's jurisdiction. Officially this made no difference as it was a BBC London production, but, in practice, it meant that they were unlikely to send representatives onto the set to halt production or find other ways to obstruct us until it was too late. Bob ruled that we should go ahead and present them with a *fete accompli*.

I pinned Greta's picture to the board and told my P.A. who clapped her hands at the news. Then I rang Greta's agents who were cock-a-hoop at our audacity. Duncan was in a state of disbelief and, obviously, had never thought that I would pull it off. The deal had to be done before I could ring Greta and begin work. The intention was then to move rapidly into action before too many people discovered exactly what was going on.

The first task was to make some stills of Greta in character which would be used as props in scenes to be shot in Jersey. Some of these were meant to have been taken in a nightclub. By coincidence there was a set in the studio which would suit fine and we decided to make use of it while the going was good. I rang Greta and asked if she could come in straight away and bring something of her own to wear. There was a long hesitation: would I describe the shot? I told her it was just of her sitting with a bunch of swells quaffing champagne. She asked me whether it would just be from the waist up. I told her that if they were all sitting round a table, I guess it would.

When women say that they have nothing to wear men tend to treat it as a joke. As I soon discovered, Greta really did have nothing to wear. She turned up at the studio with a fancy jumper that had a metallic thread which she wore above jeans. It served well enough, but she did look



somewhat under-dressed compared to the extras we had hired. And then came fittings that the costume designer, Lisa Benjamin, had arranged at Browns in South Molten Street, the Mecca of high fashion. For that she turned up in home-made pyjama bottoms with a drawstring waist and open fly front. Later, on Jersey, the wardrobe department would have to lend her a quilted jacket and wool tights to protect her from the autumn winds.

Since our first meeting Greta had become oddly withdrawn and shy. I did not know why, and did not know her well enough then to ask, but I guessed that she was going through a turbulent time in her private life. I knew well-enough that as the moment approaches for a partner to leave for location it can be a tense and unsettling time for the one who will be left behind. But, at Browns, as we went through the slow ritual of Greta changing into costume, coming out for our inspection, and then returning once more, she started to lighten up. She started to flirt with me: a little twirl of her skirt as she turned before me, a little coquettish glance back over her shoulder as she disappeared.

We settled on a Thierry Mugler suit and beret, and a diaphanous shift with cowl that had been designed by one of Browns' protégés. Afterwards we went for coffee at Widow Applebaum, a well-known hang-out for fashionistas in those days, but my time had run out. I had to make a dash back to BBC Centre while the two women would go shopping for more mundane items. As I prepared to leave I told them both that the morning had truly been a privilege. Lisa looked from me to Greta. Greta looked consumed with embarrassment. I hurried away,

but could not keep from glancing back and caught her watching me go. She wrinkled her nose and gave me a little wave.

As I roamed around the island of Jersey I saw Greta everywhere — coming down these



steps, moving through this arcade, sitting on this rock. I was getting on with the job, planning out shots. Or was I just elaborating my own personal fantasy? Soon I would have to have the answers to a hundred questions. Soon the whole crowd of actors and technicians and production team and service suppliers would descend on me and inspiration would be crowded out by over-riding practicality.

In those days Jersey was a film-maker's paradise. There were so many wonderful locations just short distances apart and all unexploited on screen. Until then the TV and film industry had passed it by. With production designer, Phil Roberson, I began building imaginary places, taking the front of one hotel, marrying it to foyer of another, and the swimming pool of a third. The empty town square in St Helier we would fill with café tables and a brass band. By filming the



causeway at high tide I would give the impression that a motorbike could be ridden over water. Realism was not my concern; this would soon become a magical place.

The episode was to be called *The Hood and the Harlequin*, a title loved by the producer, who had invented it. On the day everyone was due to arrive I sent flowers to the rooms of the two leading ladies, Cécile Paoli and Greta, and to my P.A., Heather. A reception with a buffet meal was planned for the early evening where everyone could get to know each other, discuss the days ahead, and resolve any outstanding issues. The room was almost full before I noticed Greta hovering on the edges. She was clearly thrilled to be there, but so shy that she could not even look me in the eye when she thanked me for the flowers.

I took her by the hand, lead her across the room, and, for the first time, introduced her to

Robert Banks Stewart. He was immediately swept away by her beauty and charm, and gave me a silent look of acknowledgement that she was, indeed, an asset worth all the hassle. Aside I asked him if there had been any developments with the union. He told me to forget it and just get on and make the film. He felt certain that once it was in the can the union would take the easy way out and, without further ado, issue Greta with her card. And he would be proved right.

*I felt a pang of yearning inside
but I was against location affairs*

After the meeting broke up and the crowd dispersed I still had several further meetings with department heads to prepare for the following day. It was couple of hours later before I was finally through and walking alone down the corridor computing schedules and shot-lists — when suddenly Greta popped up in front of me. She was speaking so quietly that I had to lean in to hear what she was saying. She had decided to turn in early so that she would be fresh for her first day. I told her that was a good idea, gave her a kiss on the cheek, and wished her good night. She hovered for a moment, looking confused, before turning and walking away. As I watched





her go I felt a pang of yearning inside but I was against location affairs. I had not always been blameless in this respect but had long decided that they were a bad idea. They were inevitably the cause of jealousy and tensions among cast and crew and a distraction from the work at hand. Further, as a director there were so many demands placed on you that you simply did not have the time or energy. It was just not possible to

Greta's first professional shot would be a nude shot and I was the guy to call "Action" and "Cut".

direct a film with élan and conduct an affair at the same time with any degree of finesse.

We had deliberately scheduled a night shoot with a late start on the first day to give everyone a chance to settle in. Greta only had one shot — but what a shot. We had strung white fairy-lights along the length of a high flight of stone steps leading down to the beach at Portelet Bay. Greta was to come tripping down the steps and, as she drew opposite the camera, pull off her shift and continue bare breasted into the sea. So, Greta's first professional shot would be a nude shot and I was the guy to call "Action" and "Cut".

The first take was near perfect but

everyone wanted to do it again. After three takes Greta was packed off back to the hotel, while we set up for further shots with Geoff Leesley, who played Bergerac's side-kick. As the lights were being reset, the cockney gaffer turned to me and with a grunt said, "We've had some dogs on this show but you've got a fair looker there, I'll grant you that." I had to chuckle at his colossal understatement. At that moment I had been thinking that Greta was truly the most beautiful woman I had ever seen.

When I got back to the hotel I took a quick shower, changed, and went down to the bar. There was no sign of Greta there or anywhere around. I stayed and had a couple of drinks with the boys, but, when Greta still did not show, I decided to turn in and go through the shots for the next day. No sooner had I stepped out of the bar than I came across Greta going in. She said that she had had to make a lot of calls and asked me if I was leaving. "Well, yes ..." I said. "Oh well," she sighed with a tinge of sadness in her voice, and continued into the bar.

I went on down the corridor but, instead of taking the lift to my room, I turned in the opposite direction and went out the front door. The hotel we were staying in had been the Nazi headquarters during the occupation and it was easy to see why. It was built like a fort. I set off in



the dark to walk around the perimeter while I turned things over in my head. It seemed crazy that this beautiful young woman wanted me — fifteen years her senior, married and divorced,

this was my cubic centimetre of chance

and if I let it go I might never see it again.

battered and bruised — but sometimes there really is no accounting for taste.

As I walked through the cold night air, I remembered the words of the Mexican sorcerer Don Juan Mateus, who is featured in books by Carlos Castaneda. He often spoke of a "cubic centimetre of chance" that can pop up before us at any time. Everyone has this minimal degree of good luck waiting for them but only a warrior

stays alert and ready to pluck it. I knew that this was my cubic centimetre of chance and if I let it go I might never see it again.

I went back into the hotel and straight to the bar — but there was no sign of Greta

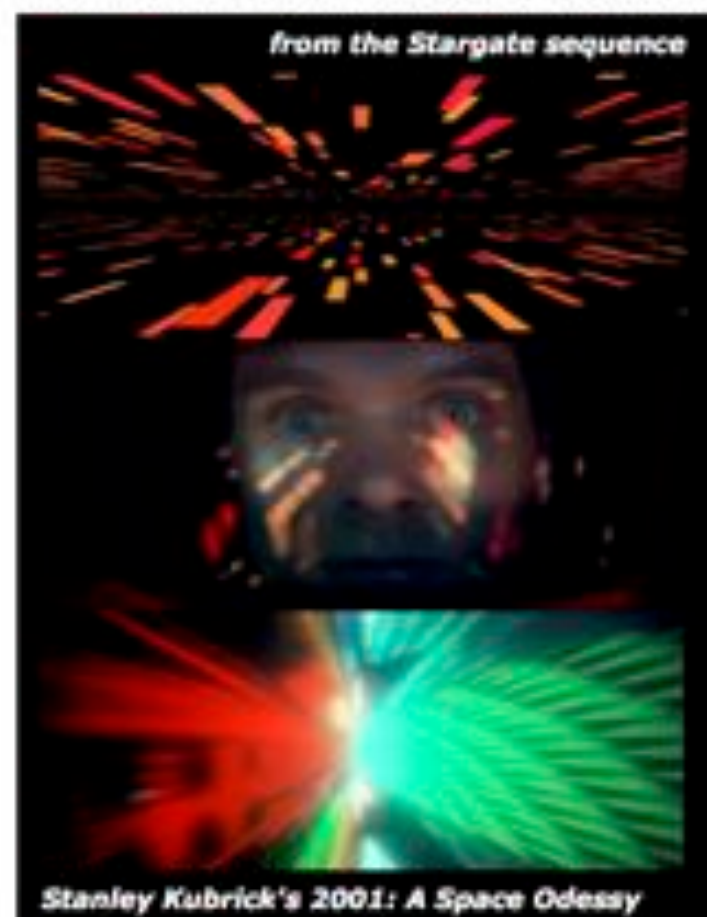
anywhere. I was just about to leave again when, suddenly, I spotted her in the near-deserted snack bar, sitting alone with her back to the door. I went in, asked if I could join her, and slid onto the bench opposite. We chatted happily while she finished off her snack and then a silence fell between us. I asked her if she would like a drink, and, before she could answer, casually mentioned that there was a bottle of wine in my room. She



looked at me for a beat, before her lids fell and a slow smile spread over her lips. After a moment, she slid out from the bench and walked towards the lift. I followed her there. As the doors closed behind us we embraced.

Greta's touch was electric. It was like no other I had ever experienced. I had been struck by it the previous night when I lent a hand to help her up onto a chair to see over the heads of the crowd. I felt then a surge of current that flowed in waves down her slender fingers. For a moment I had felt rooted to the spot as if electrified, before I gathered myself and moved on. Now, as she held me close, I felt that deep sensation again. I realised that this was a woman whose primary sense was touch. Greta touched with her whole body.

I had grown up a plump, painfully shy, only child, in a tiny suburban semi that housed, not only my mum and dad, but my grandmother and grandfather, as well as an aunt and cousin. From my earliest days I had dreamed of beautiful



with Greta naked in my bed I knew that sometimes dreams do come true and anything is possible

girls — even pre-adolescence when I formed a crush on Jennifer the pencil monitor — but, throughout my teenage years, I became totally tongue-tied in the presence of any stunning girl and found it impossible to look beauty in the eye. Now I had one of the most beautiful women in the whole world in my arms. It was as if I had passed through Kubrick's *Stargate* and was in another universe. With Greta naked in my bed I knew that sometimes dreams do come true and anything is possible.

The next day we were scheduled to shoot in a boutique and when Greta appeared on set she lit up the whole room — it was as if our rig was redundant. The song that was playing everywhere at that time was *Every Little Thing* by Sting and The Police. For me, the lyrics summed it up:

Every little thing she does is magic
Everything she do just turns me on
Even though my life before was tragic
Now I know my love for her goes on

Just to catch her eye in a mirror set my heart pounding and smiles ringing her face. Our joy soon spread over the whole set and it was not long before everyone guessed what had happened. As we were packing up to leave one of the shop assistants went up to Greta with a pen and paper and asked for her autograph. She froze before turning to me to ask, "What shall I do?" "Sign," I told her. And she did.

The news that we had got together was greeted good-heartedly by everyone, some were even supportive, but there were one or two exceptions on both sides of the sexual divide. In particular, one of the guest actors had obviously





that evening I was flabbergasted to hear that, by some devious means, White Hunter had tracked her down to her aunt's and wrangled himself an invitation to join her. However, she squeezed my arm and reassured me that there was no need to worry; when she met him White Hunter turned out to be more like White Mouse.

My room at the hotel was at the top of

been harbouring an alternative plan of his own as far as Greta was concerned. That evening Robert Banks Stewart invited Greta and I to join him and associate producer, Juliet Grimm, for dinner at the hotel. Halfway through the meal, for no good reason, we were sent a bottle of champagne. As head of the table, Bob acknowledged the sender but prudently decided against inviting him to join us. After that the actor got spectacularly drunk and had to be manoeuvred back to his room by the two assistant directors.

A new commotion ran through the unit when one of the crew noticed that an advert had been placed in the local paper by some guy desperately seeking a blond he had seen on the plane from London. He signed himself "White Hunter" and, from the details given, it was clear that Greta was his prey. Greta had an aunt on the island and had arranged to go for tea with her on her first day off. When I met up with Greta again

a tower and had a big window with a panoramic view across the rooftops of St Helier to the sea. In the mornings Greta would leap out of bed, draw back the curtains, and stand naked before the glass, looking out in awe at the rising dawn; on occasion one could see that the extraordinary purple coloured sky, shown in postcards, was no exaggeration. Watching her in these few stolen minutes before I readied myself for the day's schedule, I saw the close affinity she felt with landscape and the quality of light, something she had, perhaps, inherited from her painter father.

Scheduled for one day was a shoot with reduced unit in the old walled city of Saint-Malo on the French side of the water. As we travelled across in the ferry Greta squeezed my hand and told me to look at the colours dancing on the surf. It seemed then that she was in love with the whole world. On the other side the French film



commissioner was there waiting to greet us. Whereas we were given no help at all by the authorities in Jersey on the French side we were treated like visiting dignitaries. Everything had been organised and laid on for us in advance. We shot Greta hailing a cab to make her escape, while her decoy, played by Marianne Lawrence, rode off on a scooter pursued around the cobbled streets by two French cops. Then we repaired to a local hostelry where a meal awaited us. I noted that it was now taken for granted that Greta would take her place at the table beside me.

On Friday nights, at the end of the week's shoot, there was a regular fixture in the hotel disco. Everyone would meet and let off steam, not infrequently lead by the show's star, John Nettles who could roll out some surprising moves when he hit the dance floor. I had ended the week exhausted but now felt a new wave of energy as I realised what an unforgettable week it had been. I pulled Greta onto the dance floor but after a few unsynchronised steps she declared that it was silly and went scampering back to her seat. I tried again but Greta would have none of it, slipped her wrist from my grip, and was away. "See you later," I called after her. She nodded as she disappeared into the lift.

suddenly felt on top of the world. "I've never seen you look so happy before", she shouted out above the beat. As I stamped my feet I yelled back, "I've never been so happy before." Like most all makeup girls she avidly followed the affairs of her stars, and, had followed every nuance of the relationship between Greta and myself. As the music came to an end, she asked, "Are you going to marry her?" I was completely knocked back by the question. I had only known Greta for a couple of months, and had slept with her no more than a handful of times. "You should marry her," she insisted.

The allure of Greta soon proved stronger than the beat of the music and I slipped away to find her lying awake in my bed, lit only by the moonlight from the picture windows. I slipped in beside her and pressed myself against her back. She whispered that she had started to feel like a whore. There had been some embarrassment with one of the runners who had innocently asked her to which room he should deliver her call-sheets. Even the hotel staff knew where to find her if a call came through. She had decided that she wanted to go back to her own room. We would still make love but she would not stay all night.

It was hard to believe that a young girl as lithe and fit as Greta, whose mother had run a



dance school, could not execute a few passable moves on the dance floor; but I was soon to discover that was the truth of the case. The following week we had a sequence to shoot in a disco where Greta's character meets her accomplice in the middle of the dance floor so that their conversation cannot be overheard above the music. In the end, I had to choreograph Greta to do a few turns in front of the camera shooting from waist up, while extras danced around her.

I could see that this divide between abandon and control was fundamental to Greta's character

Greta told me that she was taught ballet while she was growing up but had never done anything like disco dancing. Once, in Germany she went out to a club with a bevy of her model friends and just went crazy on the dance floor, jumping around like a child. I could see that this divide between abandon and control was fundamental to Greta's character. It could be seen in the no-nonsense way she dressed, while at the same time being quite at ease when completely naked. It was the measured and calculated sexual provocation of both fashion and disco dancing which embarrassed her.

One evening I went to Greta's room to pick her up for dinner, and found that the door had been left open. I could hear Greta inside on the telephone, so tapped and looked in. She immediately extended a hand and gestured for me to go over and sit with you on the bed. As she continued with her long-distance call she stroked my hand, stroked it in such a deeply sensuous way that I may have swooned a little, because it was

some time before I became aware of the nature of her conversation. The words that cut through were — "it's what I need, it's what I need now " — they were the same words my wife had used before walking out of our family home. Greta had always acted like a free agent; until then it had not occurred to me that she had a live-in boyfriend in London with other ideas. "No ... No..." she kept repeating in that patient but firm tone that an adult uses with a child who is having a tantrum. I was shocked; both shocked and flattered.

Towards the close of the Jersey shoot there was a feeling that we were over the

hump. There would be a London shoot to follow, but now everyone began to feel confident that, give or take a shot or two, *The Hood and the Harlequin* was going to work out. Greta started to unwind and flirt with everyone — the over-weight props boy, the grumpy lighting cameraman, the patrician producer. I loved watching her flirt, and, perhaps, knowing that I was watching gave her the security to do so. By the time we concluded the Jersey shoot everyone was eating out of her hand.

Immediately the wrap was called the unit were hustled away as they would be paid for travel time until they were back at London base. And so they all left as fast as they had come in; but a few of us needed to stay over to the following day to clear up. Greta elected to stay over with me so that we could have a little time together without the pressure of a schedule. She checked out of her room and moved her luggage into mine. For one night, at least, it would be almost like being married. That evening we



walked together, hand in hand, down to Elizabeth Quay to take in the sights and sounds one last time.



When a film crew pulls out of a location there is an almost instant nostalgia. It is a feeling that is conjured up for me by the song, *The Day That The Circus Left Town*. While others may see no difference, you know that, for you, this place will never be the same again. As the sun fell below the horizon we turned back, and went to the bar where, we had deemed, you could find the best marguerites on the island. As drinks were half-price to that on the mainland the whole crew had taken to drinking cocktails. Greta and I snuggled close together and sipped our last.

The few of us that remained had agreed to meet for lunch on the following day at a pizza & pasta place in the town. Halfway through the meal the two young waiters who were leaning against the wall started sniggering to each other. Suddenly Greta turned round and blasted them in fluent Italian. They gasped and went pale before scurrying off. I asked Greta what it was all about. She whispered, "They were talking about doing things to me." Right, I thought, no tips for them. But by the time we left, Greta was laughing and joking with them, and even signed their menu cards. This was a foretaste of what would greet us

in London.

The first place in London that I took Greta to eat was *The Brasserie*, a fashionable café-restaurant on the Fulham Road. As soon as Greta excused herself to go to the ladies room a young toff came rolling up to the table and boomed, "Where did you find that girl?" At *The Big Easy*, a crowded American diner on the King's Road, as I looked around for the waiter, in the corner of my eye I saw something white flash by. A chancer from another table had floated a note in front of Greta. She immediately screwed it up and threw it back. In the street outside, while I was trying to hail a cab, a little guy darted up to Greta, touched her breast, and then dashed off as fast as his legs would carry him. As I shouted after him, Greta sighed and said, "Can't take me anywhere, can you?"

I had on occasion been with a number of exceptionally beautiful girls before, actresses and models, but none had caused the stir that Greta

*with those big eyes and blond hair
she seemed to radiate light*

did. I once arranged to meet her in Covent Garden; as I sat down at a table in the concourse I spotted her coming from the far side. She was wearing nothing special, no makeup, flat shoes, and toted a kit bag over her shoulder. And yet, as she walked past, almost every head turned to watch her. With those big eyes and blond hair she seemed to radiate light. She did not just have a body; she was embodied. At this time she was totally unknown; there was none of the aura of fame about her. She simply had an extraordinary charisma.

Among the scenes we still had to shoot were some cut-ins of Greta swimming bare-breasted. These shots, which we had been prevented from doing in Jersey due to weather conditions, we would shoot in the tank at Ealing Studios. By the time we got there the word about Greta had gone round. It is normal practice that any scenes involving nudity are done in a closed studio with only essential personnel present. On this occasion the studio seemed extraordinarily difficult to clear. People appeared on the grid, from back corridors; there was even another director who coned his way in on the pretext of having left something behind.

At this time Greta had no inhibitions about taking off her clothes and seemed to find the whole process slightly amusing. Nude scenes are a beautiful woman's point of power. There is normally a hushed atmosphere. Those privileged to remain are very respectful. They tend to move around more quietly and efficiently than usual. And all the attention is on her. It seems to be a dark secret that actresses often take pleasure from these moments. Afterwards remorse may creep in and silly excuses are invented, like they were tricked or did not know where the camera was or

I was quite taken aback by the instant chemistry between these two beautiful girls

the size of the shot. In this case, Greta seemed to be made quite high by the experience. When, afterwards, I knocked on her dressing room door to thank her, she grabbed me by the wrist, pulled me in, and threw her arms around me.

Exteriors to the ballet school had been shot in Saint-Malo; the interiors were to be shot at the



Marianne Lawrence as Marie-Thérèse

Sadlers Wells rehearsal studios in London, with some of their young dancers as extras recreating a class. Integrated in this would be Marianne Lawrence, playing Marie-Thérèse. Greta would come in late and the two girls would swap clothes, setting up Marianne as the decoy that would allow Greta to evade the police. For the first time Greta started to get tetchy about stripping and I slightly modified the shots to be less revealing. Even so, when we came to shoot, I was quite taken aback by the instant chemistry between these two beautiful girls, each flushed in admiration for the other. And I was instantly turned on by the both of them.

We soon moved into more complex dialogue scenes with the regular cast and the sure-footed command that Greta had displayed until then



started to slip away. The interiors of *Le Bureau Des Etranges* were shot in studio sets, and for staircase and corridors I used the interior of Ealing Town Hall. Overnight Greta appeared to go from being eager to please on set, to acting as if she could not give a damn. She was muddling lines, missing her marks, forgetting her cues. Some people started to think that she was stupid. On one occasion I took her aside and demanded, "Where's your spirit?" She looked back at me wide-eyed and whispered, "You know where it is." But still things did not improve.

A little later I spoke to her harshly for the first time and, from the way she crumpled, immediately saw that I had done the wrong thing. This was the first intimation that Greta was a far more complex person than I had at first imagined. Her reactions were often paradoxical. When most people get nervous they get uptight; with Greta it was the very opposite. She later described this to me as feeling as if she was melting away. She

would be overcome by feelings of inadequacy, feelings of lethargy, her thoughts vague, her memory clouded.

I started to better appreciate that for Greta this had been a time of enormous turmoil. She had only just left college and was taking on the responsibility of a lead role in a fast turn-around TV series. Further, her father in Milan had disowned her for taking up an acting career against his wishes, and her mother, having remarried, was about to sell up the family home

and move permanently to Australia. In addition there was, of course, the ongoing conflict with the boyfriend whom she had left behind. I later discovered that during this time she had suffered a heart palpitation but no-one on set would ever have guessed.

Soon I was to learn that the German director, whom I had outgunned for Greta's services, had adjusted his schedule in order to work with her.



As soon as she finished with me she would be leaving for Munich. In those last few days I learned more about her than ever I had of my wife with whom I had lived for over nine years. Greta lay in my arms, night after night, talking long into the early hours, when we were both ready to fall asleep. But still she would always insist in getting up and taking a taxi back to the flat where her old boyfriend would be waiting. Perhaps, this was her way of demonstrating that she belonged to neither of us.

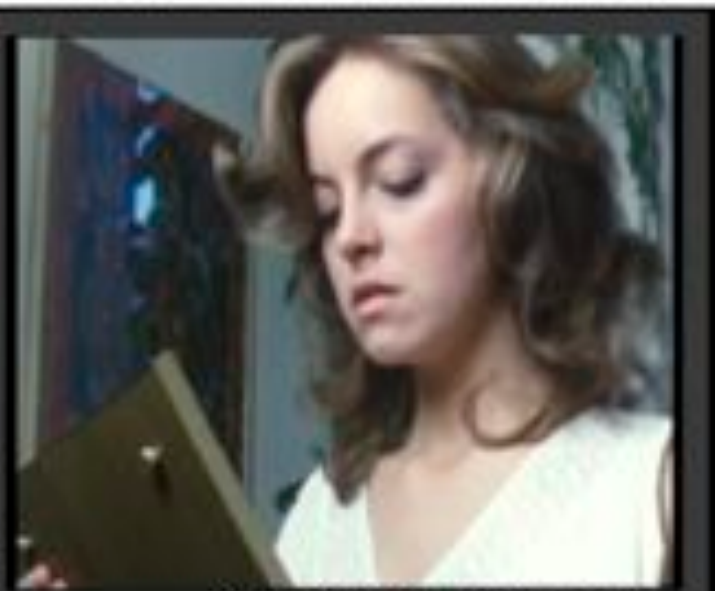
The last scene we shot was an interior which represented the model girl's apartment which Greta's character leaves at the beginning of the story. For the set I borrowed one of Greta's own modelling pictures and had it turned into a giant blow-up that was over six feet tall. I also asked whether I could borrow one of the pictures of her mother which I had the design department put in a silver frame. For some years Greta's father had ignored all her letters; now her mother, with whom she had weathered many emotional traumas, would be leaving for Australia in a few months time. Within the scene of Greta's character leaving I instructed her to pick up the picture and take a moment with it. I had dug out a

couple of lines from an E. E. Cummings poem for her:

"Whenever you think or you believe or you know, you're a lot of other people:
but the moment you feel, you're nobody -
but - yourself."

It was something Greta immediately understood. The scene, however, baffled the producer: when I explained it to him he gave me a bemused look tinged with a certain regard for the unforeseen depth I was bringing to a simple plot-driven scene.

For our last night together I arranged to take Greta to one of the trendiest restaurants of those times, The Meridiana, in South Kensington. Greta, of course, was late, but when she arrived at my flat I was taken aback to see what she was wearing. In Jersey I had dressed her in cutting-edge fashion; now she turned up for our evening out in an old pair of jeans, a jumble sale blouse, and a mismatched jacket. I decided that I best change from my cord suit to an old pair of jeans to match her. When we turned up at the restaurant it was well-past the time of our booking, and the place was buzzing. The door attendant asked us to wait while he found the maitre d'. As I stood chatting to Greta I saw him from across the room look us



Greta with her mother's photo

up and down and then, come marching forward with a look of total displeasure. Just as he reached us, Greta turned and flashed her enormous eyes at him and he just melted into a pool at her feet. In a moment he was back barking orders to his minions to clear a table for us. Greta did not dress up because she really did not have to. But that night, there was also something else. Greta always sought to undercut the emotion of big occasions.

With Greta gone my life suddenly seemed empty. On the last day of our shoot the prop boy had rolled up the enormous blow-up of Greta and presented it to her. As soon as he had gone she turned and gave it to me. Now I unrolled it and pinned it to the wall of my flat. During the day I sat watching filmed images of Greta rolling backwards and forwards on the Steinbeck editing table. In the evenings I sat eating alone while looking at her picture on the wall. One night I had a call from an old girlfriend on a flying visit from California. She asked if she could drop by to see me. I opened the door to her, she walked straight in, and stopped dead in front of the life-size blow-up of Greta. I started to try to explain before she turned back round, shook her head, and cut me dead with one word, "SAD".

how could I deny Greta an opportunity to die for?

She was right: the blow-up had to go. Less self-indulgence, more discipline would be the order of the day. I buckled down to get *The Hood* and the *Harlequin* finished, and was progressing the rough-cut when I received a call from Hilary Heath, one of the agents who represented both

Greta and I. She told me that an opportunity to die for had come up for Greta. The director/producer team of James Ivory and Ismail Merchant were casting a young English rose for a film set in 1920s India and also the present day. She was sure that Greta would be perfect for the part but

the six foot blow-up on my wall





Munich : Mariensplatz in snow

she had to have something to show them — and fast.

Hilary knew as well as I did that nothing was allowed out of the BBC until it had been signed off by a head of department. Further, I hated anyone to see my work before it had been completely finished. Normally I would just have refused, but how could I deny Greta an opportunity to die for? I got together some of her best sequences, and fine-cut them. Still undubbed, I had them transferred to an U-matic cassette, and smuggled it out of the studios. Then, on the Sunday evening I took it in person to Ismail Merchant's flat. As I rang the bell my heart sank to my boots, because, somehow, I knew that little package in my hand would take Greta away from me, perhaps forever.

Soon after, an opportunity came up for me. Another producer at the BBC was planning a series on Sigmund Freud and asked if I would accompany him and a writer to Vienna to recon the places where he had lived and worked. It was too good an opportunity to miss; further, if I left a few days early I could see Greta in Munich before

taking the short trip across the border to Austria to team up with my colleagues. In my heart of hearts I knew that I should not go to Munich, but I could not keep away.

When an actor goes off on location they are leaving the ordinary world behind and entering a special world of shared fantasy, intense emotion, in-jokes, and arcane references. Very quickly the participants build up a shared history of emotional incidents made more intense by lack of sleep. Relationships from the ordinary world can rarely thrive in this

boothouse atmosphere; they have to wait in abeyance until it is all over, and their partners gradually return to living in the ordinary world.

I got in touch with Greta and told her that I was coming. She asked me not to go. But, still I insisted that I was coming; the arrangements had all been made. "Well, if you're coming, you're coming," she said and agreed to pick me at the airport on my evening arrival. But, when got



Mariensplatz glockenspiel

there, there was no sign of Greta. I had none of the pfennig coins necessary to make a call, and when I obtained some could not get through to the number she had given me. I sat down on my bags, and broke open my duty free cigarettes. Everything felt out of joint.

Eventually Greta came by. Her filming had run late; she said that she had left me a message but I had not received it. I realised then how insanely I had missed her. It was wonderful to see her again, touch her, hear her, hold her. But, I soon discovered that Greta was not staying in the kind of international hotel, where no-one cares about comings and goings; she had been billeted in an apartment within a private house. This arrangement had been made so that she could practice her German with the family who lived there. Greta was a natural linguist but she did not speak fluent German, the language in which her film was being made.

Soon after I had dumped my bags and embraced Greta, there was a knock on the door. It was the woman of the house who spoke to Greta in German. I understood not one word of it, but I gathered that she was not overjoyed at my presence. To save Greta further embarrassment I told her I would rent a room for a couple of nights in a pension close-by. She looked relieved, and then touched my face and assured me that we could spend time together at the weekend. She would borrow a car from the film company and we would drive to an Alpine hotel in the foothills of the mountains.

I was quite take aback at how much colder it was that winter in Munich than it had been in England. There was snow on the ground and little electric carts going up and down clearing the broad

pavements. Once I came across Greta's unit filming in the street, but I knew I had no place there and hurried past. I went to see the famous glockenspiel at Mariensplatz but ice prevented the mechanical figures from coming out to dance. At the city art gallery I had more luck; I discovered works by the, so-called, decadent painters, such as Egon Schiele and Otto Dix. I owned a small painting of a typical 60s bedroom with an Egon Schiele poster clearly illustrated on the wall; but Otto Dix was new to me. I noted that these men seem to relish the ugliness of the world rather than idly yearning for a distant beauty.

After supper alone, I sat wrapped in blankets, huddled next to the radiator in my room, reading



Anita by Otto Dix



an English translation of Greta's script, *Das Zweite Gesicht* (Second Face). She had told me that her character was so close to the way she herself felt in real life that to play it she had constantly to recall the way that she had felt and reacted at various times. So I was surprised to find that this character was a lost waif, sad and lonely — almost the opposite of the vivacious girl I knew. The character in the script was really a borderline case, the prey of inexplicable moods and mental images, solitary and unpredictable,

***I was no longer her director but
just a guy in love***

way of relationships. Towards the end she asks repeatedly to be shown the way home, and then makes love to a stranger.

I lay awake into the early hours thinking about the entrancing mystery that Greta had suddenly become. When I first arrived in Munich I told her that it was great to see her again now that I was no longer her director but just a guy in love. She gave me an old-fashioned look as if I was asking for trouble. When ever we had previously met inescapably I had been the director and she my star; and, perhaps, even

without knowing, she had been acting out my projections onto her. Now another man had that role and, clearly, he saw something quite different in her. But, what was left for me?

The following evening I walked to Greta's apartment, my leather-soled boots slipping and sliding on the ice. She greeted me at the door with a quick kiss and lead me in. Greta often suffered cold hands when she withdrew into herself, but now I could feel that her touch was alive again. She said that she had not been back

***to watch a woman bathe
is more erotic than to be in
the bath with her***

long and needed to take a bath before settling in for the evening, handed me a bottle of red wine, lit a candle, and disappeared. The room was pleasantly warm and it was good to peel off my chunky sweater, and feel the heat radiating from the stove.

I poured the wine, and started flipping through a pile of LP records. In a while Greta called from the bathroom, and asked if I would bring her a glass of wine. I took it through, and was about to leave when she gestured to a stool at the foot of the bath and asked me to sit and talk to her. To watch a woman bathe is more erotic to than to be in the bath with her, when it is all a clash of knees and toes. To sit and watch Greta bathe that night was incomparable. I watched her run the sponge over her perfect breasts, her belly taut as an athlete's, her long graceful arms. And, for the first time in Munich, I felt at peace.

But the mood was soon broken by the

clangorous ring of an old-fashioned telephone. Greta leapt up out of the water, grabbed towels, and ran to answer it. From the Italian spoken I soon worked out that the call was from her father. Since she had been in Munich he had turned up out of the blue and, after years of refused telephone calls and unanswered letters, pronounced that he was reconciled to the fact of Greta becoming an actress. Of course, Greta welcomed him back with open arms. Now he would exploit the situation by sending her on errands for his art and antiques business. Our trip to the mountains would have to be curtailed.

Greta's artist father had walked out on the family when she was just three. He had sent the family to set up home in England, saying that he would follow, but he never did. He would just turn up at unexpected intervals bearing gifts like Santa Claus. As I got to know Greta I soon realised that she was enthralled by the glamour and romance of her father. She kept with her pictures of him, in black leather sitting astride a motorbike, or wearing a fedora and suit as if he had just walked out of a 40s movie. Sometimes she would mimic him in a gruff voice quoting verse about the stars, or making flirtatious comments about her underwear. She would often refer to him as a cad and a bounder who was only interested in himself; but it was obvious to whom Greta's heart belonged.

The next day we set out on our mission to find the tiny shop that traded in higgledy-piggledy



cabinets made from polished wood crates. As we walked through the crisp morning air, Greta suddenly grabbed my hand and started to run — for no reason at all other than the joy of being alive. Or perhaps she was running out from under the clouds of dark thoughts gathering in her head. We ran till we were out of breath, then strolled again. At length we found the shop but the owner was not there: he would arrive in an hour; we would have to wait.

We sat down on the low wall of an ice-bound fountain, and Greta started idly playing with a satsuma that she had found in her pocket. I told her of my surprise when I read her script;

how strange the character was with whom she identified so strongly. She said that, like her character, she had never felt that there was any place she belonged. After her father walked out on the family, her stoical mother struggled to bring up her and her twin bothers, running dance classes and taking in sewing to try to make ends meet. But when she travelled to see her father in Italy she entered another world, a world of art and extravagance and devil-may-care jests without a care for tomorrow. With each parent she had to learn to behave quite differently. And so it goes: they say that the child who cannot embrace a single identity is destined to become an actor — or worse.

All too soon I would have to leave. The ticket in my pocket was for the following day; I wanted to get to Vienna before my colleagues arrived from London. But then I learnt that, by some extraordinary serendipity, Greta, too, would be going to Vienna. Her film had planned several days shoot there. I would travel there by plane; a couple of days later she would follow with her whole unit by train. We would be there at the same time. Perhaps I would even have time to recon in advance places to take her, places to meet. As the plane took off I reflected that if I had not broken the taboo of following a lover onto location there was so much I would have accepted at face value, so much of this woman I might never have known.

I checked into the Beethoven Hotel, in walking distance of the Innere Stadt or old town of Vienna, and unpacked the several heavily annotated biographies of Freud that I had brought with me. Before I went to sleep that night I spent some moments staring at the pictures of that extraordinarily charismatic man who once described himself as a conquistador of the dark



continent of the unconscious. When he first introduced the idea of infantile sexuality and the Oedipus Complex it had seemed totally outrageous to contemporaries, yet, in most places, it was now accepted almost as a truism. What I doubted was the fundamental tenet of psychoanalysis that bringing the subconscious into conscious awareness would, in itself, be a cure. Greta was not unaware of her emotional entanglement with her father — she could even joke about it — but I feared that this would not be sufficient to protect her from its dangers.

My colleagues, producer John Purdie and writer Carey Harrison, arrived the next morning



and we began our journey by walking to Bergasse 19, the house where Freud had lived and worked from the age of thirty-five to his early seventies, when he was forced to flee from the Nazis. The house, which is now a museum, was virtually empty because nearly all his furniture had been shipped to London and installed in the house in Hampstead where he took up residence for the final years of his life. At the time we arrived at Bergasse 19 there were no other visitors there, so the three of us split up and wandered our own course round the quite cramped suite of rooms, each trying to get our own grasp of the life that had been lived there.

The psychoanalytic idea that came more and more to preoccupy me during my stay in Vienna was the idea that Freud came to late in life, the idea that runs counter to the pleasure principle: the compulsion to repeat. Like a waking dream we live out the same pattern of mistakes,

the same traumatic situations, over and over again, as if pursued by a relentless fate. But, after the event, in a moment of insight we may come to see that it is we who brought this fate on ourselves. Was Greta hell-bent on repeating the same patterns in her adult life that she had suffered in her broken childhood? And, was I setting myself up to repeat, yet again, the same trauma of lost love?

I got back one evening from a meeting with the Psychoanalytic Society to find a note left for me at the hotel addressed to "Mister Tucker!" It was from Greta. She had finished early, come round to the hotel, but found us gone. The note was signed off, "I'm well back into owl time. See ya, Greta X" In fact, so relentless was the schedule that I hardly saw Greta at all until the end of our visit, when we both elected to stay over an extra night to spend time together.

Christmas was drawing in and behind St. Stephen's Cathedral a brass band was playing carols which gave the lanes a melancholy air. We ate bratwurst in a café, all dark wood and mirrors, sitting with Greta's knees clasped between mine. And then went shopping in the old town, but most of the shops were too expensive for Greta. She had the attitude to presents of someone who had grown up poor: they should be silly and

Mister Tucker!
finished work
surprisingly early
- 6pm - came round
to see if I could
join in anything.
Missed you.
Hope you're having
fun and doing good
people. I'm well back
into owl time.
See ya. Greta X

inexpensive. She asked me if I could think of anything for her agent, Duncan Heath. I suggested some tonic for his burgeoning bald patch, but she did not buy it.

In interviews Greta has often told how she signed with her agent because he was the only one who said that she would not need to change her name. What she never explains is that this was a name entirely of her own choosing. She once told me that her birth name was Margareta Gracco. For her new surname she adopted the family name of her aristocratic Italian ancestors, Scacchi, which also, curiously, is the Italian name for chess. Sometimes she said that this was just to

in person. As soon as they did, they gave her the part — to play the colonial ancestor of Julie Christie. I always knew that they would; hoped that they would, feared that they would — because I would certainly not be following her onto location in India. All too soon it would be time to say goodbye again, and both of us knew this would be a more serious parting. This was the parting I had been deferring for too long. I knew I had to let her go.

In the Chinese restaurant Greta asked me if I could wait for three months. I told her that I could, but I felt that she was really asking the question of herself. The waiter cleared away the dishes, and she rested her cheek on her forearm on

"Well, that's alright then. You won't take too seriously all the things I've said."

distinguish her acting name from the name she used as a model; but she also told me that, from the time she was a little girl, she had imagined herself living in a palazzo with marble pillars around which she would dance. The accompanying name Greta, she said was just a childhood contraction of Margareta. Perhaps it was, but I also found this a little disingenuous. Since the age of eight she had wanted to be an actress, and no girl can grow up in England and Italy without discovering that the name was associated with the greatest movie star of all time. Greta Scacchi was a girl steeped in fantasy.

Before Greta got back I arranged for her one-page CV to be printed ready for her to send out to casting directors; but it was instantly made redundant. Merchant and Ivory had delayed the casting decision for the lead in their new film, *Heat and Dust*, until they were able to meet Greta

the table. After a few moments deep in thought, she raised her head a little, looked up at me sideways and said, "Can I trust you?" And, I whispered back, with all my heart, "You can trust me." But she still went on looking at me, suspicion in her eyes. Holding hands in the back of the taxi on the way home, she suddenly turned to me and asked, "Do you trust me?" I hesitated for a moment, and, before I could answer, she said, "Well, that's alright then. You won't take too seriously all the things I've said."

And she was gone again. Without her my world seemed empty, unreal. My strength ebbed from me. I walked along the road clinging to the fence, looking for a bench on which to rest, on which to smoke another cigarette. After a few weeks I received, not one, but two postcards from her; day and night scenes, taken from the same

This Is My Proof by Duane Michals

*This photograph is my proof
 This photograph is my proof. There was that afternoon,
 when things were still good between us, and she embraced
 me, and we were so happy. It did happen, she did love me.
 Look see for yourself!*

vantage point, looking out over the Bay of Mumbai. She signed off saying that she was having a "brill" time. I was glad for her. A little later I had an airmail letter written on lined onion-skin paper saying that she had "thought of me a bit". But, in those days, before email and Skype, it was impossible to keep in close touch over such long distances.

Around this time I came across a work by the photographer, Duane Michals. Beneath an unremarkable picture of a young woman embracing a man from behind was written:

"This photograph is my proof. There was that afternoon, when things were still good between us, and she embraced me, and we were so happy. It did happen, she did love me. Look see for yourself."

I found that immensely touching. There were no photographs of Greta and myself together. *The Hood and the Harlequin* was the only film set I

have ever been on where there was no stills photographer — probably through some admin. error. And, if any of the crew took pictures I was not aware of it. The only proof I had that our affair had not all been a dream were these few postcards, scribbled notes, ticket stubbs and the like.

I soon had new scripts, new schedules to contend with, but I lived on seeing Greta again. I expected her to return to England soon after her mid-February birthday, and in idle moments worked on an apt present. This was not an easy task. I had previously been reprimanded for the only

luxurious gift I had ever given her — a designer handbag — and made to promise that I would not further embarrass her and "put unnecessary strain on our relationship" by gifting her with any more beautiful presents! But, I could not just give her something cheap and silly; it had to be a gift that would express my feeling for her. And that was a tall order.

I was passing an Italian boutique when I

cards from Mumbai

saw a very striking scarlet cashmere scarf. I recognised it as the one worn by Daniela Silverio in Antonioni's latest film, *Identification of A Woman*. It was not exactly inexpensive, but, hell! It was just a scarf, and, as Greta never had enough clothes to keep her warm, this seemed perfect. I snapped it up; but, by the time her birthday came along Greta was shooting in the sweltering heat of an Australian summer. Instead of returning to England after *Heat and Dust*, she went straight on to star in *The Coca-Cola Kid* with, the maverick Serbian director, Dusan Makavejec. After that, there was the possibility of an Australian TV saga. I began to wonder whether I would ever see this girl again.

One day I went to see Duncan Heath to talk about the lack of dynamic in my career, only to find that he just wanted to talk about the escape

velocity of Greta's. He thanked me for my help in getting her away, without realising the irony of his words. Agents like to talk about, not getting work for their clients, but "fielding offers". In Greta's case this was a fair description: offers had started to come in from all directions. In an awed tone, unusual for Duncan, he said that he felt certain in no time she would be right up there with the top Hollywood stars. Only a few weeks later, I was astonished to pick up my copy of *The Sunday Times* from the newsagents and find a close-up of Greta on the cover of the magazine or, as it was called in those days, *The Colour Supplement*. They had sent a reporter and photographer out to do a location piece, and, even before the film was completed Greta was being hailed with the strap line, "A Star Is Born".

Stardom meant nothing to me; I cared only about the girl. Weeks passed and then the phone





rang and it was her. She sounded quite breezy as if we had just parted the night before. She was back. Did I want to get together? Was I free the day after the next? I told her that for her I would rearrange my diary. She wanted me to accompany her when she went to meet a bunch of advertising men and their clients. Okay by me. She turned up at my flat driving a vintage orange Saab that I had never seen before; but it was when I saw what she was wearing that I understood why she felt the need of an escort. She had on a genuine gents' pinstripe suit, which she had found in a charity shop — with nothing underneath.

We drove into the Westend and went to a cocktail bar in Leicester Square, where I ordered margarites in honour of Jersey days. Then we sat together in the darkest corner, chatting like old friends. She told me about the married man who had pursued her across continents, about another who was too shy to rehearse a kiss, and how, in Australia, she had to deploy her mother as defence against the advances of yet another. When she judged the right degree of lateness had arrived I walked her to the agency door and watched her go in. It was a foregone conclusion: of course they wanted her — to such an extent that they were prepared to pay her a million pounds for three

everything was working out for Greta exactly as she had planned, but faster — much faster.

days work. But, incredibly she turned them down. Money just could not buy her.

The Hood and the Harlequin was broadcast to an enthusiastic reception that exceeded all expectations. Thanks, in part, to viewers inherited from a major sporting event, it pulled in a huge audience of over eighteen



ANNIE
GRETE SCACCHI

DIRECTOR
ROGER TUCKER
© DDB MUMUKO

million. In later re-runs some of Greta's trade shots would be trimmed, but on that first showing the film went out intact. Producer Robert Banks Stewart, who had gone out on such a limb to back my choice of Greta, was ecstatic and rolled out his own litany of superlatives. His next series was assured. And, of course, everyone now wanted to know about "The Girl". But, sadly, Greta was not there to celebrate. By this stage I had quite lost track of where she was.

Everything was working out for Greta exactly as she had planned, but faster — much faster. The take-off of her career was the most breathtaking of any young actor I have ever heard of, before or since. What made it more astounding was its international character. In addition to her London agent, she soon acquired agents in Australia and America, and, for years to come she would be continuously crisscrossing the

globe, filming in four languages and several varieties of accent, hardly ever staying in the same country for more than a couple of months at a time. It was impossible for any man to keep up with her. In a letter she said that she felt like a kid at a tea party running around on top of the world one minute and then falling into depression the next. But, come what may, nothing now was going to divert her from her course.

I had half-hoped that, when Greta broke from her previous lover, she would move in with me, into the new flat I had just bought with her in mind. It had wrap-around windows on three sides and was filled with light. Instead she chose to purchase a rather dismal townhouse, which she said, one day, she would pass on to her mother. When I first went there it was not properly decorated and had only rudimentary furniture.

One late afternoon I sat in her room, in the falling light, as she got dressed for an embassy reception. Pinned to the wall was a large poster of Ingrid Bergman showing the same kind of vulnerability that I had found in Greta. Alongside was a small group of her father's paintings, which reminded me of the cubist landscapes of Lyonel Feininger. And, propped up on a dresser was a

photograph of Greta as a child, playing with her twin brothers, beneath a tree house which, she told me, her father had built for them.

I remarked that she had been as beautiful a child as she was a woman. She shrugged; since the age of five, just about every day, someone had told her she was beautiful. So now she took it for granted; it did not mean anything to her any

more. It was not often that I had the chance to see Greta all dressed up and, as she finished and turned to face me, I unwittingly let slip, "You look beautiful." Immediately, I realised the irony in view of the conversation we had just had.



Greta caught my eye and we laughed together. After a moment she crossed the room and stood very close to me, her hands resting on my shoulders. And then, without looking up, she whispered:

"I can't be with you yet, because to be with you I would have to change and I'm not ready to change."

I shook my head, unable to find words to answer. At that moment I simply adored her.

Greta and I often talked about going to the movies together. There was only one time that we

ever made it. I took her to a tiny cinema in Soho, and we sat holding hands, watching a rerun of Terence Malik's *Days of Heaven*. Greta had not seen the film before, and, in view of her love of

that I had failed.

She was, of course, too young for me at that time. She still had a world to discover, a self to

to be with you I would have to change and I'm not ready to change

landscape and the quality of light, this seemed the perfect choice. In this respect it is surely one of the most beautiful films ever made.

Greta had invited one of her girlfriends to join us and afterwards we all went to an Italian bistro. As soon as I turned away to get the waiter's attention the girls started talking about men — Greta's men. They started going through her lovers, past, present and potential. I turned back and politely asked them if they could have some respect for my presence and not have this conversation while I was there. They both looked at me wide-eyed, like little kids being ticked off. But, as soon as I turned away, they started over again. Now they were talking in stage whispers, going through one guy after another — who was hot and who was not. I could stand it no longer. In one violent gesture I swept the cutlery off the table. If this was some kind of test, it was clear

find. If she had been just four or five years older then everything might have been different; but that was a hypothetical that could never be. One day I took my coffee to sit with the crew during a break in filming, and, slowly it dawned on me that they were talking about Greta. A couple of them had just come from a shoot with her had plenty of tales to tell. She had snubbed a big Hollywood name, gone off with one guy while another wandered round in a daze trying to find her, and so on. They went on blithely, not realising that I had ever had any involvement with her. It brought it home to me that she was no longer my Greta, or any other man's for that matter. "She's a laugh is Greta", said one of them, "A real laugh." But, as he said it, there was no mirth in his eyes.

The less I saw of Greta the more I became



Days of Heaven

obsessed. In my mind's eye I saw her everywhere: sitting in the light of a floor lamp, her head resting against my knee; coming through the kitchen door, sucking the blood from a cut finger; waking with a start from a dream as I touch her bare shoulder. I began to fill my productions with echoes of her. In *Deadly Recruits* I replayed the scene in which I had watched Greta in the bath, now with Terence Stamp and Carmen Du Sautoy. In *Strangers* I had Suzanne Danielle toy with an orange as she talked to Colm Meaney, just as Greta had played with a satsuma sitting on the wall of the fountain in Munich. In *Winners & Losers* I staged a scene with Denise Stephenson and Stephen MacDonald, playing her father, beneath a tree-house that had been constructed by STV chippies.

Slowly, it dawned on me that there were, at least, two Gretas. I had known it from the very start. It was evident from the modelling card she had shown me the very first time we met: on one side, the vivacious, fun-loving, girl with the irresistible smile; on the flip side, the forbidding, cold-hearted, diva. This split could actually be read in her body: the upper half so very graceful and feminine; the lower more heavily armoured; and a recurring sciatica problem marking the division. It

could be felt too in the fluctuating warmth or coldness of her hands. It had been brought home to me in an intimate way on the last night before Greta left for Germany. One minute she would be hunched up, turned away, refusing love; moments

slowly it dawned on me

— there were two Gretas

later she would throw herself on the bed and pull me down on top of her. One learnt to ride the changes. Greta's demeanour would seesaw like this — withdrawn and in control, or abandoned and pulsing with sensation; there was nothing in-between.

The two films Greta shot in 1986, Diane Kurys' *A Man in Love*, and Michael Radeliff's *White Mischief*, perfectly illustrate the two sides to her character. In the former, which, in part, was written for Greta, she plays an ingénue getting her first break in the movies, and appears as a rather shy, but always delightful, very feminine, and deeply sensuous girl. This is the closest she comes on screen to portraying the girl I knew in Jersey. In the latter, as Lady Diana Broughton, she draws on the other side of her character, seductive,



bath scene from Deadly Recruits



cynical, self-willed and chafing at any limitation on her freedom. Together, these two contrasting films, surely, contain some of the most memorable nude scenes in the whole of cinema history.

In Ritz fashion newspaper Jessica Gutenberg said that Greta "... arrived at the Hall of Fame through the door marked Pull." What did it mean? Perhaps she knew something that I did not, but I found it hard to believe that Greta ever did anything but be herself to get the many offers that came her way. In one review I came across mention of Greta's "exquisite vulnerability". It struck me as a phrase that was exactly right to describe the young woman I had invited to my room at the Hotel de France. She appeared to me then as the most feminine woman I had ever known. Now I was about to meet the other Greta, head-on.

We had agreed to hook up when she returned to England after the Cannes Film Festival. On the day I expected to hear from her there was no



contact and I fell asleep on the sofa waiting for the phone to ring. The next morning she called to say that she was already at Heathrow and could I pick her up. It seemed odd that she was asking me to drive from central London to Heathrow, only drive her all the way back to central London, when she could just jump into a cab; but I was so eager to see her again that I gladly ran out and jumped into my car.

I searched the terminal but could not find Greta anywhere. Then I spotted her sat on the ground at the base of a pay telephone, the receiver to her ear, her contact book spread out on top of the bags before her. She was wearing green jelly sandals, cheap plastic sunglasses, and an incongruous tweed jacket. I took her bags to the car while she finished her call. Understandably she was still buzzing with what had happened at the festival. Heat and Dust had won no prizes but she had been proclaimed the star that she already was in real life.



As we wound our way through the traffic Greta's tales descended from meeting stars, like Catherine Deneuve, of whom she had been a life-long admirer, to an old mate from the music industry with whom she had hooked up. It transpired that they soon had a row and he ditched her saying that she was too obsessed with herself. "But how could I help it if everyone wanted to see me and talk to me and touch me?" she pleaded. But I sensed she was talking to herself rather than me. Greta had always had a misplaced regard for those

depersonalised, view of life, and told her that she was just being arrogant. It was not arrogance, she insisted, it was just the truth. I replied that it may be the case that reality currently supported her arrogance, but it was still arrogance. She shrugged and I knew that I was wasting my breath. At a previous low point in our relationship she had quoted to me a line from *The Ride Across Lake Constance*, an experimental play by Peter Handke, that she had performed as a student: "The more you talk the more you kill my love for you." It



who spurned her and a casual disregard for those who were smitten. By this time, it was clear, I fell into the latter category.

I did not want to hear any more and concentrated on my driving. Along the way, as a conversation filler, I responded with the old adage, "Be grateful to those who help you on the way up because ..." It had started out as a reference to someone in her story, but, half-way through, I realised that it reflected directly on me. Suddenly Greta flew into a rage—she was sick of people telling her to be grateful. Why should she be grateful? If one person had not helped her another would have. I found that a grim,

taught me that argument meant nothing to Greta. She was a creature entirely of feeling. And, for a man with a degree in philosophy that was hard to take. Whatever the logic, Greta would follow her iron whim.

I dropped her off at her town house. She said that she needed some time to get herself together and suggested that I call back at seven. I, too, was glad to have some time to refresh myself and start over. An invitation for seven to me suggests dinner; so, on my way back that evening I stopped off to pick up a decent bottle of wine. However, when I arrived Greta opened the fridge to reveal

*whatever the logic, Greta would follow
her iron whim*

that there was no food in the house but for a stale lump of cheese. I then started to hear noises coming from the next room. She poured the wine into three glasses, and took one through. There was another of her mates in there, on his hands and knees, fixing her floor. She gave him the wine and told him that he would have to finish up because I had come to take her to the theatre. This was the first I had heard of it, but, if the lady wanted to go to the theatre, I would take her to the theatre. We gave her mate a lift to the tube station and then drove on into the West End.

Soon, I discovered that it was no big production to which we were heading, but a review put on by a bunch of Greta's fellow students from Bristol Old Vic Theatre School. To gain attention for themselves they had hired a basement theatre space and mounted their own

show of short sketches and demonstration pieces. Being a professional director, I was, of course, just the kind of audience they hoped to attract. We settled in and, as the lights went down, I took Greta's hand, but she quickly put it aside, and, then, surreptitiously, hooked her foot around my ankle. I remember nothing of the show; only her leg against mine, her gentle breathing beside me.

At the interval I looked around and saw no other directors, casting directors, or producers that I recognised. I did recognise one or two young actors, including Michael Waterman, who had played a lead part in my series, *The Boy Who Won*

*her leg against mine, her gentle
breathing beside me*

The Pools. As we chatted together, I watched Greta over his shoulder, going round the room, greeting her old chums, who, behind her back, regarded her with looks of awe and envy. She was returning as an international movie star while they

were still trying to accrue enough working days to apply for a union ticket and gain a toe-hold in the industry.

When the show was over, I was glad to get out into the cool night air. As we walked back to my car Greta was chatting to a couple of old friends who seemed to be tagging along, while I was wondering where would be the best place to eat at that time of night. It was not until I opened the car door that

on the set of *The Boy Who Won The Pools*



Michael Waterman, Don Henderson, Gillian Martell & Roger Tucker



Greta announced that she just wanted to collect her things because she was had decided to spend the night at her friends place: they had a lot of catching up to do. And, at that moment, I finally saw the game she was playing. Greta was mustering friends and lovers into daisy-chain formation, so that each would cut off access from the one before, and she could flit about without commitment, free as a butterfly.

I was starving, frustrated and angered at being slighted in this way. As she bent over to get her things from the front seat, I grabbed hold of her and spun her, head over heels, through the air. After years of aikido training it was a simple and sure move. I set her safely back down on her feet, and, as she gasped and blinked, I stepped in quickly and kissed her. It was a kiss goodbye.

I walked round to the driver's door, while Greta grabbed her things. She slammed the door with a breezy "See ya." And I knew then that I would always love her.

As I drove off Greta waved out; I waved back to her in the rear-view mirror.



CONTACT: INFO@ROGERTUCKER.CO.UK
WWW.ROGERTUCKER.CO.UK

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