

For Immediate Release

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Taxter & Spengemann

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done a terrible thing—and hung up. He called back, arguing that he'd never uttered a public word about her in fifteen years and that, were he to do so, it would not be to *Globe*. More silence. "Does this mean we're not speaking anymore?" he asked. "Right," she replied. Was there nothing at all he could do? "Yes," she said, "—hang up."

It was the last time he ever heard her voice.

There was a second reason for her cutoff. Garbo knew he tape-recorded their conversations, and never objected. But at some point in 1985, she was falsely informed that he had played one of the tapes "at a party." Green categorically denies it: "I thought she knew me well enough to know I would never exploit her. God knows I had a thousand opportunities."

He was angry and wounded but, in hindsight, views those incidents as catalysts—an excuse to make a break. By 1985, her health was failing and she didn't want people to see her deteriorating, he believes. "She was very proud. She didn't want to be diminished with her friends." Over the next four years, he learned he wasn't the only one being shut out. Though she spoke to Cécile on the phone, she never saw her again, and even hung up on her, too.

"In the end, did we betray Garbo, or did she betray us?" he wonders. But Green is not a sentimental man. He brightens and suddenly remembers something: One afternoon while he was visiting her, Garbo left the living room to fix drinks and Sam reached for some peanuts, a few of which dropped on the floor. Bending down to retrieve them, he noticed a tiny figure peeking out from under the divan on which he was sitting.

"It was a troll," he says. "You know, those little plastic dwarfs with the ugly, wild, magenta and turquoise Dynel hair? When I bent down further and looked underneath the sofa, there was a whole row of them—at least a dozen, a whole little community of them—in a kind of formation." He said not a word about the discovery, but on subsequent visits, when left alone in her living room, he never failed to check under the couch—and never failed to find the trolls there, always in a different arrangement. Another time in her living room, he noticed a miniature glass candlestick on the floor: "She 'didn't know how it got there' when I pointed it out."

Why the trolls? The look on Sam Green's face says it's a silly question:

"Why not? Children play with dolls. Garbo played with her trolls. They amused her. Alone late at night, when the Sandman wouldn't come—maybe she couldn't get to sleep, maybe she acted out little scenes or games or fantasies with them from some favorite fairy tale—who knows? You tell me."*

* Swedish folklore is richly populated with trolls, elves, and house spirits (*tomte*) known as the Hidden People or Underground Folk. Selma Lagerlöf published two volumes of stories



Garbo with Cécile de Rothschild

The eternally young, alluring Garbo was, of course, an illusion. With the curse-blessing of longevity, she became an octogenarian. Once the probings of the icon are exhausted, we are left with the mortal creature whose aging process was not unlike that of a million other single, childless elderly women.

Garbo's lifelong "independence" always hinged on other people doing things for her, even when she was young and healthy. With age and infirmity, she needed people more but trusted them less, and much of her time was spent manipulating to get things done—complicated by the endless series of obstacles she placed (or perceived) in the way of everything. She dreaded every repairman, every appointment, every exigency. Everything was "impossible," or beyond her ability to cope. But for all her negativity, there were no suicidal thoughts.

on the subject. *Troll och människor* (Trolls and Humans), in 1915 and 1921. The *tomte*-trolls are pranksters who bring good or bad luck and are always unpredictable. Even the friendliest of them can be vengeful if offended. They behave like poltergeists, throwing and hiding things, making odd noises, or hitting people invisibly for no apparent reason. They may live in a tree by the front door, in a mound in the meadow, beneath the cowshed—or under the couch. Garbo's belief in them is speculative, but her known superstition—about salt being spilled, hats on beds, open umbrellas indoors—and the presence of the Dynel trolls suggest the possibility.