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THE PEOPLE OF JUVIK

VI

THE STORM

THE PEOPLE OF JUVIK

BY OLAV DUUN

A SAGA OF MODERN NORWAY

TRANSLATED FROM THE NORWEGIAN
BY ARTHUR G. CHATER

"This great work of his can rightly be called by that much abused term, a saga. . . . It displays the culture of the peasant, his essential self, more clearly than the works of any other author save Garborg."
—The Saturday Review of Literature.

I THE TROUGH OF THE WAVE

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VI THE STORM

ALFRED A. KNOPF

PUBLISHER, N. Y.

THE STORM

BY
OLAV DUUN

TRANSLATED FROM THE NORWEGIAN
BY ARTHUR G. CHATER



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THE PEOPLE OF JUVIK

VI

THE STORM

CHAPTER I

LIVELINESS TO SEAWARD

1

ODIN HAD HAD SOME BUSINESS OVER AT THE FACTORY on the south shore and was on his way home. He rowed the little bit across the river-mouth to the quays on the Haaberg Voe, to save walking round, as it was a long way up to the bridge.

Dusk was coming on, it was mild weather with fresh snow on the ground, a still, fine evening; Odin thought he could feel it was Saturday evening and peaceful all around. The snow had come sooner than expected, making folks say to themselves: this can't be a bad sign? It would not lie long on the ground, to their thinking.

The daylight still hung in the air, in the north and west. It was growing paler all the time, letting the night come on. The crescent moon showed far to the westward, it was new a few nights ago.

But in the midst of all this peace Odin was uneasy. It was something from former days, from the time he was a little boy, that kept tugging at him. It told him the sea wasn't quiet on an evening like this. He ought to have

been out with the herring nets. He'd have to let it go, as it was Saturday evening. And this factory ate up all the time he had nearly—he looked back as he rowed. It was the herring-oil factory over there on the shore, a low building with a tin roof which shone whiter than the snow; it would grow bigger in time! But a troublesome youngster it had been, and was—would it never go by *itself*?

"Fresh snow brings the herring," he muttered when he had dragged the boat up on the beach and stood looking out to sea with his hand on the stem. "Fresh snow brings the herring, that's what they used to say." The sea gleamed off the headlands of the northern shore and faded with the daylight all across the bay. A little ruffled patch tried to blink at the moon, but you could barely see it.

Then Odin heard the sound of oars a little way out. A boat was coming. Folk who had been out fishing probably; the strokes came pretty fast now. He hung about waiting for the men, without thinking. And now he knew them; it was the Pettersen lads and they were rowing with a will. He went down to the hard and hailed them.—"Have you seen a ghost out in the voe, or what is it? Any liveliness to seaward?"—"Herring!" they answered; "they're as thick as porridge all the way from the mouth of the voe to the point here, and that's a fact!" They had more to tell him and were all hot on it, for this was something like a shoal. Odin stood still, listening **out** to sea, while they were talking.

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Now he heard it, a faint rustling in the surface of the water, like tiny ripples breaking on the beach, and now like a heavy shower of rain; and the joy and excitement thrilled him till he was a little boy all over: there they are!—Were they thinking of taking their nets out now? he asked.—Why, yes, they'd have to chuck out what shreds they had tonight, to give the fish something to look at!

"No, I'll you what, boys; we'll get a crew together and take out the big net; then we'll have the whole lot in the morning. We'll make a catch, I tell you."

At first they wouldn't have it, there was one thing and another against it, but he didn't listen to them, he shoved his boat off and pulled away.—"You get the men round here," he shouted, "and I'll go up to the farms!"—"Ay ay!"

The herring was in the middle of the bay, all the way across; he could see them in the phosphorescence, they scarcely got out of the way of the boat, and he saw them leaping and flirruping all over the surface. Big herring, and the sea was fairly thick with them. Nothing was chasing them, as far as he could make out; they were forced in here by their own weight. He rowed back quickly and quietly and took the road for home.

He never made much of the road from the Voe up to Haaberg, but this time walking seemed too slow, one ought to have had young legs to run with. He saw his houses west of the fields smiling the same as ever, young

and contented; they had no idea of getting old on him, not they, and they had watched him come running home like this many and many a time. He eased up without thinking, and came in quietly as he always did.

But all the same Ingri could see there was something in the wind; she was so quick to notice everything about him.—"Is there any fresh bother at the factory?" she asked. Her eyes were never so handsome as when that shade of uneasiness or anxiety passed over them, nor was she ever so near him as at such moments.—"No, Fm going out to get rich, Ingri; Fm sick of this poor man's prosperity, and you know, you ought to have been rich all your days, that's what you were meant for. We—we're going out with the seines, for the Voe's full of herring—wasn't it nice of God Almighty to let the seine stay here after it was sold? Well, now we can say good-bye and good luck, all you poor folks!"

Ingri seldom laughed so that you could hear her, she just thawed and gave a little smile, and the smile stayed with her long after.

"Will you get men to join you, do you think?"—"Get men? They'll come like chickens at feeding-time, I tell you!" He had already started changing his clothes, and then he sat at the table and flung down some mouthfuls of food.—"Butter me a few slices of bread till I come back!" he took his cap and was at the door. The little mite, Per, got ready to go with him. He'd have to wait, said Odin; they had to be over four, those that went out

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with the seine; he could come another day and look at the herring. Anders, the elder boy, stood at the table and cleared his throat. His father knew what he meant: the lad was now fourteen and thought himself a man.—"And you must stop at home and help mother," he added.—"*Want to come too!*" Per yelled, stamping on the floor.—"The rod's just here by the wood-box!" laughed Odin as he went out, and Per had to mind his fingers as the door closed.

Odin went first to Lauris. They didn't often go to see each other, the two Haaberg men, but they usually worked together when there was anything. He came upon Astri by the kitchen steps; she was just going in, but stopped and waited.—"So you've come to look at our additions?" she said, pointing to the veranda outside the other door. "You haven't condescended to see it yet, I believe."—"Oh, it's not so bad as all that; I have *seen* it."

Odin turned his eyes that way, and she stood waiting.—"You call it nonsense, I expect?"—"I? I don't know about that. It's not much in my line. I liked the house better before, I'll admit that."—"You think it's too grand then? As you're a sort of prophet among the poor of the parish."—"Ay, it's the poor man leaking out of me, you know," he laughed; "it's as much to my taste as sour grapes to the fox's." Astri joined in the laugh.—"Well, you'll have to put up with this veranda anyway," said she.—"I can put up with a lot, child. But it was

Lauris I wanted to get by the short hair just now."—"Then you'll have to look indoors."

Lauris sat in the room reading the papers, which had just come.—"What's the news in them?" asked Odin.—"Oh, the talk's all of peace now, coming pretty soon."—"Do you want me to believe that folks have got enough sense left to make peace some day? What'll they have to write about after that? But talking about peace, we shan't have any of it here; the herring's come." He told what there was to tell and tried to get Lauris to join: "We ought to have the boss with us, you see."

Lauris took a few pulls at his pipe, crossed the room and spat into the stove.—"The seine?" he said. "But I haven't any seine, I sold it last year. You'll have to go to town and get leave first."—"Get leave? We'll take it without leave—we're going to make the fellow in town-rich and happy without his leave—well, you'll come, won't you?"

Lauris looked at Astri and she looked at him.—"No, I don't care about it. Besides, we've got a christening to-morrow; and what do you want with the herring now? Is there anybody here to buy it?"—"Yes, of course, there's the factory and others besides."—"The factory, ay—hm, hm! Food for the factory. No, but seriously, I've done with herring. I've done what you've been preaching, I'm going to stick to the land for a living, wasn't that your tune?"

There was nothing more to be done, and Odin said

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good-night and left.

At the other farms he got all hands on the move, and by midnight they were down at the shed getting the big seine aboard. The boat was leaky, but anyhow she would float, and the same with the small boats. It all went merrily, and even the pious ones joined in and laughed at the broadest jokes. They had a southerner among them whose name was Kjeld, a little stubby fellow, and Kjeld Stubb was what they called him. He was a good fisherman, but he kept on catching his feet and coming a cropper, and some of the young fellows did it after him, falling all over the place. Oh, but they had some fun that night.

When the right time came to put to sea, the net was stowed and the men got into the boat. It was not dark, and presently the dawn would show in the east. Then for it!—"Why couldn't Lauris come?" said Odin; "and who the devil have we got for master seiner? Fourteen hands for hauling and no boss?"—"Don't talk rubbish!" said Kal Stranda, the oldest hand among them. "It's Odin who runs the parish; he'll have to run this too. He can't do it any worse."—"No, not any worse!" laughed Odin; and the end of it was that he took the lead and got into the light boat.

The bay was still and smooth, and the land lay white and still around it—and the men's voices were hushed as they rowed.

It was not long before Odin found the shoal with the

lead, and he hung back more and more, as a master seiner should do before letting the net go.—"Now it's coming!" said the men in the seine boat, resting on their oars under the point. But he rowed farther out, it looked as if he rowed in herring all the way, and they followed. At last he turned and looked around him, told them to row on. The seine hands shoved their caps back and let go the moment the word came—the roller boat made for shore with the drag-rope. It was a clean shot right across the Haaberg voe, as far out as a seine could reach.

They began at once to draw the voe and kept at it till broad daylight was upon them. A calm and peaceful Sunday—they looked up and barely noticed it, bright sky and bright sea, white hills and mountains, the day of rest was everywhere. But you can't leave a big seine hanging any time, out here in the jaws of the sea; they heaved and sang, heaved and sang, this too was a kind of a solemnity, they thought. A young lad, out for the first time, looked up grinning all over his broad little face:

"My word, look at the chapel-goers, can't they work on a Sunday!"

All hands laughed at this, they couldn't help it.—"All the same," said Odin, "just one more pull all together, then we'll go home and keep Sunday for a few hours. Then we'll draw the seine right up the voe and finish this evening."

They made fast and went ashore, as the church-bells began to peal among the mountains.—"They don't mean

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any harm, those bells," said Odin to the pious ones. "They've enough wisdom to understand us."—"Odin can say that kind of thing to them," remarked one of the others to his companion. "I believe he makes them believe it too."—"Sounds like it, ay."

By three o'clock they were back. You can't wait and take the chance of bad weather when there's so much prosperity at stake. Odin and his mate took a turn with the lead inside the seine.—"Heh?" asked the men.—"Ay, they're still here."—"Thick?"—"I warrant you, my lad."

They glanced up at Odin in the middle of their work: but did he mean to draw over to the south shore?—Ay ay.—Weren't they to land the shot on the Haaberg property then?—"Oh, it's the shore rights you're thinking of!" he laughed. "You fancy I want to do my neighbour an ill turn? But I'm playing myself the same trick; we're joint owners of the shore here, Lauris and I. But the seine won't hold if we're to draw it in here, and over on the south there's the finest beach hereabouts—haven't any of you lads made a cast here before?"—"Ay ay, but—. And right's right," they declared. So it was fair enough. If *he* said so.—"And besides, it was pretty sharp practice the way that Lauris sold the seine right under his nose," they said one to another.

Odin could see that they distrusted him as well as misunderstanding him, and he said so to the mate: "They're a deep lot, these folks! Odd that they aren't a bit quicker

at turning and can't show a sharper claw, when they've got the stuff in them. That they never manage to pick up anything that's worth while."—"Well," said the other; "it isn't everybody that has your luck. Rent a salmon river for a mere song, and fish it downright scandalously, send the fish out of the country and get a hatful of gold, while the others are stuck with their old contracts and get little or nothing. And what about your luck with the herring? No, it don't come to everybody."

Odin laughed. Folks were so funny when they were taken that way.—"When it comes, it comes, as the man said when his house fell about his ears. But here we have herring, Albert, and now there'll be some life and bustle. A little life's not a bad thing, eh?"—"No, that's certain sure!"—"Well, I don't know that it's so certain sure. But it's fun. It puts a voice into the men, you might say, makes the parish sound more cheerful. Even if the profit's nothing so wonderful."

Albert sighed; a young and thoughtful man.—"No, one never knows—one never knows how it'll turn out."

"Just so, Albert, you've hit it! That's where the fun comes in—you never know how it'll turn out. But there'll be something to it, this time, I feel that in my bones."

2

The same day there was the christening at Lauris Haaberg's, and a big christening ale to follow. They had waited a long time for this little girl; the first three chil-

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dren were boys, and the eldest was now sixteen. Astri herself held the child at the font. She had held the other three too.

They all said, those who were at church, that Astri was as young and straight as ever. They could say the same about Lauris, and then he had grown so comfortably stout, he looked like a proper man. And the godfather and godmothers were select people all of them, and so were all the other guests: Ola Engdal and his swell wife, the sheriff and his madam, the Gronset folks and the young people from the Ness, Fru Mina and Arthur from Segelsund and all the rest of them. The real big people, like the doctor and the vet, she hadn't troubled about, they saw. She wasn't like that, Astri wasn't. She said so herself: she didn't think she had anything to do with them, they belonged elsewhere. Old Ola Haaberg was there too. He had invited himself, as you might say—"I want to have a hand in consecrating the princess," he had said; "and then I have such a mind to see Haaberg again; I must take a last look at home, you know."

Ola was old in earnest now, he was long past seventy; but at times he was as young and waggish as ever.—"Do you think you can stand the shaking on the hard ground?" Mina had asked him before starting, for they had to use wheels, the snow didn't lie on the road.—"I could have walked, you know," he said, "if my feet weren't so impossible." And now he was there, and it was he who had to thaw the folks and get them going.—"They talk much

more nowadays than they did in my time, but never when there's something that ought to be said," he told them with a smile; "then they get busy keeping quiet, every one of them. And the hardest thing is to know what to do with themselves in a room, and what to do with their hands; nobody ever thought of them in my time, that I could see."—"Ay ay," he said, when they had all been standing out in the yard and nobody would be the first to go in. "Ay ay, here we stand. And this is your veranda, Astri. Ay ay. You're not to be sneezed at. So this is what you've made of it. Hm! hm! hm! The farm grows smaller but the house grows bigger, that's how it is."

Astri was not listening; she was busy with the child and had gone in already; then she came and asked them once more to come in. She was a trifle stiff in the face, he thought he could see. And Ola smiled, that queer smile of his with a thousand little wrinkles and lines all over his face; there was nobody that understood him and nobody that liked him. Then he turned his attention to her two eldest boys, who were just putting up the visitors' horses.

Peder, the eldest, was small and rather like his father, a quiet little fellow and grown up in every way. The other was called Arne, and he was tall and fair, bigger than his brother, though there was nearly two years between them. He was always up to little boys' tricks, and now he came sprawling all over the place with a horse that had taken to shying, it looked as if they would go clean over Ola Haaberg; but it was only a lark. The young

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rogue mastered the horse and got him into the stable. He laughed over to Ola, rascality shining in his blue eyes: "You weren't afraid, were you?"

Ola threatened him with his finger: "Fetch me the rod so I can lick you!" Then he trudged in, muttering to himself: "The youngsters nowadays, it's a real pity to die from them. God, no, I won't go yet!"

He hadn't been up to much lately, for that matter. He read the papers and never joined in the talk; some of them thought he put in the time drinking on the quiet. But to-day he was all alive. He was like a snake, he thawed out in fine weather, folks said. Astri and he had always been good friends. She saw that today again he would put some life into the room; but she could not bring herself to like him. He didn't belong here, shouldn't have been here really. Lauris saw this the moment she gave him a look, and shrugged his shoulders. He talked right across the room to those Ola was chatting with, did this several times and got them to turn away from him. Ola took no notice of it; he was enjoying himself more and more, and before they sat down to table he had set them all by the ears, over politics and one thing and another. It was exactly as if he'd been talking to them lately and knew where each of them stood, one dead against the other: one was for the Frenchmen and one for the Germans, and one hated the whole lot; this man was a conservative and that one a radical, and now things had been said that had to be defended tooth and nail.

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After the meal the discussion died down. Coffee was drunk and someone played the harmonium, and Ola sat in the east room and took a nap. Things grew more and more peaceful. They were all ready to admit that you can look at a question from more than one side. But all at once Ola came stumping back.—"Well, I never!" he smiled, "here they are like a lot of chickens in the sand-pit on a sunny day. But what's become of Odin?"

Astri looked up calmly: "He's busy with the seines, they made a shot in the Voe here last night."—"And so he couldn't get here in time, eh? no, I suppose not. There, you see, *he* does the work, and here you sit, and then there'll be money dropping into the pockets of every one of you, shore rights and seine rights and what not."

They all gave a little start; you could hear the clock ticking on the wall. Then Astri spoke, in that loud but calm voice of hers: "There won't be any shore rights for us, and thank God for it. He drew the net to the other shore." After that they were as silent as before.—"And we sold the gear at the right time!" laughed Lauris. His tone fell into line with Astri's: nobody here was going to fret about trifles.

Why, yes, it *was* a queer thing for Odin to do, one of them remarked. Not like him. Lauris only smoked, and Astri had to hurry out to the baby.—"I expect it just happened like that," said Lauris.—"But what about the price of herring these times?" asked the Gronset man.—Ay, what about it? They looked to Lauris for an answer.

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—"Hm?" said Astri too, as she walked past him and clapped him on the shoulder.

Lauris shook his head; he knew nothing about it.— "No, he's a bank manager now," laughed Ola, "don't ask him about herring. He sailed himself ashore here, he's safe and sound. And how about Odin, who sailed past him and got to be chairman of the parish council and a kind of father and guardian to the whole lot of us, eh? Wasn't that pretty well done for an ass like him? To be sure, you helped him to it, some of you, he talked you round properly! Oh ay, I say nothing about it. I suppose we'll have another election presently, that's the usual way—why, you voted for him too, didn't you, Ola Engdal? There's such *truth* in what he says!"

Ola Engdal was always the one who had least to say. He was better off than most folks, and was married to a doctor's daughter, and over and above he was lazy and slow in the uptake. He just shifted his position and said nothing. The new man at Vennestad sat up and cleared his throat.—"It looks like peace coming in the world outside," he said. "But here in this country, and in this parish, it looks as if we'd have nothing but war; so it looks to me." He looked round at the others, and they were with him: ay, it did look so! But he would say this, for his part, even if he stood alone—

"Better keep it to yourself!" interjected Ola.

"Ay, he would say this, that now they needed peace, and now they must arm themselves, and arm in earnest, all

those who knew what they wanted, and *strike a blow!*"—"War to end war, ay!" bawled Ola, beaming with good humour. "And Odin, and the masses as they call themselves, they'll arm on their side, and then the fun begins—oh, it's a shame to miss it all! Odd that folks should always be so ready to fight for peace. But—er—the factory's doing well? And you've got shares, and you've made money?"

"The factory's stopped," said Lauris dryly, getting up.—"Strike in full swing there," he added. "We do keep up with the times here, fast as they move."—"We want a new management!" said the Gronset man seriously. "Odin isn't the whole parish, even if he did jockey us into this. Factories and profits may be fine things, of course, but, but, I tell you!"

They were all in a buzz now, one thought this and another that, but they all agreed that the times were downright crazy.—"We'll have to get rid of them!" laughed Ola, leaning back. "Ah, that Odin, it's all his doing. First the big poorhouse at Vennestad, then the new road and the bank, and last of all the factory to top up with—ay, and all the other things I can't remember. And you've backed him!"—Backed him? They had to laugh. They'd not only seen which way it was going, they'd spoken out!—"No, no, no!" laughed Ola. "And even that didn't make it go any better? Ah, you Odin, you Odin! But now they'll have to pull themselves together, those fellows; now Lauris is going to take a hand. Ay, there's something in that,

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Lauris; that's the way it's going. You've taken over the bank from him and more than that, don't forget it! They'll make you king by force, you'll see."

They were not used to hearing anyone tackle Lauris like this; they didn't know how to take it. Odin was the only one who did such a thing, but with him it was different; and Lauris never had much to say in return. Nor did he resent what Ola said; he just stood looking at a paper. Then he said: "If things had been as they used to be—and as they ought to be—I should have had a glass of punch to offer you."—He mustn't talk so sinfully, reminding them of their sorrows! And, after all, things were best as they were in that matter.

They settled down to cards, and Ola Haaberg fell into talk with the womenfolk, who had been chatting among themselves.—"We were considering if we should take down Odin and all his works," he said. "We're going to arm. And if they'll hold the haft, I'll take upon myself to direct the blow. Ay, there's going to be a storm that'll clear the air, just you wait. It's been summer weather with him all the time, but now he'll find a change. Ay!"

They laughed and looked at him. He was a funny old fish. But Astri had taken no notice.

The room grew quiet, with card-playing and small talk, and Ola sat where he was, looking about him, incredibly old in his chair. There was not much left of Aasel's furniture, they had replaced it by more convenient things, real fine things, no doubt, and the room had been painted and

redecorated so that you would hardly know it again. Ola went over it, bit by bit: hm! hm!—and twirled his thumbs as he passed on to the next thing.

Then they went to supper, and then came the time for the guests to take their leave. Baby Aashild was asleep.—"She looks to me as if she knew all about her christening presents," said Ola.

Ola did not go back to Segelsund with the others.—"I can see by your looks that you'd like me to stay here tonight," he said; "and it's too far for me to go. Think I ought to look in on Odin too, in the morning, as I'm on the move. It's always pleasant to see a man who's going to take a toss."

It was a fine evening with starlight over all the mountains, just the weather for walking. And there was a sound of work and voices, somewhere.—"Oh, that's the noise of the seine-gang down in the Voe," they said one to another.

Lauris and Ola sat up after the others had gone to bed.—"You don't look much more tired than I am," said Ola.—No, Lauris wasn't tired.—"And if you've a drop in the bottle, bring it out," said Ola solemnly. He sucked in his under lip, and that made his eyes even brighter. Lauris got up and went out; came back with a bottle. Ola was quivering with curiosity: "But is that how it looks? Eh, lad, as clear as that?—give us a taste!"

He tasted it, and his eyes grew blissfully small. Then he opened them wide: "My word, Lauris, that's the

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stuff! But I'd like to have seen you at work, in your *laboratory*!" He gave Lauris a closer look: "A master hand I call you, and a many-sided fellow!"

He said it again and again, as he sipped at the drink and brightened up. Lauris laughed indulgently.—"And I can well understand Astri wanting to take you. The spirit of adventure, you see, our old spirit of adventure; and self-sacrifice and all that. She's a mother, she is; wanted to have a father like that for her children—no, she didn't know it, but—she knew it all the same. A mother to you too, she's made a man of you. In her own way. As far as could be done—that's a deep saying, hm? As far as could be done," he repeated.

Lauris agreed. By that time Ola had gone off on to something else. "What do you say to Odin taking the seine without leave?"—"Does that matter?"—"Oh no, oh no. It takes *him* to do a thing like that. But what was I going to say?" Ola passed his hand over his skull, felt all its queer wrinkles: "Well, never mind. About some money, I think, which you and I have both forgotten—your health, Lauris!"

Lauris kept looking at the clock, and at last Ola let go of him and stumbled off to bed. A deep sense of relief came upon Lauris; he had been ducked under and came up into the air again.

He stepped cautiously into the bedroom. They were asleep, both Astri and the baby. But Astri opened her eyes and saw him, she always did when he came in here at

night, fast asleep as she might be.—"Have you got rid of him now?" she murmured.—"Yes, at last."

Astri was dead asleep again. Lauris stood for a moment. Then he stole out, quiet as a thief, put on his mackintosh and left the house. He stopped in the yard and listened. All was quiet. Only a little fine-weather murmur on the beach. He took the road down to the sea, listened now and again, and walked on. A light boat lay by the quay-side. The others were drawn up farther away.—"They've left no watch, the silly fools!" he said; got into the boat, cast off the painter and rowed. His oars made no sound.

Over on the south shore he found their catch, a big net with many flagged buoys. He held on to a stake for a while, now listening and now looking round. Then he drew his boat over the edge of the net and paddled among the herring. They were not yet used to the seine, they slipped out of the way of his oars and rushed at the net, sending the spray flying. Big herring; fat herring, as far as he could see. Five thousand barrels, did you say? Wait a bit; I'm an older hand at the game. The half of five thousand's not too bad either. Ten crowns a barrel at least, he'll get that, sure.

It was so still that the rocks almost gave him an answer; the stillness reached straight up into the sky; Lauris heard it and smiled.—Oh no, nothing bad's going to happen here tonight. There's nobody of that sort about. I only wanted to have a look. I only wanted to show you,

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old woman that you are, that I might have played you a nice trick tonight. And that I didn't do it, as you see. I'm not like that; whatever you may think of me.

He slipped over the net again and rowed home, as cool as when he came.—"We'll have it out another day," he hummed, a soft little tune that was lost in the clearness of the night.

Astri woke up again before he had his clothes off.—"Have you been out?" she sounded rather uneasy.—"Just a moment, ay." He made haste to get undressed in the dark.—"I may as well tell you about it: I went and had a look at Odin's shot; wanted to see what they have to brag about."—"Well?"—"They've got a fine lot of herring. He's had the devil's own luck once more."—"Hm. But fancy your troubling yourself to go and look!"—"Well, yes, that's so, but—I hardly thought myself that I should have worried about such trifles. Must be the seiner in me."—"Yes. But what if they saw you?"—"Not likely! And I've done nothing to the seine, you know."—"I know that very well. If you'd been *that* sort—he'd have been done for long ago. And he knows it."—"I'll never believe it," yawned Lauris. "And anyway it's all the same."—"To us, yes. But it was queer to listen to the folks this evening, there seemed to be a purpose in them."—"They were only stretching themselves in their sleep," said Lauris—and next moment he was asleep himself.

He slept, and Astri lay looking out. It was never so fine out of doors as in the middle of the night when one

lay like this looking out between the curtains. A star came in sight, and passed across the pane in calm majesty. Another came, with another light, and went the same way. A strange progression.

Then she heard Ola Haaberg coughing in the room above. She felt inclined to wake Lauris, for she was not far from being afraid. What did he want in their house, this old man? But Lauris had never seen her afraid, and he shouldn't do so now.—Ay, and it was only the seiner in him that coaxed him out. They didn't know him.

3

Next day Ola said good-bye and pattered off to Odin's house.

Odin was not at home, and Ingri had no maid and many things to see to, so he just had to sit there alone most of the time.

He looked about him here as he had done at Lauris's.—"This is like coming into a house in the old days," he said to himself. "Wait a bit, though: there's some of Otte's handiwork there, and there, and there. Ay, but one could live here, I see that; both in good and evil. But has Odin ever spent time enough indoors to fit up the place like this?" he said to Ingri.

Ingri gave the least little start when first he spoke to her; she blushed so nicely, and her mouth lost the melancholy trace of happiness it usually wore. Then she was herself again, blinked once or twice with a cheerful smile:

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"Oh yes, of course."—"Ah, then he is here sometimes? Oh, that boy! But by the way"—Ola cleared his throat and rubbed his knees—"your father sent his love; he told me to give it you."

Again the flush spread over her face, so slight and fine—one could see how it flew over eyelids and brows, like a living thing; it did one good to see.—"Thanks!" was all she said; she was on her way out again.—"Well, he doesn't come and visit Haaberg too often," laughed Ola. "He and I haven't had much talk either, the couple of months he's been at Segelsund. He has the shop to rule over, and he rules it with a hard hand. I do believe he'll go on till he has the whole place in order. I was to give you his love, as I said. And Odin too."

Ingri did not come in again for a long while. Ola shook his head, with a little sigh and a little smile.

Then Odin came home and wanted his dinner, and Anders came in from somewhere in the fields, with mud on his trousers. Ola sat sniffing the air.—"Aha, here they come, in good working humour; father and son, ay. I can feel the go in you, I can, even if you sit still. There's a smell of progress here. Too strong for me, tsh—makes me sneeze!"

Ola and Odin never had much to say to each other, and today the men had no time to spare. Ola went round the farm and looked at it all, fields and houses and everything there was to see: ay, it was in fine order. Odin and Ingri took a turn with him. Then said Ola, and his chest

wheezed as he spoke: "But you know, Odin, even you won't get any farther than we and the Almighty let you. You may find the road blocked, what'll you do then? The biggest thing of all, maybe?" Odin was not listening, but Ingri looked at Ola, and now she was not a bit afraid.

In the evening Anders drove him eastward. Ingri came out as he was leaving.—"Give my love to father," she said.—"Ay, child, I'll do that sure enough. So that's all I'm to say? Ay ay."——

The same day a herring-buyer came into the Haaberg voe, and the next day another. They had had word of the shot. All the same they showed no great keenness for herring.

The seine-gang collected outside the factory; a decision was to be made as to how they were to sell the herring. Among themselves they were saying that if they had a chance of selling the catch at once, they would let it go; it was their herring just as much as the master seiner's, and it was nonsense to talk of any rise in prices. They were waiting for Odin, he must be coming across the voe.—"He's always the first to turn up."—"He can't have meant what he said yesterday, about selling to the factory? Now that there's a strike on?"—"Ah, but he did mean it. He'd hardly have drawn the catch ashore here if that wasn't his idea. The factory, that's himself, as good as."—"Aha, there you have it!"

Before they knew it, all hands were of the same mind, and that didn't happen every day. The factory was stand-

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ing idle, and payment wasn't so sure either; the skippers were lying off the shore here and would take the herring. —"We'll sell it ourselves, if it comes to that; something's better than nothing! A seiner isn't a slave and a dog any more, like he used to be."

All at once Odin was there, he had come round by land. He greeted them in a loud and cheerful voice and mixed in the crowd, turned round and had a look at the buyers' smart craft. They were tall ships and very graceful-looking with their fine lines, the very picture of prosperity and enterprise.—"Well, men, now we've got to get through with our palavering, as Anton says." He looked at Anton, and Anton shifted his feet with a little smile—they were smiling all round.—"I've been talking to the manager of the factory, and he agrees with me that they can give ten crowns a barrel; well, not a farthing more anyway. So perhaps we'd better settle it so. There's a taint in the herring, you know. Those there," he jerked his head to seaward, "they offered me eight yesterday. Maybe we could screw them up to ten, I shouldn't be surprised."

The men chewed this in silence. At last one said: "If they'll give that, perhaps it'll be best—?"

Odin gave him a quick glance, and looked at them one by one all round. He grasped the opposition behind all their faces and his eyes brightened in rapid little blinks. —"Best, do you say?"—"No, no, but—."—"No, you didn't mean best; what you meant was safest. It's best to

get the factory started again. You can see the unemployment as well as I can. We've got to think of ourselves too."—"But the money?" three or four of them asked at once.—"I've already seen to that."—"But what about the strike?"—"We shall raise the wages, ever so little, that'll fix it. So there's nothing more to be said about that. It's the right thing to do, whichever way you look at it. This time it's we who are helping the parish. And besides, there's herring enough here for the skippers as well, if it's them you're thinking of. First a thousand barrels for the factory, we'll start tomorrow; so we'll go to work this evening getting in the small nets, we'll steal some old boat here and row across; we'll steal yours, shall we, Anton?"

They were on the move at once, he leading the way and they after him, and all looking alive.—"Now I expect they think they're driving me on," Odin laughed to himself. "Oh, well, well, I've been driven to a good many things." They never glanced in the direction of the skippers.

The work went with a will, old and young were just as keen. Odin didn't see it, he was working too merrily himself, but so it was and so it should be. That was what made it so jolly to have to do with these folk; one man warmed up the other. He pushed his hat to the back of his head and took a spell, looked at one thing or another, was lost in thought for a moment, and then turned to again. So it had been, no doubt, all the years he had been

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among them: he brought out the song in them, and the rest came of itself.

As they were running the other big boat down over the rollers, Lauris came strolling along; he seemed to be looking for something he had lost. Odin spoke to him, dropping his voice to an ordinary tone after all the shouting: "You didn't want to join us, you said?"—"Heh! no, I wasn't thinking of making any money. When one gets too old, one's no longer young, as the old woman said,"—"You shouldn't mind what the old woman says, or the old man either."—"Ah, it's all very well to talk!" Lauris sighed, in a quiet and neighbourly fashion.—"By the by," said Odin; "I spoke to the owner of the seine today, on the telephone."—"Oh?"—"All serene! He'd heard about it, as it happens, probably had a bit of a scare too. But now it's all right!"

A faint shadow, scarcely to be seen, passed over Lauris's face.—"He's been blabbing," the men said one to another.—"And now he's got what-for," they added. Odin did not hear them, but he had that boyish sparkle in his eyes, they changed colour all the time.

Presently Jon Gronset and Ola Engdal and one or two more came up, in their best clothes, looking as if they were going somewhere.—"Why, here we have all the nobility," said one.—"The whole board of the factory, ay. The fellows who send us the weather," laughed the others.

Odin greeted them, brisk and busy in voice and looks:

"Well, I sent for you, but you've come too late, you're a day after the fair. We've sold to the factory, a thousand barrels to start with. You agree to that, don't you? Ten crowns a barrel. Fat herring, you see, nothing but oil; we'll grease the factory so it'll run by itself a long time, hm? Then those fellows can feed themselves; as long as it lasts."

He leaned against the boat and looked at them, giving it time to sink into them.—Ay, they couldn't say but what it was a good enough notion, but—.—"Well?" laughed Odin; "if the notion's good enough a but or two won't hurt us."—"But the manager was saying yesterday that—"

"That was yesterday, my boy. Today he takes another view. The night brings wisdom, don't you know that?"

The seiners had held their breath. But now it was safely over. The board agreed with them and Odin.

"They've put on their Sunday clothes for nothing, this time," one of them said with a laugh, as he knocked in a thole-pin.

Well, Odin might overreach himself some day, like anyone else, somebody muttered. For all his belief in himself and his ready tongue and the rest of it.—Ay ay. They'd just see.

Just then Odin came back; he had gone along the road a little way with the men, and as soon as he was there, it all looked different. If the idea was right, then they had done right. And you had to take a bit of risk too.

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They took it on the light side, the four men who were going home again. They were no children. Odin was right, for one thing, and if he'd been a little too quick for them, why, good Lord, that was his way! "A board meeting we were called to, wasn't it? My word! And you, Johan, you swore—"

"Did I swear? No, now you're telling lies! And, come to think of it, we did have a chance to vote." They laughed, all four of them.

Lauris strolled off after them along the shore road. Then he turned off and called at a house that had lately been put up. One of the factory hands lived there. Lauris gave him to understand that they would soon be in work; he told him what he knew.—"We'll see about that," said the other. "They'll have to give us what we're asking. If not, the whole thing can stand still till the spring, and longer than that. We're going to take a holiday this Christmas, I fancy."—"Not a bit of it! It won't be you that decide that."—"Wha-at?"—"It'll be Odin and the manager, just you see!"—"Odin? Ay ay, he's *our man*. But all the same."—"You'll trot along with him," laughed Lauris. "As is right and proper," he added.—"We'll have to see about it this time. We read the papers and know what's going on; we're not sheep."—"Ay, knowledge is power, as the scripture says. But you act like sheep, mostly. Baa-baa!" sneered Lauris. "But don't let me forget what I came about. Baa-baa," he bleated to himself as he sat and collected his thoughts.—

The factory was started again, and the herring it could not deal with was sold to the skippers for nine crowns a barrel. The week went by in full work, as Odin wished it, from early morning to late at night and never a moment's standstill. Ingri saw him off with a smile, and received him with a smile when he came back, and once she said that he seemed determined to work himself to death. "Don't you care for your home any more?" she asked.

He stopped and laughed evasively: "That's what I told you, Ingri, it's not such an easy job to be married to me; you ought to have listened and left me in peace." She laughed too, but she never liked him to joke about these things. She looked so slight as she stood there, so frail and delicate, one would not have thought she could live a week; but so she had been all the fifteen years they had lived together. She's made of finer and stronger stuff than the rest of us, he would say. And it was still there, that shy, youthful blink in her eyes that he could never get hold of; she would often stand before him as if she expected him to strike her—the man that got her was meant to treat her tenderly.—"Well, you know, Ingri, I'm going to get out of all this mess before long, and then at last we'll begin life together, you and I. But holidays and rest have a queer taste when one's in the thick of it like this. And it's got to be done! But next week I'll stay at home. So you must be a good girl and ask Anders to chop wood for you."—"He'll do that without being asked; if he remembers."—"Ay ay," they both said, and so he left

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her every day.

While hard at it the thought would strike him that she found the days long, though she said just the opposite, and then he felt with a pang what strangers they were to each other. So it was to be, between those two; but it wouldn't have taken much to have set him running off home for a look in. That was how it had been all these years, he ought to have been at home and known what it was like to be at home.

At last Saturday evening came, so he could wash himself clean of all the herrings and hard work; he wanted a bath, both body and soul, he said. As he was going home the manager came and tried to hold him up, there was some fresh bother with the workpeople, but Odin only laughed him off: he'd have to do what he thought proper, play them as you play a halibut, and good-night to you! and good luck!

4

On the Sunday he was up early and scribbled off a few parish letters and other trifles, and then gave himself up to enjoying his freedom. It had rained in the night, so now the snow was gone, and Odin took a turn to look at what he called his land. Ingri had no time to go with him. She usually did so, although she used to say that she did not love the land, only it was such fun to see how much he did.

The farm had not grown much, but it was a fine farm

as it was. And now there was a strip of bog waiting to be drained and levelled when spring came; here one could gain the whole world to the westward without doing harm to one's soul.

When he was out here on the west he generally turned round and had a look at the houses. The dwelling-house was small compared with many others in the parish, especially the old Haaberg house, but he had made a nice place of it: it had a smile. And the other houses stood alongside and belonged to it, no mistake about that. He had to look at it like this now and again, otherwise the thought stuck in him that he was an unfaithful one, that he had spent his time running round the parish and working at unprofitable things. Here it stood and bore him witness, fair and trustworthy witness.

He was on his way in again. It must be indoors that Sunday was to be found.—"Are you going to have a smoke today?" asked Ingri.—"I am that; I'm going to light the long pipe you gave me, and be a real farmer for a bit. I've been looking over my farm. Now I understand how a man can look at all he has done and see that it's well done, this way and that. Now I'm going to sit me down here and keep Sunday like other folks. Not think, and not worry about anything; I'm going to read the papers."

If only he could, she said.—"It's generally crowds and bustle that mean life to you."—"No, Ingri. Life, that's being here. Just here, with you—you must drop that nerv-

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ousness of yours."—"I?"—"Yes, you. You're always looking at me as if you were just going to lose me; do you think I don't see it?"—She shook her head; then she laughed to herself; and then she was far away from him again.—"Fve never wished you to be any different, Odin."

Her voice often sounded like that, as if it came from the other side of the wall, or as if you heard it in a dream. He must have been a mighty long time away from her all this while. And his life had been made up of imagining all the big things that were to be done in the parish.—"But today, Ingri, today is our day. We've had many of them, haven't we?"

She blushed and gave him a bright and rapid glance: "Yes? We have indeed." She looked round the room, at the furniture Odin had made, at everything. Each object had been her companion, day by day.

Just then there was a shuffling in the passage, somebody hesitating before he knocked. It was the school-master, parish clerk too for the time being; the Silver Fox they called him. His name was Vikesylt and he came from the South; he had been there about a year. He passed his hand over his silver-grey hair with a smile and greeted them genially: He was just out for a walk, in this blessed fine weather, and so he took the liberty of looking in here, though he hadn't what you might call an object and they didn't know him well either. He couldn't get it out of his head that he ought to call on the chair-

man of the parish council. "And another thing too, it's such glorious weather, it's just as if Nature dragged one out into the open from the unwholesome stuffiness indoors."—"And brought you indoors again here?" laughed Odin.—"Ah, you will have your joke"—he sat down unbidden, and Ingri and Odin made haste to invite him.

The Silver Fox had made himself a great man in the parish within a short time. Folk couldn't make him out at first, they laughed at him and mimicked him, but he strode on, blunt and firm and genial, had his task to perform, and it was no small one. He was going to wake up the young. Odin had tackled him straight away, wanting to know what the young were to be waked to. The man gave him a profound look, pity and surprise in one, and began patiently to expound. As far as Odin could make out from his wordy answer, the young were to be waked to pretty nearly everything, from love of the earth to contempt for all that was born of earth. Odin had not gone into it any further. The new-comer was an odd fellow to look at, and no doubt there was some good in him; but Odin preferred to keep out of his way, he found him too far-fetched.

Ingri went out to the kitchen with a sly little smile, for Odin looked as if he had bitten his tongue. And the Silver Fox went on talking. After a while Odin guessed what he had come about, for he knew there must be something, a man like that didn't call without an object.

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It was the factory. Ah, yes, it was an excellent thing that it was going again, and still better that folk had something to keep them employed, for idleness was the root of all evil, there was no denying that. Great thanks were due to Odin, on that score. And he for his part belonged to the working class. "Like yourself," he added. But the peasants, the Norwegian peasant who had to pay them, so to speak—he had spoken to several who found this last rise in wages pretty stiff in these hard times.—"So you've already got some shares, I take it?"—"Shares, do you say? No, I can declare myself innocent of shares."

Odin sat looking at him and enjoying it: You've robbed me of my Sunday, you old fox, but not of my Sunday humour.—"Then you've only one share?" he said.

"Well, whatever I may or may not have, I am fully aware that in this matter we must look well ahead, we must take a long view and a broad view and take everything into consideration. But I will not conceal the fact that many in the parish are afraid that if we continue as we are doing, giving the workmen one increase of wages after the other—"

"You're a sly one and no mistake. But you'd do better to stick to preaching the word and revivals and that."

"Do you wish to scoff? Ah, my humble labours are nothing great, in their outward aspect; but I make bold to say that I work according to my convictions and in the direction pointed out to me by my view of life—now you also have a view of life, an interpretation of life,

shall we say? You must answer my question, Odin! For the young demand clearness above all, so we need to know where you stand. Youth and the times demand clearness. Clear thinking is what governs the world."

"Yes, I'm inclined to think so. Seeing what a good way it's in."

"Well, good is a relative conception; that is to say, it depends to some extent on how you take it. But you understand me—"

Ingri came in again, and Vikesylt turned to her: "I have such faith in your husband. That he's an idealist, whatever he may have to say about it—inwardly, as it were."—"Well, not that I know of," she smiled. Odin could see she was wondering why he didn't turn this fellow out; hadn't he turned out others who were no worse? Then laughter got the better of her, before she could keep it in: "An idealist inwardly, wasn't that what you said?"

Vikesylt laughed too, a laugh that was both crafty and embarrassed. His cheeks hung like empty bags about the corners of his mouth, his eyes lost their brightness and shrank into his head. But after a while the childish look came out in all his features. Now at last he was the Silver Fox.—"By the by: I was to bring you greetings from your father at Segelsund; I looked in there yesterday."

Ingri turned red, and her neck gave a little twitch.—"Ah, your father's been a great help and support to them at Segelsund since he came! How long is it since he came there? It'll soon be a year, I believe. Time runs away so

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fast, you simply can't stop her. Ay ay, so it is. And now he's thinking of settling down here, isn't he? Well, he has a good position already, *he* knows where he's going."

Odin asked whether Vikesylt hadn't had a talk with him.—Ay, that was so, Vikesylt had talked to him, a good deal, he might say. All at once he brightened up and asked: "He's been down in the South, didn't he tell me?" Ingri looked at him, stiff and defenceless. Vikesylt was all innocence: "I thought you told me so one day? Or was it he that told me maybe?"

"Yes, he was in the South for a time."

"In business, I think; wasn't that so?"

"Yes."

She looked at Odin as she spoke. All the colour left her face, stayed away and came pouring back. Odin smiled at her, raising his eyebrows gaily, and turned to the Silver Fox: "He was in business in Kristiania." Again the wave of colour passed over her face. She had to steady herself against the table, and she stood like that till Vikesylt had finished talking and took his leave.

"So he really had the sense to go," laughed Odin when he was outside. "That's the kind he is. There are many like that, Ingri. And still the world's as round as before. Hm?"

Then she said: "Have you known it all the time, Odin? That father has been in jail? And never said anything about it?"

"No, why should I? It's our affair—there's you and

me in it."

"But to think of me *saying* that, Odin! Telling a lie!"

"Well, but—it was only the *Silver Fox*"

"You ought to have told the truth too, Odin! For your own sake."

"You looked so queer standing there, I couldn't do aught but help you. And then that *Silver Fox*!"

He put his arm round her and drew her out of doors.—Telling the truth, he said, might be all very well, but there were higher things, things that one had to protect. "We won't think any more about it, Ingri. It's a way I've got, telling little fibs, and the worst of it is, I'm not always forced to tell them either—well, I've pretty nearly got over it now."

"If only father doesn't suffer for it!" She was following her own thoughts and scarcely heard what he said.—"He's so happy now!" she said. "And he's been so unhappy before—he was so kind to me all the time. Do you think it'll come out, Odin? For it mustn't, do you hear!"

It was only Mina at Segelsund who knew of it, and he would speak to her.

"For then I've brought disgrace on you as well as father—I couldn't bear that!"

"Pooh! I'll put that to rights. Can't you see how fine it is here? All around!"

"No. No, I'm not in the mood to see it, Odin. The colour's all gone out of it."

He consoled her by saying she was a little goose, and

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that seemed to calm her. And then the mountains stood and smiled at them with their snow-streaked faces, and the forest belt and the meadows did the same, and the sea and the bright clouds.—"There's never this breadth about the day, Ingri, when you're not out."

He took her hand and stood still for a moment. Then she said:

"But to think of my saying that!—I ought never to have been married. I knew it would turn out badly."

5

In the course of the evening Odin changed his clothes and went to Segelsund. He saw Ingri's face brighten as he left the house, and only then did it strike him that he had got to straighten this out, he would have to help her over it, or things would go badly with them. Well, he would manage to get at what was human in Mina, and then he was saved. In fact this was what he had always done, tackled people on their human side; then they came willingly if they came at all.

He had to sit down and drink coffee before he got Mina by herself, and then it was she who asked *him* in. It was often like that, he had noticed, when he had something to say to them.

They sat in the office facing each other. She had her glasses on.—"You know how it is," she said; "that's what you came about, you needn't deny it."—"You mean the co-operative store?"—"Yes, don't sit there beating

about the bush, Odin, you're too good a man for that. The co-operative store, yes; you can't have intended to come here and ask us to go out of business?"—"No, no; we could throw down the mitten, you know, or the glove if you like; we could put all our competitors out of business, eh?"

Mina grew taller, with hot cheeks and flashing eyes: "That'll never work! Never! You've got them on your side, every one, and they're a petty lot, but as to this—*no!*"

He sat looking straight at her. Now and again he smiled faintly, with eyes or mouth; she felt he must see everything within her, and yet he was thinking of many things. She must have had some painful moments before now, facing him like this.—"No, it was Aunt Aasel!" she said all at once.—"But can't you put it off, Odin? A few years longer?"—"Can't be done, no. It's here, waiting."—"You wouldn't treat us like that, Odin?"—"No, no—'I'm disposed to believe,' as the Silver Fox says."

He looked at his watch, and remembered by the same token that it was a trick he had at the parish council, of looking at his watch when he wanted to stop and think.—"No, it was something else I came about this time. It was your husband."—"Well?"—"Well? say I too."—"You can see now, can't you, Odin, that he ought to be manager of the factory?"—"No, not likely! Let's keep in the middle of the road. You don't believe yourself that he's the man for that."

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He saw how her cheeks turned grey and how she had to admit he was right; he laughed, but was honestly sick about it: "No, it's a hard thing to be human, sometimes. But it's good fun all the same. No, I thought of asking if he'd like to be manager of the co-operative society when it gets started."

Mina took a little time to think.—"I see," she said. "I see. I'll talk to him about it."—"Yes, do that, if you don't mind. But let me tell you the truth, then I shan't be lying. My real business this evening was to ask you to do something for Ingri's sake. She'll feel it horribly if the parish gets to know about her father."—"Do you think I go tale-bearing among the old wives?"—"No, if I did I shouldn't be here. But supposing they asked, that's what I meant? You see, you both come of the same folk, more or less; and you know how touchy Ingri is."

Mina stroked her hands and looked at them. They were as young as ever, long and narrow and white. Then she looked up and did not know what to answer.—"Couldn't they put it this way, asked Odin, that he had been in business in Kristiania?—Perhaps there was nothing else for it. But she didn't like it."—"No more do I!" laughed Odin. "That's what I have against the whole scheme of life, that one's forced to do a *lot* of things. One often has to dodge the worst. And for her sake I'm quite ready to do it."—"Oh, ah, life!" sighed Mina.—"No, don't say life! For life is the finest thing we have. There's nothing wrong with life. But you know how sensitive Ingri is, what a

strange bond there is between her and her father."

Odin got up, and Mina did the same and gave him her hand: "You can depend on me."—"Thanks! I know I can."—"Then it'll soon be started, this co-operative society?"—"Well, these things always take their time. I'll have to work them up, one way and another."—"Ah," she sighed, "a crowd's often difficult to manage."—"Yes, but it's good fun all the same, hm?"—"For you, I dare say. It's just like a dance for you."

She looked tired, a little weather-beaten flower. He had a mind to stroke her thin cheeks, where the curls were streaked with grey. He did so before he knew it:

"Cheer up, lass! The luck will soon turn, you'll see!"

"Ah, you Odin!"

In the parlour they found Ola Haaberg, who had come for his coffee, and Bonsach Arnesen, Ingri's father. Arnesen was always the same when Odin called; he was on the point of going away, but didn't manage to do it; no sooner did Odin turn aside than he looked at him, and little by little he tried to look him in the face. He was a tall and slightly built man, with sharp features but weak eyes. When Odin spoke to him about Ingri he blushed like a child, and presently he went out. Ola finished his coffee and was going back to his own room, and Odin understood that he was to follow.

When they got there Ola winked slyly: he had something to offer folk. Not home-made stuff, oh no, far from it; this was the lawful article.—"No, my boy, they didn't

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surprise me like a thief in the night with their law; I'd made my provision in good time! But do you really drink this kind of thing, Odin?"—he spoke low so that nobody should hear.—Ay, Odin couldn't deny it. The new parish clerk could be a teetotaller instead of him, for a while.—"Oh, you're a sly one. Odin, hm, hm! You're too much for me."

They sat chatting for a little while. Then there was a knock at the door, and the bottle vanished in an instant. It was Engelbert Olsen, the workers' leader, who came in; he had heard Odin was there.

Engelbert had had more than one farm, had kept a store on the Haaberg voe, and now he was at the factory. The luck had not been with him, but he had brains and plenty of pluck. He and Odin had been good chums, and Odin had helped him in many ways.—"And now I'll have to find you a wife," said he.

Before they noticed it the bottle was back on the table.—No, thanks, Engelbert wouldn't have any.—Nonsense?—No, he was teetotal on account of the workmen; for they had to be. "I don't do like Odin," he added.—"Well, then Odin shan't have any either," laughed Ola. "You can keep your politics. Folks are getting so canny! I'll soon take off my shoes and slip into the sea. I've been round saying good-bye already. You can sit there and be as canny as you like, *skaal!*"

Odin looked at his watch, he wanted to go home. He shouldn't have been here now. Ola was on to him at once:

"Is this the way you desert your wife? Evening after evening! She has her rights too, hasn't she?"—"Ah, if I hadn't her!" laughed Odin—"for her I could turn thief and rascal!"—"Why didn't you make her father manager of the factory?" asked Ola. "No, of course, he was still in the South, hm! hm!"

Engelbert woke up and asked what sort of a fellow that Arnesen was, what he had been doing in the South.

Ola let his eyes rest on him, but gave no sign of having heard a word of what he said. He turned again to Odin, blanker than ever: "Oh, I know, boy, I know a lot. But I keep my mouth shut; I'm as strong as a bear. Turn thief and rascal for your wife's sake, do you say? 'A sword shall pierce through thy own soul also,' ay, never fear. Her father, what in hell's that to do with you?" he turned to Engelbert. "Ask Mina, she knows!"

It sent a chill through Odin, everything that was said here tonight, it seemed to be burdened with fate. But now he tried to lead Engelbert away from Ola; he spoke about the co-operative society.—"It's creeping on now, bit by bit."—That was all right, thought Engelbert, but a good deal depended on what quarter it came from. If the workers were to join, they must have control. The manager would have to be their man, that was the first thing. Engelbert tried to look Odin in the face, again and again, and got angry with him because he found it so difficult.—"The manager—I've got him ready; but don't let's sit here jawing"—he got up and gave Engelbert such a slap

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on the shoulder that he flinched under it: "Now we're going!"

Engelbert followed him. But Ola finished his glass and came shambling to the door, trying to hold them up as long as he could.—"Leading folk in a halter like that!" he said. "Ah, I don't mean only you"—he gave Engelbert a dig in the side—"he leads the whole lot. What was it you did with the herring? Sold it yourself, and bought it yourself, and yet the price was so absurdly high."

"Child's talk!" said Odin. "Little children wherever I turn." Then he added a few words about the factory having driven the skippers to pay what they ought to pay, and he counted that a good piece of work. A couple of crowns more a barrel.

Ola put on a horrified air. "If you're lying now, it's wrong. And if you're not lying, it's still worse. But that Lauris, he's the worst of the whole lot—I'm going to leave a letter behind, in the end. One that'll help you if they get you under, Odin, he-he-he!"

They said good-bye and started off. Engelbert was bound for the young people's club at Lauvset, so they were going the same road so far. Odin walked quickly, and not much was said between them. The air had turned cooler and met their faces with a calm, fresh breeze. There was no guile about her; that was the way she greeted you sometimes, a new air over all the country-side and a new breath striking you. And stars and sky and mountain and field all bore the same witness.—"They can

talk and make as much fuss as they like," he said without knowing it—"it won't hurt us. It won't hurt us unless we choose to let it, Ingri—there! Am I walking too fast? Well, you'll have to keep up, I want to get home. And such fine weather, man—they talk about what is ever young! Are you dancing tonight? Yes, of course; I had some thoughts of being there myself. Well, good-night to you, and enjoy yourself!" As they shook hands Odin felt that he still had Engelbert on his side, felt it as a clear, good truth, so that he almost was inclined to sing.

Anders was outside when he reached home. He was standing still out in the farmyard, as young people often do, but Odin thought it made the stillness about the houses twice as deep.—"Are you standing there waiting for me?" he said.

No, Anders wasn't doing that either. He looked up. The glance in his eyes was deep and calm, it almost gave Odin a start. That was how grandmother had looked at one.

"Mother's waiting for me, isn't she?"

"I don't know. Perhaps she thought you'd gone to the club."

"Oh, you Anders!" laughed Odin as he hurried in.

"You didn't think that!" he said to Ingri. "You didn't think I'd gone off to dance?"

"No," she smiled, with her eyes full of happiness—the happiness that floats on the top of fear, he thought.

"Did you see father?" she asked.

"Yes, to be sure, I was to give you his love, and Mina's

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too. And Mina understood me, you can be easy in your mind, Ingri. Oh, I wish it might be hard to bear you dryshod over this—you shall *seel*"

A shade of anxiety passed over her, a great happy uneasiness:

"Mustn't say that, Odin!"

6

When Vikesylt left Odin's house he stood for a moment sniffing the air around him. Then he took his stick and set out, and came to Lauris's. Here his manner was even more subdued and his eyes even more respectful as they wandered over the walls.

"How strange it is!" he sighed. "No, I feel now as I've always felt, and as I was saying to your neighbour: I am a peasant, I said to him. A peasant. There is much contained in that word, and more and more according as one digs into it and reflects more deeply upon it, of course. For one must be quite clear about it and pay heed to the fact that there is a gulf, so to speak, between peasant and workman, they are sharply opposed to one another, nothing less; well, that is my humble opinion about the social situation in this country."

He talked at length and of many things, and in the middle of it all he expressed surprise about the co-operative society: Wasn't Arnesen to be manager there? Odin's father-in-law? For he had been in business in Kristiania, according to what his daughter said—he had

been there a long time, hadn't he? And a good man he was, it was one's Christian duty to believe it. Then he talked about the peasants and the factory and the wages dispute there; it was no less a conflict than that between aristocrat and democrat, so one would have to fall in on the side one belonged to. "And then we shall see your husband leader of the peasants and champion of the aristocratic principle!" he said, as he took Astri's hand to say good-bye. He resolved himself into a picture of respect and went out.

"Idiot!" muttered Lauris.—"Yes," said Astri, but her thoughts were far away, as she stood stroking the back of her chair.—"Well, that's that," said Lauris.—"What?"—"Why, I think the same as you."—"That a meeting will have to be called? at the factory?"—"General meeting, yes, extraordinary; devil take it all. The mess he's got us into."—"You'll have to go out and talk to them a bit first though. It's not too soon to let them see that you too have something to say. But you won't say anything about his drawing the seine on the other bank."—"Eh! do you think I was born a Lapp and chucked into the world?"—"Nor that about Ingri and her father either—we don't know it, Lauris. For you must be able to look folks in the face as well as he, any man you meet."—"Oh, stop that, I know what to do and what not to do! Woman's gossip."—"Hush now, Lauris! we don't say things like that. But I must say, and it's the truth, I hadn't thought that of Ingri. But I dare say it's not so easy for her. When they're

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set upon going so far in the parish."

Astri bit her lip as she went about arranging the flowers in the window and other things.—"No help for it," she said two or three times.—"For what?"—"One may be forced into all sorts of things. Into mixing ourselves up in their gossip; I thought we'd have been spared that. But to think that manager should still be his right-hand man! That he too should be so blind?"—"Ay, that's so."—"Well, as far as I care they may shut us out of everything in the parish. But if they simply can't see what it's leading to, if they let themselves be treated like lower class rabble, the whole lot of them!"—"Ay, he's been at work, he has," laughed Lauris.

He went out directly after dinner, and came home later than Odin. He had been to lots of places. On his way home he passed Lauvset, and there he met Engelbert and walked with him part of the way. Engelbert always went straight to the point, they were to hear his opinion and come out with their own, and he liked it better if they thought it over and agreed with him. He was annoyed with Lauris, who was a peasant and an opponent in everything, and you could seldom get a proper answer out of him. He was harsh in his abuse of the peasants this evening. The peasants were many things that were bad, but above all they were sausage-skins which the workers stuffed and stuffed, but they never got full, as the end had been left open. They were ten times worse than the big men in town.

But now the peasants were going to stuff their own sausages, said Lauris. "If we did the right thing we should pull down the factory and cleanse the neighbourhood of all kinds of vermin."

Engelbert was surprised at such words from Lauris. He was pleased.—"*What*—then we may look for a fresher breeze here, may we? God grant it! Then we'll scramble for the sausage. But you, Lauris, you're only jealous of Odin. He was the one who was made chairman, you see, and—well, he did you out of the shore dues too. And got the factory started right under your nose—he's a hard nut! Besides, he couldn't have got more than seven crowns a barrel for the herring if the factory hadn't been there. Isn't it annoying?"—"Oh, bosh!" said Lauris.—"Not at all, it's true; he said so himself this evening."

"Wait a few days and well hear if you remember it."

"I rather think Odin will answer for himself, as he's done before."

Lauris cleared his throat a few times; then he said that Odin was a good hand at leading folks by the nose.—"Are you starting that too?" said Engelbert, taken aback. "Maybe you think he can lead me?"—"No, are you crazy!" sneered Lauris. "All the same, Engelbert, I like talking to you. We shall end by being good chums."

Engelbert walked on, silent and out of humour. Lauris's words followed him, from tree-top to tree-top, from hummock to hummock; he was feeling pretty sick.

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Meanwhile Astri sat at home. She was not thinking, so it seemed to her, but looking back; one thing and another came and showed itself to her, as full of life as ever. This had often happened lately, especially when Lauris was away. All at once she could see him as he was in their early days here, first that closed face of his, and then the whole man. This brought on that trembling all over which she had had in those days; she knew that she would have felt like this if she had been a child and had lost herself in the forest at night, or if she had been forced to take the road of which she was most afraid.—She tore herself away and saw in her mind's eye her eldest boys, Peder and Arne, one like him and the other like her, and yet they were something else and more than that, each in his own way. "It was they I loved," she said; "I knew I should have them." It did her good to say that, to face things as they were.

In the middle of this, Odin appeared, a strong face, young and smiling. She looked at him calmly and well, and sometimes she smiled back: "That's it, that's it, just you go ahead, on and on! But presently you'll run yourself into a corner and stick fast. Then at last it'll be my time, our time!"

Then Lauris was there again, and each time more as she would have him. And there was always that about him which gave her those cold shivers. The man she was to have.—But *behind* Odin, he was always that; and no doubt it could not be otherwise. Now she saw Odin at the

time he was building here. It was impossible, the work he took upon himself, but done it was; and he was all the more cheerful the harder it went. Or rather: it didn't go hard with him, it went of itself. And that time Lauris was mean enough to try to balk him. Odin knew about it, and yet he accepted help when it came, and was glad of it; Astri still had a twinge when she thought of it. Then came the quarrels in the parish, about the almshouse and the bank and the new boundaries and the road and all, and lastly the factory; and Odin, that bit of a lad, swept over it like a summer breeze and got it done. But Lauris, he was the one they didn't know.

And now he came in. She sat and looked at him in silence as he threw his coat over the back of the chair; she could never cure him of doing that when he came in; she looked at him as he sat down and ate his supper. He looked up at her once or twice, and thought of his own affairs, as stubborn as usual.—"What are folks saying now?" she asked at last.—"Where are the boys?"—"They've gone to bed. Peder was at the club for a bit."—"What are folks saying?" he muttered. "Oh, they're beginning to rub the sleep out of their eyes, some of them."—"Not too soon either. Did they fix any time? For the meeting, I mean?"—"Oh yes. Wednesday evening, that's settled."

Astri turned bright red. As a rule she was pale. Her eyebrows twitched once or twice, subtly as could be, and her eyes took on a strong, free gleam:

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"Then you must come forward a can hear it!"

Lauris took a sip at his cup of milk; then he had finished his supper and was ready for a smoke.—"There's no need to lay it on so thick this time," he said.—"No, so long as folks have got their eyes open. But that'll be his affair. It couldn't be put off any longer."

"No?" He turned and looked at the clock, muttered something about the stable and the horses. Astri was at him again:

"For they have the right to look for it from here, the whole parish. And—our boys must have that much backing; they need it. They haven't the family behind them."

"No, thank God for that anyway!" he hummed to himself.

7

On Wednesday evening it blew a gale from the eastward. The fiord was all in a roar, and the mountains stood and sang in the blast. Odin smiled at this wind, more often than not, and he was smiling this evening as he walked to the meeting at the factory: "Ay ay, we're two of the same sort; I can hear you, my lad, you needn't shout so loud!" The wind came tearing this way over bog and forest, playful and young, now and again he flung himself down from a gap or saddle and shook the houses and threw sand and gravel into folk's eyes. You had to lean forward with all your weight when you had him against you, and plant

your feet in earnest when he came from the side. He was grim this evening, folk said.

The evening grew on under a high, pale sky, the bare wintry sky which showed itself in a greenish shimmering far out and a stormy band of orange down on the sea. The farms lay still and grey among the mountains, they let the evening come and the wind rage; there was strange comfort in the sight. Everything must have its time.

Little by little folk began to appear, one man here and two or three there, and once he saw several who had formed a party. Nearly every farmer held a share, that was how Odin had worked it. There they came. Then it seemed to Odin, and not for the first time, that he could look upon the parish and the weather with *their* eyes: the evening turning grey and dreary among the mountains, grey and dreary all around, and the sky cold and comfortless, and the wind came like an enemy or an exiled spirit; so it felt to them. And so it was to creep along to the meeting; it had to be done, that was it. And *he* was to be their spokesman, through thick and thin.

Some had already arrived before Odin, others were just behind, and he went across to speak to them.—"Bad weather coming, do you think?" he asked. They laughed and thought the weather was bad enough already. He left them. He knew they would agree with him as long as there were so few of them. He went out and talked to the work-people, especially Engelbert.—"Just a bit squally," he kept saying. "But what I had to say to you was this: there's

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doubtful weather coming, and if it blows too hard we'll have to shorten sail a bit—you're all seamen here, aren't you?"

They agreed with him there. Just now, in black winter, if they got along somehow, they'd have to be satisfied.—"No," said Odin, "not satisfied exactly; we're just waiting for a better wind."

When Odin came in again the room was full. He took the chairman's seat and the book, wrote a few words in it. Then he leaned back in his chair and looked at them, smiled and asked them to tell him what they had come here for. A man from the east side laid a letter on the table. It was from Ola Engdal, he asked leave to resign his seat on the board.—"He'll have to wait till after the new year, till the annual meeting," said Odin and put the letter among the minutes.

At last the new Vennestad man got on his feet and asked to be heard. He was a stranger to the parish and rather more independent than the rest of them.—"The factory, that's ourselves," he said, looking round. "We who've put money into it." He repeated this a couple of times and then started in. The factory had come to a standstill, and as times were, there was nothing to be said about that. But now it had been set going again, with high-priced raw material and a rise in wages, which were too high before. By degrees he put the situation calmly and broadly before them: thus and thus it would turn out—a drop in the price of herring oil, loss on interest and loss on work-

ing expenses—he gave all the figures—and finally a closing down for good and all, when the owners were sucked dry and were left looking like fools. In other words: This here meant death to the factory, and what did they say to that?

There had been mutterings of agreement here and there, and this let loose the talk all round the room: so it was, ay, death to the factory, and now they would say—

Had it been any other factory, he went on, had it been worked by outsiders on outside money, ay, and had it been run by business folk, then he'd have said—

But he didn't manage to say it, and the man sat down. He was in a sweat.

Odin sat calmly. He had seen them like this many a time before. They might all talk together for a bit, it wouldn't do them any harm. Then he collected himself and asked them to speak one at a time, but they didn't get very far with that. Finally he knocked on the table and rose to his feet. He turned to the Vennestad man: Who was it that had given him all these figures?

The man's eyes travelled across the room, Odin's followed, and many looked the same way; they stopped at Lauris.

"Now, Lauris?" said Odin. "Better speak for yourself!" he laughed.

When Odin laughed they joined in; it had always been like that. It never made a thing any worse to take it from that side.

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Lauris got up. He too spoke in a casual way, with one hand in his trouser pocket.—"It was you tricked us into this plaguy factory, but we won't say any more about that."—"Then why did you buy shares?" Odin put in.—"We wanted to have a try," Lauris went on. "But now we see what's in front of us: we're bound for the ditch. The manager, as they call him, and the chairman, they seem in a hurry to get there. I won't say much about the seine gang being done out of their share, they might have called a halt; but we know they're sore. But we're farmers, we are, and must stick up for ourselves; we can't let them eat us alive, or pull the parish to bits around us—we can't throw our money into the sea, for we haven't got it. And then another thing: there's more in it than just this. If we give in every time, they'll only open their mouths wider, those who call themselves workers; there again we have a responsibility, we're spoiling the labour market for ourselves; they'll soon eat up the farm of anyone who has to hire them."

Odin was still laughing, as he looked at them and listened to them. The room was full of decent folk, and now they were let loose again. The words "farmers" and "working-folk" buzzed everywhere. He got up and knocked on the table for a hearing.

"We're all working-folk, aren't we? Don't let's bring that word into the dispute. And before all else we're folk."

"No! no!" they shouted in opposition.

"What, aren't we that any more? Then maybe we'll have to try and *be* folk?"

They still laughed with him; but when he spoke again and asked if they really intended to shut down the factory, they were all in a storm against him: "Ay! ay! we've had enough of it—scrap the damned thing—we'd rather sell the whole rotten concern—there'll be the same old trouble in the spring!" It was impossible to make oneself heard.

Odin looked surprised. Then seriousness took hold of him, he struck the table with the palm of his hand and hushed them down. They obeyed, but gave him hostile looks. He had often seen them angry, but there was something new in this; and over there by the wall sat Ola Haaberg enjoying the whole business.—My own kin, thought Odin. Then I suppose they cover the whole parish? They spread like a bog from fiord to fiord.—"Think it over!" he cried. "Go home, folks, and think it over; at present you don't know a thing about prices and the like of that. Let's go about it like grown-up men, we've done that before now. Let's wait another week and find out the price of oil; it may upset the whole calculation you brought here tonight. You must remember it's no laughing matter, this; it's no trifle. Do you fancy I'm trying to injure the factory? Or that I wish you any harm? Have you had that idea long?"

At that moment Odin saw he had regained his power over them, it braced him like a cool stream. A tiny sting

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came with it, that it was all the same to him which silly course the folk might choose; but his joy got the upper hand: they should go the right way, whatever happened.

Then Lauris spoke, and his voice was like a rasp in the silence that hung over them: "You say we don't know the prices. We do know all the same that you used the factory here to screw up prices elsewhere—that it's dear herring you've bought us. A couple of crowns a barrel too much, eh? And we're to pay that?"

Odin looked at Engelbert, who was standing by the door. He had lately got a share through Odin. He looked too unconcerned and as if he knew nothing about it; he must be the one who had put Lauris up to this. Odin said nothing. He was thinking of many things, but right through it all it stung him that their looks were hostile again. Can I really have got a little wound somewhere? he laughed inwardly.

Now the feeling of the room had changed. In the middle of the noise one man called out: "We no longer have confidence in the board. We want a new board!"—they all said the same with one voice.

The three other members of the board had turned pale and got up at once: They were quite ready to take what belonged to them and go. But Odin called out: "Better let them throw us out!" He was already dealing out voting-cards.

Lauris and the Vennestad man were elected with all the votes, next came Ola Haaberg and the man from

Juvik—those two held many shares—and the fifth was Odin, after casting lots with another one. At that he slapped his thigh and laughed aloud: Faith, now they'd have to elect him chairman again!

The men had calmed down, and many joined in with: "All right! then we'll start the same old game once more!" Lauris said the board would do best to elect a chairman straight away, then they'd have a better idea of what the meeting wanted and didn't want. Lauris was elected unanimously. Odin looked up with a forehead full of merry wrinkles, folks were grinning all round the room, and Lauris looked at them and nodded: he stood by what had been done!

There was a little break, Odin had ordered coffee.—"As the man said when he was fighting the police: 'If I don't get a rest now I can't keep it up!'" he said when the coffee came. Odin heard they were talking about him.—"Fancy him getting beaten!"—"It had to come some time." Ola Haaberg came up to him chuckling: "You took a proper spill there, Odin?"—"Not a bit! But a spill it was. That comes of not holding on fast enough." And how little it hurts me! he wondered to himself.

The rest of them were chatting sociably over their coffee.

In the middle of the talk Odin heard that Lauris and the manager had each other by the hair, and several more were backing Lauris. Odin tried to get over to them, but before he came far enough to find out what it was about,

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the manager jumped up, with a face white as chalk, and asked if he was to understand that Lauris wanted to get rid of him.—"Be quiet and sit down, man!" said Lauris, with all the authority of a skipper.—"I don't take any orders!" answered the other.—"Oh, as to that—we shall see." And one of the others put in: "You'll have to see how you get along here without Odin to carry you."—"I'll tell you one thing," said Lauris; "and that is: you're not *indispensable*. Bear that in mind, for the future."

Odin and a few others tried to put in a good word, but the manager was already so worked up and looked so furious at Lauris's sneers that the words were spoken before anyone was aware: "Very well, I resign the post this moment! Oh no, you needn't think I'll swallow that!"—"My dear fellow, nobody asks you to," laughed Lauris, he was quite friendly now. "Now that the factory's to close down," he smiled at the others.

The manager came from the west country somewhere. He was a steady, quiet-mannered fellow, but when he had once said a thing it was nailed to the wall. He made his way through the crowd and out. Odin saw his high, square shoulders in the doorway. It was done and couldn't be undone.

Well, what were they going to do now? asked Odin after a while. Lauris was smoking, and the others watched him and waited: What were they going to do now? Lauris had heard them at last.—"Going to do?" he looked surprised.—"Yes, without a manager?" He went on smok-

ing, till they got quite faint inside.—"Don't want a manager, as you call it, if the factory's to close down."

At first they kept silent for a while. Then there was one who said it, and after him they all said it: *Was the factory to close down? When all was said and done?* Odin read uncertainty in all their faces, pulling them now this way, now that; they had got landed in something they didn't like, without knowing it they wished someone would come and turn them in the right direction. They looked to him, many of them, no doubt from old habit. They were farmers, so they called themselves, and ought to have stuck to their farming—it was he who had lured them into this here.

He nudged Lauris, that he was to take his place and get a decision. Lauris actually looked up, but he hadn't quite finished his smoke. When that was done he went forward to the table and took hold of the back of the chair, looked out over the meeting and asked them to listen.—The question was, should they let the factory close down or take the risk of starting it again. They must be good enough to state their views, the word was with them!

Odin got up.—"I'm bound to say I feel most inclined to go home," he said. "We're a little too—childish here this evening. The truth is, I suppose, that we've mixed ourselves up in something we know little or nothing about. And so it is all over the country, anybody knows that who reads a paper nowadays. We needn't be ashamed, for it's the same all over the world, only they're not so

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clumsy at smoothing it over. And here stand I, who am responsible for this concern; you can hang me if that's any use. This factory, we'd have done better if we hadn't started it. And now it's my opinion"—he straightened himself and gave full weight to his words, but there was a calm smile on his face—"it's my opinion that if the factory's to stop work now, we might just as well close it down for good. We've made some money, and we still have a chance of selling the whole caboodle; we can own up that we don't want to risk any more on it, or that it was a mistake. We've got cold feet, and so—"

There was a dead silence. One after another looked at Lauris to save the situation. He cleared his throat and got up.—No, he wouldn't give up the factory, wouldn't stop the work either, now that the mistake had been made. What he proposed was this: They should keep it going, but the last increase of wages must go; they could reconsider it in the spring; at present they hadn't thought it over enough. A manager? Well, if they wanted one they could always find one; he believed a man like Arthur Ween would fit the post well.

His words about the factory fell on good ground. One after another got up and declared his agreement with the chairman. So that matter was decided, and Odin smiled. He spoke again and warned them all the same not to forget that in affairs of this kind one *might* lose money, and now, as he said before, they had got a scare. He said this confidently, for he knew he had lost his hold on them. Yes, it

was gone now; they were not listening to him. Odin smiled once more.

Arthur was sitting over by the wall, opposite him. He tried to look down, but he had to raise his eyes and meet Odin's. He changed colour once or twice. At last, when there was a moment's silence, he got up and said he didn't feel equal to taking the post of manager. He fumbled a little with his words, looked at Odin once more, just a helpless glance, and then said that if they wanted a man who could carry on for the time being, he knew of one, and perhaps they did too. It was Bonsach Arnesen.—"He's a relation of my wife's," he said, "but I mention him for all that, so you can do as you please; he has managed similar concerns before, both in the north and south."

Lauris looked at Odin, with a little malicious twinkle in his narrow eyes. The folk said that if they got Arnesen they were saved. "For the present," added Lauris. And so it was decided. They chatted one with another and were well pleased: in fact, everybody had got what he wanted.

Odin spoke for the last time, saying he would not sit on the board now that wages were to be reduced.—"It was a bit heavy on us, I admit, but I've promised them this rise and I won't go back on it."

Just then Engelbert appeared at the door. He only wanted to give notice that now the strike was on again. There was a sharp exchange of words down by the door, rising at last to a regular roar, but Engelbert's voice was

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above all the rest. Odin worked his way there and got hold of him, pushed him a little out of the crowd and kept his hand on his shoulder.—"You'll have to give in, even if you *are* in the right; you've sense enough for that. Wages will go up, it'll come of its own accord, if only the boilers are fired here for a week or two. I've talked to most of your mates, and they see it the same way as I do."

"Never!" cried Engelbert. "Not a shovelful will we fire this time!"

Odin laughed, as was his way, and shook him a little: "You're right, but you must fire the boilers all the same."

Engelbert gave him a furious look, all of a sudden, as if he hadn't seen before who it was he was talking to:

"And you say that, Odin! You? So now we know that you're our worst enemy. Come wheedling round, making out that you're a friend—you'd better be careful!"

Men who had signed came squeezing past, trying to get out, and some of them joined in their talk. Odin said good-bye and left; he forgot his signature and all the rest. It's never any use talking sense to a man in a rage, that's the worst thing you can do to him.

Odin fell in with a whole bunch who were going northward. The wind was so rough it was impossible to talk. But Odin was light-hearted, he would have liked to talk to the wind or sing a snatch, for this was the note of a free man, a lonely and free man that they would never lay hands on. And the sky and the mountains and everything around was known and dear to him, was what it had al-

ways been, and backed him as it had always done.

But Ingri was not very pleased that her father had been appointed manager. She didn't say anything, but her face showed the look that it had when the worst of the storm struck the house and shook it. But when he told her how he had lost at the meeting, she looked at him with a hidden depth in her eyes and laughed: "So you caught it, at last!"—"Yes," he joined in the laugh; "and the worst of it is, I *could* have turned it the other way, but I didn't. It might have turned any way it liked. And then it turned the right way after all. They were quite angry, some of them, I didn't know them again. But it seemed such a small thing to me, to win against them. And it turned the right way after all!"

"And all this just because the herring came and made things lively to seaward!" he yawned.

CHAPTER II

UP AND ON!

1

ON SUNDAY EVENING THERE WAS A BIG CELEBRATION AT the young men's club. It was the anniversary both of the club and of its house.

Odin, who had taken the leading part in getting the house built, was asked to make the speech of the evening, but he had not promised; he had only said he would be there. There were so many others now who would like to speak for the young. So it came about that Vikesylt was to be the chief speaker.

The land-wind had dropped; it was calm weather and a trifle cold, the ground was bare of snow and there was a little moonlight. The young people arrived from all parts of the parish, and many of the older ones were with them. They came quietly and decently along the roads now; it was only a few of the factory hands that had taken a drop and let you hear them coming.—"It wasn't like this in the beginning, Odin," said Ingri as they were on the way.—"No, it's certainly got better. It's what I always said: if we just waited it would be better by and by."—

"You had a tough job all the same. And now—now I don't regret it, Odin!" He squeezed her hand, which he found in his coat pocket. He walked on in silence for a while, then he said: "And yet, Ingri, I don't know. Deep down inside me it's almost as if I miss something when I see them come along like this and go in and take their places."—"What is it then?"—"It's a shame to say it. But there was life in the old days too; they were so full of life, they would often roar and shout from sheer youth and high spirits, don't you remember? No, I don't want to bring it back, it's better as it is. But they're tame, these folks. I feel like a stranger, sometimes—is there any credit in gaining over a crowd like that? I *could* have managed them at the general meeting the other evening—no, I'm not boasting, on the contrary. On the contrary! 'Look out, or I'll come with you!' as the man said when the north wind got hold of him."

Vikesylt was on the platform when they came in. The whole hall was in a festal spirit, and Vikesylt was in his right place. Odin seated himself by the door and took Ingri on his knees, sat there and gave himself up to the speech. They were fine phrases and true. Sometimes the speaker's words ran smoothly like a river, and sometimes they rose like a waterfall or a heavy sea, with power and authority; now and again he stopped and searched within himself for new ideas, or outside himself for new fine images; he searched and he found. The young people were carried away; they had never heard anything finer.

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Now he was coming to the end, and the speaker was all aglow from head to foot: "Up and on!" he urged them; "up and on! Away from this world to the world of the spirit, away from self and up to God! *That is the voice of our timer*'*

The audience relaxed in a shout of approval. After that they took a long time to recover themselves. Many a face fell slack and empty or gathered in wrinkles, so tense had been the feeling. Odin could see how each fell away from the other and became himself again, a lonely little person with nothing but his own affairs. But many kept aloft the whole time, with eyes far away.

"Up and on!" the words rang within them.

The chairman came and asked if Odin would speak at once. No, he would rather wait. It struck him in a flash that this was enough for this evening, he ought to have taken Ingri and gone home, for that was where *they* belonged. But now the choir came forward, he had to listen to them; and when they had finished, he had to go up to the platform. Ingri gave up her place to another and went over and stood by her father. She was always pale when Odin was to stand up and speak.

Odin had thought of many things he might speak about. It occurred to him as he stood there that if he were to speak in earnest now, he would never be done, and it wouldn't be any festival either; it was a burden he had to cast off his own shoulders and lay upon others, and there was nobody here to bear that burden. So he pulled him-

self up and talked about the connection between old and new in the parish, between what was and what is. His idea of life was this: to strike one's roots back into what has been, and to reach forward towards what has never been, but has nevertheless lain within us from old time. For there we must find what is to be, otherwise it will be nothing but picking up and throwing away over and over again, and we shall never experience the truth that will *convince* us that this is myself.—"I have a feeling," he said in conclusion, "that I'm a heathen from old times, and that I must speak from that standpoint if I'm to say the right word to the time we live in!"—He spoke of *manly conduct*.—"That is the voice of the time," he said. "Or it ought to be."

All this time Bonsach Arnesen had stood and stared at him, not exactly in surprise, and not carried away as far as one could see; just a pair of big eyes fixed upon him—and knowing what he said was true. And time after time the question arose in Odin: why did he stand here and say this? For he didn't intend them to see things as he saw them, or to go home the richer for having done so? No. But he wanted to talk to them, to get hold of them, for he felt more strongly than ever that he belonged to them. He wanted to feel that they understood him, that they were with him when he himself could barely glimpse the truth in it: *Manly conduct*, that means giving up one's life for a cause one has at heart? But there's more than this in it, and yet it must not seem hard: it means giving up the

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cause you have at heart and anything else you can think of, when it's a question of saving your life, the inmost part of us, which cannot be sacrificed!

They were with him, in a curious way. He could hear that the applause they gave him was different from that they had given Vikesylt. And he saw that this seemed strange to Ingri. There was a light in her face, of a great sorrow or a great joy; and her father showed the same.

After coffee Engelbert got up and spoke, for there was to be a voice from the workers' camp too. He stood there, young and full of fight as usual, fair-haired and fair-skinned, with a nose turned slightly up and cold blue eyes. Odin had a mind to clap him before he had said a word.—He took up what the other two had said, and pulled it to pieces: It was fine, it was specious, but it was untrue and unwholesome, a snare to catch the young and make slaves of them. They talked about questions, and they talked about causes. There was only one question here, and that was the question of food. That was how the truth looked, even now; it was like a winter's day, and you had to dress accordingly.—"What sort of a life have you folks?" he cried. "For that's what makes you what you are. Are you going on like this—are you never going to free yourselves from peasants' food and peasants' speech and all that? Never going to get out of poor man's slavery and become what you were made for, free and rich and *cultured* folk? For *that's* what is the voice of the time, and well you all know it!"

His mates had shouted *bravo* and *hear, hear* all the time, and now they carried many of the others with them. A few tried to hush them down. Two or three of the young men and one of the elders demanded a hearing, but did not get it. There was strife in the air, and this was meant to be a festive gathering. But mutterings were heard on all sides. Odin took Ingri outside, for she had to go home. Then he went up to the platform and took the floor without asking. There was silence at once.—"I'm glad," he said, "to see the young people divided. That's what I call a holiday spirit. The actual quarrel you can leave for another time, or several times. I hear you say that we're living in a bad time. Do you think so? You think as I do, that we're living in a hopeful time. Quarrels we have, and misery and injustice, but how would it be if we hadn't? If you had nothing but dull peace and prosperity in front of you all the way? Have you ever seen twenty miles of straight road in front of you without a hill or a turn in it? and known that you were condemned to go along it? Pray God you may be spared!"

He passed his eye over them, and noticed his own inward smile coming out on their faces.—"But about the voice of the time? There are many voices. But I don't know that we ought to be their slaves. It's we who are the voice of the time; 'up and on' we mean to go—but we don't all want to go the same way? All over Europe today the young are just as doubtful of their road, hopes have broken down, and hopes are struggling to raise their

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heads—and they in their turn will fade, no doubt, and provide the soil for new hopes again—but now we'll clear the room as in old days, in the old time, and have a dance as we do it in the new time; come on, lads!"

Engelbert stood up and tried to speak, and now he was boiling over. But they had started already to move the benches, so not many listened to him.—"Odin is a friend and a relation of mine, so I can speak my mind freely: he's our worst enemy!"—"Bravo!" cried Odin, and nearly all the rest joined in. Engelbert was drowned in the noise.

Odin was pushed against the wall behind the speaker's desk, and so they stood all round the room, for now the dance had started. Then Vikesylt came up, the Silver Fox; he came to shake him by the hand and thank him for his speech: Incomparable! But there was one little thing he missed, felt bound to mention it though much against his will, namely the *Christian point of view*.—"And you call that a little thing?" said Odin.—"Ah, but now you're to answer an old and simple-minded man; I turn to you on behalf of the young and ask: What is your point of view as regards Christianity? We turn to you and demand a clear answer."

That was too lofty and too deep a matter to talk about, thought Odin.—"It's the same with Christianity as with culture: it's so seldom to be found where it's most talked about."

Folk crowded round, wanting to listen. The thought

rose clear and plain in Odin: I'm not likely to come here any more. It made him feel queer, he looked round for Ingri, but didn't find her—no, of course, she'd gone. They're sucking everything out of me, he said to himself with a sigh.

"But you *have* a view of life, haven't you? An outlook on life, you understand?"

"I believe so."

"Believe, you say? But the time calls out for clearness, mark that! It will have nothing of games and frivolity and such like; it demands earnestness. Earnestness and clearness, as I said. Not games and joking."

"Oh yes, it does. Life is a game, if you take it the right way. View of life, ha ha!" Odin laughed with a blue twinkle in his narrow eyes: "I'd have to live my whole life over again to get at it, and before I'd finished it would look quite different to me, it would be a fresh view of life. But now we're going to play."

Meanwhile someone had come in asking for Arthur; there was a group round the door, and presently it spread from man to man that something bad had happened, at Segelsund, Ola Haaberg was dead, had thrown himself into the sea this very evening; a cold shudder soon went round the room. Vikesylt looked at Odin.

"There you can hear and see! How it is with a human creature!"

"Oh, we don't see anything, any of us!" Odin worked his way to Arthur and said he was going home with him,

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then got hold of Arnesen and asked him to go to Haaberg, to Ingri.

2

It was as he feared, Mina and the rest of them at Segelsund were scared half out of their wits. The men were away, at the festival or among the neighbours.

Mina had missed Ola at coffee-time and had gone to look for him. Then she called to mind that he had been rather queer in his manner lately, and all at once she was struck with terror, it came on her like a wet cloth on her bare body that he was no longer alive. In spite of this she was on her way to the outhouses; she believed she would find him lying or hanging there and she was forced to go and look. Then it struck her that she ought rather to look down by the water, for she had often seen him standing there at the end of the pier or by the boat-house; she hurried down the road. She searched all round the point and came upon his shoes at the place where the vessels made fast. She called his name aloud, two or three times. The shoes she dared not touch. Then she caught sight of a long hook close by, a boathook from one of the vessels no doubt, that had been used for drying nets. She took this to drag the water; she felt so sure that he was lying there under the sheer rock. It was not long before she got hold of something and drew up. It was he. At first she scarcely knew what she was doing; only one thing was clear, that he must not be found without his shoes, for she

had heard an old saying that folk who made away with themselves always slipped off their footgear first. There was deep water close to, but she managed to work the body along the shore till it lay in shallow water by a cleft in the rock. There she climbed down with the shoes, waded out and put them on him, somehow. This took it out of her so that mountains and fields danced before her eyes when she straightened herself again.

All this she told to Arthur and Odin, when they came down there. They drew him up on to the rocks and spread an old sail over him, then fetched horse and cart and drove him up, carried him in and laid him in his bedroom—some women came and helped.—"He began to take off his shoes, didn't he?" said one of them.—"Nonsense!" said Mina, and her voice was sharp: "he was often slovenly about lacing his shoes." And that was true, they remembered.

Mina's face had turned grey as ashes, and when Arthur had gone out for a moment she said to Odin:

"To think that he should do this on us!"

"Well, it's done now," said Odin. Strange that he hadn't done it before, he was thinking.

"But one thing, Odin: we won't tell anybody that—that his shoes were left on the rocks."

He looked up at her. At that instant he saw she was thinking of the time she was saved, saw too that she knew she was found out. He turned red and did not know what to say. His eyes fell on a letter lying on the table, among

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books and papers; he went and picked it up.—"To Mina," it was addressed, and it was in Ola's fine round hand.—"You can look at it later," he said. But as he handed it to her he felt he was doing wrong, she ought not to have had it.

As he was leaving he said to her: "We'll tell the truth about it. That he got tired of earth and went into the sea—a useless old crock. And I'd recommend you not to look back, or you'll be turned to a pillar of salt. Though you're stronger than you're aware of."—"Must you go home this evening, Odin?"—Yes, he had to.

He was not long on the road. The sound of his footsteps hung about him in the forest and banks, followed him like a cheerful little song in the calm weather. Now and again a breath of wind sighed overhead among the peaks, with so deep a note that the storm seemed to be coming back. And it roused an answering note within him, that a man too may be caught at times by such a gust. And now Ingri was waiting anxiously for him.——

She was indeed, just at this time, as she kept glancing at the clock; and as she talked to her father, her thoughts were far away.

She had been scared when he came in. She changed colour and did not answer his greeting.—"Where is he, where's Odin?" was all she said.—Oh, she mustn't be alarmed, he'd be here directly. Little by little her cheerfulness got the upper hand and shone in her face: "So it's really you, father, come to see me?"—"Yes, Odin

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asked me to look in here. Was thinking of doing so myself, after you left. Didn't know what sort of a welcome I should get—it's a long time since I had a talk with you."—"You mustn't say such things, father! But why—has anything happened, father? Tell me at once, please!"

He told her what he knew.—"Oh, thank God!" she said. "I thought it was something to do with you!"—"No, no, there's nothing wrong with me. Except that I've been made a sort of manager, for the present, at the factory."—"Yes, I was so glad when I heard it. But all the same—I don't think you ought to be there, father. I'm so afraid. Yes, there's such danger in folks, you don't know them! They haven't been able to down Odin, but—"

Arnesen smiled: "You think they're dangerous, do you? Oh no. And, you see, I've got better times in front of me now. Up to now things have been against me. It's going to be different in future. I've nothing to be afraid of either, unless it's for your sake—that here again I might cast a shadow over you. But I had to come here; I know you understand me; you'll see, it'll be all right now."—"Dare you think that, father?"—"Oh yes, I dare. And now I see that I can do something here, both for Odin and for others. *He* shall have his rights, be sure of that! Odin shall. But you must talk to him; tell him he can be a rich man any day he likes. He could borrow money and buy up the whole factory, you see; he'd

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double it by the summer! If I could do him that turn, and you too!"

Ingri's eyes brightened, and her whole face with them, while he was talking, but the light went out as soon as he stopped.—"No!" she smiled. "*He* won't go in for any more speculations. ⁶I leave that to Lauris!' that's all he'd say. Maybe we'll sell the farm here while prices are at the top, and buy Kjelvik; we've been looking forward to that. For you see, father, I sometimes feel there's danger in the parish. I expect it's only nonsense, but—"—"Only nonsense, ay! And from you too, the wife of Odin?"—"Well, up to now we've only played with the idea. But all the same, if we *were* there!"

Ingri went into the kitchen to see to something, but soon came back.—"This Engelbert he has so much to do with?" she said.—"Ah, what sort of a one is he?"—"He's supposed to be related to Odin, a long way out; but he was born in town. Odin has helped him a little, for he has such trust in him; he's even got him to give up the drink. Odin says he's a good fellow"—she smiled—"I believe he says that about everybody?"—"Well, they say it's better to trust all than none, you know. And a strong man can afford to trust all. Odin, you see—it's put new life into me, coming here. And you're married to him! Heh?"—"Yes, do you think I understand it? Then things wouldn't be—so strange between us as they are! I think he must be on the way now."

They both noticed that they had been talking all the time, and had kept off the subject of what had happened and was not to be talked about.——

As Odin was passing Lauris's house he heard a noise in the field behind the outhouses. He heard Anders's voice, and next moment he could distinguish those of the two eldest Lauris boys. They were fighting. The same thing had happened before; it wasn't their way to stand and call each other names. Peder was usually the one who started it, and Anders went straight for him. As a rule he got thrashed, for they were generally two to one. It seemed to be the same now. Odin stood still and let them have it out. They got him under two or three times and laid into him properly, so that Odin was stepping forward to say that was enough. But then Anders tore himself free of them and cut across the fields for home; he was quicker than the wolf, and on reaching the flat he stopped and called to them:

"If you want to be thrashed any more, boys, you'll have to hurry after me, for I'm going home!"

Odin heard the other two laughing, there was no talk of enmity there. They would scuffle and scrap like this whenever the fit was on them, but friends they were and friends they remained; they kept together all the year round, in jest and in earnest, and Anders had to let the Lauris boys into it, whatever he might be up to. Odin didn't know why this made him so happy just now, but it warmed him like a promise, something to rely on; he

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could have caught them all three and beaten them soundly out of pure good humour—they must have found a view of life, those fellows?

And round about it was so still you could hear every sound, wide and free wherever you turned; the mountain-side was trying to smile at him in the moonlight, faint as it was, and the belts of forest and bog the same. But up at the top of the slopes and around the peaks there was a murmur of some kind of wind, coming and going from time to time. Odin was inclined to think it had been there all his life, with the same warning, only that he hadn't paid any heed to it. Someone or other heard it maybe, this evening as any other evening, wondered at it for a moment and turned away; it was only the wind.

"Up and on!" smiled Odin, and then he went in.

They had supper in the parlour this evening, as there was a visitor. Anders was looking down into his plate, but when he saw that his father kept his eyes to himself he threw up his head and laughed straight in his face: "When we once go at it, you know! Only I didn't know there was anybody looking on."

Arnesen and Odin hadn't much to say to each other this time either. They talked a little about the factory and a little about other things, but neither of them had his thoughts on the subject. Now and again their eyes met. Then it seemed to Odin that Arnesen gave him a nod, as much as to say, it'll be all right, you'll see! Beyond that he thought they were two men who understood each other,

each coming from his own quarter.

"And fancy him coming here to say good-bye!" said Ingri all at once.

"Ola? Yes, you're right. And now he's fallen out, like a tooth out of an old mouth."

But Ingri had turned pale.—"He didn't do it himself, did he?"

"As you choose to take it. He was dead and done with long before my time. I don't suppose he ever really got going."

3

Only a day or two later there was a rumour that Arnesen had got word of a new price for oil, and the truth of it was confirmed at once. There was money to be made. At first people were inclined to stop and ask once more if it really was so, then they let themselves be carried along. If they must confess the truth, they had never had a doubt of *that*. Why, to be sure, lots of other things were on the rise, so why shouldn't this go up too? and *they* hadn't voted for closing down the factory. It was Odin, chairman of the parish council, he had got up and proposed in all seriousness that they should close down.

Lauris was the first to hear of it. He told Astri in his usual fashion, just as one might remark that it was seven o'clock.—"That ought to cheer you up, Lauris!" she said; and a thrill of youth and courage went through her as so often before. "Isn't that a good omen, Lauris?"—"I

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understand so little about omens."—"Ah, but this is the first thing that's happened since you were made chairman—why can't you be cheerful too, once in a way?"—"I'm always cheerful. Tolerably so. But now we'll have to think about raising the wages of these starvelings; what do you say to that?"—No, they oughtn't to be allowed to force that through, she said to herself. "But Odin's to blame for that too. All he did was to coax them along; he never ruled over them. That's left for you to do."

Lauris looked rather taken aback, for a moment; then he was himself again.—"I know all that. But if a man's to think about *that*, he'll have to think of a lot of things. In the first place he must have this Engelbert Olsen on his side. He's the one who pulls the wires down there. But you see, you can't stand him."—"No, I'm bound to say—" Astri smiled and bit her lip. "I don't see what you want with him either, he ought to be put in his place!"—"There's something that we call plans," said Lauris seriously.—"Well, well, Lauris; I'll try. Perhaps we mustn't be so—so thin-skinned in future. And then you're the master, you know."

She met Ingri the same day. Astri had come to the stream to rinse out some clothes, as they hadn't enough water for that at home, and Ingri was there with some wooden bowls. They stood there chatting, and Astri told her the news from the factory. Ingri looked half frightened at first; she asked if it was true.—Ay, true it was, and now the factory had a chance of going ahead again. "It

looks as if he brought good luck, your father," she said. The sun came out and shone full on Ingri's face, so that it changed colour and her hair was all aglow; it lasted an instant or two and then went out. The sky was streaked with light little clouds. Ingri always found it so hard to take her eyes off Astri, they were fixed on her, dark and wide, scarcely blinking. So defenceless and guileless were they that Astri was held by them.—"And you're not sore, are you, Ingri, about Lauris taking Odin's place? Well, what I mean is, it's the way of the world, there's not much help for it?"—"No," said Ingri.—"No. We must let them have it out, it's their business."—Astri took up her bucket of clothes and went home.

She was angry with herself, for now again she had said a little too much to Ingri—one took a step down to her, as it were, treated her like a child, and before one knew it one was just as much of a child oneself, and found that she was just as far away after all. It must be because one felt that Ingri was easily hurt, and so one was glad not to be one of those who would do such a thing.

The factory was going again, it was almost as if it went of its own accord. Arnesen came to terms with the workpeople, promised them what they asked, talked to the board and got it through. It soon appeared that they were going to do big things, as the herring was richer in oil than anyone had believed. Arnesen went full speed ahead, working overtime day after day. They said he had

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a special turn for dealing with the men.

Then Lauris called the shareholders together for another meeting. They had planned an extension of the factory during the past summer, had even laid the foundations, but had gone no farther with it, as they thought the workpeople were getting too unreasonable. Many were now in favour of building it at once. There was plenty of herring to be had, and plenty of unemployed in the parish in winter-time; something must be done. Life and progress were in the air, folks laughed as they took up the Silver Fox's watchword, but they meant it quite seriously: "Up and on with it!"

The question was, should they give in to the bricklayers?

Odin spoke in favour of it. If they were to build, they would have to pay. He went for the farmers, pointed to the prices of all they had to sell, famine prices all round, and went so far as to ask what profit they would have if they lost their own souls. There was muttering at this, but he was at them again, and the end of it was that they gave in; they even wanted him to be chairman of the building committee. Odin laughed, and reminded them that he had advised against this extension. "I'm getting afraid," he said. "I was never afraid to join in a game, however dangerous, you know that; but now we ought to stop while the game's going well. No, I see you don't like that. I recognize myself there"—he looked before him with a smile, half boy and half old man: "I

dare say it often looked as if I was a hot-head. Well, I don't regret it. But this time—I'm not the hot-headed one."

They didn't pay much attention to him, used as they were to his queer sayings. They elected him chairman, and the work was started with all speed. It was such fine weather.

They scarcely gave a thought to Lauris. He had spoken neither for nor against—he was sly enough for that.

In the middle of all the bustle there was the funeral ale at Segelsund. Odin had never seen Mina so down, she seemed to be walking in her sleep and in pain and could scarcely answer when they spoke to her. Odin had forbidden them to invite Vikesylt, and folk thought this natural enough, for it had leaked out little by little what kind of a death Ola had met with. Many people thought it was the only end you could expect for a man like him, an oddity and a bookworm, and an unbeliever into the bargain. Odin sang out the corpse.

And the church bell tolled just as gravely and devoutly over Ola as over any other man, in the clear blue autumn day. Mountain after mountain took its note and held it awhile.

Odin looked round from one to another at the graveside; he felt he had turned pale: the same hymn over one who left a blank and over a useless life! Was the Almighty so far away as he looked down on this? His eyes met Astri's; **but** she was quick to drop hers. And

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then her lashes were like blue shadows on her cheeks. She had understood him, and felt she had been guilty of sin or shame.

But the parson recited: "And from earth thou shalt rise again."

Then he felt Ingri's hand in his. He clasped it, and so they stood.—*When* shall we men win victory over death? the question rang in the air about him.

But for the present life was there and had to be conquered. One had to throw oneself into the stream again, with it or against it, among fishermen and builders and many more, and he enjoyed it all through. Folk were so delightfully odd. Rarely satisfied, and still more rarely agreed, and always so profoundly serious about every little thing that went against them, one would think their very lives and more depended on it; Odin would often stop and laugh aloud and heartily right in their faces. That was a sure way of solving the difficulty, they had no great gift for malice. Generally there was one or another among them who looked at the matter calmly, with a smile full of ancient wisdom, and put in a word that could heal a wound.

Ingri gave him a look sometimes, especially when he was on the point of going somewhere or other. No doubt she had looked at him like this all the years they had been together, but he hadn't been aware of it till now, and one day—he was in a hurry to go out again—he turned round to her with little hollows above his eye-

brows: "Is this a life, you ask? Yes, Ingri; for me it is. For a while yet! A while yet, ay!"

A few days later he said, as he stroked her hair gently and shyly: "It won't always be like this, Ingri. Oh no. I know how you want me to be. I'll get there right enough. You be a good girl, and wait. But you know there's such a thing as *the call of the race*? When that howls for me, I go off, as I'm doing now; but I come back. The man who doesn't hear the voice of his own folk won't hear anything else either."

She would have grasped his hands, in deepest joy. But at that moment the sun came in and shone upon him as he stood there, a gaily quivering flood of light. She scarcely recognized him. She smiled pensively: "Now the sunlight has carried you far away from me. I suppose it's the same when you hear what you were talking about."—"Yes, but now I hear you and all that's yours, mixed up with all the rest—so I'll have to say good-morning, old granny!"

4

Astri went to town directly after the funeral. She had many things to do, but the chief of them was that she wanted to go and see her mother. Not that the two had much to say to each other; rather had they drifted apart as time went on.

When she had got the most of it done she chanced to remember Karen-Anna from Jornstrand. She had looked

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her up every time she was in town; she mostly regretted it afterwards, but couldn't let be. This time it occurred to her that she had heard she was ill, had heard too something about her son getting hurt at the saw-mill and being on his mother's hands. She went there.

Karen-Anna lived on the outskirts of the town, in one little room. It was clean and well kept, but fearfully cramped. Karen-Anna was pale and thin and poorly dressed, there was nothing but poverty and ill health, Astri could see.

When Astri came in, a bashful smile flitted over her face—it was the same every time Astri was there, almost as if she had a glimpse of something beautiful she had forgotten; but by degrees the grey look came back into her eyes. Over on the bench sat the son, he must be over twenty now, Astri reckoned. He no longer showed much likeness to Lauris, she could see that; his face was shockingly bony and his eyes were dull, he must be in a bad way. His crutches lay beside him.

Astri talked of one thing and another, and Karen-Anna brightened up and answered more than one would have expected. She had been ill, ay, and was ill yet; she had a touch of consumption, from what the doctor said, and now he was all for getting her away, the town would pay for sending her to a sanatorium, as they call it.—"Oh?" said Astri, and found all of a sudden that she could hear her heart beating.—"No, that's not going to come off."—"But why not?"—"No. I don't believe in it much. And

besides—I don't care to go; I'll let it be."

The lad on the bench looked up sharply, and a red spot came on each of his mother's cheeks. Then she had a fit of coughing. After that she stood moaning faintly and looking at him; he was reading a paper. When he noticed that Astri was looking at him, he tried to hide behind the paper.

The colour left Astri's cheeks, leaving her greyish white for a moment, then it came back and flooded her whole face. Karen-Anna chatted about something else, asking after folks in the country. Astri answered absently: they were still alive.

"We've got to find a way!" she said. She went over to Karen-Anna: "We've got to find a way," she said again, laying a hand on her shoulder.—"But how?"—"Well, I see it's the boy you can't leave. I don't know if he'll come with me or not, I won't even ask. But something has got to be done. You must get back your health anyhow, it *does* help to go away"—she mentioned several who had recovered. "Ludvik's your name, isn't it? Well, the man who's father to you, he wouldn't let a thing like this happen. You're to come with me, you are. To Haaberg, for that's where you belong!"

It seemed to her she was talking to a pair of shadows. She took Ludvik by the arm and shook him: "You understand, don't you, that your mother will never go away and get well if you don't come with me? Yes. And you shall have him back, Karen-Anna!"

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It took some time before they made up their minds, but Astri sat down and waited quietly. She was not going to leave till she got what she wanted. Time after time he was on the point of starting up and saying something nasty, but Astri found she could hold him in check. At last he threw his paper down and laughed: "Well, who cares, *Vm* game!"—"Now I know you again," said Astri.

She went out and bought him new clothes. It didn't amuse her to see him sitting there in his misery and not knowing how to get out of it, but at last she had the satisfaction of hearing him answer frankly and sensibly—no, there wasn't any other way, if they were to believe it gave his mother a hope of recovery. All at once he looked up at her from the side, he must have read her thoughts: "Don't know what sort of a welcome I shall get at Haaberg, but—. One can bite off the head of one's shame, I've been told." He actually smiled, and then there was just a trace of a likeness to Lauris, the Lauris of old days.

"Anyway, *you* 'll be welcome, I'll answer for that!"

Andrea saw at once that Astri had some news for her. She sat down with a different air, and her eyes hadn't that firm stare that kept one off. She crossed her knees and clasped them, sat rocking herself backwards and forwards. Now and again she bit her lip. Her forehead twitched, and her eyes grew brighter and brighter, she was almost laughing when she came out with it: "I've been to see Karen-Anna. She's got to go away and get well. And her boy, do you remember him? I've taken

him. He's to go home with me tomorrow—why shouldn't he have a father too? If only he'd settle down with us!"

Andrea stood stiff, or rather, backed towards the wall. Astri smiled at her gaily with narrow eyes. Then Andrea tried to take the same tone: "That's a nice present to bring home from town!"—"Isn't it, mother?"—"You shouldn't have done it all the same. For Lauris's sake."—"Lauris?" scoffed Astri. "Why, it was he who wished it."—"Is that true? Did he really wish it?"

Astri turned red, but looked firmly at her mother: "No, it's not true; in *one* way. But it's for his sake I'm doing it. He's got to see himself as he is; to show that he's man enough for that. For he *is*, mother, whether you believe it or not. He's grown to that," she added, in a rather lower tone.

She sat looking at her mother, so that Andrea had to drop her eyes time after time. This was not the way she had wished Astri to approach her. And now her daughter was smiling, with a network of little wrinkles round her eyes, all youth and high spirits:

"You're thinking of Odin, mother. You and all the others. You'll have to give that up soon."

She laughed on seeing what a scare she had given her mother.—"No, listen to me now, mother; I may speak out for once in a way, mayn't I? I *was* furious with Odin, I admit, for not coming and taking me by force. For he ought to have been fond enough of me for that; fond enough to sacrifice his life for me. Or else / had to sac-

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rifice myself, for another. And now I see it, and you must see it too: that anything else would have been wrong; it was right the way it turned out. For with Lauris and me it's been a fight all the time, whether I should win. I have won. Haven't you seen him? And my boys? It doesn't matter. It has turned out as it ought; and I believe it does so oftener than folks think—if they saw that, life would be easier for them; such a lot depends on seeing. I can often just sit and see things—well, no, I'm not going to get like grandmother for all that."

She got up and, without knowing it, stretched out her arms to the daylight which poured in by the west window, stood there young and strong and looked into it:

"Blindly ahead—and here I am!"

For a man who was nothing without me, the thought flashed through her.

Her mother was in tears. Perhaps it did not take much to bring them; Astri was softened and humbled at the thought, she ought not to have come here and said such things. But before she had thought this out, she was at it again.—"You're thinking about the parish and what they'll say about it. I haven't thought of that yet. First one must do what one has to do. Afterwards one can always get it to square. And Lauris, as I was saying, it was he who—well, he'll be glad when he hears of it, he's got to be!"

She paused for a moment, then went on: "You see, this here is a *thank-offering*. For him being—true to me all

the time. Yes, and besides that, mother, it's for our having got on so well all the time, although—"

At these words she stopped short, her cheeks turned cold and she forgot to blink.—"I've been expecting all sorts of things," she mumbled. "There's one thing and another that might have come back on us—I don't know Lauris—that we might have had to atone for, I mean." But she tore herself away from this and looked calmly at her mother again.—"I know you and Otte take Odin's part, for you don't see that he's sold himself, that it's the common people who rule him and not he them; you can't get it into your heads that there's two kinds of folk, and always must be—that anything else is hateful to me. We must call a halt, we who have the responsibility, that's the only thing to do—well, I didn't come here to preach about this."

Andrea spoke of this epidemic that was raging in town. People were dying fast, and it was infectious—she ought to take care of herself.—"Take care of myself? No. I've never taken any care of myself. One would have to be afraid for that, eh? Grandmother was never afraid. But by the way: is Otte sick?"—Well, he wasn't quite the thing. But it wasn't the epidemic, it was something to do with his stomach; an ulcer maybe.

Now for the first time Astri felt that a heavy gloom weighed upon the house. It seemed out of place to ask more questions, or to offer consolation. She could not

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even bring herself to go up to her mother and take her hands.——

She was a trifle uneasy next morning, as she went down to the steamer. For if Ludvik was not there, it would mean that she had been too weak, that she was not the woman she thought herself, and what was to happen then? It would mean a lot if he wasn't there. But soon the blood went to her heart with full force, for there, among all the rest who were finding a place for their belongings, she saw him, with his crutches and his pale face, looking out for her. She gave him her hand and thanked him. Then she took him along with her aft.

The boat called in the Haaberg voe this trip. There was a crowd of people down on the pier, she saw both Lauris and Odin among them. The sea was as smooth as glass, she couldn't help stopping to look at it: gloriously fine weather from the blue mountains right out to sea. The gulls flashed white over the herring-nets, the white clouds shone aloft, everywhere she saw the wonder of morning freshness, like the dew-drop on the twig.

She took hold of Ludvik and was going to help him ashore. But he was on the way already, bag in hand, turned and gave her a glance, as much as to say, now there was no getting out of it.

Lauris must have seen the lad and recognized him, had guessed it all in a twinkling, maybe, for that was how he looked as he came to meet her.—"Have you brought

a horse?" she asked.—"Ay. That's what we settled, that I should bring a horse to meet you."—"That's good. And here we have Ludvik, I don't suppose you know *him* again, do you? You'll have to give him a lift."

Ludvik came forward and greeted him. Lauris took him calmly by the hand, and went so far as to say: "Welcome to the country!"

A trifle long in the face was Lauris perhaps, but he talked as if nothing had happened. He took a good look at the lad once or twice. When they reached home and were left alone for a minute, Lauris winked one eye and smiled to himself as he turned to her:

"You Astri, you Astri!"

"Well, there. Now you're father to that one; before all the parish."

"As you please. If you trust me that far." Then he twitted her again, shaking his head: "Ah, but you know how to do Odin a turn!"

"No, Lauris, this time you'll be doing a thing that he would scarcely have been up to."

"Well, it's no business of mine, after all."

"Folk must surely have sense enough to—"

"It's their sense that saves them, you see. For they never use it. Remember that, if you're going to be mother to the creature."

She had to go to the larder for a moment, and something made her bend down to the big chest that stood there; sure enough, that was where the strange smell she

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had noticed came from. She tried to open the chest, but it was locked. Astri straightened herself and saw Lauris standing in the doorway; he looked as tricky as an ice-bound road under fresh snow: "I thought I might borrow this chest for a bit, it's almost empty."

Astri stood watching him.—"Now don't be so beastly serious about it," he pleaded. "I don't mind owning up that I used my chance while you were away to make myself a drop of Christmas spirits—weren't you just a wee bit doubtful about my beer, as I called it?" She shook her head: "I thought it was going to be beer all right. But this is against the law, Lauris?"—"So I've heard. Then you'll have to keep quiet about it."

Astri had turned as red as a berry, stood looking down and biting her lip.—"Yes, I can always keep quiet. And one must be master in one's own house; I don't listen to Odin and his angels. But I'd have you to know that I'm not going to turn liar over this, *if* I should be asked. We don't do things like that."—"All right," he said; "but who's to know what we do and what we don't do?"

She raised her eyes and held him fast:

"Are you never going to give up this sort of thing? This fibbing and trickery? Instead of taking the blow when it comes. I get so frightened, sometimes: I never know what you may have done or have a mind to do."

"Take the blow? Why, I took it just now, down on the pier. And I may look for a few more of that kind, mayn't I?" He put his hands in his pockets and went out.

It was not long before they had the epidemic out in the country too. Perhaps they had had it a long time, when they came to think. This one and that had fallen sick and died, it must have been the Spanish sickness. But they might look for a real plague of it later, and that was what had come now. A young man east in the Segelsund neighbourhood died before they could see how ill he was, and another directly after, it was like snuffing out a candle. They said it was the lungs that got blocked. And in the next parish death spread from farm to farm, so it was rumoured. If they got the doctor in time there was always a hope, or if they had brandy in the house; but both were hard to come by. Folk were scared, and many would not venture so far as the next farm, so infectious was the sickness. They read about it in the papers, it afflicted half the world, a punishment for sin, many thought.

Some were so afraid that they would not take their milk to the creamery. If this went on, it would hit the workpeople at the factory, who went there for their milk and butten

At this time Odin was going round getting people to take shares in the co-operative store. Now he had to tackle them man by man, till they promised to keep up their deliveries. He managed it, but it wasn't easy. Nor was it much easier with the co-operative store. He found

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out how a lot of them would take it, as soon as he called on Lauris. He didn't meet the man himself, for that matter, but from the way Astri answered he gathered that they had been expecting him.—"No, we're not going to have anything to do with that," she said. "We won't have a hand in snatching the bread out of anyone's mouth—you might have had some consideration for Mina yourself, I should have thought."—"We'll be able to find something for her, I was thinking."—"O-oh?"—"What if you helped to put Arthur in as manager of the store? That's a job for him."—"I see, is that the way of it? Well, well, you'd better go and hear what your own people think about it. We are against it."—"Well, if you don't beat all for sheer cussedness!" he laughed.—"I suppose one's allowed to have one's own opinion?" she replied.—"So that's how you look at it?"

They gave the same answer, many of them, but Odin was in the best of spirits, angry and cheerful at the same time. Many a one had given in before he properly knew what it was about. And if they couldn't be won over from one side, he always knew how to get at them from another. He knew them better than they did themselves, and walked all round them as he did with the spruces in the forest. He must have dreamt it all while he was a little boy, the way he knew them again, and himself too, no matter how they might be quarrelling.

Then they got a fright that he was bringing the infection.—"Well then, you just stop in the doorway and I'll

stand here/' he said, and then as a rule their fears dropped oil them.—"It's all right for a freethinker like you," one of them said.—"But am I one, do you think?"—"We've been told so."—"Yes, by the Silver Fox. And as far as that goes Fm as much afraid of death as anybody; but I've got to finish this job, a regular cart-load it is to drag uphill, up and on; so there's no time for being afraid."

He had his own trouble with the factory folk. They were afraid it was going to be a farmers' concern and nothing else. By that time he had so many shares in hand that he could do without them, and that helped. But a day or two later Engelbert declared that they had thought it over. They were not going to help a starving shopkeeper to get a living.—"Why, you weren't thinking of *yourself* for manager?" Odin asked.—"No, no, but—. We're not going to give in. We shall start one of our own."—Odin tried talking to him, and already thought he had him, for they had had many a little tussle before now. But this time Engelbert showed a different face, he had an ugly look and an ugly lip.—"You humbug, you!" he said. "Buttering the farmers and buttering us, do you think we don't see through you?"—"No, no, no!" Odin entreated; "you've got to use your wits now, you know very well you're not speaking the truth." Engelbert turned red for a moment, it looked as if he regretted his words, but shame took hold of him and he went on worse than ever: He would show Odin and anyone who liked to see, that the factory and the building would go on just as long as

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he pleased and not a day longer!

"Now you'd better be careful!" Odin said it seriously; he was not angry yet, but the colour came and went in his face.

With that they parted. When Odin came home in the evening he was just as tired and cheerful as usual. But Ingri noticed all the same that something had put him out.—"It's nothing," he said, looking up from his supper; "only that you've mixed sawdust with the flour."—"No, no, Odin! You *know* it's country flour."—"You're right, yes. And good it is. No, it's that Engelbert who's turned rusty with me. It'll come to a tug of war before I get him the way I want. Oh, but—there's true metal in folk, only you have to know how to strike it."——

The same evening Engelbert and Lauris met down at the Voe, at a place where both of them often went. The idea was that Lauris should teach them how to distil, for many had tried it but only a few brought it off. Lauris alone could do it rightly. He had brought his still in a sack, and a bottle of the real thing. They drank a little, and found it to their liking; and then they chatted about one thing and another. It was only by chance that Engelbert looked in.—"I suppose you'll report us?" said Lauris.—"That depends on a whole lot of things," laughed Engelbert. Lauris sat and looked at him, his eyes growing narrower and narrower.—"A pity you should be such a sheep!" he said. "I mean, only in one thing, you know; I've told you about it before. Apart

from that there's plenty of devil in you/'—"You mean Odin, you think I go the way he wants me? I've got something to tell you, Lauris: today I've shaken him off, and properly too."—"Well, I don't hold with you there," said Lauris. "For Odin's been a good man to you up to now."—"Yes, I know that; you needn't worry yourself! But tonight we're going to drink, and tomorrow it's war. There's to be a strike, and you're chairman of the board—*skaal!*"

Lauris laughed till he shook: "Well, I'm hanged! it's a pleasure to meet a man like you. Ay, for you're an honest soul," he added. "A *character*, I should call you. I'm old-fashioned enough to take account of character; it comes before all our fussing and wrangling. But how is it you're drinking? *You?*"—"You'd better ask Odin about that," coughed Engelbert.

The two were left alone in the room for a moment, and then Lauris leaned across the table and gave the other a consumingly sly look: "You know I'm cashier of the bank, don't you? Well, you've got a bill that Odin put his name to for you?"—"Yes, a bill for three thousand crowns, it was over that business I started."—"And the silly fool endorsed it for you, without a word! And you brought it to the bank without a word, time after time. That shows what sort of a man you are: you simply renewed it each time. When you might have got five or six thousand down, on his signature; well, you know that as well as I do. You withstood the temptation, ay. And

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you never said anything either about his father-in-law having been in jail. No. But I'm not thanking you for it, you're friends and all that."

Engelbert's eyes were getting rather glassy. At that moment the third man came in.—"You said strike?" Lauris went on.—"Yes, with the profits the factory's making now—but we can talk about that tomorrow."—"It'll be Odin you'll have to deal with there again. I'm going to be ill, let me tell you. And Odin knows how to treat you. You'll get a share in the profits. Well, you look into it!"—"Ay, we'll *look*, never fear!" One corner of Engelbert's mouth shot up.

Lauris was really taken ill. Nothing very serious, but just enough to keep him in bed. They had elected Odin vice-chairman, not wishing to put him out altogether, and now he had to act as chairman for the time being. The strike was the first thing he had to deal with, and sure enough the battle was between him and Engelbert. Odin asked him to call the workers together for a meeting, he wanted to talk to them. This was done.

Odin said he could go with them a great part of the way, now as before: As all prices were still rising, wages must rise too; but he proposed to bring this about by giving them a share in the profits, those who belonged to the factory. "For that's the right way, I can see that," he said; "and we shan't be the first to follow it either." He spoke calmly but confidently, just so that he held his audience all the time, quoted instances from other countries

and put figures before them: so much per cent, for a day of so many hours, then they could earn as much as two crowns extra a day. He promised to get this through, he had a free hand, so to say. They had better think it over.

They thought it over, and said nothing. Uncertainty ate its way from man to man, he could see that. They had never had a more subtle bait held out to them—they looked to Engelbert. He was smiling sarcastically. Then he cleared his throat and said: "Do you guarantee that it'll be as much as you promise? That the profits will keep up, all through the winter?"

All eyes went back to Odin. And his eyes sparkled with their old careless laughter:

"Not if I know it! 'Nothing venture nothing have' is an old saying."

"There, you hear him!" Engelbert cautioned them. "He's too sly for us. We must keep out of his way."

So that battle was lost. But in the end they agreed on a small rise in wages. Now it was the turn of the building folk. To them Odin made the proposal that they should be paid half by piece-work and half by time; he explained how he had worked it out. They seemed willing to agree to this; they were even saying among themselves that if they went at it as they had been doing it would mean a tidy sum at the end of the week.—"That's so, isn't it?" said Odin; he had often carried folks with him when they sounded more hostile than this.

Then Engelbert was there again, with the same deri-

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sive sneer in his voice: "How can you be such a lot of sheep! Can't you see that you'll be putting money in the capitalist's pocket here again? Now let me have my say, Odin! This is war, and you want us to forge weapons for our opponent, do you?—we'll have nothing to do with it!" He spoke long and hotly, and several others got up and declared their agreement with him.

Odin sat as in a dream while this went on. He only woke up when they were at him, shouting that they could settle the wages another day, but they wouldn't hear of any slavedriving inspectors or any pressure on the part of the manager or the board, they would work as free men, and there Was an end of it.

Odin turned red as fire. Those who knew him thought it was coming now. But his voice was calm:

"I dare say you're partly right, I don't deny it. I'm a man of the people like yourselves. But all the same I'm not going to give way in this, it shan't be, there's—there's something in me that forbids it. Start your strike if you want to! But I warn you!"

His words made many a heart sink among them. They had to decide one way or the other,

"Now I'm going home," said Engelbert, and go he did. Many slouched off after him.

"Well, I'm going too!" laughed Odin.

He did not go straight home, but fell into talk with several he met outside, men he knew pretty well. When he got them singly or two at a time they mostly agreed with

him; he could tell by what they said and didn't say that the hitch was all Engelbert's doing.—He went on ahead as fast as he could, for he heard Engelbert's voice farther on, by the loud tone of the discussion.

The moonlight bathed the whole countryside and the sea beyond for a while, then came the clouds and threw it all into shadow, so that only a gleam showed where the moon was sailing; one sight was as grand as the other, Odin thought he had never seen so deep an evening. One could almost hear the sighing of every single skerry outside the headlands. There was a dog somewhere, a long way off among the farms, tearing the evening air with his barking. Men's voices sounded far along the road.—"But I must catch him up and have a talk with him!" said Odin to himself as he hurried along. "He must still—"

At last he got Engelbert by himself. He had never spoken so seriously to him.—"I can't get over *you* being like this!" he said, and his voice was at once sorrowful and angry.—"No, I can well believe that," replied Engelbert "You thought you had me in your pocket, thought I was your slave—was that why you helped me in the beginning? I'm not to be bought."—"Be ashamed of yourself, Engelbert!"—"Oh, chuck it! that won't go with me; I'm the same class as yourself. But now I'll tell you the latest: if you push me any harder now, it's going to be unpleasant both for you and your father-in-law. Do you think I don't know he's been in jail? Do you think

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I or somebody else hasn't written to the North and heard all about it? And what about you, tricking your poor soul of a wife into telling lies. Now it's my turn to warn *your!*"

Odin had stopped short. The moon showed up the change in his face.

"You're lucky I haven't thrashed you!" he said. For a moment he stood still and couldn't get out a word.—"That's what I ought to have done—thrashed you properly." He recovered himself after a little, but his voice was dry and rusty: "Do you really think you can scare me? Hm? No, just you go round the parish and tell them. Then we'll be rid of you. Heh! heh! No, no, no! To think that this is you!" All at once his rage got the better of him and he shook his fist in the air:

"I'll scare you out of your life—go, I tell you! go!" he drove him along before him, put his hands behind his back and followed on his heels.—"Coming home will be the worst part," he sighed aloud. "And there's no keeping anything from her. Heh! heh!"

He got over it fairly well. Ingri asked how things had gone, and listened to him in her usual way, with a trace of uneasiness and anxiety in her eyes—it made her prettier than ever.—"No, my luck's out now," he said with a little laugh, "I dare say there's some fun in that too; it's what one gets for being a man; a good thing I never thought it was an easy job. Over to Kjelvik, you were thinking? Ay, bless you, we'll get there in time. But I've

done so little of what I had to do, you see, I've shoved the whole parish into this business and ought to have got it straight—there's such a lot I ought to have done. And we won't let ourselves be driven out, will we, Ingri?"

"No," she said.

"But they're enough to kill one!" he sighed after a few moments. "What is it makes folk like *that*V

Next day they had a meeting of the board, and there they agreed to give way, so that work might go on as usual. At the same time they gave Engelbert notice; they couldn't have him here. The manager took the letter in his pocket.—"I only hope this won't bring on the strike again," said Arnesen.—Well, they'd have to chance that, the others decided.

Odin went part of the way home with his father-in-law. When they reached the point where their roads divided, Arnesen looked at Odin again. He was so moved that his lips quivered.—"It's so strange that you should believe in me, Odin."—"Oh?"—"When you know all about me. It makes me so happy, I'm almost afraid. That I may be fated to bring misfortune on you and all you work for. Why shouldn't that sorrow be in store for me, I have to ask myself. And I who had such a firm belief that all would go well here; for every one of us."—"There's only one little trick in a case like that," said Odin gaily: "when things get too bad we have to let them go past us, let them make a big sweep round us. And add a cubit to our stature, if need be. Offer your wooden leg to a bit-

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ing dog, it's best for both parties."—"Well, you know, I've had to do that, I have. But fancy anybody believing in me? And believing in me the way you do? But all this squabbling, Odin—why do you trouble yourself with it all? For they'll never be satisfied, any of the parties."—"Well, I'll never have wisdom enough for that," said Odin. "I'm more likely to take a pitchfork to them—I dare say that's what they look for. Now that Engelbert! Can you make out how a man can turn like that? If that's what this quarrelling makes of them, then we're paying dearly for all our trouble in getting things started. I can't believe it, hang me if I can! But that doesn't matter: I must go through with it. I have nothing to go upon but what is within me; I feel it would be a sin if I pulled up now. Take the pitchfork, ay. But nowadays folk don't seem to be all of a piece any more! Be that as it may, you'll have to stick to your post; Uriah had to do the same."

They both laughed, and parted.——

The factory hands replied at once that they would not do a stroke of work till Engelbert was reinstated. Odin went down and talked to them, said that he was with them in principle and was glad to see such proof of good comradeship, but here there were factors that they didn't know of or realize.—What were they? He put his cap straight, did it again.—"He has threatened me, for one thing, and another thing, as you will see for yourselves, is that he's your worst enemy! He's on the wrong tack,

you won't be allowed to work in peace as long as he's here. I can't let one man wreck the work of all, even if he means well. And as to using threats—no!"—They hum'd and haw'd at this, looked at the ground and back at him and felt uncomfortable, but he didn't get anything out of them.

The following evening Engelbert had hold of some spirits and he and some others got drunk. What it was they were drinking didn't come out, but it made them tearing mad, they were yelling and shouting half the night, and they finished by pulling down the framework of the new building. They were reported for causing wilful damage, and the manager put up a placard on behalf of the board, that if they were not at work next day all hands would be discharged—two or three skilled workmen were excepted.

Nobody touched the work. Odin consulted the board, and went around engaging new men. They didn't want much asking, many of them, for factory work was what they had a mind to. It was temporary, they were told.

On the day they mustered for work, the others appeared and called a halt. Nobody was to work here. Odin was there and felt like saying that after all they were right in this too; he admitted it was not a nice thing to take their jobs from them and give it to others; he was inclined to cast the burden from him and be friends with them as before. But before he guessed what was happening within him, he was another man: the sweat stood out

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on his forehead and the blood rushed to his heart, he could barely see what was in front of him. He felt his whole body bristling, he was a wild and shaggy one that these little creatures were trying to bind and lay by the heels, they wanted to strip the skin off him and do him in. Afterwards he thought they must have come too close to him, unpleasantly close. He stood there looking at them as inferior folk, looking them in the face and right through them, and it hurt him damnably.

He waited till he had made up his mind what he wanted, though it felt as if he was making a mistake, another big mistake.

"Then am I not allowed to set the work going?" he asked in a low, gruff voice.

They shouted in an uproar that he'd have to let that be, they were going to call a different tune now. They were not drunk, and nobody misbehaved. Odin took a step forward, his face was dark and he came mighty near them with his eyes.

"No, upon my soul you'd better mind yourselves! Mind yourselves, I say!"

He smacked his hands together so that the nearest ones started back, and he after them, shouting once more, wilder than ever.

They remembered that once before he had marched into the crowd like this, but then he had a very different look.

Then he turned his back on them. There was a chilly

silence around him, they faced him with icy threats. You could hear nothing but the gulls calling out on the voe.—"Is there any pluck in you or isn't there?" he said to the new-comers. They straightened themselves a bit, gave a little dry cough, they were anything but afraid. They walked in and fastened the doors. The manager was to set them to work.

Odin looked once more at those outside. He went over them one by one, said not a word and looked as if he had forgotten what had happened just now. They said nothing either; they just stood there.—Unjust? he thought. What is injustice? / don't know. A democrat, a man of the people, what's that? Don't know that either. And what one *does* know, what is that? What use is it? It isn't that one goes by, when one does the right thing once in a way. Have I imagined these men standing there, or are they like that?

Now he woke up, and said, with a glint of the old good humour in his eyes:

"Go home now, boys, and don't make a row! Before you can use force you've got to have it. And all may yet come right again, we've a long way to go yet!"—he turned and went in.

The factory was set going again little by little. It was something like an animal lying there, it wanted tending and looking after, and purred with pleasure when it got it. It was a slave, which made slaves of the whole neighbourhood; it was the fellow that the man had taken on

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his back and had to carry across the stream. "That's as heavy as the devil," the man said as he set him down.

Outside the sun shone in the clear sky, and met with smiles everywhere, from smooth blue sea and meadows white with frost, from belts of forest and bog and bare mountains far away to the east. The gull alone was over it all with his mournful voice, laughing and wailing, it was the best he could do.

6

And so it was with Odin that day and the next, full of high courage and great astonishment; Ingri could hardly make up her mind to speak to him. His brows contracted and his lips were pursed, time and again he passed his hand quickly over his face and through his hair. But his eyes were much as usual, and in them she could see he was still Odin and not a strange man. Then he would stand still, in the middle of the room or wherever he might be, and look before him with an incredulous smile at something he had not seen before. If he then became aware of her, he blinked a little at first; his eyes had been so far away.

Strangest of all was Anders, she thought. It had always been his way to prefer his father's company, he knew nothing better, though he never made much show of it. Now, when he chanced to come across his father, he gave him a shy look, hesitated a moment, and went away—then she seemed to see his father's face. If she came a

little while after and asked him for something, she found the same furrow between the brows, and the same surprise in the grey-blue eyes. She could not help smiling, little as she was in the mood for it. Her thoughts turned again to Odin. She had seen him like this before, but never so as to make her anxious. He had got the better of it, if anything it had made a bigger man of him each time.—It's only been child's play before, something told her.

In this way he received Astri, when she came to tell him that his father was dying. Andrea had telephoned that he wished very much to see Odin, and she believed he had not long to live. Astri had asked Peder to go with the message.—"I don't know that I can," he had answered. Then she saw that the task was hers; she put on a fresh apron and went.

Odin gave her a hard look, although there was the trace of a smile somewhere about his face. It took some time, she thought, before he took in what she had told him.—"Thanks!" was all he said.

He was in the wash-house greasing his sea-boots, for he would have to go out with the seine-gang again. Astri was on the point of leaving.—"Well, thanks for coming!" he added. "Tell me: there's no chance of your coming too, is there?" But before he had said it he saw that she was ill at ease and wished herself back at home.—"Did you know before that he was in such a bad way?" she said, and now she was herself again.—"Oh, I had an idea of it. Tubercle in the intestines, I was thinking."—"That's

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what they say it is. Well, well, you'll give them my love, won't you?—you'll be leaving this evening, maybe?" She did not wait for his answer, he noticed; she was already on her way out.—"Ah, wait a moment!" he begged her. She stopped and waited. She was a trifle pale, and then flushed, but her eyes met him with a full, firm glance.—"It's only this: I suppose I can tell him that you and I have made it up? It would make him happy."—"But there's never been any unfriendliness, has there?" she replied. "It's another thing that one wants to go back and the other forward, I don't think there's any getting over *that*; you must tell him just how it is. And that won't be news to him."

She still paused a moment, but as he made no reply and only looked at the ground, she said good-bye and left.—"He seems to be getting absent-minded," she said to herself. "Maybe he'll set his brain to work after a bit, and look where he's going. If only he could see himself as he is!"—"The worst of it is that this here's supposed to be *life*," said Odin as he stood there. "As sure as you're a white man, you've got to go out among the neighbours, and if you're a man you have to find a party to belong to, and there you are, my boy, with the collar round your neck to show you're a free man. Well, well, we can't change our nature, so I'd better get on with these boots of mine."

Not long after he broke out so that his words echoed from the walls: "If I can't save Engelbert, what does that

really mean? And I didn't make myself either, I know that. But I'll take the responsibility for all that."

He went down to the *voe* and gave some instructions, and then took the steamer to town. The boat was full, but Odin was left surprisingly alone on deck.

Otte was very weak. Odin sat for a long time by his bedside before he could bring himself to say anything.—"You're feeling bad, aren't you?" he said at last. He could barely see that Otte was smiling.

After a while he recovered sufficiently to take Odin's hand and hold it; he lay looking at him the whole time. Odin believed he could read his thoughts.—"No, Astri couldn't get here," he said. "She sent her love. We are good friends and have made it up; even if we don't always agree."

Later in the evening Otte was brighter than usual. He took Odin's hand and held it fast.—"Are you still so strong?" said Odin.—"Feel like that, ay. But you must stop now, Odin; with all this squabbling in the parish."—"That's just what I'm trying to do, for all I'm worth; I've jumped right into the fire for it. I believe we'll soon see the end of it; I have that feeling."—"You ought to stop, Odin. It's a game that costs too dear. You'll lose all you have—how is it with Ingri?"

Odin gave a start and looked at his father with mouth half open. A paler shade passed over the weather-beaten face.—"Why do you ask that, father? There's nothing wrong with her, is there?"—Otte sighed and turned his

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head: "You must let them have their rights, Astri and Lauris."—"I can promise that. They shall have their rights."—"All their rights, Odin! It may be—that they see—farther ahead than you do." Odin sat looking at his father, screwing up his eyes half in sorrow, half in youthful spirits. Then he said: "Is that how it looks to you?"—"Yes, I almost think so. I have a vision of peace."—"It must be queer to look into the future like that; I've never tried it. If I did, I don't suppose I'd see a thing; I have to look backward, if I'm to find the way. So it seems to me now. I have to find *my* way, you see."

Otte would have answered, but he had an attack of pain and it left him too tired; he even dozed off, still holding Odin's hand. Andrea signed to Odin that he should come and have coffee, but he shook his head. He had a feeling that he was talking with his father as he sat there, across a bottomless and hopeless chasm. Or perhaps it was himself he talked with—it did him good, whichever it was; he had had so little time for that.—"You have done what you had to do, Odin!"—his father had opened his eyes and was wide awake. "Far enough, Odin. Far enough. You won't get any farther."—"Well," said Odin, his face brightening, "it's gone so amazingly, from one stroke to another. The people of the parish—it's always been between them and me, them and me, and we've had fine weather, and we've had foul, it's droll how it changes, and forward we've gone. Oh yes, I've won victory after victory, but what I had to do, the greatest

deed of all—I've never been able to get that far. And *that* is happiness, in my belief, to have it before one, in the distance, where it shines bright!—ay, they knew that in old times too, I'm sure I've read it in some wise man's book. It was a *good* thing I was to do, something like a gift to the folk, I was thinking."

His father pressed his hand: it was true, what he said there.—"Ay, father, but I'm made that way, I must have something to—something on my back, you understand me, father. I've just found that out, as I sit here. I carry the parish on my back. There are many men who carry a great country—that must be a heavy load? But it's impossible to cast the burden from you. The struggle may be in vain, but it's not vain to go on with it, for all that."

"No," said Otte; he was actually smiling. "No, one might have a mind to—"

"—have a mind to lots of things, ay!" Odin took him up, and youth beamed and sparkled in every feature of his face. I don't know whether what pushes us on and directs us comes from above or behind us—I believe it's within myself. But where I have taken my stand, there I must remain—I believe Luther was the first to say that!"

"You ought to be a *farmer*, Odin!" Otte struck the wall with the palm of his hand.

"A farmer?" Odin sat wondering, with a vague smile. — "A farmer? Do you ask that of me? Well, well; I'll try. Ingri and I, far away from all the brawling, ay! But a farmer—what does that really mean? A settled man

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just? A quiet man on a quiet farm, with the land and the Almighty at his back, and good neighbours and so on? Or is it a free, wild man, *all of a piece*? Who believes what he believes and is the man he is? I must say, you've hit me there. Farmer, that's what I've meant to be all the time, hm! But what about being a farmer when nobody knows any longer what a farmer is? And now, father, now I think I see it: if / were to be a farmer to my inmost marrow, I'd be rough and dangerous sometimes, I'd take the pitchfork and chase the rabble out of the parish and out of the country, so that you'd see nothing but the soles of their shoes. For they're a bad lot, many of them, I know them now. No, no, father! you needn't be afraid, I won't do it, there's more sides to me than that. And then I have Ingri. I shall try to get out of the parish tangles while there's yet time. I give you my parting word on that!"

Odin had been speaking in a low tone, pausing from time to time, but still his forehead was covered with sweat, and when he withdrew his hand, he nearly collapsed on his chair. Otte lay with a gleam of deep gratitude in his eyes. They had said farewell to each other, and that was not what had taken it out of Odin, he was surprised to find. It had almost choked him, a while before, when he came to look him in the eyes. His father felt for his hand and took it again. He had to feel his thoughts through the hand, Odin fancied, for after a little while he said, through the veiled smile that sick people often show: "You and I, Odin. There's no great

difference between us. Not now."—"No," said Odin; "it's as grandmother used to say, one is never the man one thought oneself to be."

But then Otte was already asleep. Odin had to go out. He had to look at heaven and earth, to see how they were now, in this hour.

A greyish white twilight lay all about the town, and the vault of cloud above it was greyish white. It was night; he stood here alone with the night. Its chill breathed upon him, and he could hear the night breeze that wandered among the mountains whispering to itself. The moon was up, but hidden; now and again it shone out, somewhere, you could distinguish the tree-tops against the sky far away, and shores and fields showed up with sleeping faces. He had stood waiting like this before, but it had never come to him as now.—"I know it, I know it!" he proclaimed to it all. "I shall come when the time comes."

"The Kjelvik fields!" he said suddenly.—"We only live once. It comes again, but then it's a new heaven and a new earth—he'd be a rich man who saw it. Tonight it's a far cry to other men. Up and on, I've heard them say. Good Lord, what do they know! Farmer, I believe they say. Does that mean a landowner at the assize and in the King's council? They talk about life and they talk about death!"

He sat up with his father that night, and in the morning he said good-bye to him once more, but then it was not much more than a dead man whose hand he took and

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whose eyes he met. It was outside, in the morning air and the daylight, that the great parting came, which spoke to him and made of life a strange thing.

He nearly missed seeing Fru Mina of Segelsund, as she came along the street. She had come in by the boat the evening before. Then she had looked even more pre-occupied than at Ola Haaberg's funeral; nobody could help seeing that she was in trouble.—She asked if she could come in and talk to Otte.—She could come in, as far as that went, but what was it she wanted? Odin went close up to her.

Her eyes fluttered to him and away again.—"I wanted to have a *talk* with him."—"Yes, I guessed that. But you mustn't. He's not in a state for it."—"No, Odin, it's not what you think, it's not *that!* for I can't talk to anyone about that. It's something else, it's the letter we found after Ola's death, it's put a load on me that I'm not able to bear—I must have a talk with Otte; Odin, can't you help me!"—"You'd do better to come out and talk to me. Couldn't you and I bear a whole mountain if need be?"—"Well, yes, when I'm talking to you, everything looks as it does to you. But when I'm left alone again! When I'm alone, Odin? It's Astri, you see, it's something about her or Lauris, and I think so much of Astri, I want things to go well with her, always; I believe your father must know what to advise."

Odin smiled sadly, talking to himself and not to her: "No, no! A dying man's a bad adviser. You shan't ask

anybody; then it'll come to you of its own accord, what you're to do and what not to do. Believe me, Mina!"

He went in again with her, and waited till she had done. She had only said good-bye to Otte. They went back together by the boat. But Odin would not ask what was worrying her. As far as he could see, she went home easier in her mind than when she had left.

7

But the very next day she crossed the fiord to see the parson.

The parson was a young man and new in his call, said to be a grave and silent man. He saw at once that something was on her mind, weighing her to the ground, but she did not tell the story so that he could understand it, and he did not know how to make her. He heard it was something about a letter, and this letter charged her to make known a thing which would deprive another person of both goods and honour, a person who had trouble enough already and was closely related to her. He looked at her in the deepest sympathy, feeling more and more helpless, didn't even want to know what it was; he simply said: "In a matter like this I cannot find a word to say." He paused a moment, then repeated the same words—turned red and added: "Preaching to people and showing them the way, that can be learnt. Talking to them, on a matter of this sort, is—difficult."—"Well, but what am I to do?" she wailed,— "You must try if you can

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Speak to God about it. Stand in His presence and—speak to Him, yes. What if you were to try that?"

His words were so feeble and faltering that Mina could not help looking at the man. Until now she had only seen one so honest to the backbone, and that was Odin, and never had she seen any so defenceless; for Odin never let anything get the better of him.—"Well, I'll do that," she said, and even tried to smile. But as she was getting up, the tears overcame her, a flood so violent that she broke down under it.—"If only I dared!" she wailed. "But I have—trampled God's grace under my feet; I've done worse than that, I am without God in the world—I am *alone* !"

The parson knew nothing better than to take her by the hand, then the words must surely come when he was in such need of them! But at that moment consolation was the last thing she could bear; she managed to get up and control herself, asked the parson to excuse her, said good-bye and left. She even thanked him.—"For *he* looked as if he needed a kind word, poor fellow," she smiled to herself as she came outside.

Out there everything was against her: the sunny day and the blue sky mocked her, and the sparkling fiord across which she had rowed; it had even washed out her track. And those little white clouds high up were the kind she used to call *eternity clouds* when she was a child. They never had anything to say to her now.

But by degrees her back stiffened.—"If *he* has turned

his face from me, I'll do what I please," she said, and her voice was so loud that people at work near by might easily have heard it; she noticed this and forgot it again at once. "Aunt Aasel would have borne it like nothing at all—it's just a trial, a trial!"

All the same she went to Haaberg next evening and wanted to speak to Astri.

Astri had just been over talking to Odin, to hear the news of his father, and of her mother too. She wondered, as she walked home, that there was no sorrow to be seen in Odin, indeed the whole man showed signs of relief. It made her uneasy, like a weight on her chest, that Odin was such a stranger, so big and so far away, and this would turn against her, against her and all that was hers. She had only right on her side, and that was not much when it came to the point, she was afraid. She paused on the kitchen steps and turned round.

The sun was blazing behind the knolls, setting fire to sea and mountain. Then the red flush faded, and for a while the landscape lay unlighted. Astri did not know why she was standing there; it was not her way to pause like this and let anything work upon her. But now the country looked barer and more living than before; bogs and knolls showed up so clearly, drab with frost, in deepest poverty. Till the dusk took compassion on them and hid them again. She looked up. And above her she had the sky, and it was so blue that it sang again. Then Astri came to herself, felt with a little twinge that there were other

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things to be seen to, and went in.

Indoors sat Mina waiting for her. Astri saw at once that she had come on no ordinary errand—she had got up and remained standing.—"So you've come to pay us a visit!" said Astri.—"Yes, I must have a talk with you, Astri!"—"By all means!" Astri went to the door and invited Mina to come into the east room.

Mina stopped just inside the door.—"I can't bear it any longer!" she burst out. "I have a letter here, from Ola Haaberg, he wrote it just before he—before he died. He says he collected an old debt owing to Aasel, for a seining outfit she had sold, she had had a share in it—she never thought she would get the money. Five thousand it was, and it was to go to the almshouse; and this money Ola handed over to Lauris five years ago, he says. But it has never reached its destination, he says, and there's nothing in writing either. "I haven't got it, anyone can see that," he says, 'but Lauris paid five thousand into the bank in town not very long after; and this sum Lauris has never declared for taxation.' And now, Astri, he's laid it upon me that I must go and tell the authorities—I can't keep it to myself any longer! Can't you answer me, Astri, what am I to do? Perhaps I've sinned against the Holy Ghost, there's nothing to be done about that; and if we're to go downhill once more, I shall scramble up again, as sure as I'm standing here. But this thing is impossible, Astri, for Ola's at me early and late, I daren't stay at Segelsund any longer without doing what he wants,

we'll have to quit—if only Arthur could be made manager of the factory! Well, I shouldn't like to turn out Bonsach, but I can always talk to him. For this co-operative store, if it comes to anything, will be at Segelsund. I wish you nothing but well, Astri, but if we're to stay any longer at Segelsund, I shall speak out, I can't do anything else."

Astri had stood still, silent as a wall, though Mina had paused two or three times waiting for an answer. Now she struck in, and her voice was rather dry, as it could be sometimes: "Has Odin promised you that?"—"Yes, that about the store, he has, but I believe that if *you* agreed, and Lauris, he would be made manager, for I know Odin would like to help me as much as he can."—"O-oh? He's not likely to do that for nothing. I've found out that much, that folk don't do anything for nothing, whoever they may be. But it's a pack of lies, that story of yours, I'll take my oath to that!"

Mina was so staggered she turned white in the face, Astri could see that, dim as the light was.

"You won't do that, Astri. You won't do that, you're not *mad*, are you?"

"I shall come forward and swear it's a lie. They shan't ruin us like that, it shan't be." Then she muttered to herself, in cold grey distress: "I felt it just now—I was so afraid to go in."

Mina could not get a word out. She just stared at Astri, with one hand gripping the other. Then Astri said, more

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calmly: "But you'd like to have Ola's money, wouldn't you?"—"Don't speak of it!" Mina begged her. "You don't know how badly we need it, and Ola has put it in writing that it's ours if I report the other thing to the authorities; he's written it on the same paper, it's only a couple of thousand crowns—you mustn't *think*, Astri, that it's on that account I — "

She sank into a chair and wept. Astri sat down too. She noticed, as an incredible thing, that she was laughing. — " I see, you'll lose that money?" she said. "Hm! hm! hm!"

"God grant you're speaking the truth, Astri! That Lauris didn't have it!"

"You may depend on that. Tear up the paper and burn it. A couple of thousand can always be found. And why shouldn't Arthur be manager? Such a lot of things happen nowadays—if anybody wants to live in our time he needn't be too particular, as far as I can make out."

"I f only you don't go and perjure yourself!"

"No, no, of course not!" Presently she added, chuckling to herself, that she *might* have done so, if she'd been driven to it. If it was to defend all that one was and all that one possessed. "Even if I was all alone in the parish, Mina, so now you know it."

She mustn't talk like that! pleaded Mina.—"You must remember that the Lord's a dangerous man, and that eternity's—"

"—it's a long time, ay," laughed Astri. "No, I haven't

such an excessive belief in the Lord as you have. But I believe he's on my side, he won't bring us right down—how would the parish get on then? Have you thought of that?"

"No, but I'm so afraid, Astri, that you're not speaking the truth? That you're hardened?"

"I've never yet told a lie"—Astri's voice was cold; she got up.

Mina also rose and laid her hand on the other's shoulder: "That's what comforts me, Astri. For I don't know of any more truthful person than you, and Lauris never does anything that you don't know of, that's so true that you can see it in the dark, so I think I must trust to what you say, Astri; I have nothing else to go by!"—she said good-night in the passage, stumbled out and took the road for home. She was in such a state that she hadn't even thought of driving over this evening.—"You must use your wits," Astri called after her.—"Oh, heavens, my wits! If there was only that to it! But to think that life should be like this!"—"Well, well, that's how it is.

Astri behaved as if nothing had happened when Lauris came in. Not till they were in the bedroom and he was talking of one thing and another did she ask what had been done about the money due to Aasel over the seining outfit. He broke off in the middle of his chat, and she looked him calmly in the eyes. He didn't turn a hair, just winked one eye slightly. After a moment or two he opened

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them both wide and turned to her with a shameless smile, right in her face: "I see, that's what the Segelsund woman came about?"—"Yes. She had found a paper that Ola left behind him. What do you say to that?"—"A paper? There's no paper about it, child, I know that. And what that half-crazy old woman may have said to her half-crazy brother, that I *don't* know. But that Ola Haaberg had a grudge against us, you know as well as I, if you choose. And that the money belonged to you. What do you say to that?"

Astri sat down on the edge of the bed and said nothing. She took off one thing after another, with her eyes on the floor; her colour grew paler and paler. Lauris kept an eye on her from the side.

"Well, now it's too late," she said. "Now I've denied it, and we must stick to that. The worst thing is about the declaration for tax!"

"There's been no declaration yet."

"But they'll find the money in town, it's in the bank there, the letter says."

"Don't worry, kid. It's been transferred."

"Well, but all the same—. There's nothing else for it."

"Heh?"

"I must take it upon myself. Say it was my money. And that I received it and put it into the bank without your knowing. The whole thing will have to be my fault."

"You know, that would be the smartest way, but—. I'm thinking of the parish, you see."

Astri said nothing more. She lay awake and still, listened to Lauris falling asleep and listened to the wind outside. Up to now he had had his fingers in all kinds of things, whistling away to himself; she had heard him a long, long way off, but now he was close beside her. And now he changed his note, his voice was blunt, now he spoke in earnest. He was good to listen to. If she had heard the sound of everything outside now, of every mountain and every knoll, and of the bogs and the meadows round about, it would have done her good. She would have seen them, for choice, in honest daylight, seen the houses here and all the rest.

But in between she had visions of one she knew, a starveling out on the coast, Jorgen Langaune was his name. He had sworn a false oath. He had raised three fingers in the air and sworn to a lie, she had heard that since she was a child. And he had been struck like that: three fingers stiff and two crooked; when she was a child she thought he was swearing all the time. As a rule he put his hand in his pocket; now she could see him so clearly.

"PlI do it all the same!" she said aloud. She heard Lauris stir and wake up.

Then she lay still again, listening for the wind. But it had forgotten her and gone its way.——

Vikesylt often looked in at Segelsund. Arthur was such a good man to talk to, an intelligent man one might go so far as to call him, for it was extraordinary how he could

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take a broad view and agree with one. The rest of them hereabouts, well, they were decent folk all of them, as far as that went, but as might be expected they understood but little of the ideas that prompted one, and in particular they lacked a sense for the higher and highest forces at work in the present day; they were more inclined to kick against the pricks.—"Arthur," he said, "is another exception." But just as often he would talk with Fru Mina, though one could see that she thought a good deal of herself, after a fashion; she had not yet realized that the greatest virtue is humility. Folk were always slow to reach that height, such was his experience.

He came there the day after she had been to Haaberg, and that night Mina had had no sleep.—"You look to me so ailing lately," he said. "Just as if a burden or heavy weight oppressed you; something inward, I would call it."—"Oh?" she replied, rather sharply, but without looking at him.—"Well, it is the way with me, who have been a widower for many years and have been married and all, that I see as it were right through woman, and for a long time now I've seen it in you, that you have something on your mind. I am beginning to feel sympathy for you. Oh, ay, ay!"

She made no answer. At that his eyes grew brighter.—"They are beginning to pay heed to it and becoming observant, all of them—you ought to unburden your heart, to one who is old and experienced and knows the hearts of women. For otherwise, you see, you may be driven out

of your mind by care and dismay and all such-like; remember that He above sees all things and knows and feels all things! And then the relief! the blessed relief when the heart has lightened itself of these oppressive burdens! When hope springs up within you like grass and green pastures!"

Mina got up and left him. She did not come in again. But he had seen how her face turned grey, how an ashy cast had come over her cheeks. His words, poor as they were, must have borne fruit, so help him the Great One in heaven above!

Mina had the horse put in and drove to the sheriff's.

Sheriff Mork had been schoolmaster in the parish, but at that time he had been something of a scapegrace and had had to take to another calling. Now he was a quiet man, never mixed in politics and disputes, but folk had great respect for him. Mina had a feeling that he sat there, the great calm man, and drew her towards him, and that was the right way.

He listened to her without a word; he turned neither red nor pale. He took the paper and looked it over.—"I can do nothing else!" she said.—"I can do nothing else!" she repeated.—"No, no," he said. "And as you have come here and laid this before me, there is only one thing for me to do. But let us not be in too much of a hurry. And let us hold our tongues in the meanwhile. Let us hold our tongues and keep our ears open, don't you think?"

Now he was smiling at her, he had a great calm smile:

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"Things are never as we believe them to be. They are either worse or better. I prefer to think they are better. As often as not I am right."

He took her hand firmly as she said good-bye; she faded away to nothing; and that too was good.

CHAPTER III

HIGHER UP AND FARTHER ON

1

NOT LONG AFTER, BONSACH ARNESEN RANG UP ODIN and asked him to come to the factory, there was someone who wanted to speak to him. Odin was not there just at the moment, and Anders took the message and passed it on when his father came in. If Ingri had been given a cut of a whip across her face she could not have paled so quickly or looked so helplessly at Odin.—"Now it's come out!" she said.—"What has?"—"You know. What I told you!"—"Oh, that! Not a bit of it. And if it had, I should know how to deal with it, Ingri. Pd make short work of it! You must trust to me."—"Yes, I have no one else to trust to."

Anders was still in the room; he had sat reading a book which was hard to put down; now he got up and read the last lines standing, before he put away the book and went to his work. He looked up, from one to the other, started slightly on seeing his mother's harassed look, turned red and went out. Odin stood watching the door;

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then he turned to Ingri: "Did you notice the boy, how ashamed he looked? Another time you mustn't let him hear you say that you have no one to trust to but me."

Odin went off. He was afraid Arnesen had got wind of the gossip about him and was going to resign his post at once, for he had talked of doing so apart from this. There must be some way of stopping the others' tongues. Instead of this he found a crowd of the workmen who had been dismissed. They had been talking to Arnesen, and after that they had tried to get at Lauris, but he was ill, so now Odin would have to decide it: they offered to take up their work at the former rate of wages, if Engelbert was reinstated. Arnesen had told them that properly speaking there ought to be a day shift and a night shift. So now they wanted to hear.

Odin stood looking at them, almost without knowing it, whistled softly to himself and thought about many things.—"Yes, we ought to be working with two shifts," he said. "When once we've got started in earnest. We ought to be going not just up and on, but higher up and farther on, you know"—his face relaxed and he looked at them as the wag he was—"we ought to have roped in the money while it was in the country. Hm, hm, that's so! Well then, you promise to *work*? Like real men, without pushing and driving? Ay ay, then I know you again, and I'll see and have a talk with Engelbert later. But I can't decide this on my own, I must see the board about it; you know I've had a bit of a rap over the knuckles. Well, I

don't think they'll make much difficulty; you'll hear to-night or tomorrow."

He turned away from them as soon as he could manage it and went in to Arnesen.—"They're so queer, I don't feel like talking to them," he said. "I actually forgot to remind them of the mischief they'd done; you'll have to do that. It's happened before that folk have come and humbled themselves before me when they'd taken their punishment. It hurt me, and it made me weak, for the moment, that is. But have they really grown so humble and grateful? Have they been like that long? For I haven't seen it."—Oh, thought Arnesen, there was some backbone in them yet, so long as they had numbers on their side and a fair wind. "You know that from going to sea, don't you?" he said with a little laugh.—"Easing away the sheet's another thing," replied Odin, and his eyes were grey with seriousness. "But dare-n't they really—don't they ever come and speak their mind any more, unless they've got the upper hand? Well, then I don't know what we're coming to. But is it really so?"

Afterwards Odin went off to hear what the other men on the board had to say. They gave him a free hand, they even thought it was the manager's business to settle this.—"We must put on steam," they said; "anything else would be turning back half-way."—"I know that song," was Odin's remark. "The words are all wrong, but it's a good tune."

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He couldn't find Engelbert; not that that mattered. Engelbert was not so bad that he wouldn't repay one good turn with another, if he came to the push; if one took him in the right way. Even if he had been a trifle rusty lately. In fact, it was a good thing there was somebody left who had the heart to turn rusty!

On his way home he passed the meeting-house and heard them singing inside. There was another strong wave of revival going through the district, Odin had heard a lot about it. This sickness it was that drove folks to religion, and a big preacher had come who had a way of his own for rousing the sleepers. Odin had not been inside the door of the meeting-house for ever so long. Now it struck him that it would be a cowardly act not to go in, and he wanted to hear this speaker, for it was a mighty long time since he had heard a man filled with the spirit. And it was quite likely that Engelbert was there; he was usually to be found where people were assembled.

He went in and sat down by the door. The house was full, and Odin noticed at once that here they were all joined together in a fraternity—they were singing a hymn after the address. The man sat under the reading-desk. He was quite young; they said he had been reading for the Church, but had given it up when he saw it was the road to hell. He sat with clasped hands looking stiffly before him; a refined and handsome man with great blue eyes. After the singing some of them got up and bore witness,

and on the benches many were snivelling or crying outright; and several of the converted went from bench to bench, working upon those who needed it, taking them by the hand or laying a hand on their shoulder. To Odin this was new and incredible. He saw several he knew there, they were already far gone on the other side.

Now the preacher stood up again. As soon as Odin met his eyes and felt the fire in them, it struck him that these were the eyes of a madman. Odin paid no great attention to what he said; all he heard was that the Lord was passing through the country, as the destroying angel passed through the land of Egypt, did they not hear the church-bell tolling? did they not hear it tolling for the judgment? Odin was more taken up with the people, how they were worked up. He too had touched the chords in them; perhaps he shouldn't have done that either? Wasn't it better to let folks grow up as in the old days and make what they could of it?

When the speaker had finished he got up and asked to be heard. They turned round in their seats, scarcely able to believe their ears.—"I hear you're talking about the Lord," he said. "It looks as if many of you are scared out of your wits already, and more are going the same way; that's what I should like to say a few words about; for tonight I'm here, another night it may be too late. You ought rather to let the Lord speak for himself, if it's he that is out and about. Likely enough he has something to say to us, but then we must let him have a hearing—have

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you thrown away your Bibles, good folk? You ought to have respect for the Lord! Maybe it would be best not to name him. This here's an infectious disease, and a dangerous one; I can remember many like it that swept the country-side, and they left nothing but an ash-heap behind. Folks' hearts were burnt up, the best that was in them, burnt up to no purpose—now let me have my say in peace! Here and there it brought a kind of life to some of them, but they were not the ones who went off and got converted for fear of hell-fire. You ought to know, as you're a scholar, that the Lord is not deceived by tricks and wiles, you know what the Bible says, when you choose. So you must feel within yourself that this here's too cheap and at the same time too dear."

The tears had vanished; many a wept-out face turned to Odin, and many gave him pale and spiteful glances; some of them cried out that they ought to pray for him. The preacher had come step by step down the middle gangway, and now he called on them to sing a hymn. They threw themselves into the singing from one wall to the other, there was no chance of getting out a word. The preacher came and laid a hand on his shoulder. Odin gave a start and raised his hands as if to defend himself. Instead of that he stood still and listened to the singing.—"Do you hear the song of the new Zion?" asked the preacher.—"Bless me, yes, that's just what I'm listening to. Is this joy that they're feeling? Is this joy? Can we humans come to such poverty?"—"You should *hearken*, my dear man!"

—"No, be quiet!—I once heard the niggers, it was a troop that gave a show for money, and they sang like this. The same biting poverty, the same wallowing in distress. Ay, no doubt, *that* must make it easy to die. But have folk ever been so low down before? So that they may have an easy death? I'm afraid, as I stand here, I'm afraid folk have never been in such a poor way as now."

The hymn had come to an end, and Odin's words were heard all over the house: "So joyless—nobody has made them so joyless before. And here I stand and bear the responsibility, and have done nothing. You've killed song, and laughter and gladness and all the rest!—and now we've nothing but death to console us—I stand up against it! For I love you all, I wish you well."

"You yourself must die one day, must you not?" said the preacher.

"That's another thing, which we don't talk about. You ought to be ashamed of yourself!"

The other glared at him fixedly: "Have you not seen that God is here? That He is present in this sickness that is raging in the country? That He may come and strike down your dearest ones, or yourself, at any moment?"—"If I hadn't I don't suppose I'd be mixing myself up in it," replied Odin.—"You have seen and realized that God directs all things?"—"I have. I've seen it better than you. But I believe he'd back me up if I drove you out of this house every one of you this very evening; I've seen a good deal, I have. And that's what I was going to say,

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that now we must have an end of this game, while the sickness is about. I shall get the doctor to close this house. Go home, good people, and take your Bibles and read for yourselves, then you'll know where you are!"—Odin took his hat and went. A few young people and one old man followed him. The old man was Iver Vennestad.

Odin didn't want to have any talk with them this evening. Somewhere inside him it hurt as he had never felt it before, except as a little reminder. Iver Vennestad caught him up. Odin said: "I've been talking about things one ought to keep to oneself. One wounds others and oneself as well. I've never seen it so glaring clear as now: what the others lack, I lack too. The only thing is, that I know it might have been different. For if it wasn't so, one would be able to turn one's back on it and go one's way, as father did; you may just as well call it dying."

At home he found Vikesylt waiting for him. Odin pulled himself together and took the leap over to him, as he had done so often before, from one world to the other. It wasn't easy this evening, but one had to get across, and Ingri gave him a look as though holding out her hand to help him.—"Well, so you're out and about, so to speak?" he said as he hung up his coat.—Ay ay, he couldn't deny it; he was out and about. But now he would like to speak to Odin in private.—"Not a damned chance!" laughed Odin. "If you've got anything to say that my wife mayn't listen to, then I'll have nothing to do with it either; I've just come from meeting."

Vikesylt was not one to give himself away. Odin could see how he noticed the oath and did some quick thinking, and now he had it: he smiled at the young man, an old and wise smile, then composed his face, which was so ready to obey his thought; now he was pensive and profound.—"The meeting, ay," he said. "Ay, you are right. But let us not scoff at it, we who so to speak stand above it and may be tempted, if we choose, to look down on it. But it is as you say, Odin; it is a question whether they are not going too far, whether they are not carrying it to extremes."

He was preparing to go deeply into it, but Odin was too quick for him, he wanted to see the fellow put on another face.—"There was something you wanted to say to me, wasn't there?" After much questioning and beating about the bush he got it out of him at last. It was about this riot at the factory: the men had been drunk! Well, so he had been told.—Yes, Odin knew that.—But it was a strange and so to speak incomprehensible thing, where they could have got hold of the strong stuff, of the intoxicating liquor?—Well, Odin didn't know. Then the face of the Silver Fox brightened, and his voice rose and melted, ran out in the most dulcet tones: "They distilled it themselves. Shameful to relate, they did so indeed!" Odin woke up, incredulous but merry, he seemed almost glad to hear it: "Is that true?"—"Yes, Odin, there's no doubt of it, save the mark! Isn't it enough to make one lose hope?"—"But are they really up to that? Can they really bring it off, I

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mean? Well, upon my word, they're—"

Vikesylt dried up.—"I thought you were still an abstainer," he said.—"You've talked me out of that long ago. But I haven't made the stuff myself, and I shan't either, as I'm chairman of the council; besides, I don't know how. But these folk are—they *have* some life in them in a way!"

Hm! But now Vikesylt would like to ask if Odin knew *who* had distilled it for them?—"No, but tell me, I'd like to see him!" Vikesylt drew a long face; it was some time before it came out: "You see him every day. I am bound to tell you the truth: it is your neighbour. Your enemy, if I may say so."—"Are you crazy, is it Lauris? Ha ha ha! Oh, you Lauris, you Lauris, you're a oner! You're the artfullest—ha ha Aa!"

But Vikesylt was solemn as a judge.

"And now the grave duty devolves upon you, Odin, whom the people have chosen as their chief and highest representative, of taking this matter in your powerful hand and seeing that law and justice are strictly carried out. In other words: You will report it! I can bring witnesses, more than enough."

"And you?" laughed Odin.

"No, I will keep in the background. For many reasons. And besides, it fits my position, to stand behind you and preferably to work in private. Always in closest touch with every fresh movement of the time, but in all privacy, as I was saying, for that is my nature."

"Fm sure it is. Fm afraid that's the way with far too many, worse luck."

Odin thought it over, his eyes growing younger and merrier all the time.—"Oh, it would have been fun, lad, to put the fear of God into him, to see Lauris properly scared! Sport, wouldn't it be?"

But at that moment he caught sight of Vikesylt's face. In it he saw the parish and all its devilry naked and unashamed. The youthfulness was quenched in him at once.

"No, damn it all, I won't do it! With you standing there looking like that—no!"

Vikesylt blinked his eyes at Odin again and again. Then he made ready to go.

"Then we must hope it won't come out."

"What won't?"

"What you and I have been talking about."

"Oh? Is that not to come out?"

"For the chairman—it would be something of an exposure, I fear; it would have a *compromising* effect, you understand."

"Well, well, the Lord be with you, and keep your mouth shut about what you know! Good-night!"

Odin had attacked his supper as soon as he came in, and now that he had finished he lay down on the bench and laughed again and again. He even laughed at Ingri, who was feeling bad about this strange man—how could one dare to joke with a man who was dangerous?—"Oh, not at all," he said; "nobody's dangerous here, you won't

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find one for miles round. They're so funny, that's all. I really haven't had time to look at them before. And even that teacher body there, he means *some* good with all his fussing. They're enough to make one cry, I was near doing that this evening, but why can't we laugh at them just as soon?"

Odin looked at the clock. He had to take a run down to the sea.

2

Astri saw that Vikesylt paid Odin a visit that evening. It gave her such a pain in the chest that she had to sit down.

It has been impossible for her to say any more to Lauris about the money and what they were to do, she had scarcely been equal to looking at him, and when he came into the room and stayed there, she generally put down her work and went into the kitchen. Now he took the paper and sat down to read, went through it a couple of times, the chief part of it, while Astri sat and looked at him.— "How you can read all that stuff!" she said, getting up again. Lauris looked up, in the greatest surprise: she had never once interfered with what he was doing!—he took up the paper again. After a little while he couldn't help looking up at her, whatever it was that made him. She was standing at the table cutting out some stuff. Her face was stiff, one could scarcely recognize her. And so thin she was getting.

"Have you got tooth-ache?" he asked.

Then she looked at him.—"Yes, just a little," she said, passing her tongue along the back of her teeth. "But did you see the new parish clerk go past just now?" she asked.—Oh yes, Lauris had seen the tail of him.—"He's making a long stay over there? I wonder what's brought him out now."

She turned red as soon as the words were out of her mouth, and when Lauris looked up she was still more ashamed, but she met his eyes frankly and defiantly: "You know it's not my way to keep an account of the folk that go along the road here; I scarcely see them, as a rule. You can't say I'm in the habit of worrying you either, if there is anything. I only happened to mention it—I haven't so many people to talk to. I felt so sure he was up to no good. Well, well, it'll have to take its chance!"—she bent over her work again. There was silence for a while. Outside too it was perfectly still.

But all at once she straightened herself, put down her scissors and stared vacantly at the window, with her arms hanging slack. Lauris gave a little start.

"The sheriff may be here any day," she said.

Lauris did not look up, he kept to his paper. He asked if Mina had reported it.

"No, but she will! she may have done it already! That's the way it's going, I can feel it in me." Then she added, when her voice was a little more under control: "The only thing would be if Arthur could be made manager of the factory, so as to get her away from Segelsund—

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there's no chance of that, is there?" she looked at him with burning eyes.

Lauris's eyes grew wider and wider. He had never seen Astri like this.—"Manager?" he said. "Good Lord, if that'll help her conscience, let her have her way."—"Yes, but not a word of that about Arnesen, Lauris; we can't do *that*. For Ingri's sake, chiefly; it's impossible."—"There's not much to be had gratis in this world. But this time I almost think we can bring it off free of cost."—"Do you think so, Lauris?" Astri was pale with excitement. "Do you think it could be done? Pretty quickly? For it'll have to be soon, or else Mina might—"

Once more she tried to keep her tongue in check. She took up her pattern and her scissors. But after a little the words slipped out from her heart:

"O God, if I could be let off swearing a false oath!"

She threw her work down and went into the bedroom. The last Lauris saw of her was her bent back. She must be feeling bad. He had an idea the walls were listening and looking on. Much good might it do them; they weren't the walls of a church. And as to Astri, she'll get over it, he smiled to himself.

He put on his things and went down to the Voe. He was dressed for the coldest winter weather. Engelbert ought to be somewhere thereabouts, according to his reckoning. He made an excuse for looking in at two or three places, but Engelbert was not to be found. All right, then Lauris knew the fellow was on board with one of the

skippers, where there was a chance of a drink. He didn't care to inquire for him. He was just thinking whether he should help himself to one of the skiffs alongside and row out, when Odin came sauntering up.

They greeted each other at the same time, Lauris in careless everyday fashion, Odin in loud surprise: "What, are *you* out for a walk so late? And with all those clothes on—are you going for a row?"—"I've been ill, you know very well," said Lauris.—"Yes, of course, how are you?"—"Perhaps you thought I was just shamming?" laughed Lauris. "So that big things might be done in your name?"—"I really never thought of that. But what I was going to say—you haven't seen Engelbert anywhere about? I wanted to speak to him."—No, Lauris hadn't.—"If you meet him before I do, tell him he's taken on again at the factory, on one condition, and that he shall hear from me; well, we agreed about it on the board, you understand."—"Seems there's been great doings while I was sick," said Lauris sarcastically.—"Yes, you shouldn't go and get sick like that, Lauris. There's been fighting and squabbling and tattle and lies and rubbish, enough to make anyone go sick, or get out of it some other way."—"It can't have been quite so bad as that," remarked Lauris, as he bit off a quid.—"Bad?" said Odin, looking at him with open eyes. "I don't believe folk have any idea of what's bad and what isn't, they've lost their bearings."

Odin was about to say good-night, he looked at the

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starry sky and listened to the sound of the surf round the headlands; then he turned sharply to Lauris.—"There's one thing you must tell Engelbert if you run across him, and that is that he's to keep his mouth shut; he'll know what about."—Lauris would do so.—"Well, and then there's another thing, Lauris, if you're working a still, don't let it get out among the neighbours, heh? Remember that there's two kinds of folk."

Lauris burst into a loud laugh. He begged Odin not to let that worry him.

When Lauris heard that Odin was on his way home, he cast off the boat and took the oars. But now he heard them rowing ashore from one of the vessels; there were several of them lying out in the Voe. He waited till he heard Engelbert was in the boat, then went up among the sheds and waited there. But Engelbert was drunk and noisy, it was not much use talking to him this evening, and there was no getting him away from his companions either. All Lauris could do was to tell him to meet him there next evening. Then he had to go home.

Astri lay awake when he came in.—"So youVe not gone to sleep?" he said.—"Oh no; not properly. But did you get anything done?"—"Oh yes, I did. I set it going; tomorrow evening I'll do the rest."—"Tomorrow evening, ay. It's a long time till then."—"Don't you be afraid; it's started now. But why aren't you asleep?"—"Asleep?" She was sitting up in bed. "I've sat up in bed like this many a night lately; while you've been asleep."—"Hm!

Hm! Is it as desperate as all that, do you think? Then we're not the only ones that'll have to look out. Have we really got to defend ourselves in dead earnest? I'm shockingly afraid they'll be the losers," he muttered between his teeth.

He did not go to sleep till he thought Astri was off. But scarcely had he closed his eyes when he was awake again, for she was too.—"You don't seem to be asleep either?" she said.—"Oh, /! But you've got to take this coolly and sensibly, Astri!"

She sat up in bed again; she seemed to be breathing with difficulty.—"When the boys are up, I wish they were in bed and asleep," she said. "And when they've gone to bed, it's all so quiet; then I wish they were up after all. Three innocent little lads that don't know the least thing about their mother. And here's the room and the whole house, all looking at one whether it's light or dark, and they don't know anything about me either. And sometimes it's grandmother—she's been so far away for many years now. I don't know whether she's on my side or what she thinks."

"Oh, blow the old woman!"—Lauris banged the wall with his fist.

"Ah, that's how *you* take it!" She was silent for a few moments, rocking her body slightly.—"No, I know I ought not to talk about it. For there *isn't* anybody one can talk to about this. But it's easier to say it, all the same. And *you* must understand me, I should think. That I'm

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doing the hardest thing I could do, nobody has ever taken upon himself a harder; I'm going to tell a lie, don't you hear? Fm going to make myself a common scoundrel before all the parish—do you think Fm doing that for pleasure?"

She bent forward and wept with her face in her hands.—"Nobody understands me!" she wailed softly. "But if there's no other way! there is no other!"

It was many years since she had cried like this, and she was both ashamed and alarmed to find she could do so. All the same it gave her inward relief to abandon herself to shame and misery.—"Even he doesn't understand me," she said. "That it's for his sake Fm doing it, so that he may hold his head above them and not be struck down—he did right, whatever they may say!"

Lauris had turned over on his side and pretended to be asleep, and when he had lain like this a little while, he really fell asleep. Then she wailed more despondently than ever: "But that he could do such a thing! That he could do it! And not even see what this means to me! O God, how true it is, that all is vanity!"

She sank back powerless and lay still. Lying in this abandonment was worse than anything else, but it was all she could do.—"But it can't be helped," she said as she put out the light; "I'll do it all the same. For it's the right thing, for me!"

Next day she said nothing to Lauris. It was fine weather, really a day in a thousand—one might think the sun stood

still in the sky and shone in on people, and the sky put on a deeper blue than usual as soon as you looked at it, with pale golden clouds over the mountain-tops, high up and far away. More than once Astri felt it must be the moon shining in on her. Now and again the boys stopped as they came near her, glanced at her quickly and slipped away again; Ludvik did the same. At last even that day came to an end; Lauris asked for his supper, he wanted it early tonight. He ate without looking up, put on his coat and went out. Then she would have liked to talk to him, though she did not quite know about what; but he was close and silent and deep in other thoughts—that was how she had always liked him best.

Engelbert was drunk again that evening, just comfortably so, he told Lauris; but he sobered as soon as Lauris had said a few words to him.—"Devil take me, that Odin's a well plucked one!" he said, looking seriously at Lauris. "No matter what trick you play on him, it don't bite like it does on other folk."—Lauris said nothing.—"One condition, ay," Engelbert went on. "I know what he means, and so do you. And I can agree to that. Arnesen can be manager as much as he likes, for me; I can be a nice boy too when I choose. But beyond that!—O boy, I'm going to say what I think worse than I've ever done. They shall hear from me, I warrant you. I'll never give in till we've joined the organization; and then we'll call a different tune."—"But what about it when you're manager yourself?" Lauris interjected.—"I?"—"Yes,

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you understand Norwegian, don't you? Arnesen will soon be packing up, and the day he goes, you'll come into it; you'll get the crown on your head before you know it. For Fm well again now, you see that, don't you?"

He paused, took a quid and looked at his watch. Engelbert followed everything he did, but almost as if he didn't see it; his face was so blank that you wouldn't have known him. Lauris turned to him with a broad smile: "Fll tell you how it is: this here factory can go to blazes for me, it fills the parish with all sorts of working ants or whatever I'm to call them, and I thought we'd be quit of it sooner if you were put in to manage it. They were to see how it worked, you understand. And besides, you wouldn't have to accept favours of Odin."—"Favours, what nonsense are you talking now?"—"Well, that's what I call it. For you're a character, as Fve told you; one of my own sort, I may say."

The liquor was returning to Engelbert's head; his voice was thick.—"Just exactly what I was thinking today, when I got word that I was taken back. Now Odin shall have it, thought I. Fll let it be known that I won't serve under a convict. If they'd owned up what he was, it would have been another thing, but why should they tell lies about it?"—"Ah, tell me that," sneered Lauris. "It's never been *easy* for Odin to speak the truth."—"You must keep well now, Lauris, so I don't get the sack again. This time Odin shan't get a chance to heap coals of fire on my head, there's been enough of that long ago."

"You must let it come on him as a bit of a shock then," said Lauris.

"Shock it is!" the other sang out, sailor fashion.

But next moment he reflected: It would be worst for Ingri, and he knew nothing but good of her. "She's half an angel, Lauris, you haven't seen her."—"What's that? It was I, man, who saw her first. Haven't you heard that?"—"No."—"I had many a summer sweetheart up in Nordland, you know, but she was the pick of the bunch. Well, no, I'm not going to get her talked about; I'm poor but no blackguard. But I was the first there, as I tell you; that's my way, I'd rather be first than last. Oh, if Odin had known—"

It was not much they drank, but it seemed to go to Lauris's head at once.—"I dare say you think it's all beer and skittles being in my shoes?" he said. "That I'm a devilish lucky fellow? Well, yes, I'm master in my own house. But: I'm Lauris for all that. Hm? And Odin goes about and is Odin and a long way above me and you. No, Astri scarcely looks at him, but do you think that doesn't take some doing? Nothing takes it out of a woman so much as having to guard against the wiles of a liar—and what else is he, at bottom? Well, we know that, you and I. But he's like a sort of principle. You've got to be either for him or against him, damn his eyes! Astri, you see, she threw him over—wasn't that a queer thing? She saw what he was, that's how I reckon it. Then she sees what I am

too, you may say. Let her, as much as she likes. But Ingri, my boy—"

While he was talking he took good care that Engelbert didn't get too drunk.—"You'll have to cast the bullet yourself," he said, "and hit the bull's-eye. You're to keep me out of it. This kind of thing is not to my taste. Only it's got to be done—he may diddle the nose off our face, that scallywag they've brought here, blast him! And then it'll be your time, Engelbert, you'll have to show us if there's more in you than jaw and bluster. If you can bring down Odin a peg or two, for I can't manage it, curse me if I can. But Ingri, my boy, when she was in her prime!"—he laughed and shook his head.

Engelbert joined in his laugh, and had another to himself:

"And that Odin, trying to impose conditions on me!"

"Hm-hm! You're aiming high now, Engelbert."

Lauris started to go home, and Engelbert went with him. —"Astri, Astri," Lauris was saying to himself; "she might really put a little more trust in me. I don't move fast, but I move *well*. Tomorrow I'll take a trip to Segelsund, Astri."—"Here we have Odin himself, I believe," said Engelbert, looking ahead. "He's come just as if I'd written for him."—"No, wait a bit, we'll get out of his way and pretend we don't know him; this time. There's one little thing I've just thought of."

3

It was Odin.

He had been sitting at home all the evening with the idea that he ought to look in at the factory, and he had mentioned it to Ingri. She seemed almost terrified: "Not this evening, must you?"—"Oh yes, and then I wanted to speak to Engelbert."—"But not this evening, Odin!"—"Why not? I ought to have a talk with your father too, there's lots of things may be going wrong; I've got such a feeling that he wants me for something."

He and Anders had been away north in the summer-byre field clearing stones for a spell, so now he was sweaty and shivering at the same time and really had little mind for going out again. Ingri saw that and told him so—it was chilly now in the evenings. He sat looking at her and listening to her as he smoked. But the end of it was that he put on his coat and went. Ingri followed him out. It was the same fine weather: pale yellow sky to the westward over the sea, dark blue to the eastward over the mountains, still on the slopes above and still along the shore, the fields showed straw-colour in the twilight, and the forest and bog were in dark blues and browns—stillness everywhere.—"Well, Ingri, I'm going to look in at the factory. I feel I ought to. Then maybe we'll have an end of all this running there early and late; I may be able to get it off my hands, I mean." He turned to her rather abruptly: "Do you mean to say you're afraid for me?"—"No,

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not afraid, but—. Only just a little. And sometimes I'm afraid of the dark. But can't you stay at home this evening? Put it off till tomorrow?"—"Have so little time, by daylight; it's generally too short for me."—"I had such a horrid dream this autumn: I dreamt they stabbed you."—"Rubbish! And then you know what I dreamt when I was a little boy? I dreamt that if I didn't get the better of you, of my Mermaid, everything would go wrong with me—and I'm pretty superstitious, you know. So I shall go dead against you, and good-night to you for the present!"—"Well, well, Odin!" she smiled up at him and gave in; it was that smile that he could never get to the bottom of.—"You won't be very long, will you, Odin? And you're to give father my love!"—"Yes, of course!"—he gave her a kiss and went off.

He was already deep in other thoughts when he met the two men on the road. He greeted them and walked on, but afterwards it struck him that one of them was Engelbert; the other was unrecognizable, maybe a skipper who had come ashore. He took his boat and rowed across the mouth of the river, then walked along the beach to the factory.

Engelbert went all the way up with Lauris.—"Our worthy chairman was in a hell of a hurry," he said.—"Hm-hm! But what if you went in and had a word or two with his good lady?" Lauris wondered. "You see, the letter doesn't tell us what he'd done to get laid by the heels* You'll easily worm that out of her. And then you might ask

her to warn her old man that he'd better keep his nose out of our distilling business, or he might get it scorched."—"You'd hardly like to say that to his face!" laughed Engelbert. Lauris ignored it.—"You must do it nicely," he admonished him. "It isn't her we want to scare, it's him." Engelbert waited awhile, glancing now and again at Lauris as he strolled off home; then he shrugged his shoulders and went in. He asked for Odin.

There was nobody in the room but Ingri and the little boy, Per. Anders was sitting upstairs with a book or something. Engelbert talked of this and that, and Ingri scarcely followed him. He kept looking at the clock, and Ingri at him; she thought he changed colour once or twice. Then he blurted out right in her face: "Tell me, what was it your father went to jail over?"

Ingri kept her seat and looked at him. Nothing much could be seen in her face, unless it was that her eyes did not blink. Then he heard that she was not breathing either, and saw she had turned as white as snow—she wasn't going to faint, was she? He went up to her and laid a hand on her shoulder; he was heartily sorry for himself. Then she started up with a little cry.—She mustn't take it like that, he said; it was far from unkindly meant, on the contrary, he was thinking of taking her father's part. "Now that I and Odin have made it up again," he said. "For life nowadays, I must tell you, is a sharp-toothed affair, one gets angry before one knows it, but I don't want you to—"

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"Has it come *out* then?" she asked. There was scarcely any voice in her.

"Yes, but that's Odin's fault; he's been telling a little lie, just a wee one."

Again she looked like fainting away. I shouldn't have come here, I see that now, he said to himself.—"Has it come out?" she wailed.—"You know there's war in the parish; well, in the whole country and in every country. But now I'll knock this gossip on the head, you may trust me for that. For it isn't true, he *didn't* rob the mail? Only a trifling deficit in his accounts, I believe, a wee *defalcation*, wasn't it?"

Ingri said nothing. Engelbert looked at the clock again, and stood thinking; then moved to the door.

"Robbed the mail?" she cried, starting up—"that's a lie, Engelbert, that's a lie!"

Yes, he knew that, and now he was going to clear it up. Only a trifling speculation, wasn't it?

"Yes. It was nothing more."

Engelbert nodded. He was unlike himself as he stood there, scarcely man enough to look up.

Neither knew what was happening before Per came running across the room with a billet of firewood and hurled it after the stranger so that the door resounded:

"You dirty dog! Out with you!"

His eyes blazed in the lamp-light and his face was distorted with fury, he called out "dirty dog" and "outside!" once more. Engelbert was terrified for a moment,

but laughed as well as he could, and recovered after a bit.—"I see, it's open enmity here," he laughed. "Well, well, good-night!"

He told Lauris when he came upon him out in the meadow, that this was a trip he ought not to have made.—"No, not if you bungled it," he replied. "Do you think / like it?"—No, no, said Engelbert, but it was done now, and Odin would have to comfort her; but this was the last time he for his part would use underhand devices or unfair weapons in this fight, Lauris might remember that.—All right, said Lauris, and now he thought it was time they went and had a stiffener, no doubt there was a drop left.—No, Engelbert wouldn't; he said good-night.—"Wrong, wrong!" he said as he went along. Lauris came stealing after him; the other heard him, but walked on.

Engelbert went into the shop. He was not his usual self, they thought, one minute drunk, the next sober, talking at random and not caring a blow whether they answered or not. He asked several times if they had heard he was taken back at the factory, and if they had heard that Bonsach Arnesen had been in business in Kristiania.—Surely, they had that.—"Well, she said so, his daughter said so, so it must be true? But in Nordland, where he comes from, they don't know anything about it. When he left there, they say, he was bound for the penitentiary, to do time. Well, no, he hadn't killed anybody, nothing of that sort, only there was some money missing at his bank, the time he gambled away his business; that's what they

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say. Ingri's memory's at fault, maybe?"—They didn't seem to be paying much attention to him, and one by one they slipped out and went home, for it was already late. Engelbert got even noisier and more blustering: Did they take him for a man who spread slanders? Did they think he was out for revenge? No, stop! they'd have to think again; he was Engelbert and an honest fellow, as he had been all his life—mind that, you people!

When he came out he caught sight of Lauris somewhere among the sheds, but he didn't want to run across him.—"What's *he* doing, hanging about here?" he muttered—"leave me in peace! Even if I have acted like a fool this evening; you won't get me again, you farmer, you!"——

Meanwhile Odin had been over talking to Arnesen, and Arnesen had resigned his post.—"I can't stick it any longer," he said. "It'll be best for Ingri too if I go; both for her and you. I've bought a vessel. Got a little help from the North. / shall get on all right." He looked so seriously at Odin that he could not say a word against it. Only Ingri had looked at him like that, now and again.—"Well, you must do as you think best," he said. "I won't deny that I've had the same idea, for her sake. Yes, I'm getting to see it now, it'll be easier for her if you go. Only I don't want them to sack you. You'd better write it this evening, and I'll take the letter; then I can call in on Lauris with it."

Odin smiled to himself: "This'll be a puzzle to Lauris; but he'll have to puzzle it out, or he won't get any sleep,

it'll make him ill. Hm! hm! Nobody knows why it should turn out like this. I wonder if Engelbert would go straight if he had the responsibility here?"—"Not altogether impossible," thought Arnesen.—"Well, we must try. But to think we shan't be working together any more!"—"No, it wasn't to be. And I shan't be seeing you and Ingri any more. Oh no, that's how it is!"—he looked at Odin, and looked away again, with a faint smile.

As Odin came rowing across the river-mouth and landed at the fishing pier, Engelbert strolled up and greeted him.—"Oh, is that you?" said Odin. "'Are you out for a row?' is the proper thing for you to say. Well now, I just wanted to have a word with you, you understand me, don't you? You can start at the factory any day you like. But there's one thing more—you'll have to drop your talk about Arnesen. For it's killing Ingri for me—and does no good to anybody. Well, you'll do that, Engelbert, you don't want to hurt innocent folk? I'm not so mistaken in you as that?"

"No, you see—I didn't mean—"

"You'll give me your hand on it, out with your flipper!"

Engelbert actually put out his hand.

"Well?" said Odin. "You're so quiet!"

Somebody cleared his throat behind the boat-shed, and Engelbert knew by the sound it was Lauris; he had stood there and heard everything they said. He drew himself up and tried to look Odin in the eyes. It was too dark for

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that, here in the shadow of the houses and the hills, but each could feel the other's eyes.

"Are you going to make me manager then?" said Engelbert in a hard voice. "You're working for me, I

"Heh? Manager?—is that the way of it?"

"Yes, is that so impossible? I shall make it hot for the workers, you'll see; I mean it."

"No, is it really Engelbert talking?" Odin's voice nearly failed him. Then he went on, gently: "I don't know that you're the sort of cat we could set to watch that bowl of cream, and you needn't think I'm going to buy you, understand that—do you think I've ever worked that way? We may give you a trial, that's another thing, but no bargaining, no! You must make me that promise all the same, Engelbert; if you're wise."

"O-oh! That's the way it is now. That means you're thinking of buying me all the same, bringing me *over*? Just so, and you're to stand like a monument, high above me and all the rest. It's no go, Odin. Mind yourself, lad, or there'll be a blow-up! That father-in-law of yours is to go, now you know it; I shall post up the letter from the North tomorrow morning, you'll be branded, both of you! How do you like that?"

"You're too late there, my boy. He's resigned, I've got his letter here. How do you like that?"

"Hell!" muttered Engelbert. Then after a moment he looked up with a laugh: "But you'll be shown up as a

liar all the same, you and your wife too, the whole parish shall know it."—"Ho ho!" laughed Odin. "It's a real treat to hear unadulterated spite, that's a rare dish. But seriously: you'd better look out. Remember, it's her I'm protecting, and my fist may be a heavy one; it's she that's in this and not myself! Well?"

"She? That Nordland strumpet of yours, ha ha ha! That Lauris used and threw over. Haven't you heard about that evening up at—"

Odin was at him in a flash, and his arm whizzed through the air. Engelbert didn't wait for the blow, he was gone.—"Good thing I didn't hit him, or I'd have killed him," said Odin; he even smiled, but it was no gentle smile. But he could not control himself, nor did he try to; he came on at such a furious pace that Engelbert jumped straight into the river, Odin after him down to the water's edge. There he came to himself so far as not to swim out after him; he shook his fist over the water and called out hoarsely:

"Go to the bottom, you lousy cur!"

The river was broad here now it was in flood, but the stream was still rapid in autumn, you could not hear the swimmer for the rush of water. It would take a good swimmer to cross here, even without his clothes, Odin called to mind. He didn't want to, but did it all the same—called out once more, and he felt shaggy all over, like an animal: "Sink to the bottom and don't ever come up again!"

He ran without stopping along the shore and on to the pier, cast off his boat and rowed over to the island, where the sea washed over a stony bottom, for a man was bound to fetch up there, alive or dead, that is, if he didn't stiffen and sink before he got midway. There was no Engelbert to be found. Odin even waded across to the south bank and walked up it for a bit, till he was above the spot where Engelbert had taken to the water. Not a sign of life.— "He must have drifted out to sea like a sack of hay," he said. "Well, well. What's done can't be undone." He said it once more, to the sky above and the world around:

"What's done can't be undone, and so it was to be!"

He rowed back, took a sweep out to sea and then in to the pier.— "No, it's true I didn't mean it like that. But I wished it. And I'll stand by that before the whole parish." As he said this and made the boat fast, he called to mind what Ingri had said this evening, that she was so afraid of his going out.— "Ah yes, Ingri, they're a dangerous lot," he laughed; "but I'm dangerous too!"

Up by the boat-house he ran into Lauris, who was coming down. Odin said nothing; Lauris asked after Engelbert.— "Engelbert!"—"Yes, didn't he come down to the hard just now?"

Odin stood still for a moment. He took off his cap and wiped away the sweat.

"We've blackguards enough in the parish!" he said, so loudly that it gave Lauris a start. "And by God you'd better look out for yourself, you too, if you're the father

of this—I won't answer for myself this evening, I'm dangerous!"

"/, did you say? Are you mad, Odin?" he drew back.

"Damn it, yes, I am! and the Lord knows how this'll end. I believe I'll clean up the parish directly!"

Lauris stole oil, down to the beach; Odin stood for a while watching him. Then pulled himself together and went on his way.

4

He felt good and easy as he walked up. He didn't do much thinking, just wondered that this was himself. Time after time it buzzed in his head that this here was one of the fellows from the dark days of old, one of those who didn't care what they did.—"That's what would have happened with those fellows," he smiled. "It wasn't just so easy to be them." When he reached home and was going in he had cooled down and his knees were not so steady, he hesitated a moment before lifting the latch.—"Oh no, I'm not one of that sort," he muttered; "not by a long way. But I'll have to go on with it."

There was no one in the kitchen, nor in the parlour, but the lamp was still alight. In the bedroom Per lay asleep in his mother's bed—so Anders must be out too. Odin went upstairs. His bed was empty. The whole house was empty.

He started out again. It was already night, everyone

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was asleep, and the moon's forehead showed over the ridge to the south; presently his whole yellow face was up. He was on the wane now, by the way, with a wry face, and the shimmer of light he gave was pale and uncertain, but strangely beautiful. The Haaberg fields came nearer to Odin, he thought, than he had ever seen them by daylight, and the mountains the same; he must have been going about like a blind man who saw nothing. Precipice and gorge and forest he saw, in a mild, pale grey light, and the bogs so bare and wistful and yet so living; and there was the sea, ay, awake and bright-eyed as usual. But what has all this to do with me? he thought impatiently. No more tonight than any other night! He was right, he who created it, when he saw that it was good, but afterwards he came to another way of thinking, when folk increased and multiplied; then he repented himself, even he.

And there to the southward ran the road to the bridge. That too had come out and shown itself this evening, came winding, lonely and grey, to meet Odin, almost like a living thing. Odin stepped out and walked fast, right down to the bridge. No, there was nobody about, as was to be expected.—"Ingri!" he called plaintively once or twice. "I'm *here*, Ingri." Oh well, it wasn't much use regretting; this wasn't the evening for it; he set off down the river bank, running and walking by turns; he even recalled that Christmas night when he found his way to Vennestad, it wasn't much better that time.—"She'll find me soon enough," he said, "soon enough," but ran just as

fast for all that; in one place he took a fence in his stride. — "And what's done can't be undone. You, Ingri, you understand me. But what's become of you anyway? You don't know anything about what's happened, do you?"

He ran round all the quays and sheds and houses in the Voe, took a turn down the river, where it had happened, and then up again, faster and faster, so that the night air whistled in his ears, it was like running water, he thought — oh, none of the men of old were with him now — dirty skunks!

He caught up Ingri and Anders on the road, where the Haaberg fields began. He told them, as well as his breath would let him, that he had been everywhere looking for them. They said they had gone the same way, Ingri had gone off first, alone, and then Anders had come and found the room empty and had set off after her, caught her up by the bridge. She was quite beside herself with fear, said Anders. — "Yes, but what about?" asked Odin. Ingri took his hand, she was not equal to saying anything. — "You thought they'd stabbed me to death?" he said. "They do stab," he added, "but now it's a question if I haven't put a stop to their game for the present; you'll hear something that'll surprise you, tomorrow. I've done right; it almost feels as if I'd never done it before."

Anders eyed his father searchingly once or twice. Odin noticed it, but it didn't concern him, not tonight. There were many, many things which didn't concern him any longer. **"But tomorrow it'll look** different," he muttered.

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—Ingri looked up at him, catching her breath.

"Inscrutable!" he said.

When they were alone in the bedroom he said: "// I should be forced to hunt a scoundrel into the sea, Ingri, and he should be unkind enough to get drowned?"—"No, no, Odin! don't say such things!"—"No; and besides, you know, they don't do such things nowadays. If they kill an adder, that's as far as they'll go—you wouldn't even kill that? No, I know. Ah, well, well; it's easy to talk about it."

He noticed that she was paler and weaker than ever before.—"What is it, Ingri?" he wanted to know. She shook her head, not daring to look at him. He tried to take her face in his hands and turn it round to him, but then she cast down her eyes.—"Now your father's given up his post," he said. "He's given it up and is going to leave this place, do you hear?"—"Oh?" was all she said. Then she seemed to come to herself; she looked up in surprise: "Oh, thank God!" she whispered. "We'll leave here too, Odin, won't we?"—"Well, you know—"

"They know everything! They're dangerous!" she burst out.

"We shall find people wherever we go, my dear. But now we must go to sleep. Tomorrow—is another day."

She wanted to sleep with him. She had never asked for that before, that he could remember; it had always been the other way about. Odin shuddered to think that she had not the slightest idea of what had happened that evening;

but he fell asleep fairly quickly, as was his way. When he woke up towards morning, he noticed that she lay awake, and guessed that she had lain so all night. He recalled in a flash what Engelbert had said, flung it from him as poisonous slander and thought of what had happened.—Then Ingri said: "Engelbert was here."—"Was he *here*? after I had hunted him?" Odin started up. She told him that he had come just after Odin had gone out.—"Oh, *tlien!*" he said to himself.—"It's all come out," she said. "Everything, Odin. He *said* it right out!"—a shiver went all through her.—"Ay, ay, ay," muttered Odin.—"A godsend Anders wasn't here, Odin—there'd have been mischief!"

Odin had felt such a sharp pang when she said *everything* that he lay half-stunned for a long time. The first thing he noticed when it had passed was that Ingri was trembling. "Aren't you well?" he asked.—"It gave me a bit of a shake, that's all, when he was here. And afterwards when we were looking for you. It'll soon pass off. If only father can get away from here. You and I, Odin, we can always get over it."—"Now you've made me *happy!*" he said, in a needlessly loud voice which showed her that there was some struggle going on in him.—"But that all this should be brought on you for my sake," she went on. "I knew it would come when we got married!"—"But you told me everything that time, didn't you, Ingri?"— " I wonder, did I? For you didn't ask any questions."—

"About your father, no! No, and you had nothing else to tell, I know that. But bless my soul, what a strange thing it is that it should be so difficult for folk to talk to one another. But you and I, we—"

He caught his breath, supported himself on his elbows and groaned out the words:

"Thanks for giving me that look, Ingri!"

After a while he said:

"And Engelbert I drove into the sea this evening—last night, rather. Do you hear that, Ingri?"

She was silent a long time.—"Well, well," she said at last.

"Ay, for—it had to be done, you don't know what he *said!*"

Another and more violent tremor went through her, it seemed to him it was life passing away; he noticed it and forgot it again. He began to talk. Everything he talked about he saw clearly before him, but did not reflect that he was putting it into words.—"What we want is a *broom* in the parish! Common folk, they say. I've said many a time: I hate that word. It's an ugly word. But now it's swung round, now I have to use it. Everything's swung round, and I'm on the other side. Astri and Lauris, I see them on the common folks' side, I believe I'll soon see the whole parish there. But then I'd rather clear out. They ought to be tethered or put in a pen. I see it now: it's the same all over the country. It's going to be like that for

a time. To think that it should look like this to *me!*"

"Everything looks bad at night-time," said Ingri quietly.

She was right there and no mistake, he laughed; the world was not up to much, at night-time.—"And it'll get better later on, Ingri, just you wait. Though it may not get better for us just. Alone, you say. Ay, one has to go that far, till one's left alone. The one who did the fighting was always alone; the others had a good time, as they call it. Only when it comes to war they feel it a bit—you've seen them, haven't you, Ingri? /, you see, I haven't seen them till now. They were a trifle pale, many of them. Astri now, she's an aristocrat. She looks up and on, she was born to be the mother of a great race. But the mother-instinct belongs to the common people too; it's plebeian, I've read, it draws you down. I'm afraid she's being drawn lower and lower. But to think it should ever look like this to me!"

Ingri said nothing. Then she fell asleep, for Odin was talking more to himself than out loud. At last he too fell asleep.

He was the first to wake, when he heard Anders stirring in the room above. Ingri lay in a sweat. He doubted she was ill.

He looked across the room.—Strange, he thought, that the sea hadn't been the first thing he called to mind. That he hadn't felt kind of drawn by it. "And this is me," he said; "and those are my clothes over there. I'll have to

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put them on, today like any other day."——

Lauris had gone down to the sea; that was the last Odin had seen of him that evening, and afterwards he thought no more of *him*. Lauris waited till he heard that Odin had taken the road for home. Then he began to walk along the river, he had an idea he had heard a splash somewhere. There he found Engelbert.—"Is that you?" he jeered. "Seems to me you've got wet?" Engelbert's teeth were chattering and he couldn't answer.—"Has Odin gone?" was the first thing he said.—"Yes, but he's not far off, do you want to speak to him?"—"Oh no, no!"—"Hm! I was just thinking he'd killed you. Well, what do you say now, Engelbert Olsen?"—"I'll have him jailed!" said Engelbert, shivering. Lauris cocked his ear to the road above. All was still. He took Engelbert home to his cottage, which was not far off. Lauris whispered that they must go quietly, because of the lodgers upstairs.

When Engelbert had changed his clothes and got warm again, Lauris said: "Now we'll serve Odin the only way he'll feel it. You're going to vanish and leave no trace. You're to steal aboard the boat early tomorrow—hush, not a word! and go south by the *express route*—it won't much matter if he's left saddled with your debt? You borrowed the journey money on his name, just lately, you had sense enough for that. You clear out, we don't hear any more of you; for you're finished here, you can see that yourself."

Engelbert looked at Lauris. They had only lighted a

tiny lamp.—"You're a vermin," he said.—"As you take it, my boy. But now I'm helping you, anyway. Good advice is dear, but I look for payment in another quarter. I'll keep an eye on Odin, the next few days. Pity you can't have a look at him too. You must write, lad, and let me know where you are, then I'll answer and tell you a thing or two. Murder, you see. Our chairman's a murderer now, you've scored off him fine."

It was easier than he expected to talk him over, and Lauris waited to see it all carried out.

Next morning the steamer was there before daylight, and Lauris himself rowed him over to the pier and slipped him aboard, on the outer side of the boat. It all worked according to plan, Lauris didn't think a cat had seen a trace of the fugitive, and he himself sculled off in the darkness among the vessels and came ashore unseen. And as he rowed in to the hard by the Haaberg boat-shed, he called to mind that this too was Odin's work, that the steamer no longer called here, but over by the factory. He hadn't actually worked for it; it came about of itself, you might say; but it was a thorn in the flesh of a good neighbour.—"And today you're going to have a thorn in your own flesh," he muttered. "And then we've got shut of this mischief-maker who's just gone off; there I've done the parish and myself a real service. And *summa summarum*, Odin!"

That day the sheriff rang up Haaberg.

Astri answered the telephone, had done so every time almost, of late. The sheriff only wanted to hear if they were at home tomorrow or the next day. There was something he had to talk to them about—they needn't be afraid.—"The sheriff," was all she said, as she turned from the telephone. Lauris sat at the table eating; she didn't look at him, but she saw well enough that he was badly upset. Then she had to look at him after all, she *must* see him scared for once in his life. It was just as she thought, his colour had gone an uncanny greyish yellow.

For herself she only felt that her eyes were rather stiff in her head from having slept so little the last few nights.—"Weren't you thinking of going to the wood?" she asked.—"The boys have gone already; I don't know that I'll bother about it today. I haven't properly got over my illness yet," he added. He took the opportunity, while he thought she was listening, to talk about several things, but he soon found she was paying no attention. Then he pulled himself together in earnest: "Is it really such an awkward business, this? It was for your sake, wasn't it? Of course it was wrong of me, but good Lord!"

She glanced at him quickly.—"Wrong?" she said. "It was a *mistake*, do you hear!" Presently she calmed down and was as she had been the last few days, gentle and quiet in her manner and a good way aloof from her sur-

roundings; she scarcely saw the children when they came near her, but if she did notice them she would likely enough take the youngest boy or the little girl in her arms and stay clasping them a long time.—"It was a mistake, Lauris, and now it's done. A mistake is not the worst thing in the world. A man who never makes a mistake all the days of his life, he's not for me. And now it's done, as I say. What's done can't be undone; I've learnt *that* much."

"He's coming here today then?" Lauris inquired meekly.—"The sheriff? No, tomorrow, I believe he said. It doesn't matter to me. Let it take its course," she said to herself. "I know what I have to do. It's for our children I do it. Chiefly for them. I knew it would come one day."

"This? did you know about this?" Lauris gave her a look as sharp as a knife.

"Nonsense! Then it wouldn't have come to this. But I knew it was going to be hard—to be married to you. And that I should go through with it, whatever happened."

"I believe you regret it all the same, marrying me?"—he felt he couldn't stand that singsong voice of hers much longer.

She turned from the stove she was tending and looked at him in silence. Lauris laughed:

"That's not a very pleasant face you've put on!"

"Regret it!" she scoffed, and went on with what she was doing. "You talk like a little child."

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He went over and tried to put his arm round her, that was the right thing to do sometimes, he remembered. But she shook him off at once, it must have sent a shudder all through her.—"That that Mina woman should go off and report us," he said, thrusting his hands in his pockets.—"Don't say anything bad about Mina, if you please!"—her voice was now gentle again.—"No, no. But everybody must know, if they choose to know it, that Ola Haaberg was half-crazy and a bit more at the end of his days, they can't be such fools?"—"They don't know anything of the sort," she said in a low voice. "Odin, maybe, for he said something about it once—no, it shan't be!"—"What? What shan't be?"—"I won't go to him for help. I'd rather swear to a lie if need be, I'm my own mistress. Have been all my life."

Lauris winked one eye, whistled and said with a little smile: "Odin, ay, how's he feeling today, I wonder. Not up to much, I should think. *Hes* gone and made a mistake, he has; last night. Hunted a man into the sea. Killed him, as well as he knew how. It was Engelbert, if you want to know, his own friend and trusty squire."—"Did he?" she said, took up her work and went to the kitchen.

How could he talk and look at her like that! she thought. How could he let her go and do such a thing.

"No, I'm damned if I go after her!" said Lauris to himself. "He! he! I was a *fool!*"

After a while he did so all the same, for he saw Odin come across and go to the kitchen door.

Odin greeted them as usual, in a bright and cheery voice. Lauris could see that Astri was also rather taken aback by it today.

Well, it was Lauris he wanted to speak to, he said. The thing was that Arnesen had resigned his post as manager, here was his letter.—"Already?" said Lauris, raising his eyebrows. Astri looked from one to the other, more wide-awake than she had been for a long time: "What's the meaning of that?"—"You know he undertook it against his will so to speak," said Odin—"anyhow you know, Lauris, that he didn't care for it; and now he's bought a vessel, thought he could earn more that way." Astri stood looking straight at him.—"Well," he said, answering the challenge of her eyes, "to put it plainly: if people couldn't stop being spiteful and throwing stones at him? You know something about that, don't you?"—he turned to Lauris and looked him up and down. Lauris stood as dry and hard as a post. Odin turned to Astri again, seemed to take her in and scanned her well: "But what's the matter with you? You're not taking the Spanish sickness, are you?"—"Not likely!"—"Hm. You look so washed out, a lot of you—Mina at Segelsund's just the same. Is it Ola that's given you a scare—no, it can't be?"

Astri gave him a sharp and scornful glance.—"Well, he threw himself into the sea, there's no getting away from that," said Odin. "He must have thought it was the only thing to do. It wasn't nice of him, but—"

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"He was crazy at the finish, just a little off his head, wasn't he?" asked Lauris.

Crazy, no; Odin wouldn't have called him that. But too old! altogether too old.

Astri gave one glance at Odin, and one at Lauris, so calm that it was uncanny, then went into the parlour.

And now they'd have to call another board meeting, as soon as possible? said Odin. And Lauris would have to see to that, now that he was well again. The books were at the factory.

Lauris did not answer, for Odin seemed lost in thought. Lauris cleared his throat once or twice, and at last Odin pulled himself together, smiled faintly and went to the door.—He's missed his sleep, thought Lauris.

Odin went straight to the factory. Ingrid was not yet up, Anders was busy in the byre, and it was best to leave her in peace, thought Odin.—"Even if I'd been up to talking to her," he said. She was well again, she had told him. What he wanted at the factory he didn't know; he stopped once or twice and looked around, at the farms and the landscape and out over the sea: had anyone ever seen such fine weather? Why should it be such out-and-out fine weather just now? Or was it only because it had been stormy all summer and autumn almost? He surveyed it and took possession of it, and at that moment he had it all within him so wholly and joyfully, a part of himself: the Voe with its little waves that ran glittering to meet the

sun, the river flowing so safely in its bed and out to sea, the headlands and bays turning to him with an old familiar look; and then the factory, that nightmare, and the other houses along the south shore, they stood there and knew about him, as they felt the light and air above them. Everything was *very good*.—"And I dare look it in the eyes today as any other day," he said, nodding to himself.

The factory carried on as usual, and the builders were doing their job. No Engelbert was to be seen. No, and why should he be? Odin smiled. But they look at me, he thought, almost as if they'd never seen me before. One or two tried to start talking to him too.—"Patience, men!" he muttered inwardly. "Just a little patience, you'll soon hear it. You needn't think I shall run away."

He walked round the new building a couple of times, and then in. But just as he was going to open the door he heard a woman behind him mention Engelbert's name. There were two of them who had just met.—"Today?" said one. "But bless me, I came from town by the boat today, I did, landed on the pier here—/ didn't see him."—"No, no, of course you didn't, he was making a bolt for it, and it was Lauris Haaberg himself that rowed him across; our boys were down there and saw it; he was going a long trip, what they could make out. Ay ay."—"That's what I always said; that Engelbert, says I, he's both too big and too small to be a working man. Only hope he's not up to some mischief where he's going—that we shan't have fighting and fire-raising before long!"

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—"There'll be a bust-up before winter's out!" whispered the other. "And good luck to it!" she added, with a jeering little cackle, as she picked up her bucket and went off.

Odin turned in the doorway and went up to the one who was left. He asked what was that she was saying, had Engelbert gone away? He got the whole story in answer.—"He fairly stole aboard," she said.

The daylight looked just the same, and Odin felt no great change in himself either. The only thing was that he gave two or three great yawns, he was so tired.—"A man's not up to much when he's missed his sleep and got cold knees," he said with a laugh, to the woman and to himself.

He went on to the pier and talked to the men who were landing herrings. It was the day for that. Then took a skiff and rowed across to the skippers, for he had several things to talk to them about. They were decent folk, no squabbling there, but as much coffee and food as you liked. But down in the cabin he was near falling asleep again. One of the skippers knew Lauris and asked after him. Odin asked if Engelbert had been there lately.—Not so long ago. He'd been there pretty often, he had.

Odin thought he could see a smile lurking under the serious and unconcerned expression of their faces; what was it they were thinking of?—"Engelbert's cleared out," he said, taking a good look at them. They were astonished to hear it. So it wasn't that they had in their minds, it struck him with a sharp pang. He had taken a

couple of drams with his coffee, and they must have gone straight to his head, for now he found he could control himself no longer, he laughed aloud and struck his fist against the bulkhead so that it rang: "He's been here, I see, he's been here with his tattle, don't you deny it! You think of what he told you as soon as you set eyes on me, I can see you do—it's a lie, do you hear! I've hunted him into the sea for it, but he got off too cheap, that's not enough to wash Ingri clean."

He looked at them vacantly for a while.—"No," he said quietly, "you can't wash anyone clean that's been so bespattered. Besides: what if it was true? Heh? It doesn't hurt me much more than putting stitches in dead flesh; I've tried that once, with needle and thread, boys! You said something about Lauris, didn't you? That's the one who's the liar. She never saw him till she came here."

All three skippers sat awkwardly looking at him, with a glance at each other now and again; they were feeling as uncomfortable as could be, on his account. Well, well, let them go to blazes.

On coming ashore again he went up to Arnesen. He stayed sitting there, saying that he'd have to go home, ought to have been home long ago. But he didn't go.—"No, but I ought to have looked in at home," he kept saying. "I ought to have taken a look at *Ingri*" Arnesen had a lot of writing to do, but now he looked up, and stayed so.—"It isn't anything to glare at me like that for, is it?" Arnesen did not answer.—"I ought to have seen

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how she is, I meant; there were lots of things I ought to have seen!"—"She's not poorly, is she?"—"Poorly? No, but—. It's a bad thing to be away from home. Bad, bad, when there are things one doesn't know."

It was getting on for dinner-time, and Arnesen asked if he wouldn't take a bit of food with him.—Yes, Odin had no objection. "Food, ay!" he said; "a mouthful of food first, and then home. Things often look different when you've had something to eat"—he was quite boyish to look at.

Not much was said while they were eating. After the meal Odin lay down on the bench and fell asleep at once, though it made far too short a bed for his inches. It was already dusk when he woke, the light was leaking out of the world, as he fancied. He had some coffee, and then set off for home in earnest.

He regretted that he hadn't shaken hands with Arnesen before leaving. The other had stood expecting it.

When he had gone some way along the road he became aware that he had someone behind him. It was Odin's way, when he was followed by anyone he didn't much care to meet, to put on the pace till the other had to run if he wanted to overtake him. In this way he had worn out many a garrulous one who was trying to catch him. But this was the Silver Fox himself, he could hear that; there was no sound of steps on the road, only a padding. He would gladly have given that fellow the slip this evening, but thought better of it; he slackened his pace.

And the other stepped out, old as he was, now he could hear his stick on the road, that was what helped him along; he heard the fall of the flat feet. Now he was alongside Odin, and full of astonishment that it was really *he*.

Ay, Vikesylt in his capacity of parish clerk had attended a funeral away south on Breistranda. It was a sad and solemn matter with all these deaths. They bring us a grave and fateful message.—"You'd better take care of yourself," said Odin; "you're tempting the Almighty the way you run round among the neighbours." The other wanted to stop, but Odin walked on.—Vikesylt would make bold to say that he had settled his account both with himself and with the Man Above: he would hold out until he dropped at the post that had been assigned him. He talked of one thing and another, and came at last to what he had in mind.

"How is it you hold yourself so aloof from the young men's movement, Odin? At the present juncture this is a great loss both to yourself and more especially to the parish."—"I? why, I'm right in the middle of it!" replied Odin in surprise. "But now look here, man: Do you think I have any gifts that way? Do you think I'm really a genuine thoroughbred agitator? No, you've got to answer me!"—Well, Vikesylt would say that, according to such insight and discernment as he possessed—

He was long-winded about it. Then Odin interrupted: "So you think that if only you and your people could get power over me, it would make me lighter inwardly?

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I should never go black any more and rush off and act like a savage? If I thought that I'd say good-bye to it straight away, I don't want to be so well-behaved and sly, no, I don't!"

Vikesylt raised his stick, and his voice too:

"You're depressed now, I can hear, and perturbed and downhearted, and I don't wonder at it, after the things that have been said. I have had great experience, Odin, great experience, let me tell you. When one's own wife is in question, oh, Odin, I can understand your feelings. But you must forgive. Forgiveness, you see, is the greatest thing in the world; that is my opinion. If she was inveigled in her youth, caught in the alluring toils of youth, and made a false step, Odin, you must forgive her, I tell you!"

Odin felt that his face had gone stiff as bark, but he made an effort to hold himself erect.

"Did Ingri make a false step, do you say? Are you sure of it?" He looked Vikesylt in the eyes.

"Well, you know—well, after all it might be reckoned a false step, what she said about her father, although to be sure it is a thing that should be judged leniently, that she should try to conceal what was dishonouring to her father."

Odin said: "That's a nasty way you have of tale-bearing. We hardly knew it here before you came, they were just honest blockheads; barring one or two of the women-folk."

"The other matter I can scarcely believe, if I am to give my candid personal opinion."

"Is there any more then?"

"No, that's what I'm saying, that properly speaking there is no more. Well, I mean that for which you drove Engelbert Olsen into the sea; that is what I am referring to. I have no wish to meddle with that. I shut my ears when such things are reported. One ought to be careful about believing gossip and lies."

Odin caught him by the arm, hard, though he laughed as he did so: "Say it straight out! Out with it!"

"Ow!—but I don't believe it, I tell you!"

Odin didn't let go, and Vikesylt had to come out with it: That she had had something to do with Lauris, in Nordland, they were talking about it at the funeral. "I don't believe an *atom* of it, Odin!"

Odin released him, and said fairly calmly: "You ought to believe it; and a lot more of you. Such a bloody lie as that must be just to the taste of the likes of you." He stood for a moment fumbling with his pipe: "Tell me, where's the wind coming from? I can't get a light to my pipe and it's a dead calm! There, now it's alight." Vikesylt cleared his throat:

"But what I wanted to say this evening, Odin, was just this: that you ought to rise superior to this. Superior to all adversity and disappointment and suchlike that you may encounter on the path of life!"

Odin stood looking at him and forgot to smoke,

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"Innocent!" he burst out. "God, yes, he's as innocent as a child. But to talk to him, that's like treading on a pickaxe and getting a smack on the jaw from the handle." He said good-bye and made for home.

Vikesylt watched him go, then took his stick and went *his way*.

6

Odin did not look back, but he saw Vikesylt in his mind's eye, how he rounded his back and tramped out into the parish to tell his story. He could see those who awaited him, one by one they came before him to the life: underdog in every feature. *They* believed it.

He went to the stable first. He confessed to himself that he wasn't equal to going into the house just yet.

"Lies, lies!" he kept saying in the darkness. "But when you've *heard* the lie, what are you going to do about it?" He stood about a little longer, scarcely knowing where he was; then leaned against the wall with a sigh: "No use—asking such questions!" He went out again, stood looking about him, and his eye caught a load of wood that hadn't been stacked. He untied the rope and set about piling the wood against the wall of the shed, and when that was done he looked to see if enough wood had been chopped. Barely that, as usual with Anders—so he might just as well take and saw up a log or two.

"No, this kind of thing won't do," he said all at once, left the log on the trestle and went in.

Indoors he saw only Ingri, but he had a clear feeling that Anders and Per were there as well. And Ingri backed away from him, that was all he could see, and she was pale as the whitewashed wall behind her. They stood still and looked at each other, eye against eye. Odin went greyer every moment. Then he heard Anders trying to tell him about a horse that had fallen into the river up in the north fields: he had to get the reins round his neck and haul him out! And he managed it, it wasn't a bit hard really; Anders raised his voice more and more, when he found his father was listening to him, at last.—"I dare say," said Odin, blinking his eyes; "pulling a horse out by the neck, I've heard of that; it's a dangerous game, boy, a dangerous game! The north fields, eh?" he frowned. The north slope: that's where the rock-slide happened once, in old days, a little to the north there. That's where the rock-slide went, ay. And did its work too.

"Something to eat? No, thanks; but a little coffee, I think." It was brought, but Ingri's hands were terribly shaky as she set it before him. When he had drunk his coffee he went out again. The air was fresher outside, and then he had some sawing to keep him busy, could find lots of things to do out-of-doors. He sawed till the sweat ran off him. Then he was going to chop up what he had sawn, but it was too dark for that, and he wouldn't fetch a lantern, it seemed an impossibility; besides, it was probably out of order.—"No, I'm not up to any more!" he said aloud.

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He stayed sitting on the chopping-block. Many a man before him must have sat on a block like this when things were not too straight, one was pretty well bound to land there. Anders came out, asked if he could chop some more wood, or maybe he ought to fetch in a sack of turf? Then it struck him that he had to take a letter which should have been posted; it was that application for a place at the national high school.—"So you're thinking of going there?" said Odin.—"Yes. That's what we settled, wasn't it?"—"Ay ay, I suppose it was. I'm sure it was." Anders went off. Tall and straight, and proud of himself this evening, after saving a horse in the old-fashioned way.

Odin took his head in his hands.—"No, no, Ingri," he muttered. "What made you go like that when I came in?"

Per asked his mother several times if father wasn't coming in.—"Oh yes, he won't be long," she said. "He won't be long, poor boy." She pulled herself together and went out to strain the evening milk.

All at once Odin got up.—"It's got to be!" he said. He planted the axe in the block, hung up the saw on its nail, shut the door of the wood-shed. His fingers were trembling so that he could scarcely manage it.—"I saw it in her just now, and everyone else has seen it—I'll turn her out of the house!" He said it dryly and calmly, as one might condemn an old house to be pulled down. And now he was on the road. He muttered to himself as he walked, something from the night before.—" 'It's all come out,'

she said. '*Everything*,⁹ she said." At that moment he recalled the tremor that had gone through her when he told her Engelbert had said ugly things about her—now he hurried on with long strides. " 'That Lauris used and threw over,' wasn't that what he said? They must have known it a long time. They must have wondered at me—they're wondering yet! She can go north with her father."

But at the doorstep he halted. He looked in surprise at the house, and then at one thing after another.

"Lapp?" he said. "Lapp? Ah, now I have it: There was once a man who drove out a Lapp woman." He put his hand to his forehead in bewilderment. "The parish!" he stammered. "It was the parish drove him to it. But I? —/ *wont obey!* Not even if she was Lapp and rascal too."

He stood where he was, with his hand at the back of his neck, though he had a notion that he looked like a loony. —"The face of the parish, ay," he nodded. "It's worried many a one, it has, worried them into doing something big—it made one man drive a Lapp out of his house once. A poor sort of fellow that, he ought to have been driven out after her. Blind impulse, eh? All of a piece, was he? Don't talk rubbish this evening. There were many things they didn't know in old days. I know ten times more. If it's weakness, then let me be weak."

He turned round, saw the roof of the outhouse against the sky, and the shoulder of the mountain that looks so freezingly high and abrupt at evening—he clenched his fists and cried:

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"But if the Almighty's what he's made out to be, he ought to help me now, in this need of mine, and do it handsomely too! If not, I say straight out—"

All it came to was a little groan, and then he went in-doors. He asked Per, who sat drawing by the lamp, where his mother was.—"She's gone to bed," replied the boy, bending over his figure with his tongue in the corner of his mouth. "She was feeling so poorly," he added, as he made a big stroke with his pencil: "Now he's got his gun in his hand, he's just going to shoot and kill something, look!"

When Odin saw how ill Ingri was, he stood still with his hand on the door-knob. Her face was all aglow and her cheeks were red as fire; and her eyes were burning like red-hot coals. Her lips were half open and dry. He went in and sat on the side of her bed, but she did not seem to notice him. He sat there a long time looking at her.—"Oh, but good God," he said at last; "is that the way it's going? Are you as bad as *that*?"

He straightened himself, looked about for something to fix his eyes on. He had gone pale with anxiety.

"It can't be that he's *heard my prayer*?" he whispered.

Yes, that was it; the Almighty, whoever he was or was not, he was taking Ingri now.—"And then I've lost after all," he said to himself. "Lost, lost, ay. As they did in old days. As men always will do. Get what they prayed for, so they can see how small they are—get the rock-^ slide started, sometimes." He rose abruptly:

"But: I won't give in yet, you know enough of me for that. I won't have any help!"

He went out to the kitchen, and came back with a cold compress which he laid on Ingri's forehead. She revived after it had been on a little while, he could see; he even thought some new life came into her eyes by degrees. The flush faded away, and little by little she grew pale. He spoke to her time after time, couldn't help it. She answered, but so low that he didn't catch it. As far as he could tell she was saying she felt better now.

Later on in the night he saw that she was cold and spread another blanket over her. As he drew himself up again he exclaimed: "To think one hasn't a living soul to talk to when one needs it!" But when he had said that he felt he could talk to her after all. He sat down and took her hand.—"How is it you didn't tell me that, Ingri? Why didn't you say—that you'd known Lauris before? Not one *word* have you said about it."

She gave a start, her eyes shrank away.

"Was that what he said?"

"Yes. He said more than that. There'd been more than acquaintance, he said."

She withdrew her hand and stared at him in terror, more and more awake.

"Then that was what you believed?" she whispered. "When you came in this evening and looked at me?"

Odin went slack all over. His features seemed wiped out. His voice too sounded lifeless.

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"I see. I see, he—he was lying."

"I met him one evening at a dance. He frightened me. That was all, Odin."

When he recovered himself, he sank on his knees by the bedside. Ingri gathered strength enough to stroke his hair. He shrank in pain at each touch of her hand.

7

Ingri was asleep when he woke in the morning, but he could see and hear she was ill.

It was grey and still outside, the same fine weather; it positively weighed on Odin's chest. Over the mountains in the east the dawn was turning delicately paler, through shades of pink and yellow, from the westward came the murmur of the surf, scarcely to be heard.

Anders came from the stable.—"The horse is all right again/' he said—"Ah, the *horse*" said Odin. "That fellow can always get on his feet."—"But shan't we go for the doctor? For mother, I mean—she's ill, isn't she?"—"If we only knew where to find him."—"We'll fetch the one from town, he's a better doctor," Anders proposed; "I'll take the motor-boat and go in."

Odin said nothing. Only it was such a strange thing today to know that here was Anders a grown-up lad, it touched him with a sense of joy, which at the same time was not far from pain. Then the other thoughts came back, the whole swarm, and made a dead set at him. He was forced to go into the bedroom, to Ingri. There he

stood looking her in the face, but forgot her even as he did so.—"There's no power in existence that can protect the defenceless," he muttered. "So what is it we're worrying about? Ay, tell me what's the good of it all?"

After breakfast he had a look at the papers. He only glanced through them casually, saw nothing that concerned him. Then his eye fell on a headline, and he thought somehow he must read the paragraph carefully, he didn't know why. It was about a man in a foreign country who had shot his party leader in the street in broad daylight and let himself be arrested on the spot. The leader had betrayed their cause, he asserted; so he had sentenced him to death and carried out the sentence himself. It was believed the man had been shot offhand.

Odin sat still with the paper in his hand.—"Curious!" he said. "Curious that I should happen to read this *now*!" And then it faced him bare and stark, the thought that had lain at the centre of all the others and driven them round in a whirlwind: What are you going to do now, Odin? He sat on and on, felt that time was passing ceaselessly before him, that it would soon be evening. He was back in the grey old times: he could do what he chose! Now he had it clear, as he looked before him, a broad look of happy surprise: I'm one of them, I am. I'm all I choose to be. He smiled as he sat there, and the smile stayed on his lips long after it had faded out within him. His voice spoke from the darkest depth of seriousness:

"That's how they sentence a man like him!"

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When he got up he had sentenced Lauris to death. He would go across gun in hand, call him out and shoot him as one shoots a dog or a worn-out horse. Would then proclaim it to the whole parish. The thing was decided, so firmly that it called for no more reflection.—"I've known in my heart I'd have to do it, known it all my life," he said when he reached the kitchen.—"Known what?" asked Anders.—"Ah, *something!*" he looked at Anders with one eye smaller than the other. "And to think I've put up with it all this time," he added. "What may happen afterwards must take care of itself."—"Well, I suppose we're to go for the doctor?" said Anders.—"The doctor? Why, yes, we'll get him. Hm!"

And then Ingri, falling sick just now. One would have to wait; there was no hurry. No, now he had it: he'd take Lauris with him to town, and then he'd pitch him into the sea. Not so showy, but what did that matter? What he'd do afterwards, when Ingri was strong enough, that he'd have to think about. It was impossible to look so far ahead. Worst for the boys.

When he came outside the feeling surged to his heart that the parish was full of decent folk, as it had always been; a germ of evil in every one, no doubt, and some gossiping and lying and Silver Fox here and there, that didn't matter a scrap. But Lauris sucked up the evil into himself and gave it out again as pure poison, he was the kind of fellow they challenged to single combat in heathen times, and then the country-side was rid of the

worst it held, for some time to come.—"The Juvikings," he said, and now he was smiling again. "Nobody remembers them except me. Fm not even one of them. But there's one thing to be done, I see that: wipe out everything and go back to the wilds."

As he went across to Lauris he kept saying, and anyone might have taken it for a scrap of a song:

"That's how they sentence a man like him."

Lauris met him outside.—"I won't ask you to come in," he said; "you've been going round the parish picking up infection. But you're all right yourself?" Lauris had a good look at him. Odin wondered that his fist didn't clench itself in his pocket and try to fly out.

Lauris was not inclined for any boat trip to town. He hadn't properly recovered yet. The boat was half-decked, oh yes, but he must remember it was three good hours from the voe here to town.—"And you're not going to leave home either, with your wife ill—can't our young devils make the trip?" Odin smiled, he couldn't help it. He's afraid of me, he thought. Maybe he reads his sentence in my eyes, the villain? No hurry, for that matter.—"There was another thing," he said; "I had a hope of finding my father still alive; I haven't heard anything. Well, well, we'll let the boys go. I must telephone to the doctor first."

While they stood at the corner of the house talking, the sheriff drove up. Odin saw at once that he wasn't out for pleasure today, in fact he didn't look at all comfortable.

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There was nothing to be seen in Lauris. He called to one of the boys to come and take the horse, then asked the sheriff to walk in. For no doubt this was where he was going. But the sheriff had got into conversation with Odin, about some official business. Lauris waited a few moments, then turned and went in.

Astri and he had scarcely spoken since this time the day before. She had seen the sheriff's turn-out, but she affected to take no notice of Lauris.—"Well, steady's the word now," he said. "So we don't lose our bearings in the fog and run aground."

She went about arranging the chairs and dusting here and there.

"Yes, I had it out with myself last night," she said. "I'm going to speak the truth this time too."

"Are you crazy?"

"No, but I have been."

"Well, well, do as you please."

"It shall be as I please." She came nearer. There was in her voice a reminder of its old deep, warm tone: "I thought I had to do it for—well, for your sake as well as our children's. But the mother of our children must not be guilty of a thing like this. Nothing of the sort is going to happen now. I've done it in my thoughts, in the sight of God; he must judge me for it as he pleases. But as I tell you, I'm not going to do it. Grandmother—do you think *shed* have done it?"—"No, no." Lauris was looking at the floor.—"Ah, *you!*" she said, and now a hard

brightness flared up in her eyes—"you always leave me to do whatever I choose."

Lauris went out again. The sheriff and the chairman were standing in the middle of the yard; they seemed to be talking about something that nobody else was to hear. At last they separated, and when the sheriff came in he looked many years younger, he even stooped down and stroked the cat.

Sheriff Mork was usually quiet in his manner when he was paying official visits, but now and again, when he was in really good spirits, he would come in with the rush and roar of a steamboat, colours flying, as they used to say, and so he greeted Astri now. He squeezed her hand till it hurt, and his voice rang in the room so that the baby set up a howl.—"There, see what respect I command!" he laughed. Well, that was that, and now he could tell them that he'd come on a piece of business, but he'd lost it on the way, the birds came and ate it up. He'd been talking to Odin Setran outside here, and Odin took his oath that Ola Haaberg was crazy at the finish and wanted to do his own people a bad turn. So now he might just as well go home again at once. Well, it was about a letter he had written—no, he *must* have been off his head! The sheriff himself had had a kind of suspicion of it, and now Odin and others could clinch it with their evidence.—"Oh, ay, ay, ay," he laughed, "we often get a snub like this, and sometimes it's a good thing too, a mighty good thing."

Lauris's shoulders were lightened and he held his head higher and higher.

Astri had stood looking at the floor, while a flush kept coming and going in her cheeks. Now she looked up, first at Lauris and then at the sheriff. She cleared her throat a couple of times.

"It was about some money for the almshouse, wasn't it?"

"Yes? It was something like that."

"Very well. What he said in the letter was right, I feel sure. He was not so crazy as all that."

The sheriff and Lauris both turned a stare on her.

"And they shall have the money, the ones it was meant for, no fear of that; they shall have interest as well. We have—talked it over, and now it shall be done."

"I see, then there was really something in it after all?" said the sheriff in surprise.

"It was grandmother's wish, yes. But you must please keep quiet about it, sheriff; we don't want to have any gossip in the parish."

Good heavens, no, she mustn't take him for a wolf, laughed the sheriff. As far as *he* could see, it must be quite an easy matter to arrange this.—"If you hadn't already told Odin about it, sheriff," said Lauris.—"What an idea! No danger there, I was as subtle as the serpent; and Odin's not a man to be afraid of. He got quite excited when he heard Ola had written something which

might be awkward for you, it was only then he called to mind how old and foolish Ola had been at the finish." The sheriff laughed till he coughed, but stopped short when he found he was the only one laughing.—"There was that about the tax," said Astri. "But I look at that from another point of view: It *is* our money, properly speaking. And it's been lying in the bank and now it's the almshouse money, and they'll get the interest on it; I believe that's the right way to look at it."—"Without a doubt, without a doubt!" the sheriff agreed.

He got ready to leave, he was pressed for time; he took leave of them with a firm and candid shake of the hand. Ludvik came limping up and brought out his horse, helped to put it in.

Ludvik had shown more and more of this readiness of late, and now he could hardly move quick enough when he saw anything to be done. But as a rule it was Astri he was so anxious to help; she had a feeling that he watched her like a dog. She turned to him now, as the sheriff drove off.—"Can you really harness a horse?" He blinked as if the sun were in his eyes: Oh, he could make a shift to do it. And now he could easily carry in an armful of firewood for her, if she liked.—"Not just yet," she smiled. "You must have a little more time to recover. You're getting tired of my little girl, I dare say? You'd like to be something more than a nurse, eh?"—"Oh no!" He looked her full in the face. "Oh no, I'll go back to her at once"—he was already on the way.—"Who'd have thought it

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would turn out so easy!" she said to herself when he had gone.

Lauris had been standing apart looking at the sky. He turned to Astri: "There, now we've got that over. And easy it was, you're right there, in your own way." She did not answer.—"And all the worry you might have saved yourself," he added with a little laugh.—"You might have saved me rather, if we're going to talk about that. Not that I think it's anything to laugh at, exactly. If the Lord came to our help when we didn't expect it."—"I understand so little about that kind of thing," said he.—"Yes, that's true enough. And besides, we haven't heard the end of the story yet. It'll come out, and folks will believe what they want to believe. It'll have to take its course."—"But what about Odin, taking it on himself to make out Ola was maudlin?" Lauris was laughing again.—"We didn't need *his* help, and a good thing it was."—"Well, I'm not so sure it was meant as help, just. I expect what he thought was that now you could run along and deny all you pleased; then his time would come. I shall get to know him soon."

Astri was not listening to him; she went in.—

The town doctor was not to be found, but after a long hunt Odin got on the track of the district doctor, and Anders and one of the Lauris boys crossed the fiord and brought him. He didn't think it was anything serious with Ingri, she would just have to lie quiet till she felt strong again; it was her nerves that had failed.

Astri came over in the evening. She wanted to go in and see to Ingri. Odin was in two minds what to do. Ingri was still weak, not fit to talk and needing rest; but Astri's look told him it would be hard for her to have to turn back this time. *He* was the one who ought to have a talk with her, about several things—then after all he asked her to go into the bedroom. She was already at the door when she stopped and turned to Odin again.—"I believe I'd just as well talk to you instead," she said.—"I rather think so too."—"But how is it you haven't got in any help?"—"We help ourselves so capitally without. The nurse was here just now, but I hadn't sent for her; I told her to go where she was wanted, I know there's lots needing her."

Astri was not listening, she was lost in other thoughts.—"Tell me, what is it that's wrong with Ingri?" she asked.—"I will, if you don't know it. She's suffering from wicked tongues. They've tried to murder her for me."

"Is it really so?" Astri stared at him in horror.

"So it is, ay. They didn't bring it off, this time. Next time—is not going to come. So I've been thinking. There's going to be a stop to this."

"Hm! hm! I have a kind of dread in me, hm! hm! And *you* believe it's Lauris who's at the bottom of this?"

Odin turned dark in the face, almost blue, it seemed to her. But she met his eyes without blinking.

"I'll have to talk to you about it another day," she said. "I'm not up to it this evening." She turned round

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at the door and paused for a moment; then said: "You mustn't put all the blame on other folks, Odin. And you must give Ingri my love. I shall do all I can to stop the talk in the parish—you must give her my love!"

Odin muttered that he would do so, and Astri said good-bye and left.

8

The next day was Sunday. As soon as the telephone was open Odin got a message that his father was dead. He did not know why, and was afterwards annoyed with himself for it, but he was near saying "thank God" when he heard it.—"It's come like an omen," he said. "I've been waiting for it. But am I getting superstitious?" And when he looked about him, everything was so very different from what it had been. It was all far away, and most of it had shrunk to a puny size, and no matter what he thought of, the people and the life of the parish and everything that happened, he saw it all in another light, it no longer existed for *him*. It was the same with the weather, there was another note in it now, a deep and grave note which had a meaning of its own, it must have been like this for many days now: not a puff of wind stirred, there was this sheer blue calm everywhere, blue were the mountains, and bluer the sea, and blue-grey clouds were spread all over the sky.

But when he had stood outside for a while he heard the surf on the skerries and shoals to the westward. The sea

had found its voice.—"Ah, I can hear you," said Odin. "I know what you're up to."⁹ Presently it would strike up with a storm—if only it would! A storm, ay, that would come in well now.

The thought of Ingri roused him time after time. Then he had to go in and look at her. It cheered her every time. She was not in the habit of talking much, nor was she fit for it, just yet. But she was getting better, he could see; no doubt she would recover pretty quickly. She promised she would soon be well.—Ay, and what *then*? it flashed across his mind. Then I shall do what I was born to do, he answered himself.

Before midday the gale sprang up off the land. It was there when Odin came out again, tearing and roaring along the hill-sides. That's the fellow that came near getting me one time, Odin smiled to himself. I was only a boy then, going to the fair, and Ingri was with me. It's a long time ago now—and it seems like only a few days!

In the course of the afternoon Mina came in, she had been to church.—And today there had been a crowd of people there, she said. And they could thank him for that.—"Thank me for it?" he looked at her incredulously.—Yes, that was what she had come to talk to him about; she was shocked at what he had said that evening at the meeting-house. "That's what's been working in folks' minds," she said.—"I see." Odin still sat there with a grey look about the eyes, hadn't heard more than half of what she said.—"They rushed out of the meeting,

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about half of them, soon after you had gone," she went on. "And today they were at church. I've talked to several of them—don't you think it's wrong, Odin? After all? What if it turned out that you were drawing them away from God?"

Odin was looking straight before him, he shook his head gently and smiled.—"No, I don't understand it either," said Mina; "but so it is, it goes the way you want it. You've a great responsibility there, Odin. It's a gift that may cost you dear."

He dropped his eyes and glanced quickly at her.—"Cost me dear, getting things the way I want them? I dare say it will, ay."—"But now I've come to ask one thing of you, Odin, and you mustn't say no. You must go to Astri and talk to her, for she's gone clean off her head, she means to swear a false oath." She told him about Ola's letter and all the rest. "Astri's taken it upon herself, so that Lauris may go free. You *must* talk to her!" she begged.—"No, you'll have to do that. You have more pull there than I. For that matter I don't believe she'll have to take an oath, and now I come to think of it, I believe the affair's been dropped already, as good as. But you ought to talk to her; go and talk to her, and hear. So he's driven her as far as that? Hm hm, I see! I'll remind him of it too, when I have my last talk with him. Or maybe she thought she had to do the like of that for her husband; she bought him as dear as that. Ay, and she had to go as far as the brink of the precipice, and *look* down, for we're

cousins, she and I. But beyond that she won't go, she's not to either. No use, Lauris. But you must talk to her, this very evening, so that she's not left all alone with it."

Mina said it couldn't be this evening; she had called there on her way here, and Astri was ill in bed, she had got it last night, got the real Spanish sickness, and seriously too, from what the maid said.—"What do you tell me?" said Odin after a moment. "Is Astri sick? What's the good of that?"—"Good?"—"Well, I only meant—"

He got up and walked across the room; he was looking for matches, but did not strike any. Then he went to Ingri in the bedroom. She had heard something of what they said, and asked if Astri was sick.—"Yes," he said, with an absent look.—"Won't you be going for the doctor then?" she said.—"Yes, of course. But don't think about that now. Lie still and pretend to be asleep." She closed her eyes, and he kissed her forehead and went out again.

The storm whined angrily against the windows, and a steady roar came from the forest and the mountains.—"Fresh weather," said Odin.—"So then Astri thought of taking it upon herself. That's what it is to be a mother. But: she'll right herself again sure enough. There's something that's carried her along all the time, I see that now. They call it fate, I've been told. A blind woman on a blind mare; but they get along fairly well all the same, the way they want to go; or the way they must go, I'm not so sure which it is. A countryman, they talk about. But a

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countryman was a man who lived in the dark, in a snug and woolly darkness; now he seems to have rubbed the sleep out of his eyes, the last of them, and he's not a countryman any longer. You don't believe me, I see. No, no, they must call themselves something. But I wonder if that's what makes them sail such a crooked course in this country, in everything almost—if it's because *here and there* the peasants are waking up? Ay, and will they ever be wide awake? They're beginning to think, that's so. But that's cold work, maybe they'd sooner drop it?"

He smoked as he talked, till a thick cloud hung over them, and he looked at Mina with a glimmer of his happy boyish smile; she stared at him, benumbed and not knowing what to make of him.—"Don't listen to me, please. I'm so tired, that's all. And then there's a big piece of work I've got to put off for a while—that makes a man talkative. I feel I ought to have gone about the country and raised a scare, got them to stop and think a bit. Maybe it was foolish of me, refusing to stand for the Storting, hm?"—"Yes, Odin, that was foolish of you."—"Well, you don't know what I'm talking about now. And then let them bind me hand and foot?—that looks to me like the road to ruin, for me anyway. I ought to have set to work all the same, I see that. Then maybe I'd have found out a rascal of a fellow, the very abscess that's poisoning the country, or whether he was only a flat-foot working underground like a mole—then for instance I might have caught and killed him, in the sight of everybody; what do you

say to that?"—"Ooh, Odin, you say such horrid things; what's the matter with you this evening?"—"I do say horrid things. But I'm only talking. Like all the rest. Why, you don't think I'll go off and do it? No. We don't believe in such things any longer. But they'd better not trust me, for all that. It's not so sure that I'm made of the same stuff as the others."

The wind came tearing round the corner of the house, gust after gust, and the roar on the slopes above grew louder and louder; and above it all the booming of the sea tried to make itself heard. Odin listened, and smiled at Mina: "He's saying what he thinks now; my word, he is. Plain-spoken weather. Not like the hum we can scarcely hear of an evening or at night-time." He sat still looking vaguely before him, swaying his head slightly to keep time with the storm. Then he said to himself: "Strange how it turns out, ay; here I am, back where I started, a heathen in the wilds. Maybe there's no other way sometimes for a man or a family. He's not to be envied, the one whose lot it is; no more is he to be wept over. Maybe he gets a bigger thrill of happiness than other folk, what do they know about it? The one who's reached high enough up, so that he can see and know things."

He turned to Mina again. She looked at her watch, but he motioned her to put it away. He was a trifle pale, but she was consoled to see that he hadn't a pale man's eyes, they were daringly bright, like those of some little boys. All the same she wished she had not stayed here this eve-

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ning.—"Now you're to hear what I've dreamt, or what old folks have told me," he said.

"Man's nature is such that he wants to understand. First the whole world, and then himself. And when he's run his head against the wall and doesn't understand a thing, then he arrives at his inmost desire: he wants to believe in what nobody can fathom. That is what he's been running after.

"Though it isn't the cleverest ones that take the shortest cut to get there."

He got up, stretched his arms, half yawning and half laughing: "That's what they've said, those who've experienced it. But I, you must remember, I don't rush off blindly and do what I have to do. I keep my hand on the helm; in a way anyhow."

Mina gave the talk another turn, as soon as she had a chance.—"And what about Engelbert, going off so suddenly? And you'd gone surety for him again? For his passage-money, I suppose?"—"Had I? I didn't know that."—"Well, that's what Arthur said, he was at the bank yesterday. A fresh loan, he said. That will be hard on you."

Odin considered.—"Very well!" he said. "That was likely enough to happen. It'll be a bit hard, ay. Hard to be unsuspecting, I see."

But what was he doing about the horrid slanders the man had been spreading? she asked. Odin's eyebrows shot up.—"Ah, that's true, I'd almost forgotten them, in

the middle of it all. It's so long ago"—he shook his head, attempted a smile. But he went a shade paler, and looked at her stiffly; then he said:

"Soon I shall only remember one thing: that nobody can protect a defenceless one. But it must be done!"

"So Astri's sick?" he said after a while. "That upsets my plans amazingly, Mina. It's one omen against another, I might say. But I'm not going to heed omens."

He saw that she gave a start and stared at him fixedly.—"You're worn out, Odin."—"Oh no, it doesn't feel like that. I've never been so strong. Never so wide awake either—I want to wake up the whole parish. I shan't finish my work in the parish, nobody ever finishes his work—well, now I've frightened you, I can see. As the gravedigger said when the dead man grabbed him by the foot: 'You ought to be ashamed of yourself, scaring folks like that!'"

Mina got ready to start for home. It was blowing so hard when they put the horse in that sand and gravel whistled about their ears, the storm was trying to carry them off. Odin laughed: " 'Here I come!' as the man said, when the north wind blew him off the mountain. Head wind, eh? Look at the birds and everything that wants to rise: a head wind's a fair wind for them. I've had many a fair wind."

Odin meant to let Anders go with her across country, but the lad was not to be found; no doubt he was away at the other farm with the boys there.—"I only hope he

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won't hear anything," he said. "If *he* should take it into his head to do something about it—that mustn't be!"—"What's that you say, Odin?" said Mina, taking his hand.—" 'That thou doest, do quickly,' I was saying. Oh no, I said the boys might get fighting," he laughed. But she liked that laugh no better than she liked his talk, it wasn't Odin who laughed like that.

When she had gone he stood for a long time bareheaded in the gale. Then he said:

"What else has the storm to do but to help me? He's a queer one, he who governs all: Drives one into being a murderer, and never lets one get to it. I trust to the storm, **I do.**"

He turned a little giddy.—"Aha, here I am, as weak and lackadaisical as any of the young fellows out in the wide world. That's what it's like to be one of them; I can feel them in me. No, wait a bit: I'm one of the old fellows after all, I *can* take a pitchfork and clear the rascals out. That's as plain as daylight. But what's a Juviking doing in our time? There's danger in it, my boy!

"No, I trust to the storm, I do!"

CHAPTER IV

THE STORM

IN GOOD TIME ON MONDAY MORNING ODIN WENT OVER to the other farm to find Lauris.

The land-wind had decreased during the night, but now it freshened again to a continuous roar over land and sea. A veil of grey wind clouds had flung itself across the sky, with darker bands down towards the sea. It was westerly weather and rain the storm had to contend with; you could hear that by the roar of the waves.

The Lauris boys were standing by the barn door. They greeted Odin before he got so far, and looked up as usual. He and they had always been rather more than good neighbours. But he could see they were not up to much today. It was the crank of the threshing machine they were puzzling over; they couldn't get it to work.—"Your mother's not well?" said Odin.—No; but she was no worse. They looked out into the weather and listened to the gale.—"Ay ay, boys, it's *blowing*" smiled Odin.

Odin found Lauris in the parlour, he had just left Astri's bedroom. A slight look of surprise showed in his glance, the moment he saw Odin; otherwise his face was

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still as the room around him—there was illness in the house.—"Thanks, I don't think she's any worse," he said. Then nerved himself to face Odin and thought about other things.—"I believe I can guess what you've come about: that business at the bank, over Engelbert's loan. Saw Mina had been to call on you. Didn't occur to me till Arthur mentioned it, that you ought to have been asked; and then it was too late. I believed in Engelbert, that's the truth; believed it was a *fresh* loan. But we can talk about that another time. There was some other money I wanted to talk to you about, a few dubs that Aasel left. As far as we're concerned the almshouse is welcome to them, and they say that's what she intended; but what about Elen's children? We wanted to hear what you have to say about that."—"Oh? I believe we'll let that too stand over to another day. Hadn't we better think about getting the doctor here, for Astri? It may attack the lungs, you know; serious business that, man!"

Lauris stiffened over the eyebrows and blinked his eyes a couple of times, darted a glance at Odin and away again: "Ah, if only it hasn't done that already! She's so queer. But get the doctor now, you say? That's impossible."—"Ah, that's how it is," said Odin. "Hm! Then there's only one thing to be done. You must ring up and find out where he is. A damned nuisance the steamer doesn't call here today! It's a—strange chance, that."

Lauris passed his hand heavily over his forehead and up through his hair. He looked at Odin, seemed unable

to think.—"Well, no, I have rung," he said.—"Well?"—"But it's no good, the storm's getting worse, isn't it?"

The storm answered for himself: He wouldn't let anyone cross the fiord today. It seemed to them the house hunched its back to meet the heaviest gusts. Odin and Lauris looked at each other. Their eyes and their faces were constantly changing; once Odin was not far from smiling.—"There's no more than one thing to be done now," he said. "We're going, you and I."—"Ah, do you mean that?"—"Do you think we should let be? Heh? A pity the boys ran aground the other night when they were taking the doctor across; they smashed the propeller and the rudder too, I'm told. We'll take my six-oar!"

Lauris's cheeks had gone grey again; he chewed his lip thoughtfully.—"What about taking one of the seine boats instead? and some more crew?" he wondered.

Odin shook his head.—"They haven't a rag of sail that'll stand this weather—no! You know my six-oar. I've crossed the fiord in her in weather like this; she hasn't her match."—"No, that's so. That's so, but—. There'd have to be *three* of us, anyway."—"No, two. The doctor will make a third man coming back—where was it you found him?"—"He was going to Ommundstrand and round there, in the course of the afternoon."—"The wind will hold, out and home. And it won't get any fresher towards evening, I can hear that. So it's you and I!"—Odin looked at Lauris, a look full of boyish pluck, no use saying no. Lauris tried to look right through him.—"Well, that's

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that," he said at last, and then he turned red: "Wouldn't one of my boys—? I ought not to be away from home, the way things are, I was thinking."

"No, Lauris. Today it's you and I. Our boys, they'll stay at home today."

Then he added, with twitching forehead:

"It isn't only getting there today, you see. We must *come back*, with the doctor."

These words made a new man of Lauris at once. He was a seaman all through.

"Why, then you didn't believe we should come back?" laughed Odin. "We'll have to *believe* so anyway. The day may come when we shan't come back."

Then he asked if he might go in and see Astri.—"Yes, if you *would!*" said Lauris. "See if you think she's very bad."

Astri's eyes were so bright that Odin gave a start when he saw them. There must be something very wrong there. She looked at him, and breathed hard two or three times. Then her eyes grew dim, sank away in delirium. He waited till they came back.

"Don't go, Odin!" she begged him.

"We shall see how the weather is, of course."

Odin thought he could see that her uneasiness increased the longer she looked at him.—She can't be *so* ill that she sees what I have in mind? he thought. For if that's so, nothing's any use. Then I don't know what I shall do.

He turned round to Lauris, who was standing behind

him. "You haven't a drop of spirits in the house?"—"She won't take it."—"She must." He seized Lauris by the wrist so that his knees gave way: "This is serious! If you have a drop left it won't have been made in vain." The brandy was brought, clear and strong, and Odin forced it into her. Then he said good-bye and went home—he turned in the doorway and said good-bye once more.

She looked stiffly at Lauris when he came in again.—"Odin doesn't seem happy about this trip across the fiord?" she said.—"Nor I either," he replied.—"Then you shouldn't go. He's so—he was so strange."—"Can't get out of it though, as far as I can see."—"No. You're right. You'll have to go with him!" She gasped in great distress.

The storm clouds in the sky were now a darker grey, and little black shreds came over the mountains in the east and drove out to sea. The sight stirred Odin so deeply that he could not say a word as he stood on the door-step. And when he looked up, there was the same tone over the whole country-side, surprisingly familiar, but forgotten and far away. The day had shown him this solemn face before, but that was that time and not now.

"That time and not now," he said, without knowing it.

The cleft in the mountain-side showed up grey and bare, in front of everything else. A naked truth, and you were not to forget it. Nobody in the neighbourhood saw that cleft, and he only saw it in this hour. One thing after another there was that insisted on being seen, but he

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turned from them to Lauris.—Then they'd make a start about three o'clock maybe?—That might be a good time, thought Lauris.

Odin hurried home. It struck him he had been far too long away from home, away from Ingri—and how was he going to talk to her about this? He went straight in to her, taking no notice of Anders or Per, though it pricked him that they were waiting to have a word with him. But Ingri propped herself on her elbow when he came in. Her face shone upon him, narrow and delicate, and her eyes hung upon his. She must have smiled like this whenever he appeared, trying to cross over from her own thoughts and be close beside him; maybe she had been happier than her looks showed.

"Then it's settled you're fetching the doctor to Astri?"

"Yes. And I shall come back too, don't worry about that, Ingri. I shall come back, child, I tell you that!"

She asked if Astri was very ill. Next moment she looked up into his eyes and asked if Lauris was going with him. —Yes, they'd have to be two seamen today, he answered—he tried to smile, but it faded on his lips. "But why do you ask that, Ingri?"—She looked at him without answering.—"We've got to come back with the doctor, you see; you understand that?"—"Yes." But the shadow came and went across her face. She was so weak, it looked as if she had dozed off again.

"I must have deserved an angel, as I've got one," said Odin as he went out. "And I'm sure she can follow me a

long way; when the day comes." he added. "Even if it should come soon. So far away from me, and yet she really knows everything."

"But today?" He looked straight before him and into a face that was darker than the night and deeper than the sky at night-time; fearlessly he gazed into it.

"No, surely, not today!" he begged.

In the kitchen he met the sick-nurse, who had come to see to Ingri.—"What, are you here again?" he said.—"Yes, only for a moment. Is there nothing I could help with?"—"No, no, you must stay where you are, and you're more wanted at Astri's." The girl could not take her eyes off him; she was always like that when they met, he remembered, but it passed from his mind at once. She was a pale, slight little thing, not much more than a child, but she had a pair of indescribably beautiful eyes, and the lads all turned to look at her. It was Odin who had sent her to be trained and had got her the place here.

He followed her out, and she turned in the doorway.—"I've got to make a trip today," he said.—"Yes, I—know that—it isn't *weather* for it!"—"Oh, there's weather enough, but perhaps you'd look in here this evening? In case it should be a bit late. We might be storm-bound till tomorrow too."—Yes, she would do that! she was even glad, poor thing.

"It's the storm that decides the whole thing, let me tell you"—his eyebrows shot up, as he turned and went out. There was Anders he had to talk to.

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He spent a long time in the field with Anders, though he did not find much to say to him. He had nothing but praise for what Anders was doing.—"Skilled farmer soon!" he said to himself. "No fear of him!"——

Then they pushed off.

They sailed out of the voe with reefed mainsail, but along the rocky shore to the southward the gusts were so violent that they had to take in the sail and use the oars. Here and there under a ledge of rock it was as calm as if you were indoors, only a puff or two snarled a warning from above; but outside the little creeks and off the gap the sea was lashed into foam, and every moment a heavier blast struck them and tried to take the oars out of their hands.

The six-oar was Lister-built and fore-and-aft rigged; Odin had bought her in the south and rigged her according to his own ideas. She was the best sea-boat of all the smaller craft thereabouts, and over and above she was extremely light under the oars.—"It's no work to pull her!" said Lauris; he wanted to say something. "But why do you have fixed rowlocks and grummets in a boat of this sort?"—"Ah, tell me that. I just took it into my head. As the boy said when he popped the question. So I shouldn't lose the oars if we capsize," he added, with a playful glance at Lauris over his shoulder.—"Don't joke about such things, in weather like this," Lauris admonished him. "When I was at sea I never made jokes like that!"—"Not even in fair weather? No, you're right, I

didn't either, until today."—"Your words may come true."—"They're poor sort of words if they don't!" laughed Odin.

They rested on their oars now and again, and looked across the fiord to the other shore. Here, where the fiord bends northward and the wind came right across, it didn't look so bad; they only saw the white breakers against the rocks on the Juvik shore. Only when they were south of the last headland and the fiord opened up to the eastward did they look him in the face. He was ugly. They held the boat and looked at it, for a while. Then Lauris said:

"My word, he's angry now!"

"Ay, he spits white."

Odin met Lauris's eyes. They were shifty and fearless in the same instant, and searched Odin piercingly. That's how one animal glares at another before they spring, thought Odin.

"You think this is weather for crossing the fiord?"

Odin shook his head with a little laugh:

"Heh, no! Not for folk, no! But for you and me, that's another thing. And it won't get any better today. You can see that now."

Then they'd have to sail yarely, Lauris thought.—Ay, *that* was good advice. But it might prove dear, in this seaway. But Lauris could take the tiller?—"No, thanks, you sail her yourself."

They reefed both mainsail and jib, and tried her like that. A wettish dance it was, and it didn't look pleasant;

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but they got across, before they had much time to think about it. Only when they came into smoother water among the islands off the south shore and could open their eyes again did they realize how long it had lasted, with waves breaking over them each worse than the last and the squalls getting heavier and heavier, she couldn't stand any more of it; but now she had stood it after all. They saw the worst dangers long after they had passed.

"Seems to me she made nothing of it?" said Odin as they stood ashore; he looked at Lauris and then back at the fiord. "Good boat, eh?"

"All she could do to make it."

"And that's all that's wanted, Lauris."

The doctor was ready to drive home when they reached the farm on Ommundstrand. When he heard how it was with Astri, he got out of his trap without a word and prepared to go with them. But when he came out on the bluff and saw the fiord, he halted, and when he saw their boat he turned round to them.—They surely didn't intend to go out in that thing? He had sailed in worse fiords and in worse weathers than this, but it had been in another kind of boat.—They pressed him: he must come, there was no better boat, and they thought they saw signs that the gale was abating; they pressed him hard. He looked at Lauris.—"You don't believe yourself it's advisable?" he said. "Speak the truth—I can see it in your face!" Lauris looked at Odin. *He* stood with his hands in his pockets looking out to sea, strangely far away and irresponsible.

The water was running off his peaked cap—the only head-gear he ever wore afloat—and his face was crusted white with salt. Now he turned to the doctor, half laughing, one would think to look at him: "Well, come along, we've got to bring the doctor!"

But the doctor was not to be moved. He shook his head and fixed his eyes on them sternly: "And what's more, you'll stay here tonight," he said with conviction. "You have enough sea sense for that."—"Then let's have your medicine!" said Odin. "Come on with it, we've no time to be chattering here, it'll soon be night."

The doctor dived into his bag, came out with a bottle and gave it to Lauris. Then he would come by the steamer tomorrow, he added. He looked once more at the fiord, thought for a moment and then said good-bye—he had patients waiting for him everywhere.

Odin cleared his throat when he had gone, sounded almost glad. He went first down to the sea, Lauris followed; stopped once or twice, and came on again.—"Are you coming?" said Odin, as he got into the boat.—"Ay ay. But: he was right, you know, the doctor. *Res* not one to get cold feet, we know that." Odin was trimming the ballast.—"Round stones?" said Lauris.—"Yes, my boy. Then they'll roll out, *if* we should bowl over." He looked Lauris in the face till he blenched and turned pale.

"But *are* we going, Odin?"

"Ay, we're going now. I'm going, and you're coming

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too; that's the way of it.—They're expecting us," he added.

"Well, all right then. The Lord—be with us!" Lauris tried to smile, that made it easier. "He must know Astri's life's at stake?"

"No, that's enough of your jaw—you lousy sneak, you!"

Odin said this in a low growl, wild with rage; he was just going to jump ashore and get hold of Lauris.

Then he paused. Not for long, but what passed through his mind in that instant seemed as long as half a lifetime. The thought of God had given him a stab, as he heard Lauris's words. That thought had not been really familiar to him since he was grown up, he had only felt, as a sort of emptiness around him or as a suction in his entrails, that there was something he was not able to make up his mind about. This torment had belonged to life, it was a part of life, perhaps it was that out of which everything else grew. And so they came, one generation after another, after us and out into the light, but in spite of that they saw nothing, only looked back and saw that we lived in darkness, that we were heathens, but heathens without joy and laughter—we did not know what it was we doubted nor did we know why we were so afraid to die. Now and again one might come who stood a little aside, just enough to see that it had all been a swinging about on the same spot; ay, and that made him laugh? What did it

feel like, I wonder, to crawl into the grave, to the men of all the ages? What will it be like to die a thousand years hence?—And what does all this matter to me now? Odin woke up.

"Are you coming?" he called.

Lauris pulled himself together in his turn, gave up hope and came. And so they pushed oil.

The Ommundstrand voe is narrow and winding, and they had to row themselves out of it. When they were hoisting the sail Odin said: "Look here, you'd better sail her now."—"I?" said Lauris. "A smack skipper can't sail a boat. They used to say I sailed a smack like a boat, so I expect I'll sail a boat like a smack."—"You're to sail her all the same. I'm so queer, I must tell you, I don't care what happens today; folks have made me like that." Lauris had never heard a man talk so much in bad weather; he just said: "All right then," and crawled aft.

It was another wet trip. At first the wind had moderated a little, and they took advantage of it to make a beat to windward under the southern shore; it might be hard enough to make the headlands on the other side if the wind veered a point or two as evening came on. Before they reached the middle of the fiord it came down on them with full strength, and, what made it worse, it was excessively gusty. Odin knew that Lauris was not one of the best hands at sailing a boat, but he also knew that he was no better himself; they were not the sort that could steal across the fiord in such a sea-way without getting a proper

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shower-bath—they got many. But he knew and saw that Lauris was a seaman, plucky and at the same time anxious, and quick as lightning. It was fun to watch him, when there was a moment's chance: now just an otter getting drenched all over, now a man fond of his life who wanted so badly to get well out of this and home again; you could see by the look of him how much he had to lose.

They met two or three seas that were uncanny to handle, they came on like a threatening waterfall, so high and so cavernous that the green shone through. The boat swerved away from the first two, the third they had to take, and Lauris steered straight for it. They got a sousing that floated the bottom-boards, but Lauris set to baling with a will. At that moment a sudden squall struck them. Odin slacked away the jib-sheet, and Lauris put the boat up into the wind again, trying to split the gust, but just then it veered a little to the south and filled the sails in spite of him. Lauris cast off the main-sheet and eased away, but by that time the boat had dipped her lee gunwale under and turned over; it happened in a twinkling.

When they came up again and got their breath the boat was bottom-up and had shot out her ballast, and both men were hanging on to the hull, Lauris by the main-sheet and Odin by the shrouds on the other side. The waves were sweeping over them all the time. Odin caught an oar that floated out from under the boat and held it between his knees; he made a dive with his left hand and managed to drag the other one to him. Then he groped and struggled

till he got them both back under the hull. While he was busy with this, Lauris had climbed up on to the keel. Odin made a big effort and got up on his side. But the hull lay low enough already, would hardly keep above water with *one* man, and now the seas broke over them afresh.

There was no chance for two men, not even a hope of it. They both saw this at the same moment, and stared each other in the eyes.—"The kedge," said Odin—"it's fouled under the boat—no use!"—"We'll have to shout," he said, when he got his face above water again for a second. He shouted at the top of his voice. The wind took the cry and flung it into the spray, and a breaker swept over him and took his breath away.

"I believe I'll let go"; he spat. It came over him so queerly, that this was the only thing that had any sense in it, the whole of life was not worth another grip. Pettiness and discontent and wrangling everywhere, nor would it ever be any better. He spat once more, and it was not the sea he had in mind. Again and again it flashed across him: Life. A running after nothing! And yet he had wits enough left to wonder that it should look like this now.

Then he felt a grip on his hands. It was Lauris. It was *him* right enough; he was trying to loosen his hold of the keel and get him off the boat. Odin opened his eyes again and looked at him. Lauris was grey in the face and his teeth were bared on one side of his mouth.—That's how it is, ay; tooth against tooth all down the line, thought Odin;

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it hurt him so keenly that he uttered a groan.

"But no!" he growled. "No, Lauris!" he cried, spitting out the salt water in earnest. He could feel that he too was showing his teeth. "You're the one to let go!"

Lauris tried hitting him over the knuckles, and that seemed welcome to Odin: now it was easy enough to send him the way he was to go. Then Lauris tried biting. Odin snatched the fellow's hands from the keel with a furious tug and hit him full in the chest:

"Don't you know—that I'm stronger than you?"

Lauris clung with all his might to the gunwale, fumbled with his right hand to get back on to the keel. There was a lull in the sea just now, the wind must have dropped a little. Lauris looked up into Odin's eyes. He had never seen a dog that was to be shot plead more pitiably.

"Ay, your time's come. I'd condemned you to death already. But I meant to kill you with my own hands, in the face of the whole parish—you know yourself what you've done." He had to use all his strength, almost, to keep Lauris down. "Right in the face of the whole country, ay! You *hound!*"

They stayed like this for a while. Odin shouted for help three or four times; he was beginning to pluck up heart: surely the storm was abating? He looked to the eastward.—Oh no, that wasn't to be, he muttered, for now another squall came driving on, as white as a blizzard, and on the Ommundstrand side there was scarcely a grown-up man on his feet, sick every one, and nobody could see them

from the other side. Oh no, what has to be is coming now.

He lay still, looking at Lauris, but he kept him in the water. In this way the hull floated fairly well. He must have been looking at him a long time. *A human being!* it struck him. Even he was human.

"I could kill you," he cried hoarsely. "I could bear that burden all my life."

Then there came a spell when he scarcely knew where he was, for the seas and the squalls were over them worse than ever. He fancied he was now alone on the upturned boat, he landed, came home and took up his life again—a strange thing it was, far away in another world. And in his ears sang a voice, loud and rough and old, it came from out of the wilds:

"Man's heart, Odin!"

"Ay," he called. *"It's evil from his youth!"*

He went dizzy, now that he saw this.

"But that's not all!" he cried. "That's not *all*, I tell you!"

The world had swung round, a swing of a hundred years or more; he was a long, long way back in time. Darkness and savagery. Good to be alive. Master and hound.

"But no, I say, I'm not one to buy my life. He's a kind of human, even he.—Lauris!" he roared.

"Yes, Odin!" came the answer, from the depth of misery.

"What if you were given your life?"

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"Yes! yes!"

Odin groped under the boat and got out an oar, groped again and got one more.—"The oars!" he shouted, and Lauris dived on his side and brought them out; they were there, both of them.—"I'm not just throwing myself into the sea, I mean to have what they call a *chance*" He waited for a lull, and gathered up all four oars, two under each arm.

"Give them my love at home! You understand me?"

"Yes." But Lauris looked at him with frightened eyes, crawled up on the keel but got more and more frightened; he was a little boy now, with his tongue in the corner of his mouth.

"Hold on now! And be a man!"

"We shan't get home, either of us," muttered Lauris, as a sea washed over him.

"Pray to God—that's the only way for *you*! And shout for help!"

Odin kept hold of the end of the jib-sheet and hung on. He was not so deep in the water but that he could get his breath between the worst of the seas. But he could feel his body growing stiff. He said to himself:

"Anyway I'm not a murderer."

Now he let go. Lauris lay stiff, looking at him; then he pulled himself together and shouted for help. There was plenty of voice in him.—This is what it feels like to be left behind when they're sailing for their lives, thought Odin—but why doesn't he shout louder, as he's bound that way?

"My love to all of them!" he roared above the driving spray. "All of them! You'll make the Juvik voe."

He looked up at the sky. The wide blue vault everywhere above him; but over there in the west was a glimmer of green and yellow, and straight through it ran a grey band—tomorrow would be calm again. Bright weather tomorrow, ay. He tried to see the mountains, but couldn't get hold of them; only a glimpse of something bluish grey between the gusts. Then he roused himself and struck out with his feet, but they refused to obey him, they were big and swollen and didn't seem to belong to him. All the same they doubled up under him when he thought of the little deep-water creatures, he had seen how horribly they sucked at the fish in the nets.—Ah, but I'm in luck, he tried to say; I shall lie on a shallow rocky bottom. A little while after he moaned and cried out for Ingri, where had she got to? But you have Anders and Per, he fancied he was saying to her. It'll be all right, Ingri. You talk to Lauris. This was the only way.

When he came to himself again his arms had grown stiff over the oars.—Are they shouting hurrah again? he wondered. Do they know what they're shouting for? Now they've stopped all of a sudden? Courage, my lads! You'll have God's fine weather tomorrow, never fear! And Lauris, he—

Long, long after it must have been. He woke up and wondered: But am I still alive? And then it's summer

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and sunshine on all the shores around? And all this blue
in front of me!

"Absolutely!" came the answer.

CHAPTER V
THE OTHERS

1

LAURIS KEPT AN EYE ON THE MAN WITH THE OARS, ALL the time he was shouting and holding on. Darkness came on, little by little, and the wind was driving the boat due west, but the current carried the other a little more to the southward; nor was he moving so fast, so that after a while it was hard to see him among the breakers. Now he could still see him, and now again; but then it all grew blurred and grey. When he had no strength left for shouting, and the Juvik shore was still so far away that he could barely make it out as something black with a white streak under it, he gave up hope. He felt he would not be able to hold on much longer, there were long spells when he was scarcely conscious. He dropped his belief in rescue, it was easier so.

Then he heard a smacking sound in the air, a flapping and a loud crack. He knew that sound and it sent a thrill of warmth through him: it was a sail shivering in the wind. Now he could plainly hear the flap of the sails and the crashing of a boat through the waves. He raised him-

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self up and shouted till his voice broke.

A moment later a big craft ran up into the wind alongside him scattering the spray, a Nordland ten-oar with two masts. It was a tough job, but at last they got him aboard of her. No use thinking about the up-turned boat. They lay the foresail aback and sailed on. They were making for shelter under the Ommundstrand shore somewhere. Then Lauris ran aft, stiff as he was, to the skipper.—"There's another man lying out here!" he stammered.

They held on the course he pointed, went about two or three times, but saw no sign of anything afloat. Nor was there anything to be heard, except the foaming of the fiord and the shriek of the wind in the rigging.—"We must go back!" said Lauris.—Impossible! replied the skipper, their sails were torn and the boat had sprung a leak, it was all they could do to keep her afloat, and night and foul weather and all. Lauris seized the tiller, brought the boat to and roared—hot as fire it flashed through him that so would Odin have done:

"About ship!"

The boat obeyed, and the crew obeyed, with the spray dashing over them. They made one more beat, with shivering sails and little way. But Odin was gone.—"Then we'll make for the Haaberg voe," said Lauris; "we shan't fetch up anywhere on the south side tonight." They let him have his way, as he had first claim to be put ashore quickly.

They would not have come inside the voe for all that,

had not the wind dropped as much as it did. When the hook was out Lauris went into the deck-house and made a fire. Then he stripped himself naked and squeezed out his clothes, put them on again and swallowed a big bowl of boiling coffee. While doing this he questioned them about how they had spotted him, and what they were doing there at that time of night. They told him they had meant to put in somewhere under the lee of the land long before they got as far as this, but when they tried to start the motor, it broke down, and they had to hoist sail. The gale increased, and they decided to chance it and make for Skarsvoe or the Haaberg voe, but there it was blowing so hard that they didn't even try to put in. As they lay to in the south of the fiord to take in a reef they heard a cry of distress close to them.

Lauris said not a word. Then he roused himself, said good-bye and thanked them, he would give them a look tomorrow morning before they left, he must hurry home now. He took hold of the shore-rope and tried to haul the boat in to the quay, but there was no strength in his arms, he had to ask for help.

He went up the road, half walking, half running. He felt if the medicine bottle was unbroken in his pocket. Yes. That too was saved.—"You'll see, Astri will soon be well again!" he muttered as he ran. "Strange! Strange!"

The sick-nurse and the maid were in the kitchen, but Lauris took no notice of them; he went into the parlour, stood there a moment, and went to the bedroom. Astri

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was another woman as soon as she saw him, but she said nothing, nor did he. She lay motionless, staring at him as he brought out the medicine and poured a dose.—"There!" said he. "Nothing but spirit, I'm sure, but take it. How are you feeling?"

"But to think of your crossing in this weather?" She would not let go of his eyes.

He drew himself up and looked straight at her. He nodded seriously:

"Ah yes, I'm drenched through. It's damp afloat this evening."

She blinked her eyes in a way he had never seen before. Then he gave in:

"And he—he hasn't come home with me."

Still she did not take her eyes from him, but it was scarcely him she saw.

"Where have they got to, the boys?" he asked.

"Then you—capsized?"

"Ay. We did so."

"And he wasn't saved?"

"No, he wasn't saved."

At last she moved her eyes away. They flitted hither and thither. What a deep colour they can take on, he thought. The nurse came in, and Lauris went to change his clothes.—"I think you're better now?" she said, and felt Astri's pulse. But it was as wild as ever.

Astri looked at her, raised her eyebrows slightly and considered. There was something she wanted to say, but

she let it be. After a little while she took her hand and looked her in the eyes again.—"Have you been over—at Odin's—at Ingri's lately?"—Yes, she had just come from there. It was nothing very serious with Ingri. Just rest, that was what she wanted. Astri gathered all her strength into her face. Then she said:

"But what if she were told—that Odin will never come home any more?"

Sister Else was a long time before she grasped it.—"It's not *true*?" came her voice, pleading pitifully. "It's not true?" With that she sank into her chair, sat limply for a while, staring at Astri, then turned and hid her face against the back of the chair. Her back was shaken by little spasms. Astri took a drink out of the bottle, she thought it eased her chest; she could breathe now, more or less. She waited a few moments before saying anything.

"It'll be your place to go over and tell Ingri. Do you hear?"

The other started up and stared at her with wide eyes, more horrified than before: "I? I?"

Yes, there was nothing else for it, said Astri. Nobody else to do it.—"You don't mean that?"—"It must be done, tomorrow anyhow."—"Yes, but I? I who—I who—"

She collapsed again on the back of the chair, wailing aloud.

"If only I could tell you—but I can't! For *Odin*—I daren't ever look Ingri in the face again!"

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Astri was silent for some time. Her voice was unusually gentle when she spoke.

"You've been a little too fond of Odin, ay. Never mind that, child. It's happened to others besides you. It's Ingri we have to think of now." Presently she added: "I expect Anders and our boys are below looking out for the boat; they've been out all evening." She wanted to say more, but was not equal to it just yet; and now Lauris came downstairs and into the bedroom. Astri lay still and her eyes were fixed; maybe she knew he was there and maybe not. She moistened her lips with her tongue from time to time, they were so dry. She was like that sometimes, so still and thoughtful and absent—Lauris stood there waiting. Sister Else withdrew to the window.

"Now they're coming, aren't they—the boys?" said Astri all at once, looking uneasily from one to the other of them.—"Yes, that was them—now they'll soon know it! Anders is with them, isn't he?—ay!"

The nurse stood biting her lips to keep them from trembling; she did not take her eyes off Astri.—"Ingri shouldn't hear it this evening," she got out at last.—"No, she shouldn't. You just tell Anders that they've not come home yet, they're staying the night on the other side of the fiord." The girl went out.

Astri had a fit of gasping for breath. Lauris gave her the medicine, and it helped her at once, but he could hear how the phlegm rattled in her chest.

"Ask Anders—to come here!" she whispered.

"Hm! Shall I, do you think?"

She nodded, and Lauris had to go. He caught him on the kitchen steps. The lad stood stock-still an instant, trying no doubt to read the face of Lauris; then he followed him in. The Lauris boys looked at him as he passed through the kitchen, but he did not look at them.

He came into the bedroom quietly and calmly. A trifle pale he was, perhaps. Astri reached out her hand, and Anders went up and took it. His forehead twitched once or twice as he looked Astri in the eyes, in the way Odin's had often done, and she thought he looked at one with the same eyes, there was such a bold and boyish challenge under the high and powerful brows, they reflected all that came before them after their own fashion,

"You know it, maybe?" said Astri.

His hand and face gave a little start, or more like the jolt a strong man feels when he drops on his feet from a height, it seemed to Astri. Then it came upon him with a hard blow, his face fell, poor and defenceless—he drew back his hand and gave a hostile glance around the room, till his eyes rested on Lauris.

Lauris was brick-red from the weather, a seal with a face of copper.

Anders turned again to Astri. She told him as well as she was able that they had capsized, that Lauris had been saved by a miracle, and that he must show himself the man he was and not tell his mother just yet, not for another day or two, when she was strong enough.—"You can hear

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the storm," she said. "I almost think I knew it before they started."

He looked away while she was speaking, but then he pulled himself together once more and looked her in the face. It was so far above everything he knew, that face, and when he saw the tears on it he turned quickly and went out. He heard the boys going upstairs before he reached the kitchen; they didn't want to meet him just now.

Astri gave orders that Sister Else might go to bed and take the little girl with her, while Lauris would stay with her. He sat in the arm-chair, Old Anders's chair, and kept himself awake. Astri did not sleep either, she had had little or no sleep since she fell ill. Sometimes she lay looking at the wall with burning eyes, sometimes she closed them again.

The gale roared outside, now and again it caught the house and shook it. Farther away it droned a monotonous song, mountain and field and sea together, in one great note that filled the whole night between heaven and earth. It changed to the deepest calm if one did not listen. And now Anders must be home long ago.

Far on in the night Astri said:

"Now you must tell me, Lauris."

"Yes, I must."

He came like a doomed man and sat down on the edge of the bed. She did not look at him.

"Was it impossible for you both to be saved?" she asked when a few moments had passed.

"Impossible, ay."

"And then—?"

"Well, then—"

"—then he let go, did he?"

"Yes. He did. And so I was saved. A big boat came along."

"And so you were saved, ay."

After a little while she said:

"You needn't take it to heart—that you didn't come up to *him*"

"Oh no." He looked up, drew a couple of deep breaths, and subsided again. "No, that's so. I never—expected anything else. He gave me my life. And I accepted it. Was no more of a man than that."

Then she took his hand. The fever was humming in her ears, for a time she scarcely knew where she was. Then the rattle in her chest began again and checked her breathing. Lauris had to get up and give her a dose out of the bottle. She was wandering and muttering to herself, but after a time she picked up and was more like herself. Then she said, with a loud groan, raising one arm and letting it drop:

"It's a heavy burden he laid on us in the end."

But the tone of despondency was gone. Her eyes brightened with new life and a youthful, indomitable look came into her features.

"Yes, it'll all be different after this," said Lauris, clenching his teeth.

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"But Anders, did you see him?"

"I've been seeing him all the time," sighed Lauris.

"If only he can sleep and forget it, tonight at least!"

"If only we could find him tomorrow! Odin, I mean. He was floating on the oars, the last I saw of him. Floating on the oars—there was life in him yet."

"I see. That's how it was?"—it was not to Lauris she said it. "Beyond that no one can go."

2

Anders tried to walk home steadily, but the gusts were so heavy that they carried you along and you had to keep breaking into a run. Ingri sat up in bed and heard him come. She called him into the bedroom. To judge by his look, he was annoyed at her fussing, no more than that.

"You didn't see anything of the boat, did you?"

"In this weather? You must be crazy!"

"I believe he's coming all the same. I heard him so plainly just now, never heard him so plainly before."

"Superstition!" said Anders; he even tried to laugh.

Ingri withdrew into herself, shut herself up in her own thoughts, as she often did. She shook her head once or twice; her lips moved as though speaking. Now she's back in her usuals, thought Anders. When she was like this he generally turned and left her, often rather abruptly. Now he stayed. All at once he took a step forward, and his mouth opened to speak. His cheeks were stiff and pale. All he did was to put a hand on her shoulder:

"Good-night, mother!"

Then he went out.

"And then Astri, not getting the doctor tonight," she said as he left her.

"Oh, her—"

Next day there was the same storm. The wind veered more to the southward as the day wore on, and the sky threatened rain all over. By evening the rain had set in, and then the wind dropped a little, so that they could hear the thunder of the surf.

Anders was all anxiety lest the weather should abate while it was still daylight. His mother asked time after time if it wouldn't soon be fit to cross.—No, not much sign of it.—Hadn't he telephoned to Ommundstrand?—They'd done that from the other farm.—*Were* they there, then?—Oh yes!—But why didn't they take the steamer back? she wondered.

Anders's forehead was bright with beads of sweat.—"Steamer? You don't think a steamer would cross in this weather?"—"No, that's true."—"Now you mustn't be uneasy," he admonished her; "remember what father asked you."

She smiled and closed her eyes; she would be good.

Early next morning he came down to her. She had slept nearly all night and didn't even wake when he came in; she only woke up when he had been sitting there a good while.—"I knew you were here," she said. And little by little a grey pallor spread over her face.

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"Now you're to tell me how it is, Anders! Don't you hear, Anders—you're so *strange*?"

"Well, he won't come home any more. They capsized."

"I knew it was so. Knew it all yesterday. Only I *wouldn't* know it."

Anders stood with his hands in his pockets. He looked at her with growing surprise.

"And Lauris too?" she asked, after a few moments.

"No, he was saved. He's home now."

She sat still in her bed.—Either she must have forgotten it all, thought Anders, or I don't know anything. Long after she said to herself:

"We had a longer life together—than I had looked for."

Anders went out, and Ingri got up and dressed herself. Before it was light she was over at the other farm and came in to Astri. She was near fainting as she stood there at the bedroom door.

"I was expecting you," said Astri. "Thank God you came!"

They were alone in the room, but they said little.—"Just let me sit here awhile," Ingri begged. When she got up to go, Astri said:

"Odin will never be lost to you. Perhaps not to the others either, so soon."

Ingri only smiled.

"You would scarcely have changed with me, Ingri. So that *he* came back, and—"

"No, no, no!" Ingri made a deprecating gesture and groped for the door.

"Well, it had to be one or the other, Ingri. And you know it was Odin who won—he let go."

Two tears ran down Ingri's cheeks, but she remained calm and did not notice them.

"It must have been so," Astri went on, "it must have been intended that there should be *one* victor in our family again. There were many in old days no doubt, but—I don't count them. *One* man before all the rest."

Now Ingri was far away, Astri could see. And when one was *there*, it was easy to be strong; she had only an inkling of that. After a moment she said to herself:

"Perhaps that was how life looked to him at the last, not such a precious thing to give up. It looks both poor and dismal, I often think—so it must have seemed to him. That we were a mean and petty lot, the folks he had around him? That he had done his part, I would rather say. For you know: he wouldn't leave you, whatever happened."

She looked long at Ingri, who stood there half smiling at her, and then turned her eyes to the window.

"Ah, well, well. Many things will be different, after this. It's not in vain that I got Lauris back—not in vain did Odin let himself go. I believe he knew that."

She saw in a flash that Ingri was on the point of coming to her, that she would fall over the bed and lie there weeping. But instead she said merely:

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"I must go home now. Only I had to come over. Good-bye!"

"God help us all!" said Astri to herself. "But was there no other way out of it? Does nothing new ever grow up in a family?"——

Lauris and the boys were out searching. They found the boat on the Juvik beach, drawn up on land and not much damaged. Two men from Juvik put out a boat and joined them. They searched all along the coast, but there was nothing more to be found. Then they rowed out and dragged the fiord. It was a dead calm, as smooth as any sea could be, and for a time the mountains were reflected to the life, in black and grey.—They kept at it all day. Lauris scarcely said a word, beyond what was called for. Towards evening, when the fiord grew dim and reflected nothing but the pale gleam of the sky, they found him. He lay on the rocky bottom off the Black Rock. He had lost one pair of oars.—"One wouldn't think this was a corpse," said Lauris, and the others said the same.

It was dark when they came in to the Voe with the body. Anders met them as they brought it home. He fetched a lantern and showed them the way to the barn. There he had cleared a place, they could see. He held the light calmly to his father's face; then he turned to Lauris:

Now one had to send word to parson and sheriff? and the rest of the authorities?—"I'll see to that," said Lauris. He was the last to leave the body.

Later in the evening Anders went with Ingri to the barn. He had been away somewhere crying, she could see, but now they stood beside the body in silence, and not a feature stirred in either face. Then Ingri said they must go in again.—Yes, they must go now, he said, but he did not move. A good while longer he stood there; then he turned to his mother, a grown-up and thoughtful man.

"I can't understand this. That it should be Lauris that was saved. Did he *deserve* it?"

Ingri was scarcely in a state to say anything, she had to lean against the wall.

"Did he deserve it, I ask?"

"Your father must have thought so."

"I see. I see, that's how it is. I was thinking the same myself, as it happens. Well, then—there's no more to be said."

He turned and went.—"Must be—hard!" she heard him mutter. Again and again he was on the point of leaving her, didn't look as if he could hold his head up much longer; but he stopped and waited for her and they went indoors together. Then he went and helped her in the byre.

Outside the byre door they met Lauris. They stopped short, all three.—"I thought I must come over," he said. "I wasn't sure if I ought to, but—. You're looking at me, Anders."—"Yes, I am."—"Oh well, I'm not surprised at *that*. You know all about it, I can see. So I don't have to say any more. Perhaps later on—"

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They moved towards the house, and he came with them into the kitchen and sat down on the wood-box.—"Can't be any pleasure for you to see me," he said. "But I promised Odin to give you his love. So I had to do it. And I wanted to say more to you, Ingri. Maybe I'll have to leave it to Astri; I'm no hand at talking when it's *got* to be done. We thought of helping you all we can before the funeral, but that wasn't what I had to say. No"—he looked at the clock—"I may just as well go home again. One thing I dare say you understand—that it's not so easy to be in my place either. // I could undo what ought to have been undone, and unsay what ought to have been unsaid. Well, well, good-night to you!"—he picked up his cap and went to the door.

Anders left the room. Then Ingri rose from her work and came up to Lauris. She was pale and trembling, and when she gave him her hand he felt her fingers were burning.

"Thank you for coming!" she said.

At that moment someone came into the passage. It was her father coming to see her; he had heard of the disaster.

3

The news went its way from house to house. It stirred every corner, quickening and rousing the whole parish to a common feeling, till it had put on a new face. Feature after feature came to light, changing from horror at the disaster, through relief and sorrow and many another

emotion, to an awe-struck solemnity in which all could join, in a single thought.

After a while this thought took on a new and definite form and resolved itself into words. It was the funeral. It must be a big one. The whole parish was concerned. Peasant or workman, it was all the same now, and hadn't it been so in reality all the time Odin was alive?

When they came to Ingri and talked about it, she made an effort to cast off her dreams and meet them. She glanced rapidly over them, and stood still biting her lip.—"I don't know," she said. "Must hear what Anders says about it." She left them and went to look for him.

"Well?" he said. "Do you think that's too much?"

"No, but—. It seemed so strange to me. That they should really *want* it? After all that's happened?"

"Let them go ahead as much as they like—what else are they for? They mean it well enough."

She couldn't help smiling, he was so full of cheerful hatred as he stood there. He had seen through them long ago: they couldn't be any different. Perhaps he was fond of them, in his heart, as Odin had been?

Astri was on her feet again sooner than hoped for. Pale she was and not up to much, but she took no notice of that, and before anyone knew it she went off to see Ingri. They were in the barn, looking at the body, and afterwards they sat indoors till late in the day. What they had to talk about they left unsaid; they preferred to talk about the funeral ale. Astri offered to hold it in their

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house, for there was plenty of room there for the whole parish, and there was no avoiding them this time.—"If it won't be painful for you?" she added.—"Oh no," said Ingri. "It takes more than that, now."—"It isn't that I want to gather the people round us," said Astri. "Lord, no; we've left that a long way behind. That's nothing but an old dream. But you, Ingri, you understand me: only now is *his time* coming. We've given up, it's to be a kind of token of that. Well, well, I can't put it any other way, but you understand me, don't you?"—"Oh yes. If only Anders will understand it too?"

Ingri seemed not to be listening. Now and again a little flush came into her cheeks, that was all. She got up, took a turn about the room, came back to Astri, and all at once laid her hand on her head. Her whole face shone. Her voice had a quivering brightness in it and came from far away:

"Lauris is a changed man *now*, isn't he, Astri?"

Astri turned white. It was all she could do to keep her seat. For an instant her temper flared up, but she kept it under, sank back in her chair and looked up at Ingri.

"He is that," she said quietly. "A changed man, ay. As sure as I'm a changed woman."

And so Lauris was, to look at, folk thought. He went about as quietly as usual, but he was different when he looked at one and different when he talked; he *was* a changed man. And a good thing too, they thought, for they couldn't deny he had been a dark and tricky fellow.

Astri might be glad their boys had so little of Lauris in them. Odin must have been right in saying there was some good in Lauris too.—"Ay, it teaches a man a lesson," said old Iver Vennestad when he heard them talking of it. The rest he only muttered; he went about muttering all day after hearing the bad news.—"As long as it lasts," they heard him saying. "It's the whip that tames them!" he muttered; he had been a horse-breaker in his youth.

Astri went to see Ingri every day before the funeral. One evening just as she was going home, she said: "You were talking about Lauris. Now we'll soon have the funeral. Then he'll come forward and tell them—I believe he's going to tell everything from first to last. Up to the day Odin gave him his life."

"No, no, no, Astri!" cried Ingri. "No, I tell you, it mustn't be!"

"Ah, do you say so too? I've been thinking the same. But he thinks he must."

"Odin would never have allowed it—and Anders'll raise trouble, I feel it in me!"

"I see that now," said Astri to herself.—"We have a harder path to tread tonight, for that matter."

When she came home she sent for Lauris to come into the bedroom. She saw at once that he knew what she wanted.—Hadn't they some business to do this evening? she said.—Why, was she coming too?—Yes, she thought she ought to. They were both in it. He had got in the money, hadn't he?—Yes, he had it ready; with interest

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and all. Had gone and paid off Engelbert's loan at the same time; so *that* was done.

They put on their things and went. They took the cart, and sat side by side like two old folks. They drove at a walk nearly all the way east to Engdal, through the whole parish.—"I believe they know what our business is, all the people we meet," said Astri. "They look like that."—"Ohay. And if they don't know, they'll soon hear it."—"If only we hadn't to go *there*"—"If we hadn't to go at all, I should say. But it'll be all right! as Odin says—as he used to say, I mean."

Ola Engdal was chairman of the almshouse committee, so it was he who had to receive the money. He had always had a queer way of looking from Lauris to Astri, she had often thought he shook his head at her, and that stung her into disregarding him. This made him smile in that dark beard of his. But in reality it was due to his wife, who was a doctor's daughter and thought herself superior to everyone else in the parish; with Astri she had always been a little too gracious, looking down on her sideways with narrowed eyes. But in spite of her gentility, anything that came to her ears was spread all over the parish.

And the parish was preparing for the solemnity. It was a great sign that they had snow. One evening the fall set in, hovering powdery and dense, filling the air with a white glory, and next day there was splendid going for sledges and unexpectedly fine weather.

But it was not from Haaberg that Odin was sung out.

The funeral was a parish affair, and it had to be held at the young men's club. That had been his house in a way, and he himself had always been a young man, had never counted himself anything else, so that was where he belonged. But it was for the elders to bear him to the grave.

They came and asked Lauris. He said no. Astri tackled him in private—wasn't he more of a man than that? And after all Odin was a friend and not an enemy? He blinked his eyes, dull and weary.—"Fm not *up* to it, Astri. Fm not the man you took me for."—"Im not surprised at you," she said. But she turned at the door and looked at him; then went out without another word. Lauris followed her, and told them that he'd have to do it all the same.

The day before the funeral folk stopped still in astonishment, the weather was so fine. It was so still that not a feather stirred, smooth sea and calm blue sky, and virgin snow on all the mountains and forests and fields around; so deep a blue they had never seen in the sky above them. And so it was reflected in folk's eyes, so deep and at the same time so bright, they did not know it themselves. Anders was the only one who saw it. He looked them over, all those he met, quietly and with half-closed eyes.—They're getting ready for a holiday, he said to himself.

But when they woke up on the day of the funeral, there was one whirl of snow between heaven and earth. They had to face a blinding white blizzard. Then Anders

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smiled, at his mother and at Astri and the others who were there.—"What do you say to this, Anders?" It was Astri who asked.—"Let it blow, say I . " They were staggered at this for a moment, as they had been by the weather outside; but after a while their faces softened and reflected his smile, for they felt as he did, that so it ought to be today. Those who cared to face it could come and follow Odin.

They came and came, driving and walking, from east and from west, they struggled on and got there, till the house was too small to hold them.—"I knew they would come," said Astri to Ingri, as they went arm in arm to take their seats.

The parson spoke, and the sheriff laid the first wreaths on the coffin; then they came forward man by man, and many of them wished to say a few words. The coffin was hidden under wreaths, and still there were many left.—A good thing they don't lay it on any thicker, thought Anders. They really look to me as if they *meant* it.

The church bell carried on a hopeless fight against the wind and the driving snow. Now and then it was stifled altogether, but time after time it came back and sang out over the long grey procession; it sounded as if new gates were opened, that the bell's witness might be heard.

Anders stood mute and reserved, staring down into the grave. His mother leaned heavily on his arm from time to time. Astri burst into tears and had to support herself against Ingri, who was next her, but she soon recovered

herself. Lauris stood a little to the rear. He kept shifting his feet, but did not come forward to the grave. One of the last was Iver Vennestad. He worked his way forward, dishevelled and weather-beaten, took off his cap and stood lost in thought, while the snow melted and dripped down his face and beard. Then his lips moved; there was something he said, but only Anders was near enough to hear it. He said in a thin old voice:

"Rest in peace!"

He was the last to leave the grave. With the toe of his boot he pushed in a lump of mould that had been left.

The others were already a long way on. The weather carried them with it, thought Anders. The District Council and the factory workers and every association in the parish had combined to hold the funeral ale in the young men's club; there the dinner stood waiting. Astri said to Ingri: "Are you fit to go through it, do you think?"—"I'll have to be," she answered. "I never heard of anything *he* couldn't face. And besides, I've—known it all beforehand. From the very beginning. That I should lose him, I mean."

The house was filled with long dining-tables and folk with an appetite.

And they talked and they ate, and the storm raged outside the walls. Anders left his place by his mother and squeezed in at the lower end of the table beside Per, his brother, and the Lauris boys. He noticed that everyone looked at him, and that his mother was pained at this, but

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he couldn't help himself.—"I wouldn't sit there like a bridegroom," said he; "this isn't a wedding, is it? Or maybe it is after all, that's how they look to me. Shouldn't wonder if they started making speeches again."

And it was not long before a man did get up to speak. It was the chairman of the next parish, a big, sturdy old fellow. He hadn't had a chance of saying many words at the grave-side, and now he would like to utter what he had at heart. He did it very handsomely as he went on; few of them listened with dry eyes.

Anders went pale for a moment; he jammed the butt of his knife hard against the table and was on the point of getting up and going out. Then Per looked up in his face and asked: "Don't you like your dinner, Anders?"—Anders sent a wide and searching glance round all the tables, dropped his eyes again and said: "It looks as if they like it, the folks here"—the corners of his mouth were drawn down and his forehead twitched and wrinkled. He sat still and listened for a while, and by degrees the same drawn look came back; he muttered over his plate: "A new age, does he say? Are we going to have another new age? A new outlook, he says, a new world—that's asking a good deal. *New generations?* what does he mean by that? I should think there've been new generations before now. And then father's *life-work*, I was waiting for that. What rubbish they talk—what do *they* know about it?" He looked up again, all round the table. It had stirred them right through, honest faces everywhere. That's how

they are today, he thought. But he had to run his eyes right up to the head of the table before they found a hold-fast. He could see his mother trying to smile at him, but she was not equal to it. Astri raised her eyebrows and opened her face to him, as it seemed; she understood him and was on his side. Lauris merely looked at him, but it wouldn't have taken much to make Anders go up and give him his hand; he might try anyhow to get him to eat something.

Then he saw that his mother wouldn't be able to face it much longer. He hurried to her side, helped her out and took her home.—"No, you must hold on to me, or the wind'll blow you away," he said.

A NOTE ON THE TYPE IN WHICH THIS BOOK IS SET

This book is composed on the linotype in Bodoni so called after Giambattista Bodoni (1740-1813), son of a printer of Piedmont. After gaining experience and fame as superintendent of the Press of the Propaganda in Rome, Bodoni became in 1766 the head of the ducal printing house at Parma, which he soon made the foremost of its kind in Europe. His Manuale Tipografico, completed by his widow in 1818, contains 279 pages of specimens of types, including alphabets of about thirty foreign languages. His editions of Greek, Latin, Italian, and French classics, especially his Homer, are celebrated for their typography. In type-designing he was an innovator, making his new faces rounder^ wider, and lighter, with greater openness and delicacy. His types were rather too rigidly perfect in detail, the thick lines contrasting sharply with the thin wiry lines. It was this feature, doubtless, that caused William Morris's condemnation of the Bodoni types as "swelteringly hideous." Bodoni Book, as reproduced by the Linotype Company, is a modern version based, not upon any one of Bodoni's fonts, but upon a composite conception of the Bodoni manner, designed to avoid the details stigmatized as bad by typographical experts and to secure the pleasing and effective results of which the Bodoni types are capable.



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