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HENRIK IBSEN

Seven Famous Plays

THE AUTHORISED ENGLISH TRANSLATIONS

EDITED BY

WILLIAM ARCHER

WITH INTRODUCTIONS BY P. F. D. TENNANT



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PUBLISHER'S NOTE

Seven Famous Plays is issued by arrangement with William Heinemann Ltd., publishers of the copyright edition of the Collected Works of Henrik Ibsen, revised and edited by William Archer.

The following note about the translations appears in William Archer's General Preface: "For the translations . . . I am ultimately responsible, in the sense that I have exercised an unrestricted right of revision. This means, of course, that, in plays originally translated by others the merits of the English version belong for the most part to the original translator, while the faults may have been introduced, and must have been sanctioned, by me. The revision, whether fortunate or otherwise, has in all cases been very thorough. . . . The Norwegian (and German) method of indicating emphasis by spacing the letters of a word, thus, has been adopted in this edition. In almost all cases a spaced word in translation represents a spaced word in the original."

Applications, professional and amateur, to perform the plays in this volume in any part of the world outside the U.S.A. should be directed as follows: *Ghosts*, *The Wild Duck*, and *Rosmershohn* to Curtis Brown, Ltd., 6 Henrietta Street, London, W.C.2; *Hedda Gabler*, *The Master Builder*, and *John Gabriel Bark man* to William Heinemann Ltd., 99 Great Russell Street, London, W.C.1; *A Doll's House*, professional to Curtis Brown, Ltd., amateur to Samuel French, Ltd., 26 Southampton Street, London, W.C.2.

B I O G R A P H I C A L I N T R O D U C T I O N

By P. F. D. TENNANT

HENRIK IBSEN was born on March 20th, 1828, at Skien, in Norway. He was the eldest son of a family of five, four brothers and one daughter.. In 1836 the family had to move to a farm at VenstOp as a result of his father's bankruptcy, and Ibsen felt deeply at this early age the power of social reprobation which cut the family off from the outside world and drove him to the lonely refuge of the garret which he later immortalised in *The Wild Duck*. In 1843 Ibsen left to become an apothecary^ apprentice at Grimstad, from which moment he cut himself off from his family, and from now on he had to fend for himself for the rest of his life. He was lonely and had no friends from the age of sixteen to nineteen, and in 1846 he became the father of an illegitimate child with one of the apothecary's maids, an inadvertency for which he had to pay maintenance for fourteen years, a load which was finally shaken off his mind in the figure of the green woman and her child in *Peer Gynt*. In 1847 he wrote the first poem of which we have any record, *Resignation*; he passed his examination, moved to better quarters on a better salary, began to study for the university, read Kierkegaard, interested himself in European politics, and became firm friends with Due and Schulerud. Two years later he launched out into a gay social life with the young people of Grimstad, *gained* a reputation as a wit, wrote patriotic poems, went to his first ball, wrote his first play, *Catalina*, under the pseudonym of Brynjolf Bjarme, and fell in love with Clara Ebbel. He wrote voluminously, plays, stories, and versifications of Telemark legends, was jilted by Clara Ebbel, fell in love with another girl, and finally, in 1850, left for Oslo with Schulerud to enter a crammer for the university. His little one-act play *The Warriors Barrow* was the first to be performed, *Catalina*

having been refused and never staged until 1880 in Stockholm.

In Oslo Ibsen failed his university examination in Greek and mathematics, gave up the idea of becoming a doctor, and devoted himself to literature, politics, and student life. Finally, in 1851, he signed a contract with Ole Bull for half a year as salaried dramatic adviser to the new Bergen National Theatre, which involved, to start with, the writing of prologues. In February 1852 the Bergen Theatre voted Ibsen a travelling grant to study the theatre in Denmark and Germany. He visited Copenhagen and Dresden, and returned in the autumn to a subordinate position in the Bergen Theatre. Here, on January 2nd, 1853, *Midsummer Eve*, the play he had written on his tour, was performed to a full house and was a fiasco. He lived a lonely life in Bergen, and was famed for his excessively elegant manners and dress. To add to his distress, his love affair with the fifteen-and-a-half-year-old Rikke Hoist was brought to an abrupt end by her irate father.

In 1854 Ibsen experienced a new failure with another performance of *The Warriors of Barrow*; this was followed by the failure of another play, *Lady Inger of J0itrat*, but in 1856 he had his first great success with *The Feast at Solhaug*, the first of his plays to be published after *Catalina*. In the same year he met his future wife, the nineteen-year-old Susannah Thoresen, whom he married two years later. In the meantime he had become (1857) artistic manager of the Christiania Norwegian Theatre, he had written his play *The Warriors of Helgeland*, which he finally produced in his own theatre after refusals by the Danish Royal Theatre and the Christiania Theatre, which he attacked violently for its Danish taste.

Up till 1861 Ibsen lived in a period of deep despair, satisfying his creative desire by painting and facing one literary failure after another. This period came to an end in the spring of 1861, when he arranged some successful productions of Bjvrnson's and de Musset's plays, was given a government grant to collect folk-songs, rewrote his play *Svanhild* into the versified version of *Love's Comedy*, and with the bankruptcy of his theatre became in the New Year of 1863 literary adviser to the Christiania Theatre, where he was later followed by all the Norwegian

actors from the Norwegian Theatre. Then came another period of depression, debts, and failures, until with the help of a government grant to collect more folk-songs he financed himself long enough to write his play *The Pretenders*. Shortly after this he was voted another travel grant for a study tour abroad, and he was able to leave for Copenhagen on April 5th, 1864, with the success of the performance of *The Pretenders* at the Christiania Theatre to buoy up his spirits.

On April 5th, 1864, Ibsen left Christiania for Copenhagen. It was in the middle of the Schleswig-Holstein war, and Ibsen was full of bitterness over the failure of the Swedes and Norwegians to help the Danes against the Germans. Ibsen was in Copenhagen when the Germans attacked Dybbjfl, and when he was in Berlin on May 4th he saw the Danish cannon paraded through the town. His anger knew no bounds, and it expressed itself in many ways in the years to come in his poetry and drama. From Berlin he went to Vienna, from there to Rome, then to Genzano, and then back to Rome, where he was met by his wife and son. It was now that he began work on *The Emperor and Galilean*, which was not finished until 1873. But in the spring of 1865 he turned his original epic *Brand* into dramatic form and finished it at the end of the year. It was published early in 1866 and proved—in spite of its intransigent demand for the absolute—to be a financial success. It was from now on that Hegel of Gyldendal in Copenhagen became his publisher and helped by his royalties and fees and advice on investment to make Ibsen a relatively wealthy man. The success of *Brand* was followed by a series of pecuniary grants, including one from the Trondheim Scientific Association, an annual stipend and a new travel grant from the Norwegian Government.

At the end of 1866 Ibsen was planning *Peer Gynt*, and by the autumn of 1867 it was finished, to be followed by new work on *The Emperor and Galilean*. This was followed in 1868 by beginning in Berchtesgaden the work on *The League of Youth*, which he finished in the spring of 1868 in Dresden. In July of the same year he was given a grant by the Norwegian Government to study in Sweden, which he visited as a delegate of the Scandinavian Orthographic Conference and where he was

BIOGRAPHICAL INTRODUCTION

lionised in literary society. Then it was he began his collection of decorations, of which he was always so proud, with the Order of Vasa, and a Turkish decoration later in the same year when he attended the opening of the Suez Canal as an official delegate. He now felt himself an accepted member of society, changed his handwriting from his earlier forward-slanting, fluent, pointed hand to a pedantic, rounded, backward-slanting calligraphy; he shaved off his beard, took to fashionable dundreary whiskers, and dressed himself in a smart velvet smoking-jacket as a dapper man of the world. He revised his earlier poems, compiled his first short autobiography, and began the revision of earlier plays. But with the self-irony of which he was a master, his new-found social self began to be his own victim in the first notes of the play, *Pillars of Society*, which, however, did not appear till 1877. Until 1873 he was busy with his long drama *The Emperor and Galilean*; in 1874 he spent two and a half months of the summer in Oslo, where he was feted as a conservative—a compliment against which he reacted strongly.

In the spring of 1875 he moved to Munich, gave up verse for prose, and in the summer of 1877 had completed his first modern social drama, *Pillars of Society*. This play was followed in 1879 by the publication of *A Doll's House*, his first great *succes de scandale*. He moved from Rome to Munich and then back to Rome, where he finished *Ghosts* at the end of 1881, followed by *An Enemy of the People* in 1882. Then in 1884 he published *The Wild Duck*, in which he abandoned current social problems and embarked on the psychological drama. From his visit to Norway in 1885 came his inspiration for the following play, *Rosmersholm* (1886), while his seaside holiday at Saebø in Denmark in 1887 was the background of his next play, *The Lady from the Sea* (1888). *Hedda Gabler* followed in 1890, after which he left Munich, where he had lived since 1885, and settled in Norway for the rest of his life the following year. The last plays are in many ways autobiographical confessions: *The Master Builder* (1892), *Little Eyolf* (1894), *John Gabriel Borkman* (1896), and finally *When We Dead Awaken* (1899).

His seventieth birthday in 1898 was the occasion for celebra-

tions for him all over Scandinavia, and he was now accepted as one of the greatest living dramatists. He intended to continue his work, but in the summer of 1900 he suffered from a stroke, to be followed by another the following year which left him bedridden and unable to write until his death on May 23rd, 1906.

A DOLL'S HOUSE
(1879)

TRANSLATED BY
WILLIAM ARCHER

CHARACTERS

TORVALD HELMER.

NORA, *his wife*.

DOCTOR RANK.

MRS. LINDEN.¹

NILS KROGSTAD.

THE HELMERS' THREE CHILDREN.

ANNA,² *their nurse*.

A MAID-SERVANT (ELLEN).

A PORTER.

The action passes in Helmers house (a flat) in Christiania.

In the original " Fru Linde."

² In the original " Anne-Marie."

A DOLL'S HOUSE

INTRODUCTION

On August 2nd, 1878, Ibsen wrote to his Danish publisher, Hegel, that he hoped to spend the next winter in Rome. After a stay of one and a half months at Gossensass in the Tyrol, he left at the end of September for his destination.

The first sign of renewed literary activity is in a letter of October 8th to Hegel, speaking of his need for peace to work, and the first results of this work are to be found in notes on a modern tragedy dated Rome, October 19th. The weather *in* Rome was bad that winter, and Ibsen's activity suffered accordingly; but in March and April his mood changed, and on April 18th, 1879, he mentions preparation for summer work. By May 2nd he was in full swing, and by May 24th the first draft of Act I of *A Doll's House* was completed. The second act was completed between June 4th and July 14th, and the third between July 18th and August 3rd. *On* July 5th he moved to Amain", and here he finished the final version of the play on September 20th.

During the winter months in Rome before he began work seriously, he was distant and nervous. His lonely world became peopled with the creatures of his imagination. Once he said suddenly to his wife: "Now I have seen Nora. She came right up to me and put her hand *on* my shoulder." "How was she dressed?" asked his wife. "She had on a simple blue woollen dress," he replied.

After the play was finished, John Paulsen asked him one day why Nora was called Nora. Ibsen answered: "She was really called Leonora, you know, but everyone called her Nora; she was the spoilt child of the family."

The reality of the characters he was creating appears in many letters and notes of this period. Occasionally he would dart

out of this world of his own into the world around him. One night, drinking Swedish punch in the Scandinavian Club in Rome, he suddenly rounded on two harmless Danish theologians and indulged in a tirade of abuse against Christianity and church dogmas.

On January 28th, 1879, Ibsen proposed the appointment of a lady librarian in the Scandinavian Club and voting by ladies in the general meetings. He made the formal proposal in a written speech on February 27th at a general meeting. At one point he used Nora's own words to Helmer about "men with petty occupations and petty thoughts, men with petty considerations and petty anxieties. . . ." This motion for a lady librarian was carried, but the one for ladies' votes failed by one vote. Ibsen took this defeat with bad grace. He refused to meet his friends in the restaurant that evening. He cut all those who had opposed the motion and curtly refused all social invitations. Then suddenly one evening he appeared in full evening dress, glistening with decorations, at one of the Scandinavian Club's receptions. He greeted those present and sat down at a table alone. Then, without any warning, he took his stand behind a large table with all the guests and pairs of dancers in front of him, and silenced them with a booming oration, castigating as prostitutes those ladies who had intrigued against him and the ladies' vote, working himself into an evangelical frenzy and shaking his white mane. One of the ladies collapsed and was carried out. Ibsen carried on more calmly, but with fluent eloquence, and when he had finished left the party sedately, put on his winter overcoat, and went home in great peace of mind.

Apart from these outbursts, which were symptomatic of his state of creative pregnancy at the time, the theme of the play was profoundly influenced by a human drama which he knew well. It was the case of Mrs. Laura Kieler. In 1870 he had written to her about a morally edifying prose continuation of his dramatic poem *Brand* she had written, and told her to continue as an artist and to ignore morals. As a result she left Norway for Copenhagen, where Ibsen met her and was surprised to find a gay and happy young person enjoying the

summer and freedom of Denmark. He nicknamed her "the lark/" her first trait in common with Nora. She visited Ibsen in Dresden the next year, and in 1873 she married in Denmark. In 1876 she and her husband visited the Ibsens in Munich, and Ibsen was so struck with their idyllic relationship that he called their menage a "doll's house." Later she wrote to Ibsen of her husband's illness and her unhappiness, of her efforts to earn money, of debts she had incurred without her husband's knowledge, of his final discovery of the situation and his anger. She did not walk out like Nora, but went to a nerve clinic instead. She continually reproached Ibsen for this exploitation of her own personal tragedy in *A Doll's House*, and we find an echo of this in the epilogue to his modern plays, *When We Dead Awaken*, with its theme of the sculptor exploiting the body and soul of his model. It is perhaps significant that the model Irene is here described as wearing exactly the same black-and-white dress which Laura Kieler wore when she visited Ibsen before he wrote this last play.

As so often in Ibsen's work, his themes and characters are variations and developments of those that have gone before. Nora is something of the "fairy princess" Mrs. Bratsberg in *The League of Youth*, who complained of being "dressed up as a doll." She is also foreshadowed in Dina Dorf of *Pillars of Society*,

The characters in the play went through a process of careful humanisation as Ibsen wrote. The play, based on the general conflict of man and woman, morals and instinct, in a man-made society, gradually evolves from a sermon into a psychological drama. Nora appears the most finished character from the beginning of the notes. Helmer grows from the caricature of a hypocrite with the name Stenborg (stone castle) into a real character. Whereas, for instance, the letter from Krogstad earlier drew forth the ejaculation, "Nora, you are saved," Ibsen changes this finally to "I am saved," and adds, "But there is no one who would sacrifice his honour for the one he loves." Dr. Rank, who first appears as Hank, is originally a wordy exponent of Darwinism and ends up in the play merely as an example of the curse of heredity.

The unhappy and inconclusive ending of the play was a new development, and possibly largely due to his discussions with the Danish author J. P. Jacobsen, with whom he spent much time in the winter of 1878-9 in Rome. Jacobsen had previously published his translations of Darwin's two chief works, and a lot of Darwinistic jargon crept into the original drafts of *A Doll's House* which was finally eliminated. In March 1880 Jacobsen wrote in a letter of the stupid convention of a happy ending as being against nature. The only possible ending, he said, was death, or else, since human relationships were eternally inconclusive, one should finish a work with an indication of further continuation, as Ibsen did in *A Doll's House*,

The shock of Ibsen's ending to *A Doll's House* was too much for many producers. The first performance in London, on March 3rd, 1884, at Princes Theatre, was in Henry Arthur Jones' and Henry Hermann's happy ending adaptation entitled *Breaking a Butterfly*, Ibsen had to send Wilhelm Lange a happy ending for the first performance in Germany, in which Nora did not leave her house, but collapsed in front of the nursery door. Frau Raabe refused to play Nora without a happy ending, protesting, "I would never leave my children." Heinrich Laube used the happy ending at the Residenztheater in Berlin, and in response to protests produced it in the original. Critics then fulminated because the ending was inconclusive, and a fourth act was added. This took place a year later. Nora is seated with a new-born baby on her lap, and Helmer enters. "Have you properly forgiven me?" Nora asks. He does not answer, but extracts a box of sweets from his pocket and gives her a macaroon. Nora gives a cry of joy: "The miracle has happened!" Slow curtain.

When it appeared, the play was judged as a contribution to the debate on marriage and morals, and not on its artistic merits. It became the focus of heated arguments on social ethics in Northern Europe, while it left the more sophisticated Latin countries unmoved and uninterested. The first English translation is an incompetent and comic word-for-word dictionary interpretation published in 1880 by a Danish school-master, Weber, and dedicated to Queen Alexandra. The first

good translation was made by Miss Frances Lord in 1883, but the real launching of the play and of Ibsen's work as a whole in England was Janet Achurch's performance of Nora in William Archer's translation at the Novelty in 1889. p. F. D. T.

A DOLL'S HOUSE

ACT I

A room, comfortably and tastefully, but not expensively, furnished. In the back, on the right, a door leads to the hall; on the left another door leads to Helme/s study. Between the two doors a pianoforte. In the middle of the left wall a door, and nearer the front a window. Near the window a round table with armchairs and a small sofa. In the right wall, somewhat to the back, a door, and against the same wall, farther forward, a porcelain stove; in front of it a couple of armchairs and a rocking-chair. Between the stove and the side-door a small table. Engravings on the walls. A what-not with china and bric-a-brac. A small bookcase filled with handsomely bound books. Carpet. A fire in the stove. It is a winter day.

A bell rings in the hall outside. Presently the outer door of the flat is heard to open. Then Nora enters, humming gaily. She is in outdoor dress, and carries several parcels, which she lays on the right-hand table. She leaves the door into the hall open, and a Porter is seen outside, carrying a Christmas-tree and a basket, which he gives to the maid-servant who has opened the door.

NORA. Hide the Christmas-tree carefully, Ellen; the children must on no account see it before this evening, when it's lighted up. [*To the Porter, taking out her purse.*] How much?

PORTER. Fifty ore.¹

¹ About sixpence. There are 100 ore in a krone or crown, which is worth thirteence halfpenny.

NORA. There is a crown. No, keep the change.

[The Porter thanks her and goes. NORA shuts the door. She continues smiling in quiet glee as she takes off her outdoor things. Taking from her pocket a bag of macaroons, she eats one or two. Then she goes on tiptoe to her husband's door and listens.]

NORA. Yes, he is at home.

[She begins humming again, crossing to the table on the right.]

HELMER *[in his room]*. Is that my lark[^]twittering there?

NORA *[busy opening some of her parcels]*. Yes, it is.

HELMER. Is it the squirrel frisking around?

NORA. Yes!

HELMER. When did the squrrl get home?

NORA. Just this minute. *[Hides the bag of macaroons in her pocket and wipes her mouth.]* Come here, Torvald, and see what I've been buying.

HELMER. Don't interrupt me. *[A little later he opens the door and looks in, pen in hand.]* Buying, did you say? What! All that? Has my little spendthrift been making the money fly again?

NORA. Why, Torvald, surely we can afford to launch out a little now. It's the first Christmas we haven't had to pinch.

HELMER. Come, come; we can't afford to squander money.

NORA. Oh yes, Torvald, do let us squander a little, now—just the least little bit! You know you'll soon be earning heaps of money.

HELMER. Yes, from New Year's Day. But there's a whole quarter before my first salary is due.

NORA. Never mind; we can borrow in the meantime.

HELMER. Nora! *[He goes up to her and takes her playfully by the ear.]* Still my little featherbrain! Supposing I borrowed a thousand crowns to-day, and you made ducks and drakes of them during Christmas week, and then on New Year's Eve a tile blew off the roof and knocked my brains out——

NORA *[laying her hand on his mouth]*. Hush! How can you talk so horribly?

HELMER. But supposing it were to happen—what then?

NORA. If anything so dreadful happened, it would be all the same to me whether I was in debt or not.

HELMER. But what about the creditors ?

NORA. They! Who cares for them? They're only strangers.

HELMER. Nora, Nora! What a woman you are! But seriously, Nora, you know my principles on these points. No debts! No borrowing! Home life ceases to be beautiful as soon as it is founded on borrowing and debt. We two have held out bravely till now, and we are not going to give in at the last.

NORA [*going to the fireplace*]. Very well—as you please, Torvald.

HELMER [*following her*]. Come, come; my little lark mustn't droop her wings like that. What? Is my squirrel in the sulks? [*Takes out his purse.*] Nora, what do you think I have here?

NORA [*turning round quickly*]. Money!

HELMER. There! [*Gives her some notes.*] Of course I know all sorts of things are wanted at Christmas.

NORA [*counting*]. Ten, twenty, thirty, forty. Oh, thank you, thank you, Torvald! This will go a long way.

HELMER. I should hope so.

NORA. Yes, indeed; a long way! But come here, and let me show you all I've been buying. And so cheap! Look, here's a new suit for Ivar, and a little sword. Here are a horse and a trumpet for Bob. And here are a doll and a cradle for Emmy. They're only common, but they're good enough for her to pull to pieces. And dress-stuffs and kerchiefs for the servants. I ought to have got something better for old Anna.

HELMER. And what's in that other parcel ?

NORA [*crying out*]. No, Torvald, you're not to see that until this evening!

HELMER. Oh! Ah! But now tell me, you little spend-thrift, have you thought of anything for yourself ?

NORA. For myself! Oh, I don't want anything.

HELMER. Nonsense! Just tell me something sensible you would like to have.

NORA. No, really I don't know of anything—well, listen, Torvald——

HELMER. Well?

NORA [*playing with his coat-buttons, without looking him in the face*]. If you really want to give me something you might, you know—you might——

HELMER. Well? Out with it!

NORA [*quickly*]. You might give me money, Torvald. Only just what you think you can spare; then I can buy something with it later on.

HELMER. But, Nora——

NORA. Oh, please do, dear Torvald, please do! I should hang the money in lovely gilt paper on the Christmas-tree. Wouldn't that be fun?

HELMER. What do they call the birds that are always making the money fly?

NORA. Yes, I know—spendthrifts,¹ of course. But please do as I ask you, Torvald. Then I shall have time to think what I want most. Isn't that very sensible, now?

HELMER [*smiling*]. Certainly; that is to say, if you really kept the money I gave you, and really spent it on something for yourself. But it all goes in housekeeping, and for all manner of useless things, and then I have to pay up again.

NORA. But, Torvald——

HELMER. Can you deny it, Nora dear? [*He puts his arm round her.*] It's a sweet little lark, but it gets through a lot of money. No one would believe how much it costs a man to keep such a little birdjtsjou.

NORA. "For shame! How can you say so? Why, I save as much as ever I can.

HELMER [*laughing*]. Very true—as much as you can—but that's precisely nothing.

NORA [*hums and smiles with covert glee*]. H'm! If you only knew, Torvald, what expenses we larks and squirrels have.

HELMER. You're a strange little being! Just like your father—always on the look-out for all the money you can lay your hands on; but the moment you have it, it seems to slip

¹ *Spillefugl*, literally "playbird," means a gambler.

through your fingers; you never know what becomes of it. Well, one must take you as you are. It's in the blood. Yes, Nora, that sort of thing is hereditary.

NORA. I wish I had inherited many of papa's qualities.

HELMER. And I don't wish you anything but just what you are—myjown, sweet little song-bird. But I say—it strikes me you IOOKSO—so—what shall I call it?—so suspicious to-day——

NORA. Do I?

HELMER. YOU do, indeed. Look me full in the face.

NORA [*looking at him*]. Well?

HELMER [*threatening with his finger*]. Hasn't the little sweet-tooth been playing pranks to-day?

NORA. NO; how can you think such a thing!

HELMER. Didn't she just look in at the confectioner's?

NORA. NO, Torvald; really——

HELMER. Not to sip a little jelly?

NORA. NO, certainly not.

HELMER. Hasn't she even nibbled a macaroon or two?

NORA. NO, Torvald, indeed, indeed!

HELMER. Well, well, well; of course I'm only joking.

NORA [*goes to the table on the right*], I shouldn't think of doing what you disapprove of.

HELMER. No, I'm sure of that; and, besides, you've given me your word——[*Going towards her*.] Well, keep your little Christmas secrets to yourself, Nora darling. The Christmas-tree will bring them all to light, I daresay.

NORA. Have you remembered to invite Doctor Rank?

HELMER. NO. But it's not necessary; he'll come as a matter of course. Besides, I shall ask him when he looks in to-day. I've ordered some capital wine. Nora, you can't think how I look forward to this evening.

NORA. And I too. How the children will enjoy themselves, Torvald!

HELMER. Ah, it's glorious to feel that one has an assured position and ample means. Isn't it delightful to think of?

NORA. Oh, it's wonderful!

HELMER. DO you remember last Christmas? For three whole weeks beforehand you shut yourself up every evening till

long past midnight to make flowers for the Christmas-tree, and all sorts of other marvels that were to have astonished us. I was never so bored in my life.

NORA. I didn't bore myself at all.

HELMER [*smiling*]. But it came to little enough in the end, Nora.

NORA. Oh, are you going to tease me about that again? How could I help the cat getting in and pulling it all to pieces?

HELMER. TO be sure you couldn't, my poor little Nora. You did your best to give us all pleasure, and that's the main point. But, all the same, it's a good thing the hard times are over.

NORA. Oh, isn't it wonderful?

HELMER. NOW I needn't sit here boring myself all alone; and you needn't tire your blessed eyes and your delicate little fingers——

NORA [*clapping her hands*]. No, I needn't, need I, Torvald? Oh, how wonderful it is to think of! [*Takes his arm.*] And now I'll tell you how I think we ought to manage, Torvald. As soon as Christmas is over———[*The hall-door bell rings.*] Oh, there's a ring! [*Arranging the room.*] That's somebody come to call. How tiresome!

HELMER. I'm "not at home" to callers; remember that.

ELLEN [*in the doorway*]. A lady to see you, ma'am.

NORA. Show her in.

ELLEN [*to HELMER*]. And the doctor has just come, sir.

HELMER. Has he gone into my study?

ELLEN. Yes, sir.

[HELMER goes into his study. ELLEN ushers in MRS. LINDEN, in travelling costume, and goes out, closing the door.]

MRS. LINDEN [*embarrassed and hesitating*]. How do you do, Nora?

NORA [*doubtfully*]. How do you do?

MRS. LINDEN. I see you don't recognise me.

NORA. NO, I don't think—oh yes!—I believe———[*Suddenly brightening.*] What, Christina! Is it really you!

MRS. LINDEN. Yes; really I!

NORA. Christina! And to think I didn't know you! But

how could I——[*More softly.*] How changed you are, Christina!

MRS. LINDEN. Yes, no doubt. In nine or ten years——

NORA. IS it really so long since we met? Yes, so it is. Oh, the last eight years have been a happy time, I can tell you. And now you have come to town? All that long journey in mid-winter! How brave of you!

MRS. LINDEN. I arrived by this morning's steamer.

NORA. To have a merry Christmas, of course. Oh, how delightful! Yes, we will have a merry Christmas. Do take your things off. Aren't you frozen? [*Helping her.*] There; now we'll sit cosily by the fire. No, you take the armchair; I shall sit in this rocking-chair. [*Seizes her hands.*] Yes, now I can see the dear old face again. It was only at the first glance——But you're a little paler, Christina—and perhaps a little thinner.

MRS. LINDEN. And much, much older, Nora.

NORA. Yes, perhaps a little older—not much—ever so little. [*She suddenly checks herself; seriously.*] Oh, what a thoughtless wretch I am! Here I sit chattering on and——Dear, dear Christina, can you forgive me!

MRS. LINDEN. What do you mean, Nora?

NORA [*softly*]. Poor Christina! I forgot: you are a widow.

MRS. LINDEN. Yes; my husband *died* three years ago.

NORA. I know, I know; I saw it in the papers. Oh, believe me, Christina, I did mean to write to you; but I kept putting it off, and something always came in the way.

MRS. LINDEN. I can quite understand that, Nora dear.

NORA. NO, Christina; it was horrid of me. Oh, you poor darling! how much you must have gone through!—And he left you nothing?

MRS. LINDEN. Nothing.

NORA. And no children?

MRS. LINDEN. None.

NORA. Nothing, nothing at all?

MRS. LINDEN. Not even a sorrow or a longing to dwell upon.

NORA [*looking at her incredulously*]. My dear Christina, how is that possible ?

MRS. LINDEN [*smiling sadly and stroking her hair*]. Oh, it happens so sometimes, Nora.

NORA. So utterly alone! How dreadful that must be! I have three of the loveliest children. I can't show them to you just now; they're out with their nurse. But now you must tell me everything.

MRS. LINDEN. NO, no; I want you to tell me——

NORA. NO, you must begin; I won't be egotistical to-day. To-day I'll think only of you. Oh! but I must tell you one thing—perhaps you've heard of our great stroke of fortune ?

MRS. LINDEN. NO. What is it ?

NORA. Only think! my husband has been made manager of the Joint Stock Bank.

MRS. LINDEN. Your husband! Oh, how fortunate!

NORA. Yes; isn't it? A lawyer's position is so uncertain, you see, especially when he won't touch any business that's the least bit—shady, as of course Torvald never would; and there I quite agree with him. Oh! you can imagine how glad we are. He is to enter on his new position at the New Year, and then he'll have a large salary, and percentages. In future we shall be able to live quite differently—just as we please, in fact. Oh, Christina, I feel so light-hearted and happy! It's delightful to have lots of money, and no need to worry about things, isn't it ?

MRS. LINDEN. Yes; at any rate it must be delightful to have what you need.

NORA. NO, not only what you need, but heaps of money—heaps !

MRS. LINDEN [*smiling*], Nora, Nora, haven't you learnt reason yet? In our schooldays you were a shocking little spendthrift.

NORA [*quietly smiling*]. Yes; that's what Torvald says I am still. [*Holding up her forefinger.*] But "Nora, Nora" is not so silly as you all think. Oh! I haven't had the chance to be much of a spendthrift. We have both had to work.

MRS. LINDEN. You too ?

NORA. Yes, light fancy work : crochet, and embroidery, and

things of that sort; [*Carelessly*] and other work too. You know, of course, that Torvald left the Government service when we were married. He had little chance of promotion, and of course he required to make more money. But in the first year after our marriage he overworked himself terribly. He had to undertake all sorts of extra work, you know, and to slave early and late. He couldn't stand it, and fell dangerously ill. Then the doctors declared he must go to the South.

MRS. LINDEN. You spent a whole year *in* Italy, didn't you?

NORA. Yes, we did. It wasn't easy to manage, I can tell you. It was just after Ivar's birth. But of course we had to go. Oh, it was a wonderful, delicious journey! And it saved Torvald's life. But it cost a frightful lot of money, Christina.

MRS. LINDEN. So I should think.

NORA. Twelve hundred dollars! Four thousand eight hundred crowns! 1 Isn't that a lot of money?

MRS. LINDEN. How lucky you had the money to spend!

NORA. We got it from father, you must know.

MRS. LINDEN. Ah, I see. He died just about that time, didn't he?

NORA. Yes, Christina, just then. And only think! I couldn't go and nurse him! I was expecting little Ivar's birth daily; and then I had my poor sick Torvald to attend to. Dear, kind old father! I never saw him again, Christina. Oh! that's the hardest thing I have had to bear since my marriage.

MRS. LINDEN. I know how fond you were of him. But then you went to Italy?

NORA. Yes; you see, we had the money, and the doctors said we must lose no time. We started a month later.

MRS. LINDEN. And your husband came back completely cured?

NORA. Sound as a bell.

MRS. LINDEN. But—the doctor?

NORA. What do you mean?

¹ The dollar (4/. 6d.) was the old unit of currency in Norway. The crown was substituted for it shortly before the date of this play.

MRS. LINDEN. I thought as I came in your servant announced the doctor——

NORA. Oh yes; Doctor Rank. But he doesn't come professionally. He is our best friend, and never lets a day pass without looking in. No, Torvald hasn't had an hour's illness since that time. And the children are so healthy and well, and so am I. [*Jumps up and claps her hands.*] Oh, Christina, Christina, what a wonderful thing it is to live and to be happy! —Oh, but it's really too horrid of me! Here am I talking about nothing but my own concerns. [*Sits herself upon a footstool close to Christina, and lays her arms on her friend's lap.*] Oh, don't be angry with me! Now tell me, is it really true that you didn't love your husband? What made you marry him, then?

MRS. LINDEN. My mother was still alive, you see, bed-ridden and helpless; and then I had my two younger brothers to think of. I didn't think it would be right for me to refuse him.

NORA. Perhaps it wouldn't have been. I suppose he was rich then?

MRS. LINDEN. Very well off, I believe. But his business was uncertain. It fell to pieces at his death, and there was nothing left.

NORA. And then——?

MRS. LINDEN. Then I had to fight my way by keeping a shop, a little school, anything I could turn my hand to. The last three years have been one long struggle for me. But now it is over, Nora. My poor mother no longer needs me; she is at rest. And the boys are in business, and can look after themselves.

NORA. HOW free your life must feel!

MRS. LINDEN. NO, Nora; only inexpressibly empty. No one to live for! [*Stands up restlessly.*] That's why I could not bear to stay any longer in that out-of-the-way corner. Here it must be easier to find something to take one up—to occupy one's thoughts. If I could only get some settled employment—some office work.

NORA. But, Christina, that's such drudgery, and you look

worn-out already. It would be ever so much better for you to go to some watering-place and rest.

MRS. LINDEN [*going to the window*]. I have no father to give me the money, Nora.

NORA [*rising*']. Oh, don't be vexed with me.

MRS. LINDEN [*going to her*]. My dear Nora, don't you be vexed with me. The worst of a position like mine is that it makes one so bitter. You have no one to work for, yet you have to be always on the strain. You must live, and so you becorrie selfish. When I heard of the happy change in your fortunes—can you believe it?—I was glad for my own sake more than for yours.

NORA. How do you mean? Ah, I see! You think Torvald can perhaps do something for you?

MRS. LINDEN. Yes, I thought so.

NORA. And so he shall, Christina. Just you leave it all to me. I shall lead up to it beautifully!—I shall think of some delightful plan to put him in a good humour! Oh, I should so love to help you.

MRS. LINDEN. HOW good of you, Nora, to stand by me so warmly! Doubly good in you, who know so little of the troubles and burdens of life.

NORA. I? I know so little of——?

MRS. LINDEN [*smiling*]. Oh, well—a little fancy-work, and so forth.—You're a child, Nora.

NORA [*tosses her head and paces the room*]. Oh, come, you mustn't be so patronising!

MRS. LINDEN. NO?

NORA. You're like the rest. You all think I'm fit for nothing really serious——

MRS. LINDEN. Well, well——

NORA. YOU think I've had no troubles in this weary world.

MRS. LINDEN. My dear Nora, you've just told me all your troubles.

NORA. Pooh—those trifles! [*Softly*]. I haven't told you the great thing.

MRS. LINDEN. The great thing? What do you mean?

NORA. I know you look down upon me, Christina; but you

have no right to. You are proud of having worked so hard and so long for your mother.

MRS. LINDEN. I am sure I don't look down upon anyone; but it's true I am both proud and glad when I remember that I was able to keep my mother's last days free from care.

NORA. And you're proud to think of what you have done for your brothers, too.

MRS. LINDEN. Have I not the right to be ?

NORA. Yes, indeed. But now let me tell you, Christina—I, too, have something to be proud and glad of.

MRS. LINDEN. I don't doubt it. But what do you mean?

NORA. Hush! Not so loud. Only think, if Torvald were to hear! He mustn't—not for worlds! No one must know about it, Christina—no one but you.

MRS. LINDEN. Why, what can it be ?

NORA. Come over here. [*Draws her down beside her on the sofa.*] Yes, Christina—I, too, have something to be proud and glad of. I saved Torvald's life.

MRS. LINDEN. Saved his life? How?

NORA. I told you about our going to Italy. Torvald would have died but for that.

MRS. LINDEN. Well—and your father gave you the money.

NORA [*smiling*]. Yes, so Torvald and every one believes; but——

MRS. LINDEN. But——?

NORA. Papa didn't give us one penny. It was / that found the money.

MRS. LINDEN. You? All that money?

NORA. Twelve hundred dollars. Four thousand eight hundred crowns. What do you say to that?

MRS. LINDEN. My dear Nora, how did you manage it? Did you win it in the lottery?

NORA [*contemptuously*]. In the lottery? Pooh! Anyone could have done t h a t !

MRS. LINDEN. Then wherever did you get it from?

NORA [*hums and smiles mysteriously*]. H'm; tra-la-la-la!

MRS. LINDEN. Of course you couldn't borrow it.

NORA. No? Why not?

MRS. LINDEN. Why, a wife can't borrow without her husband's consent.

NORA [*tossing her head*]. Oh! when the wife has some idea of business, and knows how to set about things——

MRS. LINDEN. But, Nora, I don't understand——

NORA. Well, you needn't. I never said I borrowed the money. There are many ways I may have got it. [*Throws herself back on the sofa.*] I may have got it from some admirer. When one is so—attractive as I am——

MRS. LINDEN. You're too silly, Nora.

NORA. Now I'm sure you're dying of curiosity, Christina——

MRS. LINDEN. Listen to me, Nora dear: haven't you been a little rash?

NORA [*sitting upright again*]. Is it rash to save one's husband's life?

MRS. LINDEN. I think it was rash of you, without his knowledge——

NORA. But it would have been fatal for him to know! Can't you understand that? He wasn't even to suspect how ill he was. The doctors came to me privately and told me his life was in danger—that nothing could save him but a winter in the South. Do you think I didn't try diplomacy first? I told him how I longed to have a trip abroad, like other young wives; I wept and prayed; I said he ought to think of my condition, and not to thwart me; and then I hinted that he could borrow the money. But then, Christina, he got almost angry. He said I was frivolous, and that it was his duty as a husband not to yield to my whims and fancies—so he called them. Very well, thought I, but saved you must be; and then I found the way to do it.

MRS. LINDEN. And did your husband never learn from your father that the money was not from him?

NORA. NO; never. Papa died at that very time. I meant to have told him all about it, and begged him to say nothing. But he was so ill—unhappily, it wasn't necessary.

MRS. LINDEN. And you have never confessed to your husband?

NORA. Good heavens! What can you be thinking of? Tell him, when he has such a loathing of debt! And besides—how painful and humiliating it would be for Torvald, with his manly self-respect, to know that he owed anything to me! It would utterly upset the relation between us; our beautiful, happy home would never again be what it is.

MRS. LINDEN. Will you never tell him?

NORA [*thoughtfully, half smiling*"]. Yes, some time perhaps—many, many years hence, when I'm—not so pretty. You mustn't laugh at me! Of course I mean when Torvald is not so much in love with me as he is now; when it doesn't amuse him any longer to see me dancing about, and dressing up and 'acting. Then it might be well to have something in reserve. [*Breaking off.*] Nonsense! nonsense! That time will never come. Now, what do you say to my grand secret, Christina? Am I fit for nothing now? You may believe it has cost me a lot of anxiety. It has been no joke to meet my engagements punctually. You must know, Christina, that in business there are things called instalments, and quarterly interest, that are terribly hard to provide for. So I've had to pinch a little here and there, wherever I could. I couldn't save much out of the housekeeping, for of course Torvald had to live well. And I couldn't let the children go about badly dressed; all I got for them, I spent on them, the blessed darlings!

MRS. LINDEN. Poor Nora! So it had to come out of your own pocket-money?

NORA. Yes, of course. After all, the whole thing was my doing. When Torvald gave me money for clothes, and so on, I never spent more than half of it; I always bought the simplest and cheapest things. It's a mercy that everything suits me so well—Torvald never had any suspicions. But it was often very hard, Christina dear. For it's nice to be beautifully dressed—now, isn't it?

MRS. LINDEN. Indeed it is.

NORA. Well, and besides that, I made money in other ways. Last winter I was so lucky—I got a heap of copying to do. I shut myself up every evening, and wrote far into the night. Oh, sometimes I was so tired, so tired. And yet it was splendid

to work in that way and earn money. I almost felt as if I was a man.

MRS. LINDEN. Then how much have you been able to pay off?

NORA. Well, I can't precisely say. It's difficult to keep that sort of business clear. I only know that I've paid everything I could scrape together. Sometimes I really didn't know where to turn. [*Smiles.*] Then I used to sit here and pretend that a rich old gentleman was in love with me——

MRS. LINDEN. What! What gentleman?

NORA. Oh, nobody?—that he was dead now, and that when his will was opened, there stood in large letters: "Pay over at once everything of which I die possessed to that charming person, Mrs. Nora Helmer."

MRS. LINDEN. But, my dear Nora—what gentleman do you mean?

NORA. Oh dear, can't you understand? There wasn't any old gentleman: it was only what I used to dream and dream when I was at my wits' end for money. But it doesn't matter now—the tiresome old creature may stay where he is for me. I care nothing for him or his will; for now my troubles are over. [*Springing up.*] Oh, Christina, how glorious it is to think of! Free from all anxiety! Free, quite free. To be able to play and romp about with the children; to have things tasteful and pretty in the house, exactly as Torvald likes it! And then the spring will soon be here, with the great blue sky. Perhaps then we shall have a little holiday. Perhaps I shall see the sea again. Oh, what a wonderful thing it is to live and to be happy!

[*The hall-door bell rings.*]

MRS. LINDEN [*rising*]. There's a ring. Perhaps I had better go.

NORA. NO; do stay. No one will come here. It's sure to be some one for Torvald.

ELLEN [*in the doorway*]. If you please, ma'am, there's a gentleman to speak to Mr. Helmer.

NORA. Who is the gentleman?

KROGSTAD [*in the doorway*]. It is I, Mrs. Helmer.

[*MRS. LINDEN starts, and turns away to the window.*]

NORA [*goes a step towards him, anxiously, speaking low.*] You? What is it? What do you want with my husband?

KROGSTAD. Bank business—in a way. I hold a small post in the Joint Stock Bank, and your husband is to be our new chief, I hear.

NORA. Then it is——?

KROGSTAD. Only tiresome business, Mrs. Helmer; nothing more.

NORA. Then will you please go to his study?

[KROGSTAD *goes.* *She bows indifferently while she closes the door into the hall. Then she goes to the stove and looks to the fire.*

MRS. LINDEN. Nora—who was that man?

NORA. A Mr. Krogstad—a lawyer.

MRS. LINDEN. Then it was really he?

NORA. Do you know him?

MRS. LINDEN. I used to know him—many years ago. He was in a lawyer's office in our town.

NORA. Yes, so he was.

MRS. LINDEN. HOW he has changed!

NORA. I believe his marriage was unhappy.

MRS. LINDEN. And he is a widower now?

NORA. With a lot of children. There! Now it will burn up. [*She closes the stove, and pushes the rocking-chair a little aside.*

MRS. LINDEN. His business is not of the most creditable, they say?

NORA. Isn't it? I daresay not. I don't know. But don't let us think of business—it's so tiresome.

[DR. RANK *comes out of HELMER'S room.*

RANK [*still in the doortway.*] No, no; I'm in your way. I shall go and have a chat with your wife. [*Shuts the door and sees MRS. LINDEN.*] Oh, I beg your pardon. I'm in the way here too.

NORA. No, not in the least. [*Introduces them.*] Doctor Rank—Mrs. Linden.

RANK. Oh, indeed; I've often heard Mrs. Linden's name. I think I passed you on the stairs as I came up.

MRS. LINDEN. Yes; I go so very slowly. Stairs try me so much.

RANK. Ah—you are not very strong?

MRS. LINDEN. Only overworked.

RANK. Nothing more? Then no doubt you've come to town to find rest in a round of dissipation?

MRS. LINDEN. I have come to look for employment.

RANK. Is that an approved remedy for overwork?

MRS. LINDEN. One must live, Doctor Rank.

RANK. Yes, that seems to be the general opinion.

NORA. Come, Doctor Rank—you want to live yourself.

RANK. TO be sure I do. However wretched I may be, I want to drag on as long as possible. All my patients, too, have the same mania. And it's the same with people whose complaint is moral. At this very moment Helmer is talking to just such a moral incurable——

MRS. LINDEN [*softly*]. Ah!

NORA. Whom do you mean?

RANK. Oh, a fellow named Krogstad, a man you know nothing about—corrupt to the very core of his character. But even he began by announcing, as a matter of vast importance, that he must live.

NORA. Indeed? And what did he want with Torvald?

RANK. I haven't an idea; I only gathered that it was some bank business.

NORA. I didn't know that Krog—that this Mr. Krogstad had anything to do with the Bank?

RANK. Yes. He has got some sort of place there. [*To MRS. LINDEN.*] I don't know whether, in your part of the country, you have people who go grubbing and sniffing around *in* search of moral rottenness—and then, when they have found a "case," don't rest till they have got their man into some good position, where they can keep a watch upon him. Men with a clean bill of health they leave out in the cold.

MRS. LINDEN. Well, I suppose the—delicate characters require most care.

RANK [*shrugs his shoulders*]. There^we have it! It's that notion that makes society a hospital.

[NORA, *deep in her oivn thoughts, breaks into half-stifled laughter, and claps her hands.*

RANK. Why do you laugh at that? Have you any idea what "society "is?

NORA. What do I care for your tiresome society? I was laughing at something else—something excessively amusing. Tell me, Doctor Rank, are all the employees at the Bank dependent on Torvald now?

RANK. Is that what strikes you as excessively amusing?

NORA [*smiles and hums*']. Never mind, never mind! [*Walks about the room.*'] Yes, it is funny to think that we—that Torvald has such power over so many people. [*Takes the bag from her pocieT.*'] Doctor Rank, will you have a macaroon?

RANK. What!—macaroons! I thought they were contra-band here?

NORA. Yes; but Christina brought me these.

MRS. LINDEN. What! I——

NORA. Oh, well! Don't be frightened. You couldn't possibly know that Torvald had forbidden them. The fact is, he's afraid of me spoiling my jteeth. But, oh bother, just for once!—That's for you, Doctor Rank! [*Puts a macaroon into his mouth.*] And you too, Christina. And I'll have one while we're about it—only a tiny one, or at most two. [*Walks about again.*] Oh dear, I am happy! There's only one thing in the world I really want.

RANK. Well, what's that?

NORA. There's something I should so like to say—in Torvald's hearing.

RANK. Then why don't you say it?

NORA. Because I daren't, it's so ugly.

MRS. LINDEN. Ugly?

RANK. In that case you'd better not. But to us you might——What is it you would so like to say in Helmer's hearing?

NORA. I should so love to say, " Damn it all! " ¹

IDod og fine, literally "death and torture"; but by usage a comparatively mild oath.

RANK. Are you out of your mind ?

MRS. LINDEN. Good gracious, Nora——!

RANK. Say it—there he is!

NORA [*hides the macaroons*]. Hush—sh—sh.

[HELMER *comes out of his room, hat in hand, with his overcoat on his arm,*

NORA [*going to him*]. Well, Torvald dear, have you got rid of him?

HELMER. Yes; he has just gone.

NORA. Let me introduce you—this is Christina, who has come to town——

HELMER. Christina ? Pardon me, I don't know——

NORA. Mrs. Linden, Torvald dear—Christina Linden.

HELMER [*to MRS. LINDEN*]. Indeed! A school friend of my wife's, no doubt ?

MRS. LINDEN. Yes, we knew each other as girls.

NORA. And only think! She has taken this long journey on purpose to speak to you.

HELMER. TO speak to me!

MRS. LINDEN. Well, not quite——

NORA. You see, Christina is tremendously clever at office work, and she's so anxious to work under a first-rate man of business in order to learn still more——

HELMER [*to MRS. LINDEN*]. Very sensible indeed.

NORA. And when she heard you were appointed manager—it was telegraphed, you know—she started off at once, and—— Torvald dear, for my sake, you must do something for Christina. Now, can't you ?

HELMER. It's not impossible. I presume Mrs. Linden is a widow ?

MRS. LINDEN. Yes.

HELMER. And you have already had some experience of business ?

MRS. LINDEN. A good deal.

HELMER. Well, then, it's very likely I may be able to find a place for you.

NORA [*clapping her hands*]. There now! There now!

HELMER. You have come at a fortunate moment, Mrs. Linden.

• MRS. LINDEN. Oh, how can I thank you——?

HELMER [*smiling*]. There is no occasion. [*Puts on his overcoat.*] But for the present you must excuse me——

RANK. Wait; I am going with you.

[*Fetches his fur coat from the hall and warms it at the fire.*]

NORA. Don't be long, Torvald dear.

HELMER. Only an hour; not more.

NORA. Are you going too, Christina?

MRS. LINDEN [*putting on her walking things*]. Yes; I must set about looking for lodgings.

HELMER. Then perhaps we can go together?

NORA [*helping her*]. What a pity we haven't a spare room for you; but it's impossible——

MRS. LINDEN. I shouldn't think of troubling you. Good-bye, dear Nora, and thank you for all your kindness.

NORA. Good-bye for the present. Of course you'll come back this evening. And you, too, Doctor Rank. What! If you're well enough? Of course you'll be well enough. Only wrap up warmly. [*They go out, talking, into the hall. Outside on the stairs are heard children's voices.*] **There they are! There they are!** [*She runs to the outer door and opens it. The Nurse, ANNA, enters the hall with the children.*] **Come in! Come in!** [*Stoops down and kisses the children.*] Oh, my sweet darlings! Do you see them, Christina? Aren't they lovely?

RANK. Don't let us stand here chattering in the draught.

HELMER. Come, Mrs. Linden; only mothers can stand such a temperature.

[DR. RANK, HELMER, and MRS. LINDEN go down the stairs;

ANNA enters the room with the children; NORA also, shutting the door.

NORA. HOW fresh and bright you look! And what red cheeks you've got! Like apples and roses. [*The children chatter to her during what follows.*] **Have you had great fun?** That's splendid! Oh, really! You've been giving Emmy and Bob a ride on your sledge!—both at once, only think! Why,

you're quite a man, Ivar. Oh, give her to me a little, Anna. My sweet little dolly! [*Takes the smallest from the Nurse and dances with her.*] Yes, yes; mother will dance with Bob too. What! Did you have a game of snowballs? Oh, I wish I'd been there. No; leave them, Anna; I'll take their things off. Oh yes, let me do it; it's such fun. Go to the nursery; you look frozen. You'll find some hot coffee on the stove.

[The NURSE goes into the room on the left. NORA takes off the children's things and throws them doivn anywhere, while the children talk all together.

Really! A big dog ran after you? But he didn't bite you? No; dogs don't bite dear little dolly children. Don't peep into those parcels, Ivar. What is it? Wouldn't you like to know? Take care—it'll bite! What? Shall we have a game? What shall we play at? Hide-and-seek?_ Yes, let's play hide-and-seek. Bob shall hide first Am I to? Yes, let me hide first.

[She and the children play, with laughter and shouting, in the room and the adjacent one to the right. At last NORA hides under the table; the children come rushing in, look for her, hut cannot find her, hear her half-choked laughter, rush to the table, lift up the cover and see her. Loud shouts. She creeps out, as though to frighten them. Fresh shouts. Meanwhile there has been a knock at the door leading into the hall. No one has heard it. Now the door is half opened, and KROGSTAD appears. He waits a little; the game is renewed.

KROGSTAD. I beg your pardon, Mrs. Helmer——

NORA [*with a suppressed cry, turns round and half jumps up*]. Ah! What do you want?

KROGSTAD. Excuse me; the outer door was ajar—somebody must have forgotten to shut it——

NORA [*standing up*]. My husband is not at home, Mr. Krogstad.

KROGSTAD. I know it.

NORA. Then what do you want here?

KROGSTAD. To say a few words to you.

NORA. To me? [*To the children, softly.*] Go in to Anna.

What? No, the strange man won't hurt mamma. When he's gone we'll go on playing. [*She leads the children into the left-hand room, and shuts the door behind them. Uneasy, in suspense.*] It is to me you wish to speak?

KROGSTAD. Yes, to you.

NORA. To-day? But it's not the first yet——

KROGSTAD. NO, to-day is Christmas Eve. It will depend upon yourself whether you have a merry Christmas.

NORA. What do you want? I'm not ready to-day——

KROGSTAD. Never mind that just now. I have come about another matter. You have a minute to spare?

NORA. Oh yes, I suppose so; although——

KROGSTAD. Good. I was sitting in the restaurant opposite, and I saw your husband go down the street——

NORA. Well?

KROGSTAD.——with a lady.

NORA. What then?

KROGSTAD. May I ask if the lady was a Mrs. Linden?

NORA. Yes.

KROGSTAD. Who has just come to town?

NORA. Yes. To-day.

KROGSTAD. I believe she is an intimate friend of yours?

NORA. Certainly. But I don't understand——

KROGSTAD. I used to know her too.

NORA. I know you did.

KROGSTAD. Ah! You know all about it. I thought as much. Now, frankly, is Mrs. Linden to have a place in the Bank?

NORA. HOW dare you catechise me in this way, Mr. Krogstad—you, a subordinate of my husband's? But since you ask, you shall know. Yes, Mrs. Linden is to be employed. And it is I who recommended her, Mr. Krogstad. Now you know.

KROGSTAD. Then my guess was right.

NORA [*walking up and down*]. You see one has a wee bit of influence, after all. It doesn't follow because one's only a woman——When people are in a subordinate position, Mr. Krogstad, they ought really to be careful how they offend anybody who—h'm——

KROGSTAD.——who has influence ?

NORA. Exactly.

KROGSTAD [*taking another tone*]. Mrs. Helmer, will you have the kindness to employ your influence on my behalf?

NORA. What? How do you mean?

KROGSTAD. Will you be so good as to see that I retain my subordinate position in the Bank?

NORA. What do you mean? Who wants to take it from you?

KROGSTAD. Oh, you needn't pretend ignorance. I can very well understand that it cannot be pleasant for your friend to meet me; and I can also understand now for whose sake I am to be hounded out.

NORA. But I assure you——

KROGSTAD. Come, come now, once for all: there is time yet, and I advise you to use your influence to prevent it.

NORA. But, Mr. Krogstad, I have no influence——absolutely none.

KROGSTAD. None? I thought you said a moment ago

NORA. Of course not in that sense. I! How can you imagine that I should have any influence over my husband?

KROGSTAD. Oh, I know your husband from our college days. I don't think he is any more inflexible than other husbands.

NORA. If you talk disrespectfully of my husband, I must request you to leave the house.

KROGSTAD. You are bold, madam.

NORA. I am afraid of you no longer. When New Year's Day is over, I shall soon be out of the whole business.

KROGSTAD [*controlling himself*]. Listen to me, Mrs. Helmer. If need be, I shall fight as though for *my* life to keep my little place in the Bank.

NORA. Yes, so it seems.

KROGSTAD. It's not only for the salary; that is what I care least about. It's something else——Well, I had better make a clean breast of it. Of course you know, like every one else, that some years ago I——got into trouble.

NORA. I think I've heard something of the sort.

KROGSTAD. The matter never came into court; but from

that moment all paths were barred to me. Then I took up the business you know about. I had to turn my hand to something; and I don't think I've been one of the worst. But now I must get clear of it all. My sons are growing up; for their sake I must try to recover my character as well as I can. This place in the Bank was the first step; and now your husband wants to kick me off the ladder, back into the mire.

NORA. But I assure you, Mr. Krogstad, I haven't the least power to help you.

KROGSTAD. That is because you have not the will; but I can compel you.

NORA. YOU won't tell my husband that I owe you money?

KROGSTAD. H' m; suppose I were to?

NORA. It would be shameful of you. [*With tears in her voice.*] The secret that is my joy and my pride—that he should learn it in such an ugly, coarse way—and from you. It would involve me in all sorts of unpleasantness——

KROGSTAD. Only unpleasantness?

NORA [*hotly*]. But just do it. It's you that will come off worst, for then my husband will see what a bad man you are, and then you certainly won't keep your place.

KROGSTAD. I asked whether it was only domestic unpleasantness you feared?

NORA. If my husband gets to know about it, he will of course pay you off at once, and then we shall have nothing more to do with you.

KROGSTAD [*coming a pace nearer*]. Listen, Mrs. Helmer; either your memory is defective, or you don't know much about business. I must make the position a little clearer to you.

NORA. HOW SO?

KROGSTAD. When your husband was ill, you came to me to borrow twelve hundred dollars.

NORA. I knew of nobody else.

KROGSTAD. I promised to find you the money——

NORA. And you did find it.

KROGSTAD. I promised to find you the money, on certain conditions. You were so much taken up at the time about your husband's illness, and so eager to have the wherewithal for your

journey, that you probably did not give much thought to the details. Allow me to remind you of them. I promised to find you the amount in exchange for a note of hand, which I drew up.

NORA. Yes, and I signed it.

KROGSTAD. Quite right. But then I added a few lines, making your father security for the debt. Your father was to sign this.

NORA. Was to——? He did sign it!

KROGSTAD. I had left the date blank. That is to say, your father was himself to date his signature. Do you recollect that?

NORA. Yes, I believe——

KROGSTAD. Then I gave you the paper to send to your father, by post. Is not that so?

NORA. Yes.

KROGSTAD. And of course you did so at once; for within five or six days you brought me back the document with your father's signature; and I handed you the money.

NORA. Well? Have I not made my payments punctually?

KROGSTAD. Fairly—yes. But to return to the point: you were in great trouble at the time, Mrs. Helmer.

NORA. I was indeed!

KROGSTAD. Your father was very ill, I believe?

NORA. He was on his death-bed.

KROGSTAD. And died soon after?

NORA. Yes.

KROGSTAD. Tell me, Mrs. Helmer: do you happen to recollect the day of his death? The day of the month, I mean?

NORA. Father died on the 29th of September.

KROGSTAD. Quite correct. I have made inquiries. And here comes in the remarkable point—[*produces a paper*]—which I cannot explain.

NORA. What remarkable point? I don't know——

KROGSTAD. The remarkable point, madam, that your father signed this paper three days after his death!

NORA. What! I don't understand——

KROGSTAD. Your father died on the 29th of September. But look here: he has dated his signature October 2nd! Is not that remarkable, Mrs. Helmer? [NORA *is silent.*] Can you

explain it? [NORA continues silent.] It is noteworthy, too, that the words "October 2nd" and the year are not in your father's handwriting, but in one which I believe I know. Well, this may be explained; your father may have forgotten to date his signature, and somebody may have added the date at random, before the fact of your father's death was known. There is nothing wrong in that. Everything depends on the signature. Of course it is genuine, Mrs. Helmer? It was really your father himself who wrote his name here?

NORA [after a short silence, throws her head back and looks defiantly at him]. No, it was not. / wrote father's name.

KROGSTAD. Ah!—Are you aware, madam, that that is a dangerous admission?

NORA. HOW SO? You will soon get your money.

KROGSTAD. May I ask you one more question? Why did you not send the paper to your father?

NORA. It was impossible. Father was ill. If I had asked him for his signature, I should have had to tell him why I wanted the money; but he was so ill I really could not tell him that my husband's life was in danger. It was impossible.

KROGSTAD. Then it would have been better to have given up your tour.

NORA. No, I couldn't do that; my husband's life depended on that journey. I couldn't give it up.

KROGSTAD. And did it never occur to you that you were playing me false?

NORA. That was nothing to me. I didn't care in the least about you. I couldn't endure you for all the cruel difficulties you made, although you knew how ill my husband was.

KROGSTAD. Mrs. Helmer, you evidently do not realise what you have been guilty of. But I can assure you it was nothing more and nothing worse that made me an outcast from society.

NORA. YOU! You want me to believe that you did a brave thing to save your wife's life?

KROGSTAD. The law takes no account of motives.

NORA. Then it must be a very bad law.

KROGSTAD. Bad or not, if I produce this document in court, you will be condemned according to law.

NORA. I don't believe that. Do you mean to tell me that a daughter has no right to spare her dying father trouble and anxiety?—that a wife has no right to save her husband's life? I don't know much about the law, but I'm sure you'll find, somewhere or another, that that is allowed. And you don't know that—you, a lawyer! You must be a bad one, Mr. Krogstad.

KROGSTAD. Possibly. But business—such business as ours—I do understand. You believe that? Very well; now do as you please. But this I may tell you, that if I am flung into the gutter a second time, you shall keep me company.

[Bows and goes out through hall.]

NORA *[stands a while thinking, then tosses her head]*. Oh, nonsense! He wants to frighten me. I'm not so foolish as that. *[Begins folding the children's clothes. Pauses.]* But —? No, it's impossible! Why, I did it for love!

CHILDREN *[at the door, left]*. Mamma, the strange man has gone now.

NORA. Yes, yes, I know. But don't tell anyone about the strange man. Do you hear? Not even papa!

CHILDREN. NO, mamma; and now will you play with us again?

NORA. NO, no; not now.

CHILDREN. Oh, do, mamma; you know you promised.

NORA. Yes, but I can't just now. Run to the nursery; I have so much to do. Run along, run along, and be good, my darlings! *[She pushes them gently into the inner room, and closes the door behind them. Sits on the sofa, embroiders a few stitches, but soon pauses.]* No! *[Throws down the work, rises, goes to the hall door and calls out.]* Ellen, bring in the Christmas-tree! *[Goes to table, left, and opens the drawer; again pauses.]* No, it's quite impossible!

ELLEN *[with Christmas-tree]*. Where shall I stand it, ma'am?

NORA. There, in the middle of the room.

ELLEN. Shall I bring in anything else?

NORA. NO, thank you, I have all I want.

[Ellen, having put down the tree, goes out.]

NORA *[busy dressing the tree]*. There must be a candle here

•—and flowers there.—That horrible man! Nonsense, nonsense! there's nothing to be afraid of. The Christmas-tree shall be beautiful. I'll do everything to please you, Torvald; I'll sing and dance, and——

[Enter HELMER by the hall door, with a bundle of documents.]

NORA. Oh! You're back already?

HELMER. Yes. Has anybody been here?

NORA. Here? No.

HELMER. That's odd. I saw Krogstad come out of the house.

NORA. Did you? Oh yes, by the by, he was here for a minute.

HELMER. Nora, I can see by your manner that he has been begging you to put in a good word for him.

NORA. Yes.

HELMER. And you were to do it as if of your own accord? You were to say nothing to me of his having been here. Didn't he suggest that too?

NORA. Yes, Torvald; but——

HELMER. Nora, Nora! And you could condescend to that! To speak to such a man, to make him a promise! And then to tell me an untruth about it!

NORA. An untruth!

HELMER. Didn't you say that nobody had been here? *[Threatens ivith his finger.]* My little bird must never do that again! A song-bird must sing clear and true; no false notes. *[Puts his arm round her.]* That's so, isn't it? Yes, I was sure of it. *[Lets her go.]* And now we'll say no more about it. *[Sits down before the fire.]* Oh, how cosy and quiet it is here! *[Glances into his documents.]*

NORA *[busy with the tree, after a short silence]*, Torvald!

HELMER. Yes.

NORA. I'm looking forward so much to the Stenborgs' fancy ball the day after to-morrow.

HELMER. And I'm on tenterhooks to see what surprise you have in store for me.

NORA. Oh, it's too tiresome!

HELMED What is?

NORA. I can't think of anything good. Everything seems so foolish and meaningless.

HELMER Has tittle Nora made that discovery?

NORA [*behind his chair, with her arms on the back*]* Are you very busy, Torvald?

HELMER. Well——

NORA. What papers are those?

HELMER. Bank business.

NORA. Already!

HELMER. I have got the retiring manager to let me make some necessary changes in the staff and the organisation. I can do this during Christmas week. I want to have everything straight by the New Year.

NORA. Then that's why that poor Krogstad——

HELMER. H'm.

NORA [*still leaning over the chair-back and slowly stroking his hair*]. If you hadn't been so very busy, I should have asked you a great, great favour, Torvald.

HELMER. What can it be? Out with it.

NORA. Nobody has such perfect taste as you; and I should so love to look well at the fancy ball. Torvald dear, couldn't you take me in hand, and settle what I'm to be, and arrange my costume for me?

HELMER. Aha! So my wilful little woman is at a loss, and making signals of distress.

NORA. Yes, please, Torvald. I can't get on without your help.

HELMER. Well, well, I'll think it over, and we'll soon hit upon something.

NORA. Oh, how good that is of you! [*Goes to the tree again; pause.*] How well the red flowers show.—Tell me, was it anything so very dreadful this Krogstad got into trouble about?

HELMER. Forgery, that's all. Don't you know what that means?

NORA. Mayn't he have been driven to it by need?

HELMER. Yes; or, like so many others, he may have done it

in pure heedlessness. I am not so hard-hearted as to condemn a man absolutely for a single fault.

NORA. NO, surely not, Torvald!

HELMER. Many a man can retrieve his character, if he owns his crime and takes the punishment.

NORA. Punishment——?

HELMER. But Krogstad didn't do that. He evaded the law by means of tricks and subterfuges; and that is what has morally ruined him.

NORA. DO you think that——?

HELMER. Just think how a man with a thing of that sort on his conscience must be always lying and canting and shamming. Think of the mask he must wear even towards those who stand nearest him—towards his own wife and children. ^The effect on the children—that's the most terrible part of it, Nora.

NORA. Why?

HELMER. Because in such an atmosphere of lies home life is poisoned and contaminated in every fibre. Every breath the children draw contains some germ of evil.

NORA [*closer behind him*]. Are you sure of that?

HELMER. AS a lawyer, my dear, I have seen it often enough. Nearly all cases of early corruption may be traced to lying mothers.

NORA. Why—mothers?

HELMER. It generally comes from the mother's side; but of course the father's influence may act in the same way. Every lawyer knows it too well. And here has this Krogstad been poisoning his own children for years past by a life of lies and hypocrisy—that is why I call him morally ruined. [*Holds out both hands to her.*] So my sweet little Nora must promise not to plead his cause. Shake hands upon it. Come, come, what's this? Give me your hand. That's right. Then it's a bargain. I assure you it would have been impossible for me to work with him. It gives me a positive sense of physical discomfort to come in contact with such people.

[NORA *draws her hand away, and moves to the other side of the Christmas-tree.*]

NORA. HOW warm it is here. And I have so much to do.

HELMER [*rises and gathers up his papers*]. Yes, and I must try to get some of these papers looked through before dinner. And I shall think over your costume too. Perhaps I may even find something to hang in gilt paper on the Christmas-tree. [*Lays his hand on her head.*] My precious little song-bird I

[*He goes into his room and shuts the door.*]

NORA [*softly, after a pause*]. It can't be. It's impossible. It must be impossible!

ANNA [*at the door, left*]. The little ones are begging so prettily to come to mamma.

NORA. NO, no, no; don't let them come to me! Keep them with you, Anna.

ANNA. Very well, ma'am. [*Shuts the door.*]

NORA [*pale with terror*]. Corrupt my children!—Poison my home! [*Short pause. She throws back her head,*] It's not true! It can never, never be true!

A C T I I

The same room. In the corner, beside the piano, stands the Christmas-tree, stripped, and with the candles burnt out.

NORA'S outdoor things lie on the sofa.

NORA, alone, is walking about restlessly. At last she stops by the sofa, and takes up her cloak.

NORA [*dropping the cloak*]. There's somebody coming! [*Goes to the hall door and listens.*] Nobody; of course nobody will come to-day, Christmas Day; nor to-morrow either. But perhaps——[*Opens the door and looks out.*]—No, nothing in the letter-box; quite empty. [*Comes forward.*] Stuff and nonsense! Of course he won't really do anything. Such a thing couldn't happen. It's impossible! Why, I have three little children.

ANNA *enters from the left, with a large cardboard box.*

ANNA. I've found the box with the fancy dress at last.

NORA. Thanks; put it down on the table.

ANNA [*does so*]. But I'm afraid it's very much out of order.

NORA. Oh, I wish I could tear it into a hundred thousand pieces!

ANNA. Oh no. It can easily be put to rights—just a little patience.

NORA. I shall go and get Mrs. Linden to help me.

ANNA. Going out again? In such weather as this! You'll catch cold, ma'am, and be ill.

NORA. Worse things might happen.—What are the children doing?

ANNA. They're playing with their Christmas presents, poor little dears; but——

NORA. DO they often ask for me?

ANNA. YOU see, they've been so used to having their mamma with them.

NORA. Yes; but, Anna, I can't have them so much with me in future.

ANNA. Well, little children get used to anything.

NORA. DO you think they do? Do you believe they would forget their mother if she went quite away?

ANNA. Gracious me! Quite away?

NORA. Tell me, Anna—I've so often wondered about it—how could you bring yourself to give your child up to strangers?

ANNA. I had to when I came to nurse my little Miss Nora.

NORA. But how could you make up your mind to it?

ANNA. When I had the chance of such a good place? A poor girl who's been in trouble must take what comes. That wicked man did nothing for me.

NORA. But your daughter must have forgotten you.

ANNA. Oh no, ma'am, that she hasn't. She wrote to me both when she was confirmed and when she was married.

NORA [*embracing her*]. Dear old Anna—you were a good mother to me when I was little.

ANNA. My poor little Nora had no mother but me.

NORA. And if my little ones had nobody else, I'm sure you would——Nonsense, nonsense! [*Opens the box.*] Go in to the children. Now I must——You'll see how lovely I shall be to-morrow.

ANNA. I'm sure there will be no one at the ball so lovely as

my Miss Nora. *[She goes into the room on the left.]*

NORA *[takes the costume out of the box, but soon throws it down again]*. Oh, if I dared go out. If only nobody would come. If only nothing would happen here in the meantime. Rubbish; nobody is coming. Only not to think. What a delicious muff! Beautiful gloves, beautiful gloves! To forget—to forget! One, two, three, four, five, six——*[With a scream.]* Ah, there they come.

[Goes towards the door, then stands irresolute.] MRS. LINDEN enters from the hall, where she has taken off her things,

NORA. Oh, it's you, Christina. There's nobody else there? I'm so glad you have come.

MRS. LINDEN. I hear you called at my lodgings.

NORA. Yes, I was just passing. There's something you must help me with. Let us sit here on the sofa—so. Tomorrow evening there's to be a fancy ball at Consul Stenborg's overhead, and Torvald wants me to appear as a Neapolitan fisher-girl, and dance the tarantella; I learned it at Capri.

TVTRS. LINDEN. I see—quite a performance.

NORA. Yes, Torvald wishes it. Look, this is the costume; Torvald had it made for me in Italy. But now it's all so torn, I don't know——

MRS. LINDEN. Oh, we shall soon set that to rights. It's only the trimming that has come loose here and there. Have you a needle and thread? Ah, here's the very thing.

NORA. Oh, how kind of you.

MRS. LINDEN *[sewing]*. So you're to be in costume tomorrow, Nora? I'll tell you what—I shall come in for a moment to see you in all your glory. But I've quite forgotten to thank you for the pleasant evening yesterday.

NORA *[rises and walks across the room]*. Oh, yesterday; it didn't seem so pleasant as usual.—You should have come to town a little sooner, Christina.—Torvald has certainly the art of making home bright and beautiful.

MRS. LINDEN. YOU too, I should think, or you wouldn't be your father's daughter. But tell me—is Doctor Rank always so depressed as he was last evening?

NORA. NO, yesterday it was particularly noticeable. You see, he suffers from a dreadful illness. He has spinal consumption, poor fellow. They say his father was a horrible man, so the son has been sickly from his childhood, you understand.

MRS. LINDEN [*lets her sewing fall into her lap*]. Why, my darling Nora, how do you come to know such things?

NORA [*moving about the room*]. Oh, when one has three children, one sometimes has visits from women who are half—half doctors—and they talk of one thing and another.

MRS. LINDEN [*goes on sewing; a short pause*]. Does Doctor Rank come here every day?

NORA. Every day of his life. He has been Torvald's most intimate friend from boyhood, and he's a good friend of mine too. Doctor Rank is quite one of the family.

MRS. LINDEN. But tell me—is he quite sincere? I mean, isn't he rather given to flattering people?

NORA. NO, quite the contrary. Why should you think so?

MRS. LINDEN. When you introduced us yesterday he said he had often heard my name; but I noticed afterwards that your husband had no notion who I was. How could Doctor Rank——?

NORA. He was quite right, Christina. You see, Torvald loves me so indescribably, he wants to have me all to himself, as he says. When we were first married he was almost jealous if I even mentioned any of my old friends at home; so naturally I gave up doing it. But I often talk of the old times to Doctor Rank, for he likes to hear about them.

MRS. LINDEN. Listen to me, Nora! You are still a child in many ways. I am older than you, and have had more experience. I'll tell you something. You ought to get clear of all this with Doctor Rank.

NORA. Get clear of what?

MRS. LINDEN. The whole affair, I should say. You were talking yesterday of a rich admirer who was to find you money——

NORA. Yes, one who never existed, worse luck! What then?

MRS. LINDEN. Has Doctor Rank money ?

NORA. Yes, he has.

MRS. LINDEN. And nobody to provide for?

NORA. Nobody. But——?

MRS. LINDEN. And he comes here every day?

NORA. Yes, I told you so.

MRS. LINDEN. I should have thought he would have had better taste.

NORA. I don't understand you a bit.

MRS. LINDEN. Don't pretend, Nora. Do you suppose I can't guess who lent you the twelve hundred dollars ?

NORA. Are you out of your senses? How can you think such a thing? A friend who comes here every day! Why, the position would be unbearable !

MRS. LINDEN. Then it really is not he ?

NORA. NO, I assure you. It never for a moment occurred to me——Besides, at that time he had nothing to lend; he came into his property afterwards.

MRS. LINDEN. Well, I believe that was lucky for you, Nora dear.

NORA. NO, really, it would never have struck me to ask Doctor Rank——And yet, I'm certain that if I did——

MRS. LINDEN. But of course you never would.

NORA. Of course not. It's inconceivable that it should ever be necessary. But I'm quite sure that *if* I spoke to Doctor Rank——

MRS. LINDEN. Behind your husband's back?

NORA. I must get clear of the other thing; that's behind his back too. I must get clear of that.

MRS. LINDEN. Yes, yes, I told you so yesterday; but——

NORA [*walking up and down*], A man can manage these things much better than a woman.

MRS. LINDEN. One's own husband, yes.

NORA. Nonsense. [*Stands still.*] When everything is paid, one gets back the paper.

MRS. LINDEN. Of course.

NORA. And can tear it into a hundred thousand pieces, and burn it up, the nasty, filthy thing!

MRS. LINDEN [*looks at her fixedly, lays down her work, and rises slowly*]. Nora, you are hiding something from me.

NORA. Can you see it in my face ?

MRS. LINDEN. Something has happened since yesterday morning. Nora, what is it ?

NORA [*going towards her*], Christina——! [*Listens.*] Hush! There's Torvald coming home. Do you mind going into the nursery for the present? Torvald can't bear to see dressmaking going on. Get Anna to help you.

MRS. LINDEN [*gathers some of the things together*]. Very well; but I shan't go away until you have told me all about it.

[*She goes out to the left, as HELMER enters from the hall,*

NORA [*runs to meet him*]. Oh, how I've been longing for you to come, Torvald dear !

HELMER.. Was that the dressmaker——?

NORA. NO, Christina. She's helping me with my costume. You'll see how nice I shall look.

HELMER. Yes, wasn't that a happy thought of mine?

NORA. Splendid ! But isn't it good of me too, to have given in to you about the tarantella ?

HELMER [*takes her under the chin*]. Good of you! To give in to your own husband? Well, well, you little madcap. I know you don't mean it. But I won't disturb you. I daresay you want to be " trying on."

NORA. And you are going to work, I suppose ?

HELMER. Yes. [*Shows her a bundle of papers.*] Look here. I've just come from the Bank——

[*Goes towards his room.*

NORA. Torvald.

HELMER [*stopping*]. Yes?

NORA. If your little squirrel were to beg you for something so prettily——

HELMER. Well?

NORA. Would you do it ?

HELMER. I must know first what it is.

NORA. The squirrel would skip about and play all sorts of tricks if you would only be nice and kind.

HELMER. Come, then, out with it.

NORA. Your lark would twitter from morning till night——

HELMER. Oh, that she does in any case.

NORA. I'll be an elf and dance in the moonlight for you, Torvald.

HELMER. Nora—you can't mean what you were hinting at this morning?

NORA [*coming nearer*]. Yes, Torvald, I beg and implore you!

HELMER. Have you really the courage to begin that again?

NORA. Yes, yes; for my sake, you must let Krogstad keep his place in the Bank.

HELMER. My dear Nora, it's his place I intend for Mrs. Linden.

NORA. Yes, that's so good of you. But instead of Krogstad, you could dismiss some other clerk.

HELMER. Why, this is incredible obstinacy! Because you have thoughtlessly promised to put in a word for him, I am

NORA. It's not that, Torvald. It's for your own sake. This man writes for the most scurrilous newspapers; you said so yourself. He can do you no end of harm. I'm so terribly afraid of him——

HELMER. Ah, I understand; it's old recollections that are frightening you.

NORA. What do you mean?

HELMER. Of course you're thinking of your father.

NORA. Yes—yes, of course. Only think of the shameful slanders wicked people used to write about father. I believe they would have got him dismissed if you hadn't been sent to look into the thing, and been kind to him, and helped him.

HELMER. My little Nora, between your father and me there is all the difference in the world. You father was not altogether unimpeachable. I am; and I hope to remain so.

NORA. Oh, no one knows what wicked men may hit upon. We could live so quietly and happily now, in our cosy, peaceful home, you and I and the children, Torvald! That's why I beg and implore your

HELMER. And it is just by pleading his cause that you make it impossible for me to keep him. It's already known at the Bank that I intend to dismiss Krogstad. If it were now reported that the new manager let himself be turned round his wife's little finger——

NORA. What then?

HELMER. Oh, nothing, so long as a wilful woman can have her way——! I am to make myself a laughing-stock to the whole staff, and set people saying that I am open to all sorts of outside influence? Take my word for it, I should soon feel the consequences. And besides—there is one thing that makes Krogstad impossible for me to work with——

NORA. What thing?

HELMER. I could perhaps have overlooked his moral failings at a pinch——

NORA. Yes, couldn't you, Torvald?

HELMER. And I hear he is good at his work. But the fact is, he was a college chum of mine—there was one of those rash friendships between us that one so often repents of later. I may as well confess it at once—he calls me by my Christian name;* and he is tactless enough to do it even when others are present. He delights in putting on airs of familiarity—Torvald here, Torvald there! I assure you it's most painful to me. He would make my position at the Bank perfectly unendurable.

NORA. Torvald, surely you're not serious?

HELMER. NO? Why not?

NORA. That's such a petty reason.

HELMER. What! Petty! Do you consider me petty?

NORA. NO, on the contrary, Torvald, dear; and that's just why——

HELMER. Never mind; you call my motives petty; then I must be petty too. Petty! Very well!—Now we'll put an end to this, once for all. [*Goes to the door into the hall and calls.*] Ellen!

NORA. What do you want?

HELMER [*searching among his papers*]. To settle the thing. [*Ellen enters.*] Here, take this letter; give it to a messenger.

¹ In the original, "We say ' thou ' to each other."

See that he takes it at once. The address is on it. Here's the money.

ELLEN. Very well, sir.

[Goes with the letter.]

HELMER *[putting his papers together]*. There, Madam Obstinacy.

NORA *[breathless]*, Torvald—what was in the letter?

HELMER. Krogstad's dismissal.

NORA. Call it back again, Torvald! There's still time. Oh, Torvald, call it back again! For my sake, for your own, for the children's sake! Do you hear, Torvald? Do it I You don't know what that letter may bring upon us all.

HELMER. Too late.

NORA. Yes, too late.

HELMER. My dear Nora, I forgive your anxiety, though it's anything but flattering to me. Why should you suppose that I would be afraid of a wretched scribbler's spite? But I forgive you all the same, for it's a proof of your great love for me. *[Takes her in his arms.]* That's as it should be, my own dear Nora. Let what will happen—when it comes to the pinch, I shall have strength and courage enough. You shall see: my shoulders are broad enough to bear the whole burden.

NORA *[terror-struck]*. What do you mean by that?

HELMER. The whole burden, I say—

NORA *[with decision]*. That you shall never, never do!

HELMER. Very well; then we'll share it, Nora, as man and wife. That is how it should be. *[Petting her.]* Are you satisfied now? Come, come, come, don't look like a scared dove. It's all nothing—foolish fancies.—Now you ought to play the tarantella through and practise with the tambourine. I shall sit in my inner room and shut both doors, so that I shall hear nothing. You can make as much noise as you please. *[Turns round in doorway.]* And when Rank comes, just tell him where I'm to be found.

[He nods to her, and goes with his papers into his room, closing the door.]

NORA *[bewildered with terror, stands as though rooted to the ground, and whispers]*. He would do it. Yes, he would do

it. He would do it, in spite of all the world.—No, never that, never, never! Anything rather than that! Oh, for some way of escape! What shall I do——! [*Hall bell rings.*] Doctor Rank——! Anything, anything, rather than——!

[*NORA draws her hands over her face, pulls herself together, goes to the door and opens it. RANK stands outside hanging up his fur coat. During what follows it begins to grow dark.*]

NORA. Good afternoon, Doctor Rank. I knew you by your ring. But you mustn't go to Torvald now. I believe he's busy.

RANK. And you? [*Enters and closes the door.*]

NORA. Oh, you know very well, I have always time for you.

RANK. Thank you. I shall avail myself of your kindness as long as I can.

NORA. What do you mean? As long as you can?

RANK. Yes. Does t h a t frighten you?

NORA. I think it's an odd expression. Do you expect anything to happen?

RANK. Something I have long been prepared for; but I didn't think it would come so soon.

NORA [*catching at his arm*]. What have you discovered? Doctor Rank, you must tell me!

RANK [*sitting down by the stove*]. I am running down hill. There's no help for it.

NORA [*draws a long breath of relief*]. It's y o u——?

RANK. Who else should it be?—Why lie to one's self? I am the most wretched of all my patients, Mrs. Helmer. In these last days I have been auditing my life-account—bankrupt! Perhaps before a month is over I shall lie rotting in the churchyard.

NORA. Oh! What an ugly way to talk.

RANK. The thing itself is so confoundedly ugly, you see. But the worst of it is, so many other ugly things have to be gone through first. There is only one last investigation to be made, and when that is over I shall know pretty certainly when the break-up will begin. There's one thing I want to say to you:

Helmer's delicate nature shrinks so from all that is horrible will not have him in my sick-room——

NORA. But, Doctor Rank——

RANK. I won't have him, I say—not on any account! I shall lock my door against him. As soon as I am quite certain of the worst, I shall send you my visiting-card with a black cross on it; and then you will know that the final horror has begun.

NORA. Why, you're perfectly unreasonable to-day; and I did so want you to be in a really good humour.

RANK. With death staring me in the face?—And to suffer thus for another's sin! Where's the justice of it? And in one way or another you can trace in every family some such inexorable retribution——

NORA [*stopping her ears*]. Nonsense, nonsense! Now cheer up!

RANK. Well, after all, the whole thing's only worth laughing at. My poor innocent spine must do penance for my father's wild oats.

NORA [*at table, left*]. I suppose he was too fond of asparagus and Strasbourg pate, wasn't he?

RANK. Yes; and truffles.

NORA. Yes, truffles, to be sure. And oysters, I believe?

RANK. Yes, oysters; oysters, of course.

NORA. And then all the port and champagne! It's sad that all these good things should attack the spine.

RANK. Especially when the luckless spine attacked never had any good of them.

NORA. Ah yes, that's the worst of it.

RANK [*looks at her searchingly*]. H'm——

NORA [*a moment later*]. Why did you smile?

RANK. NO; it was you that laughed.

NORA. NO; it was you that smiled, Doctor Rank.

RANK [*standing up*]. I see you're deeper than I thought.

NORA. I'm *in* such a crazy mood to-day.

RANK. SO it seems.

NORA [*with her hands on his shoulders*]. Dear, dear Doctor Rank, death shall not take you away from Torvald and me.

RANK. Oh, you'll easily get over the loss. The absent are soon forgotten.

NORA [*looks at him anxiously*]. Do you think so?

RANK. People make fresh ties, and then——

NORA. Who make fresh ties?

RANK. YOU and Helmer will, when I am gone. You yourself are taking time by the forelock, it seems to me. What was that Mrs. Linden doing here yesterday?

NORA. Oh!—you're surely not jealous of poor Christina?

RANK. Yes, I am. She will be my successor in this house. When I am out of the way, this woman will perhaps——

NORA. Hush! Not so loud! She's in there.

RANK. To-day as well? You see!

NORA. Only to put my costume in order—dear me, how unreasonable you are! [*Sits on sofa.*] Now do be good, Doctor Rank! To-morrow you shall see how beautifully I shall dance; and then you may fancy that I'm doing it all to please you—and of course Torvald as well. [*Takes various things out of box.*] Doctor Rank, sit down here, and I'll show you something.

RANK [*sitting*]. What is it?

NORA. Look here. Look!

RANK. Silk stockings.

NORA. Flesh-coloured. Aren't they lovely? It's so dark here now; but to-morrow——No, no, no; you must only look at the feet. Oh, well, I suppose you may look at the rest too.

RANK. H'm——

NORA. What are you looking so critical about? Do you think they won't fit me?

RANK. I can't possibly give any competent opinion on that point.

NORA [*looking at him a moment*]. For shame! [*Hits him lightly on the ear with the stockings.*] Take that.

[*Rolls them up again.*]

RANK. And what other wonders am I to see?

NORA. You shan't see any more; for you don't behave nicely. [*She hums a little, and searches among the things.*]

RANK [*after a short silence*]. When I sit here gossiping with

you, I can't imagine—I simply cannot conceive—what would have become of me if I had never entered this house.

NORA [*smiling*]. Yes, I think you do feel at home with us.

RANK [*more softly—looking straight before him*]. And now to have to leave it all——

NORA. Nonsense. You shan't leave us.

RANK [*in the same tone*]. And not to be able to leave behind the slightest token of gratitude; scarcely even a passing regret—nothing but an empty place, that can be filled by the first comer.

NORA. And if I were to ask you for——? No——

RANK. For what?

NORA. For a great proof of your friendship.

RANK. Yes—yes?

NORA. I mean—for a very, very great service——

RANK. Would you really, for once, make me so happy?

NORA. Oh, you don't know what it is.

RANK. Then tell me.

NORA. NO, I really can't, Doctor Rank. It's far, far too much—not only a service, but help and advice besides——

RANK. SO much the better. I can't think what you can mean. But go on. Don't you trust me?

NORA. AS I trust no one else. I know you are my best and truest friend. So I will tell you. Well then, Doctor Rank, there is something you must help me to prevent. You know how deeply, how wonderfully Torvald loves me; he wouldn't hesitate a moment to give his very life for my sake.

RANK [*bending towards her*]. Nora—do you think he is the only one who——?

NORA [*with a slight start*]. Who——?

RANK. Who would gladly give his life for you?

NORA [*sadly*]. Oh!

RANK. I have sworn that you shall know it before I—go. I shall never find a better opportunity.—Yes, Nora, now I have told you; and now you know that you can trust me as you can no one else.

NORA [*standing up; simply and calmly*]. Let me pass, please.

RANK [*makes way for her, but remains sitting*]. Nora——

NORA [*in the doorway*]. Ellen, bring the lamp. [*Crosses to the stove.*] Oh dear, Doctor Rank, that was too bad of you.

RANK [*rising*]. That I have loved you as deeply as—any one else? Was that too bad of me?

NORA. NO, but that you should have told me so. It was so unnecessary——

RANK. What do you mean? Did you know——?

[*ELLEN enters with the lamp; sets it on the table and goes out again.*]

RANK. Nora—Mrs. Helmer—I ask you, did you know?

NORA. Oh, how can I tell what I knew or didn't know? I really can't say——How could you be so clumsy, Doctor Rank? It was all so nice!

RANK. Well, at any rate, you know now that I am at your service, body and soul. And now, go on.

NORA [*looking at him*]. Go on—now?

RANK. I beg you to tell me what you want.

NORA. I can tell you nothing now.

RANK. Yes, yes! You mustn't punish me in that way. Let me do for you whatever a man can.

NORA. YOU can do nothing for me now.—Besides, I really want no help. You shall see it was only my fancy. Yes, it must be so. Of course! [*Sits in the rocking-chair, looks at him and smiles.*] You are a nice person, Doctor Rank! Aren't you ashamed of yourself, now that the lamp is on the table?

RANK. NO; not exactly. But perhaps I ought to go—for ever.

NORA. NO, indeed you mustn't. Of course you must come and go as you've always done. You know very well that Torvald can't do without you.

RANK. Yes, but you?

NORA. Oh, you know I always like to have you here.

RANK. That is just what led me astray. You are a riddle to me. It has often seemed to me as if you liked being with me almost as much as being with Helmer.

NORA. Yes; don't you see? There are people one loves, and others one likes to talk to.

RANK. Yes—there's something in that.

NORA. When I was a girl, of course I loved papa best. But it always delighted me to steal into the servants' room. In the first place, they never lectured me, and, in the second, it was such fun to hear them talk.

RANK. Ah, I see; then it's their place I have taken?

NORA [*jumps up and hurries towards him*]. Oh, my dear Doctor Rank, I don't mean that. But you understand, with Torvald it's the same as with papa——

[ELLEN enters from the hall.

ELLEN. Please, ma'am——

[*Whispers to NORA, and gives her a card.*

NORA [*glancing at card*]. Ah! [*Puts it in her pocket.*

RANK. Anything wrong?

NORA. NO, no, not in the least. It's only—it's my new costume——

RANK. Your costume? Why, it's there.

NORA. Oh, that one, yes. But this is another that—I have ordered it—Torvald mustn't know——

RANK. Aha! So that's the great secret.

NORA. Yes, of course. Please go to him; he's in the inner room. Do keep him while I——

RANK. Don't be alarmed; he shan't escape.

[*Goes into HELMER'S room.*

NORA [*to ELLEN*]. Is he waiting in the kitchen?

ELLEN. Yes, he came up the back stair——

NORA. Didn't you tell him I was engaged?

ELLEN. Yes, but it was no use.

NORA. He won't go away?

ELLEN. NO, ma'am, not until he has spoken to you.

NORA. Then let him come in; but quietly. And, Ellen—say nothing about it; it's a surprise for my husband.

ELLEN. Oh, yes, ma'am, I understand. [*She goes out.*

NORA. It is coming! The dreadful thing is coming, after all. No, no, no, it can never be; it shall not!

[*She goes to HELMER'S door and slips the bolt. ELLEN opens the hall door for KROGSTAD, and shuts it after him. He wears a travelling-coat, high boots, and a fur cap.*

NORA [*goes towards him*']. Speak softly; my husband is at home.

KROGSTAD. All right. That's nothing to me.

NORA. What do you want ?

KROGSTAD. A little information.

NORA. Be quick, then. What is it ?

KROGSTAD. You know I have got my dismissal ?

NORA. I couldn't prevent it, Mr. Krogstad. I fought for you to the last, but it was of no use.

KROGSTAD. Does your husband care for you so little? He knows what I can bring upon you, and yet he dares——

NORA. HOW could you think I should tell him ?

KROGSTAD. Well, as a matter of fact, I didn't think it. It wasn't like my friend Torvald Helmer to show so much courage——

NORA. Mr. Krogstad, be good enough to speak respectfully of my husband.

KROGSTAD. Certainly, with all due respect. But since you are so anxious to keep the matter secret, I suppose you are a little clearer than yesterday as to what you have done.

NORA. Clearer than you could ever make me.

KROGSTAD. Yes, such a bad lawyer as I——

NORA. What is it you want ?

KROGSTAD. Only to see how you are getting on, Mrs. Helmer. I've been thinking about you all day. Even a mere money-lender, a gutter-journalist, a—in short, a creature like me—has a little bit of what people call feeling.

NORA. Then show it; think of my little children.

KROGSTAD. Did you and your husband think of mine ? But enough of that. I only wanted to tell you that you needn't take this matter too seriously. I shall not lodge any information, for the present.

NORA. No, surely not. I knew you wouldn't.

KROGSTAD. The whole thing can be settled quite amicably. Nobody need know. It can remain among us three.

NORA. My husband must never know.

KROGSTAD. HOW can you prevent it ? Can you pay off the balance?

NORA. No, not at once.

KROGSTAD. Or have you any means or raising the money in the next few days?

NORA. None—that I will make use of.

KROGSTAD. And if you had, it would not help you now. If you offered me ever so much money down, you should not get back your I O U.

NORA. Tell me what you want to do with it.

KROGSTAD. I only want to keep it—to have it in my possession. No outsider shall hear anything of it. So, if you have any desperate scheme in your head——

NORA. What if I have?

KROGSTAD. If you should think of leaving your husband and children——

NORA. What if I do?

KROGSTAD. Or if you should think of——something worse——

NORA. HOW do you know that?

KROGSTAD. Put all that out of your head.

NORA. HOW did you know what I had in my mind?

KROGSTAD. Most of us think of that at first. I thought of it, too; but I hadn't the courage——

NORA [*tonelessly*]. Nor I.

KROGSTAD [*relieved*]. No, one hasn't. You haven't the courage either, have you?

NORA. I haven't, I haven't.

KROGSTAD. Besides, it would be very foolish.—Just one domestic storm, and it's all over. I have a letter in my pocket for your husband——

NORA. Telling him everything?

KROGSTAD. Sparing you as much as possible.

NORA [*quickly*]. He must never read that letter. Tear it ap. I will manage to get the money somehow——

KROGSTAD. Pardon me, Mrs. Helmer, but I believe I told you——

NORA. Oh, I am not talking about the money I owe you. Tell me how much you demand from my husband—I will get it.

KROGSTAD. I demand no money from your husband.

NORA. What do you demand, then ?

KROGSTAD. I will tell you. I want to regain my footing in the world. I want to rise; and your husband shall help me to do it. For the last eighteen months my record has been spotless ; I have been in bitter need all the time; but I was content to fight my way up, step by step. Now, I've been thrust down again, and I will not be satisfied with merely being reinstated as a matter of grace. I want to rise, I tell you. I must get into the Bank again, in a higher position than before. Your husband shall create a place on purpose for me——

NORA. He will never do that!

KROGSTAD. He will do it; I know him—he won't dare to show fight! And when he and I *ate* together there, you shall soon see! Before a year is out I shall be the manager's right hand. It won't be Torvald Helmer, but Nils Krogstad, that manages the Joint Stock Bank.

NORA. That shall never be.

KROGSTAD. Perhaps you will——?

NORA. Now I have the courage for it.

KROGSTAD. Oh, you don't frighten me ! A sensitive, petted creature like you——

NORA. You shall see, you shall see !

KROGSTAD. Under the ice, perhaps? Down into the cold, black water? And next spring to come up again, ugly, heirless, unrecognisable——

NORA. YOU can't terrify me.

KROGSTAD. Nor you me. People don't do that sort of thing, Mrs. Helmer. And after all, what would be the result of it ? I have your husband in my pocket all the same.

NORA. Afterwards ? When I am no longer——?

KROGSTAD. YOU forget, your reputation remains in my hands! [NORA stands speechless and looks at him.] Well, now you are prepared. Do nothing foolish. As soon as Helmer has received my letter, I shall expect to hear from him. And remember that it is your husband himself who has forced me back again into such paths. That I will never forgive him. Good-bye, Mrs. Helmer.

[Goes out through the hall. NORA hurries to the door, opens it a little, and listens.

NORA. He's going. He's not putting the letter into the box. No, no, it would be impossible! [Opens the door farther and f art her,] What's that? He's standing still; not going downstairs. Has he changed his mind? Is he——? [A letter falls into the box, KROGSTAD'S footsteps are heard gradually receding down the stair, NORA utters a suppressed shriek, and rushes forward towards the sofa-table; pause J] In the letter-box! [Slips shrinkingly up to the hall door,] There it lies.—Torvald, Torvald—now we are lost!

MRS. LINDEN enters from the left with the costume.

MRS. LINDEN. There, I think it's all right now. Shall we just try it on?

NORA [hoarsely and softly]. Christina, come here.

MRS. LINDEN [throws down the dress on the sofa]. What's the matter? You look quite distracted.

NORA. Come here. Do you see that letter? There, see—through the glass of the letter-box.

MRS. LINDEN. Yes, yes, I see it.

NORA. That letter is from Krogstad——

MRS. LINDEN. Nora—it was Krogstad who lent you the money?

NORA. Yes; and now Torvald will know everything.

MRS. LINDEN. Believe me, Nora, it's the best thing for both of you.

NORA. YOU don't know all yet. I have forged a name——

MRS. LINDEN. Good heavens!

NORA. NOW, listen to me, Christina; you shall bear me witness——

MRS. LINDEN. HOW "witness"? What am I to——?

NORA. If I should go out of my mind—it might easily happen——

MRS. LINDEN. Nora!

NORA. Or if anything else should happen to me—so that I couldn't be here——!

MRS. LINDEN. Nora, Nora, you're quite beside yourself!

NORA. In case any one wanted to take it all upon himself—the whole blame—you understand——

MRS. LINDEN. Yes, yes; but how can you think——?

NORA. You shall bear witness that it's not true, Christina. I'm not out of my mind at all; I know quite well what I'm saying; and I tell you nobody else knew anything about it; I did the whole thing, I myself. Remember that.

MRS. LINDEN. I shall remember. But I don't understand what you mean——

NORA. Oh, how should you? It's the miracle coming to pass.

MRS. LINDEN. The miracle ?

NORA. Yes, the miracle. But it's so terrible, Christina; it mustn't happen for all the world.

MRS. LINDEN. I shall go straight to Krogstad and talk to him.

NORA. Don't; he'll do you some harm.

MRS. LINDEN. Once he would have done anything for me.

NORA. He ?

MRS. LINDEN. Where does he live ?

NORA. Oh, how can I tell——? Yes———[*Feels in her pocket.*] Here's his card. But the letter, the letter——!

HELMER [*knocking outside*], Nora!

NORA [*shrieks in terror*]. Oh, what is it? What do you want?

HELMER. Well, well, don't be frightened. We're not coming in; you've bolted the door. Are you trying on your dress?

NORA. Yes, yes, I'm trying it on. It suits me so well, Torvald.

MRS. LINDEN [*who has read the card*]. Why, he lives close by here.

NORA. Yes, but it's no use now. We are lost. The letter is there in the box.

MRS. LINDEN. And your husband has the key?

NORA. Always.

MRS. LINDEN. Krogstad must demand his letter back, unread. He must find some pretext——

NORA. But this is the very time when Torvald generally——
 MRS. LINDEN. Prevent him. Keep him occupied. I shall
 come back as quickly as I can.

[She goes out hastily by the hall door.]

NORA *[opens HELMER's door and peeps in]*. Torvald!

HELMER. Well, may one come into one's own room again at
 last? Come, Rank, we'll have a look——*[In the doorway.]*
 But how's this?

NORA. What, Torvald dear?

HELMER. Rank led me to expect a grand transformation.

RANK *[in the doorway]*. So I understood. I suppose I was
 mistaken.

NORA. NO, no one shall see me in my glory till to-morrow
 evening.

HELMER. Why, Nora dear, you look so tired. Have you
 been practising too hard?

NORA. No, I haven't practised at all yet.

HELMER. But you'll have to——

NORA. Oh yes, I must, I must! But, Torvald, I can't get
 on at all without your help. I've forgotten everything.

HELMER. Oh, we shall soon freshen it up again.

NORA. Yes, do help me, Torvald. You must promise
 me——Oh, I'm so nervous about it. Before so many
 people——This evening you must give yourself up entirely to
 me. You mustn't do a stroke of work; you mustn't even touch
 a pen. Do promise, Torvald dear!

HELMER. I promise. All this evening I shall be your slave.
 Little helpless thing——! But, by the by, I must just——

[Going to hall door.]

NORA. What do you want there?

HELMER. Only to see if there are any letters.

NORA. NO, no, don't do that, Torvald.

HELMER. Why not?

NORA. Torvald, I beg you not to. There are none there.

HELMER. Let me just see.

[Is going.] NORA, *at the piano, plays the first bars of the
 tarantella.*

HELMER *[at the door, stops]*. Aha!

NORA. I can't dance to-morrow if I don't rehearse with you first.

HELMER *[going to her]*. Are you really so nervous, dear Nora?

NORA. Yes, dreadfully! Let me rehearse at once. We have time before dinner. Oh, do sit down and play for me, Torvald dear; direct me and put me right, as you used to do.

HELMER. With all the pleasure in life, since you wish it.

[Sits at the piano. NORA snatches the tambourine out of the box, and hurriedly drapes herself in a long parti-coloured shawl; then, with a bound, stands in the middle of the floor.]

NORA. NOW play for me! Now I'll dance!

[HELMER plays and NORA dances. RANK stands at the piano behind HELMER and looks on.]

HELMER *[playing]*. Slower! Slower!

NORA. Can't do it slower!

HELMER. Not so violently, Nora.

NORA. I must! I must!

HELMER *[stops]*. No, no, Nora—that will never do.

NORA *[laughs and swings her tambourine]*. Didn't I tell you so!

RANK. Let me play for her.

HELMER *[rising]*. Yes, do—then I can direct her better.

[RANK sits down to the piano and plays; NORA dances more and more wildly. HELMER stands by the stove and addresses frequent directions to her; she seems not to hear. Her hair breaks loose, and falls over her shoulders. She does not notice it, but goes on dancing, MRS. LINDEN enters, and stands spellbound in the doorway,]

MRS. LINDEN. Ah———!

NORA *[dancing]*. We're having such fun here, Christina!

HELMER. Why, Nora dear, you're dancing as if it were a matter of life and death.

NORA. So it is.

HELMER. Rank, stop! This is the merest madness. Stop, I say!

[RANK stops playing, and NORA comes to a sudden standstill.]

HELMER [*going towards her*], I couldn't have believed it. You've positively forgotten all I taught you.

NORA [*throws the tambourine away*]. You see for yourself.

HELMER. YOU really do want teaching.

NORA. Yes, you see how much I need it. You must practise with me up to the last moment. Will you promise me, Torvald?

HELMER. Certainly, certainly.

NORA. Neither to-day nor to-morrow must you think of anything but me. You mustn't open a single letter—mustn't look at the letter-box.

HELMER. Ah, you're still afraid of that man——

NORA. Oh yes, yes, I am.

HELMER. Nora, I can see it in your face—there's a letter from him in the box.

NORA. I don't know, I believe so. But you're not to read anything now; nothing ugly must come between us until all is over.

RANK [*softly, to HELMER*]. YOU mustn't contradict her.

HELMER [*putting his arm around her*], The child shall have her own way. But to-morrow night, when the dance is over——

NORA. Then you shall be free.

ELLEN *appears in the doorway, right.*

ELLEN. Dinner is on the table, ma'am.

NORA. We'll have some champagne, Ellen.

ELLEN. Yes, ma'am.

[*Goes out.*]

HELMER. Dear me! Quite a banquet.

NORA. Yes, and we'll keep it up till morning. [*Calling out.*] And macaroons, Ellen—plenty—just this once.

HELMER [*seizing her hand*]. Come, come, don't let us have this wild excitement! Be my own little lark again.

NORA. Oh yes, I will. But now go into the dining-room; and you too, Doctor Rank. Christina, you must help me to do up my hair.

RANK [*softly, as they go*]. There's nothing in the wind? Nothing—I mean——?

HELMER. Oh no, nothing of the kind. It's merely this babyish anxiety I was telling you about.

[They go out to the right.]

NORA. Well?

MRS. LINDEN. He's gone out of town.

NORA. I saw it in your face.

MRS. LINDEN. He comes back to-morrow evening. I left a note for him.

NORA. YOU shouldn't have done that. Things must take their course. After all, there's something glorious in waiting for the miracle.

MRS. LINDEN. What is it you're waiting for?

NORA. Oh, you can't understand. Go to them in the dining-room; I shall come in a moment.

[MRS. LINDEN goes into the dining-room. NORA stands for a moment as though collecting her thoughts; then looks at her watch.]

NORA. Five. Seven hours till midnight. Then twenty-four hours till the next midnight. Then the tarantella will be over. Twenty-four and seven? Thirty-one hours to live.

[HELMER appears at the door, right.]

HELMER. What has become of my little lark?

NORA *[runs to him with open arms]*. Here she is!

ACT III

The same room. The table, with the chairs around it, in the middle. A lighted lamp on the table. The door to the hall stands open. Dance music is heard from the floor above.

MRS. LINDEN *sits by the table and absently turns the pages of a book. She tries to read, but seems unable to fix her attention; she frequently listens, and looks anxiously towards the hall door.*

MRS. LINDEN *[looks at her watch]*. Not here yet; and the time is nearly up. If only he hasn't——*[Listens again.]* Ah, there he is. *[She goes into the hall and cautiously opens*

the outer door; soft footsteps are heard on the stairs; she whispers.] Come in; there is no one here.

KROGSTAD [*in the doorway*], I found a note from you at my house. What does it mean?

MRS. LINDEN. I must speak to you.

KROGSTAD. Indeed? And in this house?

MRS. LINDEN. I could not see you at my rooms. They have no separate entrance. Come in; we are quite alone. The servants are asleep, and the Helmers are at the ball upstairs.

KROGSTAD [*coming into the room*]. Ah! So the Helmers are dancing this evening? Really?

MRS. LINDEN. Yes. Why not?

KROGSTAD. Quite right. Why not?

MRS. LINDEN. And now let us talk a little.

KROGSTAD. Have we two anything to say to each other?

MRS. LINDEN. A great deal.

KROGSTAD. I should not have thought so.

MRS. LINDEN. Because you have never really understood me.

KROGSTAD. What was there to understand? The most natural thing in the world—a heartless woman throws a man over when a better match offers.

MRS. LINDEN. DO you really think me so heartless? Do you think I broke with you lightly?

KROGSTAD. Did you not?

MRS. LINDEN. DO you really think so?

KROGSTAD. If not, why did you write me that letter?

MRS. LINDEN. Was it not best? Since I had to break with you, was it not right that I should try to put an end to all that you felt for me?

KROGSTAD [*clenching his hands together*]. So that was it? And all this—for the sake of money!

MRS. LINDEN. You ought not to forget that I had a helpless mother and two little brothers. We could not wait for you, Nils, as your prospects then stood.

KROGSTAD. Perhaps not; but you had no right to cast me off for the sake of others, whoever the others might be.

MRS. LINDEN. I don't know. I have often asked myself whether I had the right.

KROGSTAD [*more softly*]. When I had lost you, I seemed to have no firm ground left under my feet. Look at me now. I am a shipwrecked man, clinging to a spar.

MRS. LINDEN. Rescue may be at hand.

KROGSTAD. It was at hand; but then you came and stood in the way.

MRS. LINDEN. Without my knowledge, Nils. I did not know till to-day that it was you I was to replace in the Bank.

KROGSTAD. Well, I take your word for it. But now that you do know, do you mean to give way?

MRS. LINDEN. NO, for that would not help you in the least.

KROGSTAD. Oh, help, help——! I should do it whether or no.

MRS. LINDEN. I have learnt prudence. Life and bitter necessity have schooled me.

KROGSTAD. And life has taught me not to trust fine speeches.

MRS. LINDEN. Then life has taught you a very sensible thing. But deeds you will trust?

KROGSTAD. What do you mean?

MRS. LINDEN. YOU said you were a shipwrecked man, clinging to a spar.

KROGSTAD. I have good reason to say so.

MRS. LINDEN. I too am shipwrecked, and clinging to a spar. I have no one to mourn for, no one to care for.

KROGSTAD. You made your own choice.

MRS. LINDEN. NO choice was left me.

KROGSTAD. Well, what then?

MRS. LINDEN. Nils, how if we two shipwrecked people could join hands?

KROGSTAD. What!

MRS. LINDEN. TWO on a raft have a better chance than if each clings to a separate spar.

KROGSTAD. Christina!

MRS. LINDEN. What do you think brought me to town?

KROGSTAD. Had you any thought of me?

MRS. LINDEN. I must have work or I can't bear to live.

All my life, as long as I can remember, I have worked; work has been my one great joy. Now I stand quite alone in the world, aimless and forlorn. There is no happiness in working for one's self. Nils, give me somebody and something to work for.

KROGSTAD. I cannot believe *in* all this. It is simply a woman's romantic craving for self-sacrifice.

MRS. LINDEN. Have you ever found me romantic?

KROGSTAD. Would you really——? Tell me : do you know all my past ?

MRS. LINDEN. Yes.

KROGSTAD. And do you know what people say of me ?

MRS. LINDEN. Did you not say just now that with me you could have been another man ?

KROGSTAD. I am sure of it.

MRS. LINDEN. IS it too late ?

KROGSTAD. Christina, do you know what you are doing? Yes, you do; I see it in your face. Have you the courage, then——?

MRS. LINDEN. I need some one to be a mother to, and your children need a mother. You need me, and I — I need you. Nils, I believe *in* your better self. With you I fear nothing.

KROGSTAD [*seizing her hands*]. Thank you—thank you, Christina. Now I shall make others see me as you do.—Ah, I forgot——

MRS. LINDEN [*listening*]. Hush! The tarantella! Go I go!

KROGSTAD. Why ? What is it ?

MRS. LINDEN. Don't you hear the dancing overhead? As soon as that is over they will be here.

KROGSTAD. Oh yes, I shall go. Nothing will come of this, after all. Of course, you don't know the step I have taken against the Helmers.

MRS. LINDEN. Yes, Nils, I do know.

KROGSTAD. And yet you have the courage to——?

MRS. LINDEN. I know to what lengths despair can drive a man.

KROGSTAD. Oh, if I could only undo it !

MRS. LINDEN. You could. Your letter is still in the box.

KROGSTAD. Are you sure?

MRS. LINDEN. Yes; but——

KROGSTAD [*looking at her searchingly*]. Is that what it all means? You want to save your friend at any price. Say it out—is that your idea?

MRS. LINDEN. Nils, a woman who has once sold herself for the sake of others, does not do so again.

KROGSTAD. I shall demand my letter back again.

MRS. LINDEN. No, no.

KROGSTAD. Yes, of course. I shall wait till Helmer comes; I shall tell him to give it back to me—that it's only about my dismissal—that I don't want it read——

MRS. LINDEN. No, Nils, you must not recall the letter.

KROGSTAD. But tell me, wasn't that just why you got me to come here?

MRS. LINDEN. Yes, in my first alarm. But a day has passed since then, and in that day I have seen incredible things in this house. Helmer must know everything; there must be an end to this unhappy secret. These two must come to a full understanding. They must have done with all these shifts and subterfuges.

KROGSTAD. Very well, if you like to risk it. But one thing I can do, and at once——

MRS. LINDEN [*listening*]. Make haste! Go, go! The dance is over; we're not safe another moment.

KROGSTAD. I shall wait for you in the street.

MRS. LINDEN. Yes, do; you must see me home.

KROGSTAD. I never was so happy in all my life!

[KROGSTAD *goes out by the outer door. The door between the room and the hall remains open.*]

MRS. LINDEN [*arranging the room and getting her outdoor things together*]. What a change! What a change! To have some one to work for, to live for; a home to make happy! Well, it shall not be my fault if I fail.—I wish they would come.—[*Listens.*] Ah, here they are! I must get my things on.

[*Takes bonnet and cloak.* HELMER'S and NORA'S voices are

heard outside, a key is turned in the lock, and HELMER drags NORA almost by force into the hall. She wears the Italian costume with a large black shawl over it. He is in evening dress, and wears a black domino, open.,

NORA [*struggling with him in the doorway*]. No, no, no! I won't go in! I want to go upstairs again; I don't want to leave so early!

HELMER. But, my dearest girl——!

NORA. Oh, please, please, Torvaid, I beseech you—only one hour more!

HELMER. Not one minute more, Nora dear; you know what we agreed. Come, come in; you're catching cold here.

[He leads her gently into the room in spite of her resistance,

MRS. LINDEN. Good-evening.

NORA. Christina!

HELMER. What, Mrs. Linden! You here so late?

MRS. LINDEN. Yes, I ought to apologise. I did so want to see Nora in her costume.

NORA. Have you been sitting here waiting for me?

MRS. LINDEN. Yes; unfortunately I came too late. You had gone upstairs already, and I felt I couldn't go away without seeing you.

HELMER [*taking Nora's shawl off*]. Well then, just look at her! I assure you she's worth it. Isn't she lovely, Mrs. Linden?

MRS. LINDEN. Yes, I must say——

HELMER. Isn't she exquisite? Every one said so. But she's dreadfully obstinate, dear little creature. What's to be done with her? Just think, I had almost to force her away.

NORA. Oh, Torvaid, you'll be sorry some day that you didn't let me stay, if only for one half-hour more.

HELMER. There! You hear her, Mrs. Linden? She dances her tarantella with wild applause, and well she deserved it, I must say—though there was, perhaps, a little too much nature in her rendering of the idea—more than was, strictly speaking, artistic. But never mind—the point is, she made a great success, a tremendous success. Was I to let her remain after that—toweaken the impression? Not if I know it. I

took my sweet little Capri girl—my capricious little Capri girl, I might say—under my arm; a rapid turn round the room, a curtsey to all sides, and—as they say in novels—the lovely apparition vanished! An exit should always be effective, Mrs. Linden; but I can't get Nora to see it. By Jove! it's warm here. [*Throws his domino on a chair and opens the door to his room.*] What! No light there? Oh, of course. Excuse me—
 me—————[*Goes in and lights candles.*

NORA [*whispers breathlessly*]. Well?

MRS. LINDEN [*softly*]. I've spoken to him.

NORA. And——?

MRS. LINDEN. Nora—you must tell your husband everything——

NORA [*tonelessly*]. I knew it!

MRS. LINDEN. YOU have nothing to fear from Krogstad; but you must speak out.

NORA. I shall not speak.

MRS. LINDEN. Then the letter will.

NORA. Thank you, Christina. Now I know what I have to do. Hush——!

HELMER [*coming back*]. Well, Mrs. Linden, have you admired her?

MRS. LINDEN. Yes; and now I must say good-night.

HELMER. What, already? Does this knitting belong to you?

MRS. LINDEN [*takes it*]. Yes, thanks; I was nearly forgetting it.

HELMER. Then you do knit?

MRS. LINDEN. Yes.

HELMER. DO you know, you ought to embroider instead?

MRS. LINDEN. Indeed! Why?

HELMER. Because it's so much prettier. Look now! You hold the embroidery in the left hand so, and then work the needle with the right hand, in a long, graceful curve—don't you?

MRS. LINDEN. Yes, I suppose so.

HELMER. But knitting is always ugly. Just look—your arms close to your sides, and the needles going up and down—

there's something Chinese about it.—They really gave us splendid champagne to-night.

MRS. LINDEN. Well, good-night, Nora, and don't be obstinate any more.

HELMER. Well said, Mrs. Linden!

MRS. LINDEN. Good-night, Mr. Helmer.

HELMER [*accompanying her to the door*]. Good-night, good-night; I hope you'll get safely home. I should be glad to—but you have such a short way to go. Good-night, good-night. [*She goes; HELMER shuts the door after her, and comes forward again.*] At last we've got rid of her: she's a terrible bore.

NORA. Aren't you very tired, Torvald?

HELMER. NO, not in the least.

NORA. Nor sleepy?

HELMER. Not a bit. I feel particularly lively. But you? You do look tired and sleepy.

NORA. Yes, very tired. I shall soon sleep now.

HELMER. There, you see. I was right after all not to let you stay longer.

NORA. Oh, everything you do is right.

HELMER [*kissing her forehead*']. Now my lark is speaking like a reasonable being. Did you notice how jolly Rank was this evening?

NORA. Indeed? Was he? I had no chance of speaking to him.

HELMER. Nor I, much; but I haven't seen him in such good spirits for a long time. [*Looks at NORA a little, then comes nearer her.*] It's splendid to be back in our own home, to be quite alone together!—Oh, you enchanting creature!

NORA. Don't look at me in that way, Torvald.

HELMER. I am not to look at my dearest treasure?—at all the loveliness that is mine, mine only, wholly and entirely mine?

NORA [*goes to the other side of the table*]. You mustn't say these things to me this evening.

HELMER [*following*]. I see you have the tarantella still in your blood—and that makes you all the more enticing. Listen! the other people are going now. [*More softly.*] Nora—soon the whole house will be still.

NORA. Yes, I hope so.

HELMER. Yes, don't you, Nora darling! When we are among strangers, do you know why I speak so little to you, and keep so far away, and only steal a glance at you now and then—do you know why I do it? Because I am fancying that we love each other in secret, that I am secretly betrothed to you, and that no one dreams that there is anything between us.

NORA. Yes, yes, yes. I know all your thoughts are with me.

HELMER. And then, when the time comes to go, and I put the shawl about your smooth, soft shoulders, and this glorious neck of yours, I imagine you are my bride, that our marriage is just over, that I am bringing you for the first time to my home—that I am alone with you for the first time—quite alone with you, in your trembling loveliness! All this evening I have been longing for you, and you only. When I watched you swaying and whirling in the tarantella—my blood boiled—I could endure it no longer; and that's why I made you come home with me so early——

NORA. Go now, Torvald! Go away from me. I won't have all this.

HELMER. What do you mean? Ah, I see you're teasing me, little Nora! Won't—won't! Am I not your husband——?

[A knock at the outer door.]

NORA *[starts]*. Did you hear——?

HELMER *[going towards the hall]*. Who's there?

RANK *[outside]*. It is I; may I come in for a moment?

HELMER *[in a low tone, annoyed]*. Oh! what can he want just now? *[Aloud.]* Wait a moment. *[Opens door.]* Come, it's nice of you to look in.

RANK. I thought I heard your voice, and that put it into my head. *[Looks round.]* Ah, this dear old place! How cosy you two are here!

HELMER. YOU seemed to find it pleasant enough upstairs, too.

RANK. Exceedingly. Why not? Why shouldn't one take one's share of everything in this world? All one can, at least, and as long as one can. The wine was splendid——

HELMER. Especially the champagne.

RANK. Did you notice it? It's incredible the quantity I contrived to get down.

NORA. Torvald drank plenty of champagne, too.

RANK. Did he?

NORA. Yes, and it always puts him in such spirits.

RANK. Well, why shouldn't one have a jolly evening after a well-spent day?

HELMER. Well spent! Well, I haven't much to boast of in that respect.

RANK [*slapping him on the shoulder*]. But I have, don't you see?

NORA. I suppose you have been engaged in a scientific investigation, Doctor Rank?

RANK. Quite right.

HELMER. Bless me! Little Nora talking about scientific investigations?

NORA. Am I to congratulate you on the result?

RANK. By all means.

NORA. It was good, then?

RANK. The best possible, both for doctor and patient—certainty.

NORA [*quickly and searchingly*]. Certainty?

RANK. Absolute certainty. Wasn't I right to enjoy myself after that?

NORA. Yes, quite right, Doctor Rank.

HELMER. And so say I, provided you don't have to pay for it to-morrow.

RANK. Well, in this life nothing is to be had for nothing.

NORA. Doctor Rank—I'm sure you are very fond of masquerades?

RANK. Yes, when there are plenty of amusing disguises——

NORA. Tell me, what shall we two be at our next masquerade?

HELMER. Little featherbrain! Thinking of your next already!

RANK. We two? I'll tell you. You must go as a good fairy.

HELMER. Ah, but what costume would indicate that?

RANK. She has simply to wear her everyday dress.

HELMER. Capital! But don't you know what you will be yourself?

RANK. Yes, my dear friend, I am perfectly clear upon that point.

HELMER. Well?

RANK. At the next masquerade I shall be invisible.

HELMER. What a comical idea!

RANK. There's a big black hat—haven't you heard of the invisible hat? It comes down all over you, and then no one can see you.

HELMER [*with a suppressed smile*]. No, you're right there.

RANK. But I'm quite forgetting what I came for. Helmer, give me a cigar—one of the dark Havanas.

HELMER. With the greatest pleasure. [*Hands cigar-case.*

RANK [*takes one and cuts the end off*]. Thank you.

NORA [*striking a wax match*]. Let me give you a light.

RANK. A thousand thanks.

[*She holds the match. He lights his cigar at it.*

RANK. And now, good-bye!

HELMER. Good-bye, good-bye, my dear fellow.

NORA. Sleep well, Doctor Rank.

RANK. Thanks for the wish.

NORA. Wish me the same.

RANK. You? Very well, since you ask me—Sleep well. And thanks for the light. [*He nods to them both and goes out.*

HELMER [*in an undertone*]. He's been drinking a good deal.

NORA [*absently*]. I daresay. [HELMER *takes his bunch of keys from his pocket and goes into the hall.*] Torvald, what are you doing there?

HELMER. I must empty the letter-box; it's quite full; there will be no room for the newspapers to-morrow morning.

NORA. Are you going to work to-night?

HELMER. You know very well I am not.—Why, how is this? Some one has been at the lock.

NORA. The lock——?

HELMER. I'm sure of it. What does it mean? I can't think that the servants——? Here's a broken hairpin. Nora, it's one of yours.

NORA [*quickly*]. It must have been the children——

HELMER. Then you must break them of such tricks.— There! At last I've got it open. [*Takes contents out and calls into the kitchen,*] Ellen!—Ellen, just put the hall door lamp out.

[*He returns with letters in his hand, and shuts the inner door.*]

HELMER. Just see how they've accumulated. [*Turning them over.*] Why, what's this?

NORA [*at the window*]. The letter! Oh no, no, Torvald!

HELMER. TWO visiting-cards—from Rank.

NORA. From Doctor Rank?

HELMER [*looking at them*]. Doctor Rank. They were on the top. He must just have put them in.

NORA. Is there anything on them?

HELMER. There's a black cross over the name. Look at it. What an unpleasant idea! It looks just as if he were announcing his own death.

NORA. SO he is.

HELMER. What! Do you know anything? Has he told you anything?

NORA. Yes. These cards mean that he has taken his last leave of us. He is going to shut himself up and die.

HELMER. Poor fellow! Of course I knew we couldn't hope to keep him long. But so soon——! And to go and creep into his lair like a wounded animal——

NORA. When we must go, it is best to go silently. Don't you think so, Torvald?

HELMER [*walking up and down*]. He had so grown into our lives, I can't realise that he is gone. He and his sufferings and his loneliness formed a sort of cloudy background to the sunshine of our happiness.—Well, perhaps it's best as it is—at any "Tate fof'hiirL [*Stands still,*] And perhaps for us too, Nora. Now we two are thrown entirely upon each other.

[Takes her in his arms.] My darling wife! I feel as if I could never hold you close enough. Do you know, Nora, I often wish some danger might threaten you, that I might risk body and soul, and everything, everything, for your dear sake.

NORA *[tears herself from him, and says firmly]*. Now you shall read your letters, Torvald.

HELMER. NO, no; not to-night. I want to be with you, my sweet wife.

NORA. With the thought of your dying friend——?

HELMER. YOU are right. This has shaken us both. Unloveliness has come between us—thoughts of death and decay. We must seek to cast them off. Till then—we will remain apart.

NORA *[her arms round his neck]*. Torvald! Good-night! good-night!

HELMER *[kissing her forehead]*. Good-night, my little song-bird. Sleep well, Nora. Now I shall go and read my letters. *[He goes with the letters in his hand into his room and shuts the door.]*

NORA *[with wild eyes, gropes about her, seizes HELMER'S domino, throws it round her, and whispers quickly, hoarsely, and brokenly]*. Never to see him again. Never never, never. *[Throws her shawl over her head.]* Never to see the children again. Never, never.—Oh, that black, icy water! Oh, that bottomless——! If it were only over! Now he has it; he's reading it. Oh, no, no, no, not yet. Torvald, good-bye——! Good-bye my little ones——!

[She is rushing out by the hall; at the same moment HELMER flings his door open, and stands there with an open letter in his hand.]

HELMER. Nora!

NORA *[shrieks]*. Ah——!

HELMER. What is this? Do you know what is in this letter?

NORA. Yes, I know. Let me go! Let me pass!

HELMER *[holds her back]*. Where do you want to go?

NORA *[tries to break away from him]*. You shall not save me, Torvald.

HELMER [*falling back*]. True! Is what he writes true? No, no, it is impossible that this can be true.

NORA. It is true. I have loved you beyond all else in the world.

HELMER. Pshaw—no silly evasions!

NORA [*a step nearer him*], Torvald——!

HELMER. Wretched woman—what have you done!

NORA. Let me go—you shall not save me! You shall not take my guilt upon yourself!

HELMER. I don't want any melodramatic airs. [*Locks the outer door.*] Here you shall stay and give an account of yourself. Do you understand what you have done? Answer! Do you understand it?

NORA [*looks at him fixedly, and says with a stiffening expression*]. Yes; now I begin fully to understand it.

HELMER [*walking up and down*]. Oh! what an awful awakening! During all these eight years—she who was my pride and my joy—a hypocrite, a liar—worse, worse—a criminal. Oh, the unfathomable hideousness of it all! Ugh! Ugh!

[*NORA says nothing, and continues to look fixedly at him.*]

HELMER. I ought to have known how it would be. I ought to have foreseen it. All your father's want of principle—be silent!—all your father's want of principle you have inherited—no religion, nor morality, no sense of duty. How I am punished for screening him! I did it for your sake; and you reward me like this.

NORA. Yes—like this!

HELMER. YOU have destroyed my whole happiness. You have ruined my future. Oh, it's frightful to think of! I am in the power of a scoundrel; he can do whatever he pleases with me, demand whatever he chooses; he can domineer over me as much as he likes, and I must submit. And all this disaster and ruin is brought upon me by an unprincipled woman!

NORA. When I am out of the world you will be free.

HELMER. Oh, no fine phrases. Your father, too, was always ready with them. What good would it do me, if you were "out of the world," as you say? No good whatever! He can

publish the story all the same; I might even be suspected of collusion. People will think I was at the bottom of it all and egged you on. And for all this I have you to thank—you whom I have done nothing but pet and spoil during our whole married life. Do you understand now what you have done to me?

NORA [*with cold calmness*]. Yes.

HELMER. The thing is so incredible, I can't grasp it. But we must come to an understanding. Take that shawl off. Take it off, I say! I must try to pacify him in one way or another—the matter must be hushed up, cost what it may.—As for you and me, we must make no outward change in our way of life—no outward change, you understand. Of course, you will continue to live here. But the children cannot be left in your care. I dare not trust them to you.—Oh, to have to say this to one I have loved so tenderly—whom I still——! But that must be a thing of the past. Henceforward there can be no question of happiness, but merely of saving the ruins, the shreds, the show——[*A ring; HELMER starts.*] What's that? So late! Can it be the worst? Can he——? Hide yourself, Nora; say you are ill.

[NORA stands motionless. HELMER goes to the door and opens it.]

ELLEN [*half dressed, in the hall*]. Here is a letter for you, ma'am.

HELMER. Give it to me. [*Seizes the letter and shuts the door.*] Yes, from him. You shall not have it. I shall read it.

NORA. Read it!

HELMER [*by the lamp*]. I have hardly the courage to. We may both be lost, both you and I. Ah! I must know. [*Hastily tears the letter open; reads a few lines, looks at an enclosure; with a cry of joy.*] Nora!

[NORA looks inquiringly at him.]

HELMER. Nora!—Oh! I must read it again.—Yes, yes, it is so. I am saved! Nora, I am saved!

NORA. And I?

HELMER. You too, of course; we are both saved, both of us. Look here—he sends you back your promissory note. He writes that he regrets and apologises, that a happy turn in his life——

Oh, what matter what he writes! We are saved, Nora! No one can harm you. Oh, Nora, Nora——; but first to get rid of this hateful thing. HI just see———[*Glances at the I O U.*] No, I will not look at it; the whole thing shall be nothing but a dream to me. [*Tears the I O U and both letters in pieces. Throws them into the fire and watches them burn.*] There! it's gone!—He said that ever since Christmas Eve———Oh, Nora, they must have been three terrible days for you!

NORA. I have fought a hard fight for the last three days.

HELMER. And in your agony you saw no other outlet but———No; we won't think of that horror. We will only rejoice and repeat—it's over, all over! Don't you hear, Nora? You don't seem able to grasp it. Yes, it's over. What is this set look on your face? Oh, my poor Nora, I understand; you cannot believe that I have forgiven you. But I have, Nora; I swear it. I have forgiven everything. I know that what you did was all for love of me.

NORA. That is true.

HELMER. YOU loved me as a wife should love her husband. It was only the means that, in your inexperience, you misjudged. But do you think I love you the less because you cannot do without guidance? No, no. Only lean on me; I will counsel you, and guide you. I should be no true man if this very womanly helplessness did not make you doubly dear in my eyes. You mustn't dwell upon the hard things I said in my first moment of terror, when the world seemed to be tumbling about my ears. I have forgiven you, Nora—I swear I have forgiven you.

NORA. I thank you for your forgiveness.

[*Goes out, to the right.*]

HELMER. NO, stay——! [*Looking through the doorway.*] What are you going to do?

NORA [*inside*]. To take off my masquerade dress.

HELMER [*in the doorway*], 'Yes, do dear. Try to calm down, and recover your balance, my scared little song-bird. You may rest secure. I have broad wings to shield you. [*Walking up and down near the door.*] Oh, how lovely—how cosy our home is, Nora! Here you are safe; here I can shelter you like a hunted dove whom I have saved from the claws of

the hawk. I shall soon bring your poor beating heart to rest; believe me, Nora, very soon. To-morrow all this will seem quite different—everything will be as before. I shall not need to tell you again that I forgive you; you will feel for yourself that it is true. How could you think I could find it in my heart to drive you away, or even so much as to reproach you? Oh, you don't know a true man's heart, Nora. There is something indescribably sweet and soothing to a man in having forgiven his wife—honestly forgiven her, from the bottom of his heart. She becomes his property in a double sense. She is as though born again; she has become, so to speak, at once his wife and his child. That is what you shall henceforth be to me, my bewildered, helpless darling. Don't be troubled about anything, Nora; only open your heart to me, and I will be both will and conscience to you. [NORA enters in everyday dress.] Why, what's this? Not gone to bed? You have changed your dress?

NORA. Yes, Torvald; now I have changed my dress.

HELMER. But why now, so late——?

NORA. I shall not sleep to-night.

HELMER. But, Nora dear——

NORA [*looking at her watch*]. It's not so late yet. Sit down, Torvald; you and I have much to say to each other.

[*She sits at one side of the table.*]

HELMER. Nora—what does this mean? Your cold, set face——

NORA. Sit down. It will take some time. I have much to talk over with you.

[*HELMER sits at the other side of the table.*]

HELMER. YOU alarm me, Nora. I don't understand you.

NORA. NO, that is just it. You don't understand me; and I have never understood you—till to-night. No, don't interrupt. Only listen to what I say.—We must come to a final settlement, Torvald.

HELMER. HOW do you mean?

NORA [*after a short silence*]. Does not one thing strike you as we sit here?

HELMER. What should strike me?

NORA. We have been married eight years. Does it not

strike you that this is the first time we two, you and I, man and wife, have talked together seriously?

HELMER. Seriously! What do you call seriously?

NORA. During eight whole years, and more—ever since the day we first met—we have never exchanged one serious word about serious things.

HELMER. Was I always to trouble you with the cares you could not help me to bear?

NORA. I am not talking of cares. I say that we have never yet set ourselves seriously to get to the bottom of anything.

HELMER. Why, my dearest Nora, what have you to do with serious things?

NORA. There we have it! You have never understood me.—I have had great injustice done me Torvald; first by father, and then by you.

HELMER. What! By your father and me?—By us, who have loved you more than all the world?

NORA [*shaking her head*]. You have never loved me. You only thought it amusing to be in love with me.

HELMER. Why, Nora, what a thing to say!

NORA. Yes, it is so, Torvald. While I was at home with father, he used to tell me all his opinions, and I held the same opinions. If I had others I said nothing about them, because he wouldn't have liked it. He used to call me his doll-child, and played with me as I played with my dolls. Then I came to live in your house——

HELMER. What an expression to use about our marriage!

NORA [*undisturbed*], I mean I passed from father's hands into yours. You arranged everything according to your taste; and I got the same tastes as you; or I pretended to—I don't know which—both ways, perhaps; sometimes one and sometimes the other. When I look back on it now, I seem to have been living here like a beggar, from hand to mouth. I lived by performing tricks for you, Torvald. But you would have it so. You and father have done me a great wrong. It is your fault that my life has come to nothing.

HELMER. Why, Nora, how unreasonable and ungrateful you are I—Have you not been happy here?

NORA. NO, never. I thought I was; but I never was.

HELMER. Not—not happy!

NORA. NO; only merry. And you have always been so kind to me. But our house has been nothing but a playroom. Here I have been your doll-wife, just as at home I used to be papa's doll-child. And the children, in their turn, have been my dolls. I thought it fun when you played with me, just as the children did when I played with them. That has been our marriage, Torvald.

HELMER. There is some truth in what you say, exaggerated and overstrained though it be. But henceforth it shall be different. Playtime is over; now comes the time for education.

NORA. Whose education? Mine, or the children's?

HELMER. Both, my dear Nora.

NORA. Oh, Torvald, you are not the man to teach me to be a fit wife for you.

HELMER. And you can say that?

NORA. And I—how have I prepared myself to educate the children?

HELMER. Nora!

NORA. Did you not say yourself, a few minutes ago, you dared not trust them to me?

HELMER. In the excitement of the moment! Why should you dwell upon that?

NORA. No—you were perfectly right. That problem is beyond me. There is another to be solved first—I must try to educate myself. You are not the man to help me in that. I must set about it alone. And that is why I am leaving you.

HELMER [*jumping up*]. What—do you mean to say——?

NORA. I must stand quite alone if I am ever to know myself and my surroundings; so I cannot stay with you.

HELMER. Nora! Nora!

NORA. I am going at once. I daresay Christina will take me in for to-night——

HELMER. YOU are mad! I shall not allow it! I forbid it!

NORA. It is of no use your forbidding me anything now. I

shall take with me what belongs to me. From you I will accept nothing, either now or afterwards.

HELMER. What madness is this!

NORA. To-morrow I shall go home—I mean to what was my home. It will be easier for me to find some opening there.

HELMER. Oh, in your blind inexperience——

NORA. I must try to gain experience, Torvald.

HELMER. To forsake your home, your husband, and your children! And you don't consider what the world will say!

NORA. I can pay no heed to that. I only know that I must do it.

HELMER. This is monstrous! Can you forsake your holiest duties in this way?

NORA. What do you consider my holiest duties?

HELMER. DO I need to tell you that? Your duties to your husband and your children.

NORA. I have other duties equally sacred.

HELMER. Impossible! What duties do you mean?

NORA. My duties towards myself.

HELMER. Before all else you are a wife and a mother.

NORA. That I no longer believe. I believe that before all else I am a human being, just as much as you are—or at least that I should try to become one. I know that most people agree with you, Torvald, and that they say so in books. But henceforth I can't be satisfied with what most people say, and what is in books. I must think things out for myself, and try to get clear about them.

HELMER. Are you not clear about your place in your own home? Have you not an infallible guide in questions like these? Have you not religion?

NORA. Oh, Torvald, I don't really know what religion is.

HELMER. What do you mean?

NORA. I know nothing but what Pastor Hansen told me when I was confirmed. He explained that religion was this and that. When I get away from all this and stand alone, I will look into that matter too. I will see whether what he taught me is right, or, at any rate, whether it is right for me.

HELMER. Oh, this is unheard-of! And from so young a

woman! But if religion cannot keep you right, let me appeal to your conscience—for I suppose you have some moral feeling? Or, answer me : perhaps you have none?

NORA. Well, Torvald, it's not easy to say. I really don't know—I am all at sea about these things. I only know that I think quite differently from you about them. I hear, too, that the laws are different from what I thought; but I can't believe that they can be right. It appears that a woman has no right to spare her dying father, or to save her husband's life! I don't believe that.

HELMER. You talk like a child. You don't understand the society in which you live.

NORA. NO, I defnot. But now I shall try to learn. I must make up my mind which is right—society or I.

HELMER. Nora, you are ill; you are feverish; I almost think you are out of your senses.

NORA. I have never felt so much clearness and certainty as to-night.

HELMER. YOU are clear and certain enough to forsake husband and children?

NORA. Yes, I am.

HELMER. Then there is only one explanation possible.

NORA. What is that?

HELMER. YOU no longer love me.

NORA. NO; that is just it.

HELMER. Nora!—Can you say so!

NORA. Oh, I'm so sorry, Torvald; for you've always been so kind to me. But I can't help it. I do not love you any longer.

HELMER [*mastering himself with difficulty*]. Are you clear and certain on this point too?

NORA. Yes, quite. That is why I will not stay here any longer.

HELMER. And can you also make clear to me how I have forfeited your love?

NORA. Yes, I can. It was this evening, when the miracle did not happen; for then I saw you were not the man I had imagined.

HELMER. Explain yourself more clearly; I don't understand.

NORA. I have waited so patiently all these eight years; for of course I saw clearly enough that miracles don't happen every day. When this crushing blow threatened me, I said to myself so confidently, "Now comes the miracle!" When Krogstad's letter lay in the box, it never for a moment occurred to me that you would think of submitting to that man's conditions. I was convinced that you would say to him, "Make it known to all the world"; and that then——

HELMER. Well? When I had given my own wife's name up to disgrace and shame——?

NORA. Then I firmly believed that you would come forward, take everything upon yourself, and say, "I am the guilty one."

HELMER. Nora——!

NORA. You mean I would never have accepted such a sacrifice? No, certainly not. But what would my assertions have been worth in opposition to yours?—That was the miracle that I hoped for and dreaded. And it was to hinder that that I wanted to die.

HELMER. I would gladly work for you day and night, Nora—bear sorrow and want for your sake. But no man sacrifices his honour, even for one he loves.

NORA. Millions of women have done so.

HELMER. Oh, you think and talk like a silly child.

NORA. Very likely. But you neither think nor talk like the man I can share my life with. When your terror was over—not for what threatened me, but for yourself—when there was nothing more to fear—then it seemed to you as though nothing had happened. I was your lark again, your doll, just as before—whom you would take twice as much care of in future, because she was so weak and fragile. [*Stands up.*] Torvald—in that moment it burst upon me that I had been living here these eight years with a strange man, and had borne him three children.—Oh, I can't bear to think of it! I could tear myself to pieces!

HELMER [*sadly*']. I see it, I see it; an abyss has opened between us.—But, Nora, can it never be filled up?

NORA. AS I now am, I am no wife for you.

HELMER. I have strength to become another man.

NORA. Perhaps—when your doll is taken away from you.

HELMER. TO part—to part from you! No, Nora, no; I can't grasp the thought.

NORA [*going into the room on the right*]. The more reason for the thing to happen.

[She comes back with outdoor things and a small travelling-bag, which she places on a chair,

HELMER. Nora, Nora, not now! Wait till to-morrow.

NORA [*putting on cloak*], I can't spend the night in a strange man's house.

HELMER. But can we not live here, as brother and sister——?

NORA [*fastening her hat*]. You know very well that wouldn't last long. [*Puts on the shawl,*] Good-bye, Torvald. No, I won't go to the children. I know they are in better hands than mine. As I now am, I can be nothing to them.

HELMER. But some time, Nora—some time——?

NORA. HOW can I tell? I have no idea what will become of me.

HELMER. But you are my wife, now and always!

NORA. Listen, Torvald—when a wife leaves her husband's house, as I am doing, I have heard that in the eyes of the law he is free from all duties towards her. At any rate I release you from all duties. You must not feel yourself bound, any more than I shall. There must be perfect freedom on both sides. There, I give you back your ring. Give me mine.

HELMER. That too?

NORA. That too.

HELMER. Here it is.

NORA. Very well. Now it is all over. I lay the keys here. The servants know about everything *in* the house—better than I do. To-morrow, when I have started, Christina will come to pack up the things I brought with me from home. I will have them sent after me.

HELMER. All over! all over! Nora, will you never think of me again?

NORA. Oh, I shall often think of you, and the children, and this house.

HELMER. May I write to you, Nora?

NORA. NO—never. You must not.

HELMER. But I must send you——

NORA. Nothing, nothing.

HELMER. I must help you if you need it.

NORA. NO, I say. I take nothing from strangers.

HELMER. Nora—can I never be more than a stranger to you?

NORA [*taking her travelling-bag*]. Oh, Torvald, then the miracle of miracles would have to happen——

HELMER. What is the miracle of miracles?

NORA. Both of us would have to change so that——Oh, Torvald, I no longer believe in miracles.

HELMER. But I will believe. Tell me! We must so change that——?

NORA. That communion between us shall be a marriage. Good-bye. [*She goes out by the hall door.*]

HELMER [*sinks into a chair by the door with his face in his hands*]. Nora! Nora! [*He looks round and rises.*] Empty. She is gone. [*A hope springs up in him.*] Ah! The miracle of miracles——?

[*From below is heard the reverberation of a heavy door closing.*]

Curtain

GHOSTS
(1881)

TRANSLATED BY
WILLIAM ARCHER

CHARACTERS

MRS. ALVING (HELEN), *widow of Captain Alving, late Chamberlain¹ to the King.*

OSWALD ALVING, *her son, a painter.*

PASTOR MANDERS.

JACOB ENGSTRAND, *a carpenter.*

REGINA ENGSTRAND, *Mrs. Alvings maid.*

The action takes place at Mrs. Alving's country-house, beside one of the large fjords in Western Norway.

¹ Chamberlain (Kammrherre) is the only title of honour now existing in Norway. It is a distinction conferred by the King on men of wealth and position, and is not hereditary.

G H O S T S

I N T R O D U C T I O N

Ghosts first began to take shape in Ibsen's mind in the summer of 1880, when he and Jonas Lie and John Paulsen were together in Berchtesgaden. The weather was rainy and gloomy, and Paulsen tells how this in great measure contributed to the atmosphere of the play.

Ibsen moved to Rome that winter, but it was *An Enemy of the People*, and not *Ghosts*, which preoccupied him. In the spring of 1881, however, he laid the former play aside and began to concentrate on *Ghosts*. The first connected draft of the play was written between June and August 1881 in Rome and Sorrento. The second draft took shape between September 25th and October 24th. The finished manuscript was sent to Hegel before the middle of November, and the play was published in December.

Ghosts produced a sensation unparalleled in this history of Ibsen's plays. His publisher Hegel had loads of consignments returned. No new edition appeared for thirteen years. It was refused by Fallesen in Copenhagen, Schroder, the new Director of the Christiania Theatre, did not dare to produce it, and it was temporarily turned down in Stockholm. Criticism in Scandinavia was almost entirely hostile. Even Herman Jaeger, Ibsen's future Boswell, organised a series of lectures against the tendencies of the play in Christiania, and extended them into a provincial lecture tour. But Bjornson and Brandes defended him, while the younger generation acclaimed him as their leader.

The first production of *Ghosts* was put on by the Scandinavian colony in Chicago on May 28th, 1882. August Lindberg, the Swedish producer and actor, after failing to procure Ernst Josephson's support for a production in Stockholm, formed his own company in 1882 and in 1883 got Ibsen's permission to

perform *Ghosts* in a Swedish translation. He took the part of Oswald after having made a study of paralytics in a Copenhagen hospital, and gave the first European performance in Halsingborg on August 22nd, 1883. From here he proceeded in triumph to Copenhagen, Stockholm, and finally to Christiania, where the play was produced in the Mfllergaten Theatre to the wild acclamation of the audience, which shouted down Schroder in the National Theatre and yelled hurrah for Ibsen.

The first German production was Felix Philippi's at the Augsburg Stadttheater, at which Ibsen himself was present. But his great triumph was Direktor Anno's matinee at the Berlin Residenztheater on January 9th, 1887, when Julius Hoffory ran up and down the auditorium between the acts gesticulating and exclaiming: "To-day a new era has begun for German literature." The production was so realistic that the producer omitted Mrs. Alving's remark: "It was then I began to examine the seams of your teaching. I wanted only to undo a single stitch; but when I had loosened it, the whole lot came undone. And then I understood it was machine sewn." Ibsen asked why this had been left out and received the reply: "Modern sewing machines have been so perfected that it is impossible to undo the stitches." "You can be certain that Mrs. Alving up at Rosenvold has still got her old-fashioned sewing machine," Ibsen replied, smiling. His wounded vanity at the hostile reception of the play was in some way appeased by being elevated to the rank of Commander of the Ernestine Order by the Duke of Saxe-Meiningen when the play was produced at the Meiningen Theatre on January 9th, 1887.

In 1888 William Archer's translation of *Ghosts* appeared, and on March 13th, 1891, J. T. Grein's Independent Theatre gave one performance of the play at the Royalty in London. The fury of the Press knew no bounds, and Archer's article *Ghosts and Gibberings* in the *Pall Mall Gazette* of April 8th gives samples of the abuse directed at Ibsen. "An open drain," "naked loathsomeness," "a putrid play," and it was stated that "Old Ibsen is as dead as a door-nail."

In 1890 Antoine made his debut in an Ibsen part when he played Oswald, the first time that a play of Ibsen's had been

performed in France. Critics showed little comprehension of the play, but it became the most popular item of his repertoire during his tours of France and Italy. Prozor's French translations have always been a hindrance to the understanding of Ibsen in France, but the new La Chenais translations have done much to redeem the loss.

Ibsen had confidence in the merits of his play, in spite of general hostility, and wrote to Hegel in March 1882: "But all these wilting, dilapidated people, who have attacked this work, as they have, will one day themselves be crushingly condemned in the future history of literature. . . . My book has the future to itself."

In 1898 Ibsen was present at a dinner in his honour at the Royal Palace in Stockholm, and King Oscar II remarked to him: "You ought not to have written *Ghosts*, Ibsen. It isn't a good play; no. *Lady Inger of Ostrata* that's a good play." Ibsen bit his lip, was silent for a moment, and then replied: "Your Majesty, I had to write *Ghosts*."

It was a play on a theme which had exercised compulsion on him for a long time—the weight of the past, of heredity, of authority and tradition, "the corpse *in the hold*," as he called it earlier, the old man of the sea which rode on every man's back. And this reckoning with the past affected his dramatic technique as well, which more and more turns to the retrospective form of exposition, revealing the distant past as the plot unfolds, although the action itself covers only a short space of time.

"*Ghosts*" is an inadequate rendering of the Norwegian "*Gengangere*" which is the French "*revenants*," or spirits of the dead that walk again. Oswald is not a spook, he is only one of the "spirits of the past that walk in Mrs. Alving's shadow. There is a strong element of the Greek fate motif which we find in one of the earliest notes where Ibsen mentions Nemesis. It is a motif which pervades Ibsen's work from the beginning to the end. It is Mrs. Alving's fate, and not that of Oswald, that is the central theme of the play. Oswald has inherited his syphilis and is inescapably doomed. Mrs. Alving, however, has to suffer for her own past, for not having the will to refuse marriage with the rich young Lieutenant Alving, who had been foisted upon

her as a remunerative match by her mother and her two aunts. Gradually we find her freeing herself from all the haunting spirits of the past until her son alone is left, and the Curtain again falls on a question mark as to whether she had the courage to free herself from him as well by taking his life.

Ibsen conceived the play first as a conflict between the individual and the pressure of the past. This conflict is then concentrated on the person of Mrs. Alving, who in many ways is a development of Nora in *A Doll's House*. In a letter to Archer of January 2nd, 1882, he writes of how "a badly brought up, misused woman must be driven to opposite extremes by people with Pastor Manders' ideas and way of feeling," in fact the reaction Nora underwent after leaving Helmer. From now on a new standard is applied to Ibsen's characters—a standard borrowed in some degree from John Stuart Mill. Whereas earlier they tended to be measured by their devotion to duty, from now on they fall or survive according as to whether they have or have not had the courage to choose happiness in life when they had the opportunity. Ideals from now on become for Ibsen purely relative; the pursuit of happiness is all that matters, and the only ideals that count are what Nietzsche called "stimulating lies." His revaluation of moral values is expressed in a letter of 1882, where he states: "In our days every poetic production has the task of shifting boundary marks."

Ghosts was attacked and defended as a realistic play. Ibsen wrote in a letter to August Lindberg (August 2nd, 1882): "The effect of the play depends largely on the audience believing they are sitting and hearing and seeing something which is happening in real life." Never before had he so echoed the finest shades of conversational speech, never before had he given such microscopic stage directions. But, nevertheless, it is the poetic illusion of reality he gives, and not the drab approximation to reality of the naturalistic school. The whole fate motif of the play is unrealistic and romantic. Coincidences are skillfully given the appearance of consequences. The sins of the fathers are visited on the children in a most unrealistic manner. Regina, Oswald's sister, has opportunely escaped inheriting their

father's venereal disease. The incestuous love of these two is a time-honoured ingredient of romantic fate-tragedy, and the dramatic devices are equally traditional. In the same conservatory, in the same circumstances as her mother with Oswald's father, Regina reproves Oswald for his advances with identically the same words. Nor could anything be more unrealistic than Oswald's sudden physical decomposition in the last act, tuned as it is to the glow of a conventional romantic sunrise, |Ibsen always insisted on illusion, and not reality, as the basis of art, and *Ghosts* is no exception to the rule. P. F. D. T.

G H O S T S

A FAMILY-DRAMA IN THREE ACTS

A C T I

A spacious garden-room, with one door to the left, and two doors to the right, In the middle of the room a round table, with chairs about it. On the table lie books, periodicals, and newspapers. In the foreground to the left a window, and by it a small sofa, with a work-table in front of it. In the background, the room is continued into a somewhat narrower conservatory, which is shut in by glass walls with large panes. In the right-hand wall of the conservatory is a door leading down into the garden. Through the glass wall one catches a glimpse of a gloomy fjord-landscape, veiled by steady rain. Engstrand, the carpenter, stands by the garden-door. His left leg is somewhat bent; he has a clump of wood under the sole of his boot. Regina, with an empty garden syringe in her hand, hinders him from advancing.

REGINA [*in a low voice*]. What do you want? Stop where you are. You're positively dripping.

ENGSTRAND. It's the Lord's own rain, my girl.

REGINA. It's the devil's rain, Isay.

ENGSTRAND. Lord! how you talk, Regina. [*Limps a few steps forward into the room.*] What I wanted to say was this——

REGINA. Don't clatter so with that foot of yours, I tell you! The young master's asleep upstairs.

ENGSTRAND. Asleep ? In the middle of the day ?

REGINA. It's no business of yours.

ENGSTRAND. I was out on the loose last night——

REGINA. I can quite believe that.

ENGSTRAND. Yes, we're weak vessels, we poor mortals, my girl——

REGINA. SO it seems.

ENGSTRAND.——and temptations are manifold in this world, you see; but all the~same, I was hard at work, God knows, at half-past five this morning.

REGINA. Very well; only be off now. I won't stop here and have *rendezvous*¹ with you.

ENGSTRAND. What is it you won't have ?

REGINA. I won't have any one find you here; so just you go about your business.

ENGSTRAND [*advances a step or two*]. Blest if I go before I've had a talk with you. This afternoon I shall have finished my work at the school-house, and then I shall take to-night's boat and be off home to the town.

REGINA [*mutters*], A pleasant journey to you.

ENGSTRAND. Thank you, my child. To-morrow the Asylum's to be opened, and then there'll be fine doings, no doubt, and plenty of intoxicating drink going, you know. And nobody shall say of Jacob Engstrand that he can't keep out of temptation's way.

REGINA. Oh!

ENGSTRAND. YOU see, there are to be any number of swells here to-morrow. Pastor Manders is expected from town, too.

REGINA. He's coming to-day.

ENGSTRAND. There you see! And I should be cursedly

¹ This and other French words used by Regina are in that language in the original.

sorry if he found out anything to my disadvantage, don't you understand?

REGINA. Oh! is that your game?

ENGSTRAND. IS what my game?

REGINA [*looking hard at him*]. What trick are you going to play on Pastor Manders?

ENGSTRAND. Hush! hush! Are you crazy? Do I want to play any trick on Pastor Manders? Oh no! Pastor Manders has been far too kind to me for that. But I just wanted to say, you know—that I mean to set off home again to-night.

REGINA. The sooner the better, say I.

ENGSTRAND. Yes, but I want to take you with me, Regina.

REGINA [*open-mouthed*]. You want me——? What are you talking about?

ENGSTRAND. I want to take you home, I say.

REGINA [*scornfully*]. Never in this world shall you get me home with you.

ENGSTRAND. We'll see about that.

REGINA. Yes, you may be sure we'll see about it! I, who have been brought up by a lady like Mrs. Alving! I, who am treated almost as a daughter here! Is it me you want to go home with you?—to a house like yours? For shame!

ENGSTRAND. What the devil do you mean? Do you set yourself up against your father, girl?

REGINA [*mutters without looking at him*]. You've said often enough I was no child of yours.

ENGSTRAND. Stuff! Why should you trouble about that?

REGINA. Haven't you many a time sworn at me and called me a——? *Fidone!*

ENGSTRAND. Curse me, now, if ever I used such an ugly word.

REGINA. Oh! I know quite well what word you used.

ENGSTRAND. Well, but that was only when I was a bit on, don't you know? H'm! Temptations are manifold in this world, Regina.

REGINA. Ugh!

ENGSTRAND. And besides, it was when your mother rode her high horse. I had to find something to twit her with, my

child. She was always setting up for a fine lady. [*Mimics.*] "Let me go, Engstrand; let me be. Remember I've been three years in Chamberlain Alving's family at Rosen void." [*Laughs.*] Mercy on us! She could never forget that the Captain was made a Chamberlain while she was in service here.

REGINA. Poor mother! You very soon worried her into her grave.

ENGSTRAND [*turns on his heel*]. Oh, of course! I'm to be blamed for everything.

REGINA [*turns away; half aloud*]. Ugh! And that leg too!

ENGSTRAND. What do you say, girl?

REGINA. *Pied de mouton.*

ENGSTRAND. IS that English, eh?

REGINA. Yes.

ENGSTRAND. Oh, ah; you've picked up some learning out here; and that may come in useful now, Regina.

REGINA [*after a short silence*]. What do you want with me in town?

ENGSTRAND. Can you ask what a father wants with his only child? Am I not a lonely and forsaken widower?

REGINA. Oh! don't try on any nonsense like that! Why do you want me?

ENGSTRAND. Well, let me tell you, I've been thinking of starting a new line of business.

REGINA [*contemptuously*]. You've tried that often enough, and never done any good.

ENGSTRAND. Yes, but this time you shall see, Regina! Devil take me——

REGINA [*stamps*]. Don't swear!

ENGSTRAND. Hush, hush; you're right enough there, my girl. What I wanted to say was just this—I've laid by a very tidy pile from this Orphanage job.

REGINA. Have you? That's a good thing for you.

ENGSTRAND. What can a man spend his ha'pence on here in the country?

REGINA. Well, what then?

ENGSTRAND. Why, you see, I thought of putting the money

into some paying speculation. I thought of a sort of sailors' tavern——

REGINA. Horrid!

ENGSTRAND. A regular high-class affair, of course; not a mere pigstye for common sailors. No! damn it! it would be for captains and mates, and—and—all those swells, you know.

REGINA. And I was to———?

ENGSTRAND. You were to help, to be sure. Only for appearance* sake, you understand. Devil a bit of hard work shall you have, my girl. You shall do exactly what you like.

REGINA. Oh, indeed!

ENGSTRAND. But there must be a petticoat in the house; that's as clear as daylight. For I want to have it a little lively in the evenings, with singing and dancing, and so forth. You must remember they're weary wanderers on the ocean of life. [*Nearer.*] Now don't be stupid and stand in your own light, Regina. What can become of you out here? Your mistress has given you a lot of learning; but what good is it to you? You're to look after the children at the new Orphanage, I hear. Is that the sort of thing for you, eh? Are you so desperately bent upon wearing yourself out for the sake of the dirty brats?

REGINA. NO; if things go as I want them to, then—well, there's no saying—there's no saying.

ENGSTRAND. What do you mean by "there's no saying"?

REGINA. Never you mind. How much money have you saved up here?

ENGSTRAND. What with one thing and another, a matter of seven or eight hundred crowns.¹

REGINA. That's not so bad.

ENGSTRAND. It's enough to make a start with, my girl.

REGINA. Aren't you thinking of giving me any?

ENGSTRAND. NO, I'm damned if I am!

REGINA. Not even of sending me a scrap of stuff for a new dress?

ENGSTRAND. If you'll come to town with me, you can get dresses enough.

¹A "kroner" is equal to one shilling and three halfpence.

REGINA. Pooh! P can do that on my own account if I want to.

ENGSTRAND. No, a father's guiding hand is what you want, Regina. Now, Fve my eyes on a capital house in Little Harbour Street. It won't need much ready-money, and it could be a sort of sailors' home, you know.

REGINA. But I will *not* live with you. I have nothing whatever to do with you. Be off!

ENGSTRAND. YOU wouldn't remain long with me, my girl. No such luck! If you knew how to play your cards, such a fine girl as you've grown in the last year or two——

REGINA. Well?

ENGSTRAND. You'd soon get hold of some mate—or perhaps even a captain——

REGINA. I won't marry any one of that sort. Sailors have no *savoir vivre*.

ENGSTRAND. What haven't they got ?

REGINA. I know what sailors are, I tell you. They're not the sort of people to marry.

ENGSTRAND. Then never mind about marrying them. You can make it pay all the same. [*More confidentially.*] He—the Englishman—the man with the yacht—he gave three hundred dollars, he did; and she wasn't a bit handsomer than you.

REGINA [*going towards him*]. Out you go!

ENGSTRAND [*falling back*]. Come, come! You're not going to strike me, I hope.

REGINA. Yes, if you begin to talk about mother I shall strike you. Get away with you, I say. [*Drives him back towards the garden door.*] And don't bang the doors. Young Mr. Alving——

ENGSTRAND. He's asleep; I know. It's curious how you're taken up about young Mr. Alving—[*more softly*] Oho! it surely can't be he that——?

REGINA. Be off at once! You're crazy, I tell you! No, not that way. There comer- Pastor Manders. Down the kitchen stairs with you.

ENGSTRAND [*towards the right*]. Yes, yes, I'm going. But just you talk to him that's coming there. He's the man to tell

you what a child owes its father. For I am your father **all the same**, you know. I can prove it from the church register.

[He goes out through the second door to the right, which REGINA has opened, and fastens again after him, REGINA glances hastily at herself in the mirror, dusts herself with her pocket-handkerchief, and settles her collar; then she busies herself with the flowers. PASTOR MANDERS, in an overcoat, with an umbrella, and with a small travelling-bag on a strap over his shoulder, comes through the garden-door into the conservatory.]

MANDERS. Good-morning, Miss Engstrand.

REGINA *[turning round, surprised and pleased]*. No, really! Good-morning, Pastor Manders. Is the steamer in already?

MANDERS. It's just in. *[Enters the sitting-room.]* Terrible weather we've been having lately.

REGINA *[follows him]*. It's such blessed weather for the country, sir.

MANDERS. Yes, you're quite right. We townspeople think **too little about that**. *[He begins to take off his overcoat.]*

REGINA. Oh, mayn't I help you? There! Why, how wet it is! I'll just hang it up in the hall. And your umbrella, too — I'll open it and let it dry.

[She goes out with the things through the second door on the right. PASTOR MANDERS takes off his travelling-bag and lays it and his hat on a chair. Meanwhile REGINA comes in again.]

MANDERS. Ah! it's a comfort to get safe under cover. Everything going on well here?

REGINA. Yes, thank you, sir.

MANDERS. YOU have your hands full, I suppose, in preparation for to-morrow?

REGINA. Yes, there's plenty to do, of course.

MANDERS. And Mrs. Alving is at home, I trust?

REGINA. Oh dear, yes. She's just upstairs looking after the young master's chocolate.

MANDERS. Yes,, by-the-by—I heard down at the pier that Oswald had arrived.

REGINA. Yes, he came the day before yesterday. We didn't expect him before to-day.

MANDERS. Quite strong and well, I hope ?

REGINA. Yes, thank you, quite; but dreadfully tired with the journey. He has made one rush all the way from Paris. I believe he came the whole way in one train. He's sleeping a little now, I think; so perhaps we'd better talk a little quietly.

MANDERS. Hush!—as quietly as you please.

REGINA [*arranging an armchair beside the table*]. Now, do sit down, Pastor Manders, and make yourself comfortable. [*He sits down; she puts a footstool under his feet,*] There! are you comfortable now, sir ?

MANDERS. Thanks, thanks, I'm most comfortable. [*Looks at her,*] Do you know, Miss Engstrand, I positively believe you've grown since I last saw you.

REGINA. DO you think so, sir? Mrs. Alving says my figure has developed too.

MANDERS. Developed? Well, perhaps a little; just enough. [*Short pause.*]

REGINA. Shall I tell Mrs. Alving you are here ?

MANDERS. Thanks, thanks, there's no hurry, my dear child. By-the-by, Regina, my good girl, just tell me : how is your father getting on out here ?

REGINA. Oh, thank you, he's getting on well enough.

MANDERS. He called upon me last time he was in town.

REGINA. Did he, indeed ? He's always so glad of a chance of talking to you, sir.

MANDERS. And you often look in upon him at his work, I daresay ?

REGINA. I ? Oh, of course, when I have time, I——

MANDERS. Your father is not a man of strong character, Miss Engstrand. He stands terribly in need of a guiding hand.

REGINA. Oh, yes; I daresay he does.

MANDERS. He needs to have some one near him whom he cares for, and whose judgment he respects. He frankly admitted that when he last came to see me.

REGINA. Yes, he mentioned something of the sort to me. But I don't know whether Mrs. Alving can spare me; especially

now that we've got the new Orphanage to attend to. And then I should be so sorry to leave Mrs. Alving; she has always been so kind to me.

MANDERS. But a daughter's duty, my good girl——Of course we must first get your mistress's consent.

REGINA. But I don't know whether it would be quite proper for me, at my age, to keep house for a single man.

MANDERS. What! My dear Miss Engstrand! When the man is your own father!

REGINA. Yes, that may be; but all the same——Now if it were in a thoroughly respectable house, and with a real gentleman——

MANDERS. But, my dear Regina——

REGINA.——one I could love and respect, and be a daughter to——

MANDERS. Yes, but my dear, good child——

REGINA. Then I should be glad to go to town. It's very lonely out here; you know yourself, sir, what it is to be alone in the world. And I can assure you I'm both quick and willing. Don't you know of any such place for me, sir?

MANDERS. I? No, certainly not.

REGINA. But, dear, dear sir, do remember me if——

MANDERS *[rising]*. Yes, yes, certainly, Miss Engstrand.

REGINA. For if I——

MANDERS. Will you be so good as to fetch your mistress?

REGINA. I will, at once, sir. *[She goes out to the left.]*

MANDERS *[paces the room two or three times, stands a moment in the background with his hands behind his back, and looks out over the garden. Then he returns to the table, takes up a book, and looks at the title-page; starts, and looks at several]*. H'm——indeed!

[MRS. ALVING enters by the door on the left; she is followed by REGINA, who immediately goes out by the first door on the right.]

MRS. ALVING *[holds out her hand]*. Welcome, my dear Pastor.

MANDERS. HOW do you do, Mrs. Alving? Here I am as I promised.

MRS. ALVING. Always punctual to the minute.

MANDERS. YOU may believe it wasn't so easy for me to get away. With all the Boards and Committees I belong to——

MRS. ALVING. That makes it all the kinder of you to come so early. Now we can get through our business before dinner. But where's your luggage?

MANDERS [*quickly*], I left it down at the inn. I shall sleep there to-night.

MRS. ALVING [*suppressing a smile*]. Are you really not to be persuaded, even now, to pass the night under my roof?

MANDERS. NO, no, Mrs. Alving; many thanks. I shall stay down there as usual. It's so convenient for starting again.

MRS. ALVING. Well, you must have your own way. But I really should have thought we two old people——

MANDERS. NOW you're making fun of me. Ah! you're naturally in great spirits to-day—what between to-morrow's festival and Oswald's return.

MRS. ALVING. Yes; you can think what a delight it is to me! It's more than two years since he was home last. And now he has promised to stay with me all winter.

MANDERS. Has he really? That's very nice and dutiful of him. For I can well believe that life in Rome and Paris has far more attractions.

MRS. ALVING. True. But here he has his mother, you see. My own darling boy, he hasn't forgotten his old mother!

MANDERS. It would be grievous indeed, if absence and absorption in art and that sort of thing were to blunt his natural feelings.

MRS. ALVING. Yes, you may well say so. But there's nothing of that sort to fear in him. I'm quite curious to see whether you'll know him again. He'll be down presently; he's upstairs just now, resting a little on the sofa. But do sit down, my dear Pastor.

MANDERS. Thank you. Are you quite at liberty——?

MRS. ALVING. Certainly. [*She sits by the table.*]

MANDERS. Very well. Then you shall see——[*He goes to the chair where his travelling-bag lies, takes out a packet of papers, sits down on the opposite side of the table, and tries to*]

find a clear space for the papers.] Now, to begin with, here is——[*breaking off*]—Tell me, Mrs. Alving, how do these books come here ?

MRS. ALVING. These books? They are books I am reading.

MANDERS. DO you read this sort of literature ?

MRS. ALVING. Certainly I do.

MANDERS. DO you feel better or happier for reading of this kind?

MRS. ALVING. I feel, so to speak, more secure.

MANDERS. That's strange. How do you mean ?

MRS. ALVING. Well, I seem to find explanation and confirmation of all sorts of things I myself have been *h*lhrEig. For that's the wonderful part of it, Pastor Manders; there's really nothing new in these books, nothing but what most people think and believe. Only most people either don't formulate it to themselves, or else keep quiet about it.

*m*LANDERS. Great heavens ! Do you really believe that most people——?

MRS. ALVING. I do, indeed.

MANDERS. But surely not in this country? Not here, among us ?

MRS. ALVING. Yes, certainly, among us too.

MANDERS. Well, I really must say——!

MRS. ALVING. For the rest, what do you object to in these books ?

MANDERS. Object to in them? You surely don't suppose that I have nothing to do but study such productions as these?

MRS. ALVING. That is to say, you know nothing of what you are condemning.

MANDERS. I have read enough *about* these writings to disapprove of them.

MRS. ALVING. Yes; but your own opinion——

MANDERS. My dear Mrs. Alving, there are many occasions in life when one must rely upon others. Things are so ordered in this world; and it's well that they are. How could society get on otherwise ?

MRS. ALVING. Well, I daresay you're right there.

MANDERS. Besides, I of course don't deny that there may be much that is interesting in such books. Nor can I blame you for-wishTng to keep up with the intellectual movements that are said to be going on in the great world, where you have let your son pass so much of his life. But——

MRS. ALVING. But?

MANDERS [*lowering his voice*]. But one shouldn't talk, about it, Mrs. Alving. One is certainly not bound to account to everybody for what one reads and thinks within one's own four walls.

MRS. ALVING. Of course not; I quite think so.

MANDERS. Only think, now, how you are bound to consider the interests of this Orphanage which you decided on founding at a time when you thought very differently on spiritual matters—so far as I can judge.

MRS. ALVING. Oh yes; I quite admit that. But it was about the Orphanage——

MANDERS. It was about the Orphanage we were to speak; yes. All I say is: prudence, my dear lady! And now we'll get to business. [*Opens the packet, and takes out a number of papers.*] Do you see these?

MRS. ALVING. The documents?

MANDERS. All—and in perfect order. I can tell you it was hard work to get them in time. I had to put on strong pressure. The authorities are almost painfully scrupulous when you want them to come to the point. But here they are at last. [*Looks through the bundle.*] See! here is the formal deed of gift of the parcel of ground known as Solvik in the Manor of Rosenvoid, with all the newly constructed buildings, schoolrooms, master's house, and chapel. And here is the legal fiat for the endowment and for the Regulations of the Institution. Will you look at them? [*Reads.*] " Regulations for the Children's Home to be known as ' Captain Alving's Foundation.' "

MRS. ALVING [*looks long at the paper*]. So there it is.

MANDERS. I have chosen the designation " Captain " rather than " Chamberlain." " Captain " looks less pretentious.

MRS. ALVING. Oh, yes; just as you think best.

MANDERS. And here you have the Bank Account of the

capital lying at interest to cover the current expenses of the Orphanage.

MRS. ALVING. Thank you; but please keep it—it will be more convenient.

MANDERS. With pleasure. I think we will leave the money in the Bank for the present. The interest is certainly not what we could wish—four per cent, and six months* notice of withdrawal. If a good mortgage could be found later on—of course it must be a first mortgage and an undoubted security—then we could consider the matter.

MRS. ALVING. Certainly, my dear Pastor Manders, You are the best judge in these things.

MANDERS. I will keep my eyes open at any rate. But now there's one thing more which I have several times been intending to ask you.

MRS. ALVING. And what's that?

MANDERS. Shall the Orphanage buildings be insured or not?

MRS. ALVING. Of course they must be insured.

MANDERS. Well, stop a minute, Mrs. Alving. Let us look into the matter a little more closely.

MRS. ALVING. I have everything insured; buildings and movables and stock and crops.

MANDERS. Of course you have—on your own estate. And so have I—of course. But here, you see, it's quite another matter. The Orphanage is to be consecrated, as it were, to a higher purpose.

MRS. ALVING. Yes, but that's no reason——

MANDERS. For my own part, I should not see the smallest impropriety in guarding against all contingencies——

MRS. ALVING. No, I should think not.

MANDERS. But what is the general feeling in the neighbourhood? You, of course, know better than I.

MRS. ALVING. H'm—the general feeling——

MANDERS. Is there any considerable number of people—really responsible people—who might be scandalised?

MRS. ALVING. What do you mean by "really responsible people"?

MANDERS. Well, I mean people in such independent and influential positions that one cannot help allowing some weight to their opinions.

MRS. ALVING. There are several people of that sort here, who would very likely be shocked if——

MANDERS. There, you see! In town we have many such people. Think of all my colleagues' adherents! People would be only too ready to interpret our action as a sign that neither you nor I had the right faith in a Higher Providence.

MRS. ALVING. But for your own part, my dear Pastor, you can at least tell yourself that——

MANDERS. Yes, I know—I know; my conscience would be quite easy, that is true enough. But nevertheless we should not escape grave misinterpretation; and that might very likely react unfavourably upon the Orphanage.

MRS. ALVING. Well, in that case, then——

MANDERS. Nor can I lose sight of the difficult—I may even say painful—position I might perhaps get into. In the leading circles of the town people are much taken up about this Orphanage. It is, of course, founded partly for the benefit of the town, as well; and it is to be hoped it will, to a considerable extent, result in lightening our Poor Rates. Now, as I have been your adviser, and have had the business matters in my hands, I cannot but fear that I may have to bear the brunt of fanaticism.

MRS. ALVING. Oh, you mustn't run the risk of that.

MANDERS. TO say nothing of the attacks that would assuredly be made upon me in certain papers and periodicals, which——

MRS. ALVING. Enough, my dear Pastor Manders. That consideration is quite decisive*

MANDERS. Then you do not wish the Orphanage insured?

MRS. ALVING. No. We'll let it alone.

MANDERS [*leaning back in his chair*]. But if a disaster were to happen?—one can never tell. Would you be able to make good the damage?

MRS. ALVING. NO; I tell you plainly I should do nothing of the kind.

MANDERS. Then I must tell you, Mrs. Alving, we are taking no small responsibility upon ourselves.

MRS. ALVING. DO you think we can do otherwise?

MANDERS. NO, that's just the thing; we really cannot do otherwise. We must not expose ourselves to misinterpretation; and we have no right whatever to give offence to our neighbours.

MRS. ALVING. YOU, as a clergyman, certainly should not.

MANDERS. I really think, too, we may trust that such an institution has fortune on its side; in fact, that it stands under a Special Providence.

MRS. ALVING. Let us hope so, Pastor Manders.

MANDERS. Then we'll let the matter alone.

MRS. ALVING. Yes, certainly.

MANDERS. Very well. Just as you think best. [*Makes a note.*] Then—no insurance.

MRS. ALVING. It's rather curious that you should just happen to mention the matter to-day.

MANDERS. I have often thought of asking you about it——

MRS. ALVING.——for we very nearly had a fire down there yesterday.

MANDERS. YOU don't say so!

MRS. ALVING. Oh, it was of no importance. A heap of shavings had caught fire in the carpenter's workshop.

MANDERS. Where Engstrand works?

MRS. ALVING. Yes. They say he's often very careless with matches.

MANDERS. He has so many things in his head, that man—so many temptations. Thank God, he's now striving to lead a decent life, I hear.

MRS. ALVING. Indeed! Who says so ?

MANDERS. He himself assures me of it. And he's certainly a capital workman.

MRS. ALVING. Oh, yes; so long as he's sober.

MANDERS. Yes, that's a sad weakness. But he's often driven to it by his bad leg, he says. Last time he was *in* town I was really touched by him. He came and thanked me so warmly for having got him work here, so that he might be near **Regina.**

MRS. ALVING. He doesn't see much of *her*,

MANDERS. . Oh, yes; he has a talk with her every day. He told me so himself.

MRS. ALVING. Well, it may be so.

MANDERS. He feels so acutely that he needs some one to hold him back when temptation comes. That's what I can't help liking about Jacob Engstrand; he comes to you helplessly, accusing himself and confessing his own weakness. The last time he was talking to me—Believe me, Mrs. Alving, supposing it were a real necessity for him to have Regina home again——

MRS. ALVING [*rising hastily*], Regina!

MANDERS.——you must not set yourself against it.

MRS. ALVING. Indeed I shall set myself against it! And besides—Regina is to have a position in the Orphanage.

MANDERS. But, after all, remember he's her father——

MRS. ALVING. Oh! I know best what sort of a father he has been to her. No! she shall never go to him with my goodwill.

MANDERS [*rising*']. My dear lady, don't take the matter so warmly. You misjudge Engstrand sadly. You seem to be quite terrified——

MRS. ALVING [*more quietly*]. It makes no difference. I have taken Regina into my house, and there she shall stay. [*Listens.*] Hush, my dear Mr. Manders; don't say any more about it. [*Her face lights up with gladness.*] Listen! there's Oswald coming downstairs. Now we'll think of no one but him.

[OSWALD ALVING, *in a light overcoat, hat in hand and smoking a large meerschaum, enters through the door on the left; he stops in the doorway,*

OSWALD. Oh! I beg your pardon; I thought you were in the study. [*Comes forward.*] Good-morning, Pastor Manders.

MANDERS [*staring*]. Ah——! How strange——!

MRS. ALVING. WELL now, what do you think of him, Mr. Manders?

MANDERS. I—I—can it really be——?

OSWALD. Yes, it's really the Prodigal Son, sir.

MANDERS [*protesting*]. My dear young friend——!

OSWALD. Well, then, the Reclaimed Son.

MRS. ALVING. Oswald remembers how much you were opposed to his becoming a painter.

MANDERS. TO our human eyes many a step seems dubious which afterwards proves——[*wrings his hand*]. Anyhow, welcome, welcome home. Why, my dear Oswald—I suppose I may call you by your Christian name?

OSWALD. What else should you call me?

MANDERS. Very good. What I wanted to say was this, my dear Oswald—you mustn't believe that I utterly condemn the artist's calling. I have no doubt there are many who can keep their inner self unharmed in that profession, as in any other.

OSWALD. Let us hope so.

MRS. ALVING [*beaming with delight*], I know one who has kept both his inner and outer self unharmed. Just look at him, Mr. Manders.

OSWALD [*moves restlessly about the room*]. Yes, yes, my dear mother; let's say no more about it.

MANDERS. Why, certainly—that's undeniable. And you have begun to make a name for yourself already. The newspapers have often spoken of you, most favourably. By-the-by, just lately they haven't mentioned you so often, I fancy.

OSWALD [*up in the conservatory*], I haven't been able to paint so much lately.

MRS. ALVING. Even a painter needs a little rest now and then.

MANDERS. I can quite believe it. And meanwhile he can be gathering his forces for some great work.

OSWALD. Yes.—Mother, will dinner soon be ready?

MRS. ALVING. In less than half an hour. He has a capital appetite, thank God.

MANDERS. And a taste for tobacco, too.

OSWALD. I found my father's pipe in my room and so——

MANDERS. Aha! then that accounts for it.

MRS. ALVING. For what?

MANDERS. When Oswald stood there, in the doorway, with the pipe in his mouth, I could have sworn I saw his father, large as life.

OSWALD. NO, really?

MRS. ALVING. Oh! how can you say so? Oswald takes after me.

MANDERS. Yes, but there's an expression about the corners of the mouth—something about the lips that reminds one exactly of Alving; at any rate, now that he's smoking.

MRS. ALVING. Not in the least. Oswald has rather a clerical curve about his mouth, I think.

MANDERS. Yes, yes; some of my colleagues have much the same expression.

MRS. ALVING. But put your pipe away, my dear boy; I won't have smoking in here.

OSWALD [*does so*]. By all means. I only wanted to try it; for I once smoked it when I was a child.

MRS. ALVING. YOU?

OSWALD. Yes. I was quite small at the time. I recollect I came up to father's room one evening when he was in great spirits.

MRS. ALVING. Oh, you can't recollect anything of those times.

OSWALD. Yes, I recollect distinctly. He took me up on his knees, and gave me the pipe. "Smoke, boy," he said; "smoke away, boy." And I smoked as hard as I could, until I felt I was growing quite pale, and the perspiration stood in great drops on my forehead. Then he burst out laughing heartily—

MANDERS. That was most extraordinary.

MRS. ALVING. My dear friend, it's only something Oswald has dreamt.

OSWALD. NO, mother, I assure you I didn't dream it. For—don't you remember this?—you came and carried me out into the nursery. Then I was sick, and I saw that you were crying.—Did father often play such pranks?

MANDERS. In his youth he overflowed with the joy of life—I

OSWALD. And yet he managed to do so much in the world;

1 "Var en sårdeles livsglad maud"—literally, "was a man who took the greatest pleasure in life," *la joie de vivre*—an expression which frequently recurs in this play.

so much that was good and useful; and he died so young, too.

MANDERS. Yes, you have inherited the name of an active and worthy man, my dear Oswald Alving. No doubt it will be an incentive to you——

OSWALD. It ought to, indeed.

MANDERS. It was good of you to come home for the ceremony in his honour.

OSWALD. I could do no less for my father.

MRS. ALVING. And I am to keep him so long! That's the best of all.

MANDERS. You're going to pass the winter at home, I hear.

OSWALD. My stay is indefinite, sir. But, oh! how delightful it is to be at home again!

MRS. ALVING [*beaming*]. Yes, isn't it?

MANDERS [*looking sympathetically at him*]. You went out into the world early, my dear Oswald.

OSWALD. I did. I sometimes wonder whether it wasn't *too* early.

MRS. ALVING. Oh, not at all. A healthy lad is all the better for it; especially when he's an only child. He oughtn't to hang on at home with his mother and father and get spoilt.

MANDERS. It's a very difficult question, Mrs. Alving. A child's proper place is, and must be, the home of his fathers.

OSWALD. There I quite agree with you, Pastor Manders.

MANDERS. Only look at your own son—there's no reason why we shouldn't say it in his presence—what has the consequence been for him? He's six or seven and twenty, and has never had the opportunity of learning what home life really is.

OSWALD. I beg your pardon, Pastor; there you're quite mistaken.

MANDERS. Indeed? I thought you had lived almost exclusively in artistic circles.

OSWALD. SO I have.

MANDERS. And chiefly among the younger artists.

OSWALD. Yes, certainly.

MANDERS. But I thought few of these young fellows could afford to set up house and support a family.

OSWALD. There are many who can't afford to marry, sir.

MANDERS. Yes, that's just what I say.

OSWALD. But they can have a home for all that. And several of them have, as a matter of fact; and very pleasant, comfortable homes they are, too.

[MRS. ALVING follows with breathless interest; nods, but says nothing.]

MANDERS. But I am not talking of bachelors' quarters. By a "home" I understand the home of a family, where a man lives with his wife and children.

OSWALD. Yes; or with his children and his children's mother.

MANDERS [*starts; clasps his hands*]. But, good heavens——!

OSWALD. Well ?

MANDERS. Lives with——his children's mother!

OSWALD. Yes. Would you have him turn his children's mother out of doors ?

MANDERS. Then it's illicit relations you are talking of! Irregular marriages, as people call them !

OSWALD] I Have never noticed anything particularly irregular about the life these people lead.

MANDERS. But how is it possible that a—a young man or young woman with any decent principles can endure to live in that way ?—in the eyes of all the world!

OSWALD. What are they to do? A poor young artist—a poor girl—it costs a lot to get married. What are they to do ?

MANDERS. What are they to do? Let me tell you, Mr. Alving, what they ought to do. They ought to exercise self-restraint from the first; that's what they ought to do.

OSWALD. Such talk won't go far with warm-blooded young people, over head and ears in love.

MRS. ALVING. NO, it wouldn't go far.

MANDERS [*continuing*]. How can the authorities tolerate such things? Allow them to go on in the light of day? [*To MRS. ALVING.*] -Mad I not cause to be deeply concerned about your son? In circles where open immorality prevails, and has even a sort of prestige——!

OSWALD. Let me tell you, sir, that I have been a constant Sunday-guest in one or two such irregular homes——

MANDERS. On Sunday of all days!

OSWALD. Isn't that the day to enjoy oneself? Well, never have I heard an offensive word, and still less have I witnessed anything that could be called immoral. No; do you know when and where I have come across immorality in artistic circles?

MANDERS. No, thank heaven, I don't!

OSWALD. Well, then, allow me to inform you. I have met with it when one or other of our pattern husbands and fathers has come to Paris to have a look round on his own account, and has done the artists the honour of visiting their humble haunts. *They* knew what was what. These gentlemen could tell us all about places and things we had never dreamt of.

MANDERS. What! Do you mean to say that respectable men from home here would——?

OSWALD. Have you never heard these respectable men, when they got home again, talking about the way in which immorality was running rampant abroad?

MANDERS. Yes, of course.

MRS. ALVING. I have too.

OSWALD. Well, you may take their word for it. They know what they're talking about! [*Presses his hands to his head*] Oh! that that great, free, glorious life out there should be defiled in such a way!

MRS. ALVING. YOU mustn't get excited, Oswald. You will do yourself harm.

OSWALD. Yes; you're quite right, mother. It's not good for me. You see, I'm wretchedly worn out. I'll go for a little turn before dinner. Excuse me, Pastor; I know you can't take my point of view; but I couldn't help speaking out.

[*He goes out through the second door to the right**

MRS. ALVING. My poor boy!

MANDERS. You may well say so. Then that's what he has come to! [MRS. ALVING *looks at him silently.*

MANDERS [*walking up and down*]. He called himself the Prodigal Son—alas! alas!

[MRS. ALVING *continues looking at him.*

MANDERS. And what do you say to all this?

MRS. ALVING. I say that Oswald was right in every word.

MANDERS [*stands still*]. Right! Right! In such principles?

MRS. ALVING. Here, in my loneliness, I have come to the same way of thinking, Pastor Manders. But I've never dared to say anything. Well! now my boy shall speak for me.

MANDERS. YOU are much to be pitied, Mrs. Alving. But now I must speak seriously to you. And now it is no longer your business manager and adviser, your own and your late husband's early friend, who stands before you. It is the priest—the priest who stood before you in the moment of your life when you had gone most astray.

MRS. ALVING. And what has the priest to say to me?

MANDERS. I will first stir up your memory a little. The time is well chosen. To-morrow will be the tenth anniversary of your husband's death. To-morrow the memorial in his honour will be unveiled. To-morrow I shall have to speak to the whole assembled multitude. But to-day I will speak to you alone.

MRS. ALVING. Very well, Pastor Manders. Speak.

MANDERS. DO you remember that after less than a year of married life you stood on the verge of an abyss? That you forsook your house and home? That you fled from your husband? Yes, Mrs. Alving—fled, fled, and refused to return to him, however much he begged and prayed you?

MRS. ALVING. Have you forgotten how infinitely miserable I was in that first year?

MANDERS. It is only the spirit of rebellion that craves for happiness in this life. What right have we human beings to happiness? No, we have to do our duty! And your duty was to hold firmly to the man you had once chosen and to whom you were bound by a holy tie.

MRS. ALVING. YOU know very well what sort of life Alving was leading—what excesses he was guilty of.

MANDERS. I know very well what rumours there were about him, and I am the last to approve the life he led in his young days, if report did not wrong him. But a wife is not to be her husband's judge. It was your duty to bear with humility

the cross which a Higher Power had, for your own good, laid upon you. But instead of that you rebelliously throw away the cross, desert the backslider whom you should have supported, go and risk your good name and reputation, and—nearly succeed in ruining other people's reputation into the bargain.

MRS. ALVING. Other people's? One other person's, you mean.

MANDERS. It was incredibly reckless of you to seek refuge with me.

MRS. ALVING. With our clergyman? With our intimate friend?

MANDERS. Just on that account. Yes, you may thank God that I possessed the necessary firmness; that I dissuaded you from your wild designs; and that it was vouchsafed me to lead you back to the path of duty, and home to your lawful husband.

MRS. ALVING. Yes, Pastor Manders, it was certainly your work.

MANDERS. I was but a poor instrument in a Higher Hand. And what a blessing has it not been to you, all the days of your life, that I got you to resume the yoke of duty and obedience! Did not everything happen as I foretold? Did not Alving turn his back on his errors, as a man should? Did he not live with you from that time, lovingly and blamelessly, all his days? Did he not become a benefactor to the whole district? And did he not raise you up to him, so that you little by little became his assistant in all his undertakings? And a capital assistant, too—Oh! I know, Mrs. Alving, that praise is due to you. But now I come to the next great error in your life.

MRS. ALVING. What do you mean?

MANDERS. Just as you once disowned a wife's duty, so you have since disowned a mother's.

MRS. ALVING. Ah!

MANDERS. You have been all your life under the dominion of a pestilent spirit of self-will. All your efforts have been bent towards emancipation and lawlessness. You have never known how to endure any bond. Everything that has weighed upon you in life you have cast away without care or conscience, like a

burden you could throw off at will. It did not please you to be a wife any longer, and you left your husband. You found it troublesome to be a mother, and you sent your child forth among strangers.

MRS. ALVING. Yes. That is true. I did so.

MANDERS. And thus you have become a stranger to him.

MRS. ALVING. No! no! I am not.

MANDERS. Yes, you are; you must be. And how have you got him back again? Bethink yourself well, Mrs. Alving. You have sinned greatly against your husband;—that you recognise by raising yonder memorial to him. Recognise now, also, how you have sinned against your son. There may be time to lead him back from the paths of error. Turn back yourself, and save what may yet be saved in him. For *[with uplifted forefinger]* verily, Mrs. Alving, you are a guilt-laden mother!—This I have thought it my duty to say to you. *[Silence.]*

MRS. ALVING *[slowly and with self-control]*. You have now spoken out, Pastor Manders; and to-morrow you are to speak publicly in memory of my husband. I shall not speak to-morrow. But now I will speak frankly to you, as you have spoken to me.

MANDERS. TO be sure; you will plead excuses for your conduct——

MRS. ALVING. No. I will only narrate.

MANDERS. Well?

MRS. ALVING. All that you have just said about me and my husband and our life after you had brought me back to the path of duty—as you called it—about all that you know nothing from personal observation. From that moment you, who had been our intimate friend, never set foot in our house again.

MANDERS. You and your husband left the town immediately after.

MRS. ALVING. Yes; and in my husband's lifetime you never came to see*^s. It was business that forced you to visit me when you undertook the affairs of the Orphanage.

MANDERS *[softly and uncertainly]*. Helen—if that is meant as a reproach, I would beg you to bear in mind——

MRS. ALVING.——the regard you owed to your position,

yes; and that I was a runaway wife. One can never be too careful with such unprincipled creatures.

MANDERS. My dear—Mrs. Alving, you know that is an absurd exaggeration——

MRS. ALVING. Well, well, suppose it is. My point is that your judgment as to my married life is founded upon nothing but current gossip.

MANDERS. Well, I admit that. What then?

MRS. ALVING. Well, then, Mr. Manders—I will tell you the truth. I have sworn to myself that one day you should know it—you alone!

MANDERS. What is the truth, then?

MRS. ALVING. The truth is that my husband died just as dissolute as he had lived all his days.

MANDERS [*feeling after a chair*]. What do you say?

MRS. ALVING. After nineteen years of marriage, as dissolute—in his desires at any rate—as he was before you married us.

MANDERS. And those—those wild oats, those irregularities, those excesses, if you like, you call " a dissolute life " ?

MRS. ALVING. Our doctor used the expression.

MANDERS. I don't understand you.

MRS. ALVING. You need not.

MANDERS. It almost makes me dizzy. Your whole married life, the seeming union of all these years, was nothing more than a hidden abyss!

MRS. ALVING. Nothing more. Now you know it.

MANDERS. This is—it will take me long to accustom myself to the thought. I can't grasp it! I can't realise it! But how was it possible to——? How could such a state of things be kept dark?

MRS. ALVING. That has been my ceaseless struggle, day after day. After Oswald's birth, I thought Alving seemed to be a little better. But it didn't last long. And then I had to struggle twice as hard, righting for life or death, so that nobody should know what sort of a man my child's father was. And you know what power Alving had of tving people's hearts. Nobody seemed able to believe anything but good of him. He was one of those people whose life does not bide upon their

reputation. But at last, Mr. Manders—for you must know the whole story—the most repulsive thing of all happened.

MANDERS. More repulsive than the rest ?

MRS. ALVING. I had gone on bearing with him, although I knew very well the secrets of his life out of doors. But when he brought the scandal within our own walls——

MANDERS. Impossible! Here!

MRS. ALVING. Yes; here in our own home. It was there [*pointing towards the first door on the right*], in the dining-room, that I first got to know of it. I was busy with something in there, and the door was standing ajar. I heard our housemaid come up from the garden, with water for those flowers.

MANDERS . Well—?

MRS. ALVING. Soon after I heard Alving come too. I heard him say something softly to her. And then I heard—[*with a short laugh*]—oh! it still sounds *in* my ears, so hateful and yet so ludicrous—I heard my own servant-maid whisper, "Let me go, Mr. Alving! Let me be."

MANDERS. What unseemly levity on his part! But it cannot have been more than levity, Mrs. Alving; believe me, it cannot.

MRS. ALVING. I soon knew what to believe. Mr. Alving had his way with the girl; and that connection had consequences, Mr. Manders.

MANDERS [*as though petrified*]. Such things in this house! in this house!

MRS. ALVING. I had borne a great deal in this house. To keep him at home in the evenings—and at night—I had to make myself his boon companion in his secret orgies up in his room. There I have had to sit alone with him, to clink glasses and drink with him, and to listen to his ribald, silly talk. I have had to fight with him to get him dragged to bed——

MANDERS [*moved*]. And you were able to bear all that?

MRS. ALVING. - I had to bear it for my little boy's sake. But when the last insult was added; when my own servant-maid——Then I swore to myself: This shall come to an end. And so I took the reins into my own hand—the whole control over him and everything else. For now I had a weapon against

him, you see; he dared not oppose me. It was then I sent Oswald from home. He was in his seventh year, and was beginning to observe and ask questions, as children do. That I could not bear. It seemed to me the child must be poisoned by merely breathing the air of this polluted home. That was why I sent him away. And now you can see, too, why he was never allowed to set foot inside his home so long as his father lived. No one knows what it has cost me.

MANDERS. You have indeed had a life of trial.

MRS. ALVING. I could never have borne it if I hadn't had my work. For I may truly say that I have worked! All those additions to the estate—all the improvements—all the useful appliances, that won Alving such general praise—do you suppose *he* had energy for anything of the sort?—he who lay ail day on the sofa and read an old court guide! No; this I will tell you too: it was I who urged him on when he had his better intervals; it was I who had to drag the whole load when he relapsed into his evil ways, or sank into querulous wretchedness.

MANDERS. And to that man you raise a memorial?

MRS. ALVING. There you see the power of an evil conscience.

MANDERS. Evil——? What do you mean?

MRS. ALVING. It always seemed to me impossible but that the truth must come out and be believed. So the Asylum was to deaden all rumours and banish doubt.

MANDERS. IN that 'you have certainly not missed your aim, Mrs. Alving.

MRS. ALVING. And besides, I had one other reason. I did not wish that Oswald, my own boy, should inherit anything[^] whatever from his father.

MANDERS. Then it is Alving's fortune that——?

MRS. ALVING. Yes. The sums I have spent upon the Orphanage, year by year, make up the amount—I have reckoned it up precisely—the amount which made Lieutenant Alving a good match in his day.

MANDERS. I don't quite understand——

MRS. ALVING. It was my purchase-money. I do not choose that that money should pass into Oswald's hands. My son shall

have everything from me—everything. [OSWALD ALVING enters through the second door to the right; he has taken off his hat and overcoat in the hall MRS. ALVING goes towards him.] Are you back again already? my dear, dear boy!

OSWALD. Yes. What can a fellow do out of doors in this eternal rain? But I hear dinners ready. That's capital!

REGINA [*with a parcel, from the dining-room*], A parcel has come for you, Mrs. Alving. [*Hands it to her.*]

MRS. ALVING [*with a glance at MR. MANDERS*]. NO doubt copies of the ode for to-morrow's ceremony.

MANDERS. H'm——

REGINA. And dinner is ready.

MRS. ALVING. Very well. We'll come directly. I'll just———[*Begins to open the parcel.*]

REGINA [*to OSSWALD*]. Would Mr. Alving like red or white wine?

OSWALD. Both, if you please.

REGINA. *Bien.* Very well, sir.

[*She goes into the dining-room.*]

OSWALD. I may as well help to uncork it.

[*He also goes into the dining-room, the door of which swings half-open behind him.*]

MRS. ALVING [*who has opened the parcel*]. Yes, as I thought. Here is the Ceremonial Ode, Pastor Manders.

MANDERS [*with folded hands*]. With what countenance I'm to deliver my discourse to-morrow——!

MRS. ALVING. Oh! you'll get through it somehow.

MANDERS [*softly, so as not to be heard in the dining-room*]. Yes; it would not do to provoke scandal.

MRS. ALVING [*under her breath, but firmly*]. No. But then this long, hateful comedy will be ended. From the day after to-morrow it shall be for me as though he who is dead had never lived in this house. No one shall be here but my boy and his mother.

[*From within the dining-room comes the noise of a chair overturned, and at the same moment is heard*]

REGINA [*sharply, but whispering*]. Oswald! take care I are you mad? Let me go!

MRS. ALVING [*starts in terror*]. Ah!

[*She stares wildly towards the half-opened door, OSWALD is heard coughing and humming. A bottle is uncorked,*

MANDERS [*excited*]. What in the world is the matter? What is it, Mrs. Alving.

MRS. ALVING [*hoarsely*]. Ghosts! The couple from the conservatory—risen again!

MANDERS. What! Is it possible! Regina——? Is she——?

MRS. ALVING. Yes. Come. Not another word!

[*She seizes MR. MANDERS by the arm, and walks unsteadily towards the dining-room.*

ACT II

The same room. The mist still lies heavy over the landscape, MANDERS and MRS. ALVING enter from the dining-room.

MRS. ALVING [*still in the doorway*], *Velbekomme*,¹ Mr. Manders. [*Turns back towards the dining-room.*] Aren't you coming too, Oswald?

OSWALD [*from within*]. No, thank you. I think I shall go out a little.

MRS. ALVING. Yes, do. The weather seems brighter now. [*She shuts the dining-room door, goes to the hall door, and calls*] Regina!

REGINA [*outside*]. Yes, Mrs. Alving.

MRS. ALVING. GO down to the laundry, and help with the garlands.

REGINA. I'll go directly, Mrs. Alving.

[*MRS. ALVING assures herself that REGINA goes; then shuts the door.*

MANDERS. I suppose he can't overhear us in there?

MRS. ALVING. Not when the door is shut. Besides, he's just going out.

^xA phrase equivalent to the German *Prosit die Uahlzeit*—"May good digestion wait on appetite."

MANDERS. Fm still quite upset. I can't think how I could get down a morsel of dinner.

MRS. ALVING [*controlling her nervousness, walks up and down*]. No more can I. But what's to be done now?

MANDERS. Yes; what's to be done? Upon my honour, I don't know. Fm so utterly without experience in matters of this sort.

MRS. ALVING. Fm quite convinced that, so far, no mischief has been done.

MANDERS. NO; heaven forbid! But it's an unseemly state of things, nevertheless.

MRS. ALVING. The whole thing is an idle fancy of Oswald's; you may be sure of that.

MANDERS. Well, as I say, Fm not accustomed to affairs of the kind. But I should certainly think——

MRS. ALVING. Out of the house she must go, and that immediately. That's as clear as daylight.

MANDERS. Yes, of course she must.

MRS. ALVING. But where to? It would not be right to——

MANDERS. Where to? Home to her father, of course.

MRS. ALVING. TO whom did you say?

MANDERS. To her——But then, Engstrand is not——? Good God, Mrs. Alving, it's impossible! You must be mistaken after all.

MRS. ALVING. Alas! Fm mistaken in nothing. Johanna confessed all to me, and Alving could not deny it. So there was nothing to be done but to get the matter hushed up.

MANDERS. No, you could do nothing else.

MRS. ALVING. The girl left our service at once, and got a good sum of money to hold her tongue for the time. The rest she managed for herself when she got into the town. She renewed[^]er old acquaintance with Engstrand, no doubt gave him to understand how much money she had received, and told him some tale about a foreigner who put in here with a yacht that summer. So she and Engstrand got married in hot haste. Why, you married them yourself.

MANDERS. But then, how to account for——? I recollect

distinctly Engstrand coming to give notice of the marriage. He was broken down with contrition, and reproached himself so bitterly for the misbehaviour he and his sweetheart had been guilty of.

MRS. ALVING. Yes; of course he had to take the blame upon himself.

MANDERS. But such a piece of duplicity on his part! And towards me too! I never could have believed it of Jacob Engstrand. I shan't fail to give him a serious talking to; he may be sure of that. And then the immorality of such a connection! For money! How much did the girl receive?

MRS. ALVING. Three hundred dollars.

MANDERS. There! think of that! for a miserable three hundred dollars to go and marry a fallen woman!

MRS. ALVING. Then what have you to say of me? I went and married a fallen man.

MANDERS. But—good heavens!—what are you talking about? A fallen man?

MRS. ALVING. DO you think Alving was any purer when I went with him to the altar than Johanna was when Engstrand married her?

MANDERS. Well, but there's a world of difference between the two cases——

MRS. ALVING. Not so much difference after all, except in the price—a wretched three hundred dollars and a whole fortune.

MANDERS. HOW can you compare the two cases? You had taken counsel with your own heart and with your friends.

MRS. ALVING [*without looking at him*]. I thought you understood where what you call my heart had strayed to at the time.

MANDERS [*distantly*]. Had I understood anything of the kind, I should not have continued a daily guest in your husband's house.

MRS. ALVING. Well, the fact remains that with myself I took no counsel whatever.

MANDERS. Well then, with your nearest relatives—as your duty bade you—with your mother and both your aunts.

MRS. ALVING, Yes, that's true. Those three cast up the account for me. Oh! it's marvellous how clearly they made out that it would be downright madness to refuse such an offer. If mother could only see me now, and know what all that grandeur has come to!

MANDERS. Nobody can be held responsible for the result. This, at least, remains clear : your marriage was in accordance with law and order.

MRS. ALVING [*at the window*]. Oh! that perpetual law and order! I often think that's what does all the mischief here in the world.

MANDERS. Mrs. Alving, that is a sinful way of talking.

MRS. ALVING. Well, I can't help it; I can endure all this constraint and cowardice no longer. It's too much for me. I must work my way out to freedom.

MANDERS. What do you mean by that ?

MRS. ALVING [*drumming on the window-sill*]. I ought never to have concealed the facts of Alving's life. But at that time I was afraid to do anything else—afraid on my own account. I was such a coward.

MANDERS. A coward ?

MRS. ALVING. If people had come to know anything, they would have said—" Poor man ! with a runaway wife, no wonder he kicks over the traces."

MANDERS. Such remarks might have been made with a certain show of right.

MRS. ALVING [*looking steadily at him*]. If I were what I ought to be, I should go to Oswald and say, " Listen, my boy; your father was self-indulgent and vicious——"

MANDERS. Merciful heavens——!

MRS. ALVING.——and then I should tell him all I have told you—every word of it.

MANDERS. The idea is shocking, Mrs. Alving.

MRS. ALVING. Yes; I know that. I know that very well. I'm shocked at it myself. [*Goes away from the window .*] I'm such a coward.

MANDERS. YOU call it " cowardice " to do your plain duty?

Have you forgotten that a son should love and honour **his** father and mother?

MRS. ALVING. Don't let us talk in such general terms. Let us ask: should Oswald love and honour Chamberlain Alving?

MANDERS. IS there no voice in your mother's heart that forbids you to destroy your son's ideals?

MRS. ALVING. But what about the truth?

MANDERS. But what about the ideals?

MRS. ALVING. Oh! Ideals! Ideals! If only I weren't such a coward!

MANDERS. Do not despise ideals, Mrs. Alving; they will avenge themselves cruelly. Take Oswald's case; he, unfortunately, seems to have few enough ideals as it is; but I can see that his father stands before him as an ideal.

MRS. ALVING. You're right there.

MANDERS. And this habit of mind you have yourself implanted and fostered by your letters.

MRS. ALVING. Yes; in my superstitious awe for Duty and Decency I lied to my boy, year after year. Oh! what a coward, what a coward I've been!

MANDERS. You have established a happy illusion in your son's heart, Mrs. Alving, and assuredly you ought not to undervalue it.

MRS. ALVING. H'm; who knows whether it's so happy after all——? But, at any rate, I won't have any goings-on with Regina. He shan't go and ruin the poor girl.

MANDERS. NO; good God! that would be dreadful!

MRS. ALVING. If I knew he was in earnest, and that It would be for his happiness——

MANDERS. What? What then?

MRS. ALVING. But it couldn't be; for I'm sorry to say Regina is not a girl to make him happy.

MANDERS. Well, what then? What do you mean?

MRS. ALVING. If I weren't such a pitiful coward I would say to him, "Marry her, or make what arrangement you please, only let us have nothing underhand about it."

MANDERS. Good heavens, would you let them *marry* I! Anything so dreadful——! so unheard-of——!

MRS. ALVING. DO you really mean "unheard-of"? Frankly, Pastor Manders, do you suppose that throughout the country there aren't plenty of married couples as closely akin as they?

MANDERS. I don't in the least understand you.

MRS. ALVING. Oh yes, indeed you do.

MANDERS. Ah, you are thinking of the possibility that—— Yes, alas! family life is certainly not always so pure as it ought to be. But in such a case as you point to, one can never know—at least with any certainty. Here, on the other hand—that you, a mother, can think of letting your son——!

MRS. ALVING. But I can't—I wouldn't for anything in the world; that's precisely what I am saying.

MANDERS. NO, because you are a "coward," as you put it. But if you were not a "coward," then——? Good God! a connection so shocking.

MRS. ALVING. SO far as that goes, they say we're all sprung from connections of that sort. And who is it that arranged the world so, Pastor Manders?

MANDERS. Questions of that kind I must decline to discuss with you, Mrs. Alving; you are far from being in the right frame of mind for them. But that you dare to call your scruples "cowardly"——!

MRS. ALVING. Let me tell you what I mean. I am timid and half-hearted because I cannot get rid of the Ghosts that haunt me.

MANDERS. What do you say haunts you?

MRS. ALVING. Ghosts! When I heard Regina and Oswald in there, I seemed to see Ghosts before me. I almost think we're all of us Ghosts, Pastor Manders. It's not only what we have inherited from our father and mother that "walks" in us. It's all sorts of dead ideas, and lifeless old beliefs, and so forth. They have no vitality, but they cling to us all the same, and we can't get rid of them. Whenever I take up a newspaper, I seem to see Ghosts gliding between the lines. There must be Ghosts all the country over, as thick as the sand of the sea. And then we are, one and all, so pitifully afraid of the light.

MANDERS. Ah! here we have the fruits of your reading!

And pretty fruits they are, upon my word ! Oh ! those horrible, revolutionary, free-thinking books!

MRS. ALVING. YOU are mistaken, my dear Pastor. It was you yourself who set me thinking; and I thank you for it with all my heart.

M ANDERS. I ?

MRS. ALVING. Yes—when you forced me under the yoke you called Duty and Obligation; when you praised as right and proper what, my whole soul rebelled against as something loathsome. It was then that I began to look into the seams of your doctrine. I wanted only to pick at a single knot; but when I had got that undone, the whole thing ravelled out. And then I understood that it was all machine-sewn.

MANDERS [*softly, with emotion*]. And was that the upshot of my life's hardest battle ?

MRS. ALVING. Call it rather your most pitiful defeat.

MANDERS. It was my greatest victory, Helen—the victory over myself.

MRS. ALVING. It was a crime against us both.

MANDERS. When you went astray, and came to me crying, " Here I am; take me ! " I commanded you, saying, " Woman, go home to your lawful husband." Was that a crime ?

MRS. ALVING. Yes, I think so.

MANDERS. We two do not understand each other.

MRS. ALVING. Not now, at any rate.

MANDERS. Never—never in my most secret thoughts have I regarded you otherwise than as another's wife.

MRS. ALVING. Oh!—indeed ?

MANDERS. Helen——!

MRS. ALVING. People so easily forget their past selves.

MANDERS. I do not. I am what I always was.

MRS. ALVING [*changing the subject*"]. Well, well, well; don't let us talk of old times any longer. You are now over head and ears *in* Commissions and Boards of Direction, and I am fighting my battle with Ghosts both within me and without.

MANDERS. Those without I shall help you to lay. After all the shocking things I've heard from you to-day, I cannot *in* conscience permit an unprotected girl to remain in your house.

MRS. ALVING. Don't you think the best plan would be to get her provided for—I mean, by a good marriage.

MANDERS. No doubt. I think it would be desirable for her in every respect. Regina is now at the age when——Of course I don't know much about these things, but——

MRS. ALVING. Regina matured very early.

MANDERS. Yes, did she not? I have an impression that she was remarkably well developed, physically, when I prepared her for confirmation. But in the meantime, she must go home, under her father's eye.—Ah! but Engstrand is not——That he—that *he*—could so hide the truth from me!

[A knock at the door into the hall.]

MRS. ALVING. Who can that be? Come in!

ENGSTRAND *[in his Sunday clothes, in the doorway]*, I beg your pardon humbly, but——

MANDERS. Ah! H'm——

MRS. ALVING. IS that you, Engstrand?

ENGSTRAND.——there was none of the servants about, so I took the great liberty of just knocking.

MRS. ALVING. Oh! very well. Come in. Do you want to speak to me?

ENGSTRAND *[comes in]*. No, I'm greatly obliged to you; it was with his Reverence I wanted to have a word or two.

MANDERS *[walking up and down the room]*. H'm, indeed. You want to speak to me, do you?

ENGSTRAND. Yes, I should like so much to——

MANDERS *[stops in front of him]*. Well; may I ask what you want?

ENGSTRAND. Well, it was just this, your Reverence; we've been paid off down yonder—my grateful thanks to you, ma'am, —and now everything's finished, I've been thinking it would be but right and proper if we, that have been working so honestly together all this time—well, I was thinking we ought to end up with a little prayer-meeting to-night.

MANDERS. A prayer-meeting? Down at the Orphanage?

ENGSTRAND. Oh, if your Reverence doesn't think it proper——

MANDERS. Oh yes! I do; but—h'm——

ENGSTRAND. I've been in the habit of offering up a little prayer in the evenings, myself.

MRS. ALVING. Have you ?

ENGSTRAND. Yes, every now and then—just a little exercise, you might call it. But I'm a poor, common man, and have little enough gift, God help me! and so I thought, as the Reverend Mr. Manders happened to be here, I'd——

MANDERS. Well, you see, Engstrand, I must first ask you a question. Are you in the right frame of mind for such a meeting ? Do you feel your conscience clear and at ease ?

ENGSTRAND. Oh ! God help us, your Reverence! we'd better not talk about conscience.

MANDERS. Yes, that's just what we must talk about. What have you to answer ?

ENGSTRAND. Why—one's conscience—it can be bad enough now and then.

MANDERS. Ah, you admit that. Then will you make a clean breast of it, and tell the truth about Regina ?

MRS. ALVING [*quickly*], Mr. Manders!

MANDERS [*reassuringly*]. Just let me——

ENGSTRAND. About Regina! Lord ! how you frighten me! [*Looks at MRS. ALVING.*] There's nothing wrong about Regina, is there ?

MANDERS. We'll hope not. But I mean, what is the truth about you and Regina ? You pass for her father, eh !

ENGSTRAND [*uncertain*]. Well—h'm—your Reverence knows all about me and poor Johanna.

MANDERS. Come, no more prevarication! Your wife told Mrs. Alving the whole story before quitting her service.

ENGSTRAND. Well, then, may——! Now, did she really ?

MANDERS. SO you're found out, Engstrand.

ENGSTRAND. And she swore and took her Bible oath——

MANDERS. Did she take her Bible oath ?

ENGSTRAND. NO ; she only swore; but she did it so earnestly.

MANDERS. And you have hidden the truth from me all these years? Hidden it from me! from me, who have trusted you without reserve, in everything.

ENGSTRAND. Well, I can't deny it.

MANDERS. Have I deserved this of you, Engstrand? Haven't I always been ready to help you in word and deed, so far as it stood in my power? Answer me. Have I not?

ENGSTRAND. It would have been a poor look-out for me many a time but for the Reverend Mr. Manders.

MANDERS. And you reward me thus! You cause me to enter falsehoods in the Church Register, and you withhold from me, year after year, the explanations you owed alike to me and to truth. Your conduct has been wholly inexcusable, Engstrand; and from this time forward all is over between us.

ENGSTRAND [*with a sigh*]. Yes! I suppose it must be.

MANDERS. How can you possibly justify yourself?

ENGSTRAND. How could I think she'd gone and made bad worse by talking about it? Will your Reverence just fancy yourself in the same trouble as poor Johanna——

MANDERS. I!

ENGSTRAND. Lord bless you! I don't mean just exactly the same. But I mean, if your Reverence had anything to be ashamed of in the eyes of the world, as the saying is——We men oughtn't to judge a poor woman too hardly, your Reverence.

MANDERS. I am not doing so. It's you I am reproaching.

ENGSTRAND. Might I make so bold as to ask your Reverence a bit of a question?

MANDERS. Yes, ask away.

ENGSTRAND. Isn't it right and proper for a man to raise up the fallen?

MANDERS. Most certainly it is.

ENGSTRAND. And isn't a man bound to keep his sacred word?

MANDERS. Why, of course he is; but——

ENGSTRAND. When Johanna had got into trouble through that Englishman—or it might have been an American or a Russian, as they call them—well, you see, she came down into the town. Poor thing! she'd sent me about my business once or twice before: for she couldn't bear the sight of anything but what was handsome; and I'd got this damaged leg. Your Reverence recollects how I ventured up into a dancing-saloon,

where seafaring people carried on with drink and devilry, as the saying goes. And then, when I was for giving them a bit of an admonition to lead a new life——

MRS. ALVING [*at the window*], H'm——

MANDERS. I know all about that, Engstrand; the ruffians threw you downstairs. You've told me of the affair already.

ENGSTRAND. I'm not puffed up about it, your Reverence. But what I wanted to say was, that then she came and confessed all to me, with weeping and gnashing of teeth. I can tell your Reverence I was sore at heart to hear it.

MANDERS. Were you indeed, Engstrand? Well, go on.

ENGSTRAND. SO I said to her, "The American, he's sailing about on the boundless sea. And as for you, Johanna," said I, "you've committed a grievous sin and you're a fallen creature. But Jacob Engstrand," said I, "he's got two good legs to stand upon, *he* has——" You know, your Reverence, I was speaking figurative-like.

MANDERS. I understand quite well. Go on.

ENGSTRAND. Well, that was how I raised her up and made an honest woman of her, so that folks shouldn't get to know how she'd gone astray with foreigners.

MANDERS. All that was very good of you. Only I can't approve of your stooping to take money——

ENGSTRAND. Money ? I ? Not a farthing!

MANDERS [*inquiringly to MRS. ALVING*]. But——

ENGSTRAND. Oh, wait a minute !—now I recollect. Johanna had a trifle of money. But I would have nothing to do with it. "No," said I, "that's mammon; that's the wages of sin. This dirty gold—or notes, or whatever it was—we'll just fling that back to the American," said I. But he was gone and away, over the stormy sea, your Reverence.

MANDERS. Was he really, my good fellow ?

ENGSTRAND. Ay, sir. So Johanna and I, we agreed that the money should go to the child's education; and so it did, and I can account for every blessed farthing of it.

MANDERS. Why, this alters the case considerably.

ENGSTRAND. That's just how it stands, your Reverence. .And I make so bold as to say I've been an honest father to

Regina, so far as my poor strength went; for I'm but a poor creature, worse luck I

MANDERS. Well, well, my good fellow——

ENGSTRAND. But I may make bold to say that I've brought up the child, and lived kindly with poor Johanna, and ruled over my own house, as the Scripture has it. But I could never think of going up to your Reverence and puffing myself up and boasting because I too had done some good in the world. No, sir; when anything of that sort happens to Jacob Engstrand, he holds his tongue about it. It doesn't happen so very often, I daresay. And when I do come to see your Reverence, I find a mortal deal to say about what's wicked and weak. For I do say—as I was saying just now—one's conscience isn't always as clean as it might be.

MANDERS. Give me your hand, Jacob Engstrand.

ENGSTRAND. Oh, Lord! your Reverence——

MANDERS. Come, no nonsense [*wrings his hand*]. There we are!

ENGSTRAND. And if I might humbly beg your Reverence's pardon——

MANDERS. YOU? On the contrary, it's I who ought to beg your pardon——

ENGSTRAND. Lord, no, sir!

MANDERS. Yes, certainly. And I do it with all my heart. Forgive me for misunderstanding you. And I wish I could give you some proof of my hearty regret, and of my good-will towards you——

ENGSTRAND. Would your Reverence?

MANDERS. With the greatest pleasure.

ENGSTRAND. Well then, there's the very opportunity now. With the money I've saved here, I was thinking I might set up a Sailors' Home down in the town.

MRS. ALVING. YOU?

ENGSTRAND. Yes; it too might be a sort of Orphanage, in a manner of speaking. There are many temptations for seafaring folk ashore. But *in* this Home of mine, a man might feel as under a father's eye, I was thinking.

MANDERS. What do you say to this, Mrs. Alving?

ENGSTRAND. It isn't much I've got to start with, the Lord help me! But if I could only find a helping hand, why——

MANDERS. Yes, yes; we'll look into the matter. I entirely approve of your plan. But now, go before me and make everything ready, and get the candles lighted, so as to give the place an air of festivity. And then we'll pass an edifying hour together, my good fellow; for now I quite believe you're in the right frame of mind.

ENGSTRAND. Yes, I trust I am. And so I'll say good-bye, ma'am, and thank you kindly; and take good care of Regina for me—*[wipes a tear from his eye]*—poor Johanna's child; h'm, it's an odd thing, now; but it's just as if she'd grown into the very apple of my eye. It is indeed.

[He boivs and goes out through the hall]

MANDERS. Well, what do you say of that man now, Mrs. Alving? That threw a totally different light on matters, didn't it?

MRS. ALVING. Yes, it certainly did.

MANDERS. It only shows how excessively careful one must be in judging one's fellow-creatures. But it's a great joy to ascertain that one has been mistaken. Don't you think so?

MRS. ALVING. I think you are, and will always be, a great baby, Manders.

MANDERS. I?

MRS. ALVING *[laying her two hands upon his shoulders]*. And I say that I've half a mind to put my arms round your neck, and kiss you.

MANDERS *[stepping hastily back]*. No, no! God bless me! What an idea!

MRS. ALVING *[with a smile]*. Oh! you needn't be afraid of me.

MANDERS *[by the table]*. You have sometimes such an exaggerated way of expressing yourself. Now, I'll just collect all the documents, and put them in my bag. *[He does so,]* There now. And now, good-bye for the present. Keep your eyes open when Oswald comes back. I shall look in again later.

[He takes his hat and goes out through the hall door,]

MRS. ALVING *[sighs, looks for a moment out of the window]*

sets the room in order a little, and is about to go into the dining-room, but stops at the door with a half-suppressed cry.
Oswald, are you still at table?

OSWALD [*in the dining-room*], I'm only finishing my cigar.

MRS. ALVING. I thought you'd gone for a little walk.

OSWALD. In such weather as this? [*A glass clinks.* MRS. ALVING *leaves the door open, and sits down with her knitting on the sofa by the window.*] Wasn't that Pastor Manders that went out just now?

MRS. ALVING. Yes; he went down to the Orphanage.

OSWALD. H'm. [*The glass and decanter clink again.*]

MRS. ALVING [*with a troubled glance*]. Dear Oswald, you should take care of that liqueur. It's strong.

OSWALD. It keeps out the damp.

MRS. ALVING. Wouldn't you rather come in to me?

OSWALD. I mayn't smoke in there.

MRS. ALVING. YOU know quite well you may smoke cigars.

OSWALD. Oh! all*right, then; I'll come in. Just a tiny drop more first! There! [*He comes into the room with his cigar, and shuts the door after him. A short silence.*] Where's Manders gone to?

MRS. ALVING. I've just told you; he went down to the Orphanage.

OSWALD. Oh, ah; so you did.

MRS. ALVING. You shouldn't sit so long at table after dinner, Oswald.

OSWALD [*holding his cigar behind him*]. But I find it so pleasant, mother. [*Strokes and pets her.*] Just think what it is for me to come home and sit at mother's own table, in mother's room, and eat mother's delicious dinners.

MRS. ALVING. My dear, dear boy!

OSWALD [*somewhat impatiently walks about and smokes*]. And what else can I do with myself here? I can't set to work at anything.

MRS. ALVING. Why can't you?

OSWALD. In such weather as this? Without a single ray of sunlight the whole day? [*Walks up the room.*] Oh! not to be able to work!

MRS. ALVING. Perhaps **it** was **not** quite wise of you to come home?

OSWALD. Oh, yes, mother; I had to.

MRS. ALVING. Why? I would ten times rather forgo the joy of having you here than——

OSWALD [*stops beside the table*]. Now just tell me, mother: does it really make you so very happy to have me home again?

MRS. ALVING. Does it make me happy!

OSWALD [*crumpling up a newspaper*], I should have thought it must be pretty much the same to you whether I was in existence or not.

MRS. ALVING. Have you the heart to say that to your mother, Oswald?

OSWALD. But you've got on very well without me all this time.

MRS. ALVING. Yes; I've got on without you. That's true.

[*A silence, Twilight gradually falls. OSWALD walks to and fro across the room. He has laid his cigar down,*

OSWALD [*stops beside MRS. ALVING*], Mother, may I sit on the sofa beside you?

MRS. ALVING [*makes room for him*]. Yes, do, my dear boy.

OSWALD [*sits down*]. Now I'm going to tell you something, mother.

MRS. ALVING [*anxiously*], Well?

OSWALD [*looks fixedly before him*]. For I can't go on hiding it any longer.

MRS. ALVING. Hiding what? What is it?

OSWALD [*as before*], I could never bring myself to write to you about it; and since I've come home——

MRS. ALVING [*seizes him by the arm*], Oswald, what is the matter?

OSWALD [*as before*]. Both yesterday and to-day I've tried to put the thoughts away from me—to get free from them; but it won't do.

MRS. ALVING [*rising*]. Now you must speak out, Oswald.

OSWALD [*draws her down to the sofa again*]. Sit still; and then I'll try to tell you. I complained of fatigue after my journey——

MRS. ALVING. Well, what then?

OSWALD. But it isn't that that's the matter with me; it **isn't** any ordinary fatigue——

MRS. ALVING [*tries to jump up*]. You're not ill, Oswald?

OSWALD [*draws her down again*]. Do sit still, mother. Only take it quietly. I'm not downright ill, either; not what's commonly called "ill." [*Clasps his hands above his head.*] Mother, my mind is broken down—ruined—I shall never be able to work again.

[With his hands before his face, he buries his head in her lap, and breaks into bitter sobbing.]

MRS. ALVING [*white and trembling*]. Oswald! Look at me! No, no; it isn't true.

OSWALD [*looks up with despair in his eyes*]. Never to be able to work again! Never! never! It will be like living death! Mother, can you imagine anything so horrible?

MRS. ALVING. My poor boy! How has this horrible thing come over you?

OSWALD [*sits upright*]. That's just what I can't possibly grasp or understand. I've never led a dissipated life—never, in any respect. You mustn't believe that of me, mother. I've never done that.

MRS. ALVING. I'm sure you haven't, Oswald.

OSWALD. And yet this has come over me just the same—this awful misfortune!

MRS. ALVING. Oh, but it will pass away, my dear, blessed boy. It's nothing but over-work. Trust me, I am right.

OSWALD [*sadly*]. I thought so too at first; but it isn't so.

MRS. ALVING. Tell me the whole story from beginning to end.

OSWALD. Well, I will.

MRS. ALVING. When did you first notice it?

OSWALD. It was directly after I had been home last time, and had got back to Paris again. I began to feel the most violent pains in my head—chiefly in the back of my head, I thought. It was as though a tight iron ring was being screwed round my neck and upwards.

MRS. ALVING. Well, and then?

OSWALD. At first I thought it was nothing but the ordinary headache I had been so plagued with when I was growing up——

MRS. ALVING. Yes, yes——

OSWALD. But it wasn't that. I soon found that out. I couldn't work. I wanted to begin upon a big new picture, but my powers seemed to fail me; all my strength was crippled; I couldn't form any definite images; everything swam before me—whirling round and round. Oh! it was an awful state! At last I sent for a doctor, and from him I learned the truth.

MRS. ALVING. HOW do you mean?

OSWALD. He was one of the first doctors in Paris. I told him my symptoms, and then he set to work asking me a heap of questions which I thought had nothing to do with the matter. I couldn't imagine what the man was after——

MRS. ALVING. Well?

OSWALD. At last he said: "You have been worm-eaten from your birth." He used that very word—*vermoulu*.

MRS. ALVING [*breathlessly*]. What did he mean by that?

OSWALD. I didn't understand either, and begged him to explain himself more clearly. And then the old cynic said—*[clenching his fist]* Oh——!

MRS. ALVING. What did he say?

OSWALD. He said, "The sins of the fathers are visited upon the children."

MRS. ALVING [*rising slowly*]. The sins of the fathers——1

OSWALD. I very nearly struck him in the face——

MRS. ALVING [*walks away across the floor*]. The sins of the fathers——

OSWALD [*smiles sadly*]. Yes; what do you think of that? Of course I assured him that such a thing was out of the question. But do you think he gave in? No, he stuck to it; and it was only when I produced your letters and translated the passages relating to father——

MRS. ALVING. But then?

OSWALD. Then of course he was bound to admit that he was on the wrong track; and so I got to know the truth—the incomprehensible truth! I ought to have held aloof from my

bright and happy life among my comrades. It had been too much for my strength. So I had brought it upon myself!

MRS. ALVING. Oswald! Oh no, don't believe it!

OSWALD. NO other explanation was possible, he said. That's the awful part of it. Incurably ruined for life—by my own heedlessness! All that I meant to have done in the world—I never dare think of again—I'm not *able* to think of it. Oh! if I could but live over again, and undo all I've done! [*He buries his face in the sofa.* MRS. ALVING *wrings her hands and walks, in silent struggle, backwards and forwards.* OSWALD, *after a while, looks up and remains resting upon his elbow.*] If it had only been something inherited, something one wasn't responsible for! But this! To have thrown away so shamefully, thoughtlessly, recklessly, one's own happiness, one's own health, everything in the world—one's future, one's very life!

MRS. ALVING. NO, no, my dear, darling boy! It's impossible. [*Bends over him.*] Things are not so desperate as you think.

OSWALD. Oh! you don't know———[*Springs up.*] And then, mother, to cause you all this sorrow! Many a time I've almost wished and hoped that at bottom you didn't care so very much about me.

MRS. ALVING. I, Oswald? My only boy! You are all I have in the world! The only thing I care about!

OSWALD [*seizes both her hands and kisses them*]. Yes, mother dear, I see it well enough. When I'm at home, I see it, of course; and that's the hardest part for me. But now you know the whole story, and now we won't talk any more about it to-day. I daren't think of it for long together. [*Goes up the rotn.*] Get me something to drink, mother.

MRS. ALVING. Drink? What do you want to drink now?

OSWALD. Oh! anything you like. You have some cold punch in the house.

MRS. ALVING. Yes, but my dear Oswald——

OSWALD. Don't refuse me, mother. Do be nice, now! I must have something to wash down all these gnawing thoughts. [*Goes into the conservatory.*] And then——it's so dark here! [*MRS. ALVING pulls a bell-rope on the right.*] And this cease-

less rain! It may go on week after week for months together. Never to get a glimpse of the sun! I can't recollect ever having seen the sun shine all the times I've been at home.

MRS. ALVING. Oswald, you're thinking of going away from me.

OSWALD. H'm—*[draiving a deep breath]*—I'm not thinking of anything. I can't think of anything. *[In a low voice.]* I let thinking alone.

REGINA *[from the dining-room]*. Did you ring, ma'am?

MRS. ALVING. Yes; let us have the lamp in.

REGINA. I will, directly. It's ready lighted. *[Goes out.*

MRS. ALVING *[goes across to OSWALD]*, Oswald, be frank with me.

OSWALD. Well, so I am, mother. *[Goes to the table.]* I think I've told you enough.

[REGINA brings the lamp and sets it upon the table.

MRS. ALVING. Regina, you might fetch us a half-bottle of champagne.

REGINA. Very well, ma'am. *[Goes out.*

OSWALD *[puts his arm round MRS. ALVING'S neck]*. That's just what I wanted. I knew mother wouldn't let her boy be thirsty.

MRS. ALVING. My own, poor, darling Oswald, how could I deny you anything now?

OSWALD *[eagerly]*. Is that true, mother? Do you mean it?

MRS. ALVING. HOW? What?

OSWALD. That you couldn't deny me anything.

MRS. ALVING. My dear Oswald—

OSWALD. Hush!

REGINA *[brings a tray with a half-bottle of champagne and two glasses, which she sets on the table]*. Shall I open-it?

OSWALD. NO, thanks. I'll do it myself.

[REGINA goes out again.

MRS. ALVING *[sits down by the table]*. What was it you meant, I mustn't deny you?

OSWALD *[busy opening the bottle]*. First let's have a glass—or two.

[*The cork pops; he pours wine into one glass, and is about to pour it into the other.*

MRS. ALVING [*holding her hand over it*]. Thanks; not for me.

OSWALD. Oh! won't you? Then I will!

[*He empties the glass; fills, and empties it again; then he sits down by the table.*]

MRS. ALVING [*in expectation*]. Well?

OSWALD [*without looking at her*]. Tell me—I thought you and Pastor Manders seemed so odd—so quiet—at dinner to-day.

MRS. ALVING. Did you notice it?

OSWALD. Yes. H'm———[*After a short silence.*] Tell me: what do you think of Regina?

MRS. ALVING. What I think?

OSWALD. Yes; isn't she splendid?

MRS. ALVING. My dear Oswald, you don't know her as I do——

OSWALD. Well?

MRS. ALVING. Regina, unfortunately, was allowed to stay at home too long. I ought to have taken her earlier into my house.

OSWALD. Yes, but isn't she splendid to look at, mother?

[*He fills his glass.*]

MRS. ALVING. Regina has many serious faults.

OSWALD. Oh, what does it matter? [*He drinks again.*]

MRS. ALVING. But I'm fond of her, nevertheless, and I'm responsible for her. I wouldn't for all the world have any harm happen to her.

OSWALD [*springs up*]. Mother! Regina is my only salvation.

MRS. ALVING [*rising*]. What do you mean by that?

OSWALD. I can't go on bearing all this anguish of mind alone.

MRS. ALVING. Haven't you got your mother to share it with you?

OSWALD. Yes; that's what I thought; and so I came home to you. But that won't do. I see it won't do. I can't endure my life here.

MRS. ALVING. Oswald!

OSWALD. I must live differently, mother. That's why I must leave you. I won't have you looking on at it.

MRS. ALVING. My unhappy boy! But, Oswald, while you're so ill as this——

OSWALD. If it were only the illness, I should stay with you, mother, you may be sure; for you are the best friend I have in the world.

MRS. ALVING. Yes, indeed I am, Oswald; am I not?

OSWALD [*wanders restlessly about*]. But it's all the torment, the remorse; and besides that, the great, killing dread. Oh! that awful dread!

MRS. ALVING [*walking after him*]. Dread? What dread? What do you mean?

OSWALD. Oh, you mustn't ask me any more! I don't know. I can't describe it. [MRS. ALVING *goes over to the right and pulls the bell*.] What is it you want?

MRS. ALVING. I want my boy to be happy—that's what I want. He shan't go on racking his brains. [*To REGINA, who comes in at the door*.] More champagne—a whole bottle.

[REGINA *goes*.

OSWALD. Mother!

MRS. ALVING. DO you think we don't know how to live here at home?

OSWALD. Isn't she splendid to look at? How beautifully she's built! And so thoroughly healthy!

MRS. ALVING [*sits by the table*]. Sit down, Oswald; let us talk quietly together.

OSWALD [*sits*], I daresay you don't know, mother, that I owe Regina some reparation.

MRS. ALVING. You?

OSWALD. For a bit of thoughtlessness, or whatever you like to call it—very innocent, anyhow. When I was home last time——

MRS. ALVING. Well?

OSWALD. She used often to ask me about Paris, and I used to tell her one thing and another. Then I recollect I happened to say to her one day, "Wouldn't you like to go there yourself?" "

MRS. ALVING. Well?

OSWALD. I saw her face flush, and then she said, " Yes, I should like it of all things." " Ah, well," I replied, " it might perhaps be managed "—or something like that.,

MRS. ALVING. And then ?

OSWALD. Of course I'd forgotten the whole thing; but the day before yesterday I happened to ask her whether she was glad I was to stay at home so long——

MRS. ALVING. Yes?

OSWALD. And then she looked so strangely at me and asked, " But what's to become of my trip to Paris ? "

MRS. ALVING. Her trip!

OSWALD. And so I got out of her that she had taken the thing seriously; that she had been thinking of me the whole time, and had set to work to learn French——

MRS. ALVING. SO that was why she did it!

OSWALD. Mother! when I saw that fresh, lovely, splendid girl standing there before me—till then I had hardly noticed her—but when she stood there as though with open arms ready to receive me——

MRS. ALVING. Oswald!

OSWALD.———then it flashed upon me that my salvation lay in her; for I saw that she was full of the joy of life.¹

MRS. ALVING [*starts*]. The joy of life? Can there be salvation in that ?

REGINA [*from the dining-room, with a bottle of champagne*], I'm sorry to have been so long, but I had to go to the cellar.

[*Puts the bottle on the table.*]

OSWALD. And now fetch another glass.

REGINA [*looks at him in surprise*]. There is Mrs. Alving's glass, Mr. Alving.

OSWALD. Yes, but fetch one for yourself, Regina. [REGINA *starts and gives a lightning-like side glance at* MRS. ALVING.] Why do you wait ?

REGINA [*softly and hesitatingly*]. Is it Mrs. Alving's wish?

MRS. ALVING. Fetch the glass, Regina.

[REGINA *goes out into the dining-room.*]

¹ *Livsglede*—"la joie de vivre."

OSWALD [*follows her with his eyes*]. Have you noticed how she walks?—so firmly and lightly!

MRS. ALVING. It can never be, Oswald!

OSWALD. It's a settled thing. Can't you see that? It's no use saying anything against it. [REGINA *enters with an empty glass, which she keeps in her hand.*] Sit down, Regina. [REGINA *looks inquiringly at MRS. ALVING.*]

MRS. ALVING. Sit down. [REGINA *sits on a chair by the dining-room door, still holding the empty glass in her hand.*] Oswald, what were you saying about the joy of life?

OSWALD. Ah! the joy of life, mother—that's a thing you don't know much about in these parts. I've never felt it here.

MRS. ALVING. Not when you're with me?

OSWALD. Not when I'm at home. But you don't understand that.

MRS. ALVING. Yes, yes; I think I almost understand it—*now.

OSWALD. And then, too, the joy of work! At bottom, it's the same thing. But that, too, you know nothing about.

MRS. ALVING. Perhaps you're right, Oswald; tell me more about it.

OSWALD. Well, I only mean that here people are brought up to believe that work is a curse and a punishment for sin, and that life is something miserable, something we want to be done with, the sooner the better.

MRS. ALVING. "A vale of tears," yes; and we take care to make it one.

OSWALD. But in the great world people won't hear of such things. There, nobody really believes such doctrines any longer. There, you feel it bliss and ecstasy merely to draw the breath of life. Mother, have you noticed that everything I've painted has turned upon the joy of life?—always, always upon the joy of life?—light and sunshine and glorious air and faces radiant with happiness. That's why I'm afraid of remaining at home with you.

MRS. ALVING. Afraid? What are you afraid of here, with me?

OSWALD. I'm afraid lest all my instincts should be warped into ugliness.

MRS. ALVING [*looks steadily at him*]. Do you think that would be the way of it?

OSWALD. I know it. You may live the same life here as there, and yet it won't be the same life.

MRS. ALVING [*who has been listening eagerly, rises, her eyes big with thought, and says:*] Now I see the connection.

OSWALD. What is it you see?

MRS. ALVING. I see it now for the first time. And now I can speak.

OSWALD [*rising*']. Mother, I don't understand you.

REGINA [*who has also risen*']. Perhaps I ought to go?

MRS. ALVING. NO. Stay here. Now I can speak. Now, my boy, you shall know the whole truth. And then you can choose. Oswald! Regina!

OSWALD. Hush! Here's Manders——

MANDERS [*comes in by the hall door*]. There! We've had a most edifying time down there.

OSWALD. SO have we.

MANDERS. We must stand by Engstrand and his Sailors' Home. Regina must go to him and help him——

REGINA. NO, thank you, sir.

MANDERS [*noticing her for the first time*]. What? You here? and with a glass in your hand!

REGINA [*hastily putting the glass down*]. Pardon!

OSWALD. Regina is going with me, Mr. Manders.

MANDERS. Going with you!

OSWALD. Yes; as my wife—\i she wishes it.

MANDERS. But, good God——!

REGINA. I can't help it, sir.

OSWALD. Or she'll stay here, if I stay.

REGINA [*involuntarily*]. Here!

MANDERS. I am thunderstruck at your conduct, Mrs. Alving.

MRS. ALVING. They will do neither one thing nor the other; for now I can speak out plainly.

MANDERS. YOU surely won't do that. No, no, no!

MRS. ALVING. Yes, I can speak and I will. And no ideal shall suffer after all.

OSWALD. Mother! What on earth are you hiding from me?

REGINA [*listening*]. Oh, ma'am! listen! Don't you hear shouts outside? [*She goes into the conservatory and looks out.*]

OSWALD [*at the window on the left*]. What's going on? Where does that light come from?

REGINA [*cries out*]. The Orphanage is on fire!

MRS. ALVING [*rushing to the window*]. On fire?

MANDERS. On fire! Impossible! I've just come from there.

OSWALD. Where's my hat? Oh, never mind it—Father's Orphanage! [*Fie rushes out through the garden door*]

MRS. ALVING. My shawl, Regina! It's blazing!

MANDERS. Terrible! Mrs. Alving, it's a judgment upon this abode of sin.

MRS. ALVING. Yes, of course. Come, Regina.

[*She and REGINA hasten out through the hall.*]

MANDERS [*clasps his hands together*]. And uninsured too!

[*He goes out the same way.*]

ACT III

The room as before. All the doors stand open. The lamp is still burning on the table. It is dark out of doors; there is only a faint glow from the conflagration in the background to the left.

MRS. ALVING, with a shawl over her head, stands in the conservatory and looks out. REGINA, also with a shawl on, stands a little behind her.

MRS. ALVING. All burnt!—burnt to the ground!

REGINA. The basement is still burning.

MRS. ALVING. HOW is it Oswald doesn't come home? There's nothing to be saved.

REGINA. Would you like me to take down his hat for him?

MRS. ALVING. Hasn't he even got his hat on ?

REGINA [*pointing to the hall*]. No; there it hangs.

MRS. ALVING. Let it be. He must come up now. I'll go and look for him myself. [*She goes out through the garden door.*]

MANDERS [*comes in from the hall*]. Isn't Mrs. Alving here?

REGINA. She's just gone down the garden.

MANDERS. This is the most terrible night I ever went through.

REGINA. Yes; isn't it a dreadful misfortune, sir ?

MANDERS. Oh, don't talk about it! I can hardly bear to think of it.

REGINA. HOW c a n it have happened ?

MANDERS. Don't ask me, Regina. HOW should I know? Do you, too——? Isn't it enough that your father——?

REGINA. What about him ?

MANDERS. Oh ! he has driven me clean out of my mind.——

ENGSTRAND [*conies through the hall*]. Your Reverence !

MANDERS [*turns round in terror*]. Are you after me here, too?

ENGSTRAND. Yes, strike me dead, but I must——Oh, Lord! what am I saying? It's an awfully ugly business, your Reverence.

MANDERS [*walks to and fro*], Alas! alas!

REGINA. What's the matter?

ENGSTRAND. Why, it all came of that prayer-meeting, you see. [*Softy.*] The bird's limed, my girl. [*Aloud.*] And to think that it's my fault that it's his Reverence's fault!

MANDERS. But I assure you, Engstrand——

ENGSTRAND. There wasn't another soul except your Reverence that ever touched the candles down there.

MANDERS [*stops*]. Ah! so you declare. But I certainly can't recollect that I ever had a candle in my hand.

ENGSTRAND. And I saw as clear as daylight how your Reverence took the candle and snuffed it with your fingers, and threw away the snuff among the shavings.

MANDERS. And you stood and looked on ?

ENGSTRAND. Yes; I saw it as plain as a pike-staff.

MANDERS. It's quite beyond my comprehension. Besides, it's never been my habit to snuff candles with my fingers.

ENGSTRAND. And very risky it looked, that it did! But is there so much harm done after all, your Reverence?

MANDERS [*walks restlessly to and fro*]. Oh, don't ask me!

ENGSTRAND [*walks with him*]. And your Reverence hadn't insured it, neither?

MANDERS [*continuing to walk up and down*]. No, no, no; you've heard that already.

ENGSTRAND [*following him*]. Not insured! And then to go right down and set light to the whole thing. Lord! Lord! what a misfortune!

MANDERS [*wipes the sweat from his forehead*]. Ay, you may well say that, Engstrand.

ENGSTRAND. And to think that such a thing should happen to a benevolent Institution, that was to have been a blessing both to town and country, as the saying is! The newspapers won't handle your Reverence very gently, I expect.

MANDERS. NO; that's just what I'm thinking of. That's almost the worst of it. All the malignant attacks and accusations——! Oh, it's terrible only to imagine it.

MRS. ALVING [*comes in from the garden*]. He can't be got away from the fire.

MANDERS. Ah! there you are, Mrs. Alving!

MRS. ALVING. SO you've escaped your Inaugural Address, Pastor Manders.

MANDERS. Oh! I should so gladly——

MRS. ALVING [*in an undertone*]. It's all for the best. That Orphanage would have done no good to anybody.

MANDERS. DO you think not?

MRS. ALVING. DO you think it would?

MANDERS. It's a terrible misfortune, all the same.

MRS. ALVING. Let us speak plainly of it, as a piece of business. Are you waiting for Mr. Manders, Engstrand?

ENGSTRAND [*at the hall door*]. Ay, ma'am; indeed I am.

MRS. ALVING. Then sit down meanwhile.

ENGSTRAND. Thank you, ma'am; I'd rather stand.

MRS. ALVING [*to MANDERS*]. I suppose you're going by the steamer?

MANDERS. Yes; it starts in an hour.

MRS. ALVING. Be so good as to take all the papers with you. I won't hear another word about this affair. I have other things to think about.

MANDERS. Mrs. Alving——

MRS. ALVING. Later on I shall send you a Power of Attorney to settle everything as you please.

MANDERS. That I shall very readily undertake. The original destination of the endowment must now be completely changed, alas!

MRS. ALVING. Of course it must.

MANDERS. I think, first of all, I shall arrange that the Solvik property shall pass to the parish. The land is by no means without value. It can always be turned to account for some purpose or other. And the interest of the money in the Bank I could, perhaps, best apply for the benefit of some undertaking that has proved itself a blessing to the town.

MRS. ALVING. DO just as you please. The whole matter is now completely indifferent to me.

ENGSTRAND. Give a thought to my Sailors' Home, your Reverence.

MANDERS. Yes, that's not a bad suggestion. That must be considered.

ENGSTRAND. Oh, devil take considering—I beg your pardon!

MANDERS [*with a sigh*]. And I'm sorry to say I don't know how long I shall be able to retain control of these things—whether public opinion may not compel me to retire. It entirely depends upon the result of the official inquiry into the fire——

MRS. ALVING. What are you talking about?

MANDERS. And the result can by no means be foretold.

ENGSTRAND [*comes close to him*]. Ay, but it can, though. For here stands Jacob Engstrand.

MANDERS. Well, well, but——?

ENGSTRAND [*more softly*]. And Jacob Engstrand isn't the

man to desert a noble benefactor in the hour of need, as the saying is.

MANDERS. Yes, but my good fellow—how——?

ENGSTRAND. Jacob Engstrand may be likened to a guardian angel, he may, your Reverence.

MANDERS. No, no; I can't accept that.

ENGSTRAND. Oh! you will though, all the same. I know a man that's taken others' sins upon himself before now, I do.

MANDERS. Jacob! [*Wrings his hand.*] You are a rare character. Well, you shall be helped with your Sailors' Home. That you may rely upon. [ENGSTRAND *tries to thank him, but cannot for emotion.* MR. MANDERS *hangs his travelling-bag over his shoulder.*] And now let's be off. We two go together.

ENGSTRAND [*at the dining-room door, softly to REGINA.*] You come along too, girl. You shall live as snug as the yolk in an egg.

REGINA [*tosses her head.*] *Merci!*

[*She goes out into the hall and fetches MANDERS'S overcoat.*]

MANDERS. Good-bye, Mrs. Alving! and may the spirit of Law and Order descend upon this house, and that quickly.

MRS. ALVING. Good-bye, Manders.

[*She goes up towards the conservatory as she sees OSWALD coming in through the garden door.*]

ENGSTRAND [*while he and REGINA help MANDERS to get his coat on.*] Good-bye, my child. And if any trouble should come to you, you know where Jacob Engstrand is to be found. [*Softly.*] Little Harbour Street, h'm——! [*To MRS. ALVING and OSWALD.*] And the refuge for wandering mariners shall be called "Captain Alving's Home," that *it* shall! And if I'm spared to carry on that house in my own way, I venture to promise that it shall be worthy of his memory.

MANDERS [*in the doorway.*] H'm—h'm!—Now come, my dear Engstrand. Good-bye! Good-bye!

[*He and ENGSTRAND go out through the hall.*]

OSWALD [*goes towards the table.*] What house was he talking about?

MRS. ALVING. Oh, a kind of Home that he and Manders want to set up.

OSWALD. It will burn down like the other.

MRS. ALVING. What makes you think so ?

OSWALD. Everything will burn. All that recalls father's memory is doomed. Here am I, too, burning down.

[REGINA starts and looks at him,

MRS. ALVING. Oswald! you oughtn't to have remained so long down there, my poor boy!

OSWALD [*sits down by the table*]. I almost think you're right.

MRS. ALVING. Let me dry your face, Oswald; you're quite wet. [*She dries his face with her pocket-handkerchief.*

OSWALD [*stares indifferently in front of him*]. Thanks, mother.

MRS. ALVING. Aren't you tired, Oswald? Would you like to sleep?

OSWALD [*nervously*]. No, no—I can't sleep. I never sleep. I only pretend to. [*Sadly.*] That will come soon enough.

MRS. ALVING [*looking sorrowfully at him*]. Yes, you really are ill, my blessed boy.

REGINA [*eagerly*]. Is Mr. Alving ill?

OSWALD [*impatently*]. Oh, do shut all the doors! This killing dread——

MRS. ALVING. Shut the doors, Regina.

[REGINA shuts them and remains standing by the hall door,

MRS. ALVING takes her shawl off. REGINA does the same.

MRS. ALVING draws a chair across to OSWALD'S, and sits by him.

MRS. ALVING. There now! I'm going to sit beside you——

OSWALD. Ah! do. And Regina shall stay here, too. Regina shall be with me always. You'll come to the rescue, Regina, won't you?

REGINA. I don't understand——

MRS. ALVING. To the rescue?

OSWALD. Yes—in the hour of need.

MRS. ALVING. Oswald, have you not your mother to come to the rescue?

OSWALD. YOU? [*Smiles.*] No, mother; that rescue you

will never bring me. [*Laughs sadly.*] You! ha ha I [*Looks earnestly at her.*] Though, after all, it lies nearest to you. [*Impetuously.*] Why don't you say "thou" * to me, Regina? Why don't you call me "Oswald" ?

REGINA [*softly*]. I don't think Mrs. Alving would like it.

MRS. ALVING. YOU shall soon have leave to do it. And sit over here beside us, won't you ?

[REGINA *sits down quietly and hesitatingly at the other side of the table.*

MRS. ALVING. And now, my poor suffering boy, I'm going to take the burden off your mind——

OSWALD. YOU, mother?

MRS. ALVING.——All the gnawing remorse and self-reproach you speak of.

OSWALD. And you think you can do that ?

MRS. ALVING. Yes, now I can, Oswald. You spoke of the joy of life; and at that word a new light burst for me over my life and all it has contained.

OSWALD [*shakes his head*], I don't understand you.

MRS. ALVING. YOU ought to have known your father when he was a young lieutenant. He was brimming over with the joy of life!

OSWALD. Yes, I know he was.

MRS. ALVING. It was like a breezy day only to look at him. And what exuberant strength and vitality there was *in* him!

OSWALD. Well——?

MRS. ALVING. Well then, child of joy as he was—for he was like a child at that time—he had to live here at home in a half-grown town, which had no joys to offer him—only dissipations. He had no object in life—only an official position. He had no work into which he could throw himself heart and soul; he had only business. He had not a single comrade that knew what the joy of life meant—only loungers and boon-companions——

OSWALD. Mother!

¹ *Sige du* = Fr. "tutoycr."

MRS. ALVING. SO the inevitable happened.

OSWALD. The inevitable?

MRS. ALVING. You said yourself, this evening, what would happen to you if you stayed at home.

OSWALD. DO you mean to say that father——?

MRS. ALVING. Your poor father found no outlet for the overpowering joy of life that was in him. And I brought no brightness into his home.

OSWALD. Not even you?

MRS. ALVING. They had taught me a lot about duties and so on, which I had taken to be true. Everything was marked out into duties—into my duties, and his duties, and—I'm afraid I made home intolerable for your poor father, Oswald.

OSWALD. Why did you never write me anything about all this?

MRS. ALVING. I have never before seen it in such a light that I could speak of it to you, his son.

OSWALD. In what light did you see it then?

MRS. ALVING [*slowly*], I saw only this one thing, that your father was a broken-down man before you were born.

OSWALD [*softly*]. Ah!

[*He rises and walks away to the window.*]

MRS. ALVING. And then, day after day, I dwelt on the one thought that by rights Regina should be at home in this house—just like my own boy.

OSWALD [*turning round quickly*], Regina!

REGINA [*springs up and asks, with bated breath*], I?

MRS. ALVING. Yes, now you know it, both of you.

OSWALD. Regina!

REGINA [*to herself*]. So mother was that kind of woman, after all.

MRS. ALVING. Your mother had many good qualities, Regina.

REGINA. Yes, but she was one of that sort, all the same. Oh! I've often suspected it; but——And now, if you please, ma'am, may I be allowed to go away at once?

MRS. ALVING. Do you really wish it, Regina?

REGINA. Yes, indeed I do.

MRS. ALVING. Of course you can do as you like; but—
OSWALD [*goes towards REGINA*]. Go away now? Isn't this your home?

REGINA. *Mercij* Mr. Alving!—or now, I suppose, I may say Oswald. But I can tell you this wasn't what I expected.

MRS. ALVING. Regina, I have not been frank with you—

REGINA. NO, that you haven't, indeed. If I'd known that Oswald was ill, why—And now, too, that it can never come to anything serious between us—I really can't stop out here in the country and wear myself out nursing sick people.

OSWALD. Not even one who is so near to you?

REGINA. NO, that I can't. A poor girl must make the best of her young days, or she'll be left out in the cold before she knows where she is. And I, too, have the joy of life in me, Mrs. Alving.

MRS. ALVING. Yes, I can see you have. But don't throw yourself away, Regina.

REGINA. Oh! what must be, must be. If Oswald takes after his father, I take after my mother, I daresay. May I ask, ma'am, if Mr. Manders knows all this about me?

MRS. ALVING. Mr. Manders knows all about it.

REGINA [*puts on her shawl hastily*]. Well then, I'd better make haste and get away by this steamer. Pastor Manders is so nice to deal with; and I certainly think I've as much right to a little of that money as he has—that brute of a carpenter.

MRS. ALVING. You're heartily welcome to it, Regina.

REGINA [*looks hard at her*], I think you might have brought me up as a gentleman's daughter, ma'am; it would have suited me better. [*Tosses her head.*] But it's done now—it doesn't matter! [*With a bitter side glance at the corked bottle.*] All the same, I may come to drink champagne with gentlefolks yet.

MRS. ALVING. And if you ever need a home, Regina, come to me.

REGINA. NO, thank you, ma'am. Mr. Manders will look after me, I know. And if the worst comes to the worst, I know of one house where I've every right to a place.

MRS. ALVING. Where is that?

REGINA. " Captain Alving's Home."

MRS. ALVING. Regina—now I see it—you're going to your ruin.

REGINA. Oh, stuff! Good-bye.

[She nods and goes out through the hall.]

OSWALD *[stands at the window and looks out]*. Is she gone?

MRS. ALVING. Yes.

OSWALD *[murmuring aside to himself]*, I think it's a great mistake, all this.

MRS. ALVING *[goes behind him and lays her hands on his shoulders]*. Oswald, my dear boy; has it shaken you very much?

OSWALD *[turns his face towards her]*, All that about father, do you mean?

MRS. ALVING. Yes, about your unhappy father. I'm so afraid it may have been too much for you.

OSWALD. Why should you fancy that? Of course it came upon me as a great surprise; but, after all, it can't matter much to me.

MRS. ALVING *[draws her hands away]*. Can't matter! That your father was so infinitely miserable!

OSWALD. Of course I can pity him as I would anybody else; but——

MRS. ALVING. Nothing more? Your own father!

OSWALD *[impatiently]*. Oh, there! "father," "father"! I never knew anything of father. I don't remember anything about him except that he once made me sick.

MRS. ALVING. That's a terrible way to speak! Should a son not love his father, all the same?

OSWALD. When a son has nothing to thank his father for? has never known him? Do you really cling to that old superstition?—you who are so enlightened in other ways?

MRS. ALVING. Is it only a superstition——?

OSWALD. Yes; can't you see it, mother? It's one of those notions that are current in the world, and so——

MRS. ALVING *[deeply moved]*. Ghosts!

OSWALD *[crossing the room]*. Yes; you may well call them Ghosts.

MRS. ALVING [*wildly*]. Oswald!—then you don't love me, either!

OSWALD. You I know, at any rate.

MRS. ALVING. Yes, you know me; but is that all?

OSWALD. And of course I know how fond you are of me, and I can't but be grateful to you. And you can be so very useful to me, now that I'm ill.

MRS. ALVING. Yes, can't I, Oswald? Oh! I could almost bless the illness that has driven you home to me. For I can see very plainly you are not mine; I have to win you.

OSWALD [*impatiently*]. Yes, yes, yes; all these are just so many phrases. You must recollect I'm a sick man, mother. I can't be much taken up with other people! I have enough to do thinking about myself.

MRS. ALVING [*in a low voice*]. I shall be patient and easily satisfied.

OSWALD. And cheerful too, mother.

MRS. ALVING. Yes, my dear boy, you're quite right. [*Goes towards him.*] Have I relieved you of all remorse and self-reproach now?

OSWALD. Yes, you have. But who's to relieve me of the dread?

MRS. ALVING. The dread?

OSWALD [*walks across the room*], Regina could have been got to do it.

MRS. ALVING. I don't understand you. What is all this about dread—and Regina?

OSWALD. Is it very late, mother?

MRS. ALVING. It's early morning. [*She looks out through the conservatory.*] The day is dawning over the hills; and the weather is fine, Oswald. In a little while you shall see the SUP

OSWALD. I'm glad of that. Oh! I may still have much to rejoice in and live for——

MRS. ALVING. Yes, much—much, indeed!

OSWALD. Even if I can't work——

MRS. ALVING. Oh! you'll soon be able to work again, my dear boy, now that you haven't got all those gnawing and depressing thoughts to brood over any longer.

OSWALD. Yes, I'm glad you were able to rid me of all those fancies; and when I've got one thing more arranged———[*Sits on the sofa.*] Now we'll have a little talk, mother.

MRS. ALVING. Yes, let us.

[*She pushes an armchair towards the sofa, and sits down close to him.*]

OSWALD. And meantime the sun will be rising. And then you'll know all. And then I shan't have that dread any longer.

MRS. ALVING. What am I to know?

OSWALD [*not listening to her*]. Mother, didn't you say, a little while ago, that there was nothing in the world you wouldn't do for me, if I asked you.

MRS. ALVING. Yes, to be sure I said it.

OSWALD. And you'll stick to it, mother?

MRS. ALVING. You may rely on that, my dear and only boy! I have nothing *in* the world to live for but you alone.

OSWALD. All right, then; now you shall hear. Mother, you have a strong, steadfast mind, I know. Now you're to sit quite still when you hear it.

MRS. ALVING. What dreadful thing can it be———?

OSWALD. You're not to scream out. Do you hear? Do you promise me that? We'll sit and talk about it quite quietly. Promise me, mother?

MRS. ALVING. Yes, yes; I promise. Only speak.

OSWALD. Well, you must know that all this fatigue, and my inability to think of work—all that is not the illness itself———

MRS. ALVING. Then what is the illness itself?

OSWALD. The disease I have as my birthright [*he points to his forehead and adds very softly*]*—*is seated here.

MRS. ALVING [*almost voiceless*]. Oswald! No, no!

OSWALD. Don't scream. I can't bear it. Yes, it's seated here—waiting. And it may break out any day—at any moment.

MRS. ALVING. Oh! what horror!

OSWALD. NOW, do be quiet. That's how it stands with me———

MRS. ALVING [*jumps up*]. It's **not** true, Oswald, It's impossible. It can't be so.

OSWALD. I have had one attack down there already. It was soon over. But when I got to know what had been the matter with me, then the dread came upon me raging and tearing; and so I set off home to you as fast as I could.

MRS. ALVING. Then this is the dread——!

OSWALD. Yes, for it's so indescribably loathsome, you know. Oh! if it had only been an ordinary mortal disease——! For I'm not so afraid of death—though I should like to live as long as I can.

MRS. ALVING. Yes, yes, Oswald, you must!

OSWALD. But this is so unutterably loathsome! To become a little baby again! To have to be fed! To have to—— Oh, it's not to be spoken of!

MRS. ALVING. The child has his mother to nurse him.

OSWALD [*jumps up*]. No, never; that's just what I won't have. I can't endure to think that perhaps I should lie in that state for many years—get old and grey. And in the meantime you might die and leave me. [*Sits in MRS. ALVING'S chair.*] For the doctor said it wouldn't necessarily prove fatal at once. He called it a sort of softening of the brain—or something of the kind. [*Smiles sadly.*] I think that expression sounds so nice. It always sets me thinking of cherry-coloured velvet—something soft and delicate to stroke.

MRS. ALVING [*screams*]. Oswald!

OSWALD [*springs up and paces the room*]. And now you have taken Regina from me. If I'd only had her! She would have come to the rescue, I know.

MRS. ALVING [*goes to him*]. What do you mean by that, my darling boy? Is there any help in the world that I wouldn't give you?

OSWALD. When I got over my attack in Paris, the doctor told me that when it came again—and it will come again—there would be no more hope.

MRS. ALVING. He was heartless enough to——

OSWALD. I demanded it of him. I told him I had preparations to make. [*He smiles cunningly.*] And so I had. [*He*

takes a little box from his inner breast pocket and opens it.]

Mother, do you see this?

MRS. ALVING. What is that ?

OSWALD. Morphia.

MRS. ALVING [*looks horrified at him*]. Oswald—my boy!

OSWALD. I've scraped together twelve pilules——

MRS. ALVING [*snatches at it*]. Give me the box, Oswald.

OSWALD. Not yet, mother.

[He hides the box again in his pocket.

MRS. ALVING. I shall never survive this!

OSWALD. It must be survived. Now if I'd had Regina here, I should have told her how things stood with me, and begged her to come to the rescue at the last. She would have done it. I'm certain she would.

MRS. ALVING. Never!

OSWALD. When the horror had come upon me, and she saw me lying there helpless, like a little new-born baby, impotent, lost, hopeless, past all saving——

MRS. ALVING. Never in all the world would Regina have done this.

OSWALD. Regina would have done it. Regina was so splendidly light-hearted. And she would soon have wearied of nursing an invalid like me——

MRS. ALVING. Then heaven be praised that Regina is not here.

OSWALD. Well then, it's you that must come to the rescue, mother.

MRS. ALVING [*screams aloud*]. I !

OSWALD. Who is nearer to it than you ?

MRS. ALVING. I ! your mother!

OSWALD. For that very reason.

MRS. ALVING. I, who gave you life!

OSWALD. I never asked you for life. And what sort of a life have you given me? I won't have it. You shall take it back again.

MRS. ALVING. Help! Help! [*She runs out into the hall.*

OSWALD [*going after her*]. Don't leave me. Where are you going?

MRS. ALVING [*in the hall*]. To fetch the doctor, Oswald. Let me go.

OSWALD [*also outside*]. You shall not go. And no one shall come in. [*The locking of a door is heard.*]

MRS. ALVING [*comes in again*]. Oswald—Oswald!—my child!

OSWALD [*follows her*]. Have you a mother's heart for me, and yet can see me suffer from this unutterable dread?

MRS. ALVING [*after a moment's silence, commands herself, and says:*] Here's my hand upon it.

OSWALD. Will you——?

MRS. ALVING. If it's ever necessary. But it will never be necessary. No, no; it's impossible.

OSWALD. Well, let us hope so, and let us live together as long as we can. Thank you, mother.

[*He seats himself in the armchair which MRS. ALVING has moved to the sofa. Day is breaking. The lamp is still burning on the table.*]

MRS. ALVING [*drawing near cautiously*]. Do you feel calm now?

OSWALD. Yes.

MRS. ALVING [*bending over him*]. It has been a dreadful fancy of yours, Oswald—nothing but a fancy. All this excitement has been too much for you. But now you shall have a long rest; at home with your mother, my own blessed boy. Everything you point to you shall have, just as when you were a little child. There now. That crisis is over now. You see how easily it passed. Oh! I was sure it would——And do you see, Oswald, what a lovely day we're going to have? Brilliant sunshine! Now you'll be really be able to see your home.

[*She goes to the table and puts the lamp out. Sunrise. The glacier and the snow-peaks in the background glow in the morning light.*]

OSWALD [*sits in the armchair with his back towards the landscape, without moving. Suddenly he says:*] Mother, give me the sun.

MRS. ALVING [*by the table, starts and looks at him*]. What do you say?

OSWALD [*repeats, in a dull, toneless voice*]* The sun. The sun.

MRS. ALVING [*goes to him*], Oswald, what's the matter with you? [OSWALD *seems to shrink together in the chair; all his muscles relax; his face is expressionless, his eyes have a glassy stare. MRS. ALVING is quivering with terror.*] What is this? [*Shrieks.*] Oswald, what's the matter with you? [*Falls on her knees beside him and shakes him.*] Oswald, Oswald! look at me! Don't you know me?

OSWALD [*tonelessly as before*]. The sun. The sun.

MRS. ALVING [*springs up in despair, entwines her hands in her hair and shrieks*]. I can't bear it! [*Whispers, as though petrified*] I can't bear it! Never! [*Suddenly.*] Where has he got them? [*Fumbles hastily in his breast.*] Here! [*Shrinks back a few steps and screams.*] No; no; no! Yes! —No; no!

[*She stands a few steps from him with her hands twisted in her hair, and stares at him in speechless terror.*

OSWALD [*sits motionless as before and says*]. The sun. The sun.

Curtain

THE WILD DUCK
(1884)

TRANSLATED BY
MRS. F. E. ARCHER

CHARACTERS

WERLE, *a merchant, manufacturer, etc.*

GREGERS WERLE, *his son.*

OLD EKDAL.

HIALMAR EKDAL, *his son, a photographer.*

GINA EKDAL, *Hialmar's wife.*

HEDVIG, *their daughter, fourteen years old.*

MRS. SORBY, *Werle's housekeeper.*

RELLING, *a doctor.*

MOLVIK, *ex-student of theology.*

GRABERG, *Werle's bookkeeper.*

PETTERSEN, *Werle's servant.*

JENSEN, *a hired waiter.*

A FLABBY GENTLEMAN.

A THIN-HAIRED GENTLEMAN.

A SHORT-SIGHTED GENTLEMAN.

Six other gentlemen, dinner-guests at Werle's.

Several hired waiters.

*The first act passes in Werle's house, the four following acts at
Hialmar Ekdal's.*

PRONUNCIATION.—Grcgers Werle — *Grayghers Verle*; Hialmar Ekdal =
met Aykdal; G'ma — *Gheena*; Graberg = *Groberg*; Jensen = *Yensen*.

THE WILD DUCK

INTRODUCTION

After *Ghosts*, Ibsen had written *An Enemy of the People*. On June 12 th, 1883, he wrote to Georg Brandes of a new play in four acts and defined his present attitude in explaining the standpoint of Stockmann, the hero of *An Enemy of the People*: " I maintain that an intellectual fighter in the outposts never *can* collect a majority around him. In ten years' time the majority will perhaps be standing where Dr. Stockmann stood during the public meeting. But in these ten years the doctor has not remained at a standstill; he is still at least ten years ahead of the majority; the majority, the populace, will never catch him up; he can never get the majority on his side. In my own personal case I notice a continuous progress of this kind. Quite a compact crowd now stands where I stood when I wrote my various books; but I myself am no longer there; I am somewhere else, farther on, as I hope."

(.With *The Wild Duck* he enters on a new field of thought and technique altogether; he has exhausted the moral and social problems of the day and opens the door to/a new world of human character and poetry. He is now ten years ahead of the crowd, and of his old self in the person of Gregers Werle suffering from acute rectitudinitis.

The first draft of *The Wild Duck* was finished in Rome by the end of June 1884. On June 30th he left Rome for Gossensass, and on September 2nd sent Hegel the finished manuscript. It was published on November nth, 1884.

Opinion was immediately divided on the question of meaning. The play aroused discussion in Scandinavia, strong reproaches from Bøgh in Denmark, misunderstanding on the part of William Archer, puzzled wonderment from Sir Edmund Gosse, quacks from the Parisian public on its *premiere* in France, and

roars of ridicule from its first audience in Rome. Later considered opinion has placed the play in the first category of Ibsen's achievements.

(Much confused thinking has been devoted to the significance of the wild duck itself; it has been looked upon as a mysterious symbol and has been variously interpreted. In fact Ibsen called the play *The Wild Duck* because the wild duck itself is the chief protagonist of the play, which by its very presence so affects the emotions of Gregers, Hialmar, and Hedvig by the different connotations it suggests to each of them that it bears the sole responsibility for the final catastrophe.)^

In the notes and drafts preceding the final version we see how Ibsen changed the nature of the duck from being a symbolical commentary on the play to becoming an active participant in the action. I It becomes charged with affective content for the three main characters.V For Hialmar it is an obsessing reminder of all the humiliations he has suffered at the hands of Werle, associating it in turn with Gina, with Hedvig, and himself. Gregers, on the other hand, trades on its poetic significance and allows it to fire his idealism and his desire to save Hialmar from drowning in the swamp of untruth. Hedvig's tragedy lies in being torn between these realistic and romantic associations with the bird, which represents her irreconcilable loyalties to her father and Gregers. With the realistic perspicacity of the child, she escapes from this whole world of humbug and hypocrisy by killing herself.>

(The theme of *The Wild Duck* is said to be borrowed from a poem by Welhaven, where a wild duck is wounded by a shot and dives to the bottom of the lake to die.v A similar image occurs in Tegner's *Frithiofs Saga*. It is also said that although Ibsen may not have read Darwin's description of the charming eccentricities of ducks and their easy adaptability in captivity in his work *Variation Under Domestication*, (Darwinism nevertheless plays a considerable part in the play, and the duck itself is an exponent of the factors of environment and heredity in evolution)^

The conflict of past and present in the play is accentuated to an extreme degree,yand here Ibsen's retrospective technique is developed to the uttermost, the beginning of the plot only being

revealed in the last act. The conflict is partly a result of Ibsen's own retrospective mood at the time, a few years after his unfinished attempt to write down recollections of his childhood. In *Hedvig*, Ibsen gives us a tender portrait of his own sister, and the garret, with its accumulation of rubbish, its clock that has stopped, its books, Harrison's *History of London*, are all memories of the garret at Vensttøp, the farm-house to which the Ibsens had to move in 1836 after his father's bankruptcy. It was in this garret that Ibsen found consolation for his family becoming social outcasts, where he hid from his brothers and sisters, painted and drew, prepared conjuring tricks, cut cardboard figures for the little stage he had made, and read the old books left behind by the former owner, an old sea captain remembered by the name of "The Flying Dutchman," and who himself is recalled in the pages of *The Wild Duck*.

Ibsen's father survives in the figure of old Ekdal, who had earlier appeared as Peer Gynt's father and as Daniel Hejre in the League of Youth. The son, Hjalmar Ekdal, is the supreme example of the failed artist in Ibsen's gallery of these figures. The fact that he is represented as a photographer is of some significance. In Christiania Ibsen had lived in the same house as a photographer, and references in his letters recur frequently to this profession and its difference from the plastic arts. Writing to Bjørnson about Peer Gynt (December 9th, 1867), he said: "If I am not a poet I have nothing to lose. I shall try as a photographer." Hjalmar Ekdal is referred to in the first notes on *The Wild Duck* as "the photographer, the unsuccessful poet E. L.," probably referring to Edvard Larssen, the writer and photographer who in 1861 or 1862 took the first known photograph of Ibsen. He probably also had in mind his old painting master, Magnus Bagge, a dilapidated member of the Düsseldorf school, who raised his self-esteem in Germany by railing himself "von Bagge." Other characters he had in mind were Kristoffer Janson and Alexander Kielland. Ibsen had also just read and thanked Georg Brandes for his book on the Romantic School in France, and for Ibsen *The Wild Duck* was his own reckoning with romanticism as had been the case with Brandes in this series of essays.

(The setting of the play was worked out in great detail. Ibsen attached much importance to the dramatic effect of lighting on the action. He wrote to Schroder (November 14th, 1844): "The lighting also has its significance; it is different for each act and is intended to correspond to the atmosphere which gives a special character to each of the five acts." The whole action is, in fact, punctuated by lighting effects, the dazzling brightness of the Werle household, the gloom of the photographer's studio, the moonlight in the attic, the morning of the next day when sunshine pours in through the holes in the roof on to the attic floor, the setting sun and dusk of the fourth act, and the final grey morning of the tragedy with the faint light percolating through the wet snow on the window panes of the studio.

Ibsen always set his stage with "left" and "right" as seen from the audience, and not from the stage. "I arrange everything as I see it before me when writing," he commented in a letter to August Lindberg (November 22nd, 1844), who was preparing to produce *The Wild Duck*. An instance of the importance of his settings and the dramatic qualities inherent in doors and windows and unseen rooms is to be found in his arrangement for the attic. His original drafts made it impossible to see the duck and the rabbits on the attic floor. They were hidden by a system of double doors, which were opened at the top and kept closed at the bottom. In order to make the duck visible for a short instant, the double doors when opened slide completely aside, revealing the curious menagerie. Then the floor of the attic is hidden from view by a fishing-net, which is dropped from the ceiling, the bottom half of which, however, consists of a wide strip of canvas, which masks old Ekdal's happy hunting-ground.

Ibsen sent the finished manuscript of *The Wild Duck* to his publisher Hegel with the following comments: "This new play to a certain extent stands in a position of its own in my dramatic production; the method of composition is in several ways different from my former one. For the present I will say nothing further on this subject. I hope the critics will succeed in finding the points; anyhow, they will find diverse points to squabble about, various points to interpret. I likewise believe that *The*

Wild Duck can possibly induce some of our younger dramatists to enter on new paths, and I would consider such as desirable." Ibsen certainly did fox the critics, who were in the habit of looking for a message in his plays. The idea that a wounded duck should be the central figure in a group of dilapidated human beings would have seemed preposterous. Ibsen showed such objectivity in the presentation of these down-at-heel characters, he showed such warm human feeling for all of them, and yet sided with none, that the play stands out as his most penetrating study of human psychology and the best statement of his essentially humane philosophy; in the words of Dr. Relling, the only commentator of this play: "Rob the average man of his delusions, and you'll rob him of his happiness at the same time.")

p. F. D. T.

THE WILD DUCK

ACT I

At WERLE'S house. A richly and comfortably furnished study; bookcases and upholstered furniture; a writing-table, with papers and documents, in the centre of the room; lighted lamps with green shades casting a dim light. In the background, open folding doors with curtains drawn back. Within is seen a large and elegant room brilliantly lighted with lamps and branching candlesticks. in front, the right in the study), a small baize door leads into WERLE'S office. On the left, in front, a fireplace with a glowing coal fire and farther back a folding door leading into the dining-room.

WERLE'S servant, PETERSEN, in livery, and JENSEN, the hired waiter, in black, are putting the study in order. In the large room, two or three other hired waiters are moving about arranging things and lighting more candles. From the dining-room, the hum of conversation and laughter of many voices are heard; a glass is tapped with a knife; silence follows,

*and a toast is proposed; shouts of " Bravo" and then again a buzz of conversation**

PETTERSEN [*lights a lamp on the chimney-piece and sets a shade over it*]. Just listen, Jensen; now the old man's on his legs proposing Mrs. Sorby's health in a long speech.

JENSEN [*pushing forward an armchair*]. Is it true, what people say, that there's something between them?

PETTERSEN. Lord knows.

JENSEN. I'm told he's been a jively customer in his day.

PETTERSEN. May be.

JENSEN. It's in honour of his son that he's giving this dinner-party, they say.

PETTERSEN. Yes. His son came home yesterday.

JENSEN. I never knew till now that Mr. Werle had a son.

PETTERSEN. Oh yes, he has a son. But he's always up at the Hoidal works. He's never once come to town all the years I've been in service here.

A WAITER [*in the doorway of the other room*]. Pettersen, here's an old fellow wanting——

PETTERSEN [*mutters*]. The devil—who's this now?

[OLD EKDAL *appears from the right, in the inner room. He is dressed in a threadbare overcoat with a high collar; he wears woollen mittens, and carries in his hand a stick and a fur cap. Under his arm, a brown-paper parcel. Dirty red-brjown wig and small grey moustache.*

PETTERSEN *Xities towards him*]. Good Lord—what do you want here?

EKDAL [*at the door*]. Must get into the office, Pettersen.

PETTERSEN. The office was closed an hour ago, and——

EKDAL. SO they told me at the door. But Graberg's in there still. Let me slip in this way, Pettersen; there's a good fellow. [*Points towards the baize door*]. I've been in this way before.

PETTERSEN. Well, you may pass. [*Opens the door*]. But mind you go out again the proper way, for we've got company.

EKDAL. I know—h'm. Thanks, Pettersen, good old friend! Thanks! [*Mutters softly*]. Ass!

[He goes into the office; PETERSEN shuts the door after him]*

JENSEN. IS he one of the office people ?

PETERSEN. NO, he's only an outsider that does odd jobs of copying. But he's been a gentleman in his time, has old Ekdal.

JENSEN. You can see he's been through a lot.

PETERSEN. Yes; he was a lieutenant, you know.

JENSEN. The devil he was!

PETERSEN. NO mistake about it. But afterwards he went into the timber trade or something of that sort. They say he once played Mr. Werle a very nasty trick. They were in partnership at the Hoidal works at the time. Oh, I know old Ekdal well, I do. Many's the glass of bitters and bottle of ale we two have drunk at Madam Eriksen's.

JENSEN. He can't have much to stand treat with.

PETERSEN. Why, bless you, Jensen, it's me that stands treat. You see I always think one must be a bit civil to folks that have seen better, days.

JENSEN. Did he go bankrupt, then ?

PETERSEN. NO, worse than that. He went to prison.

JENSEN. To prison!

PETERSEN. Or perhaps it was the Penitentiary—*[listens]*. Hush, they're leaving the table.

[The dining-room door is thrown open from inside, by a couple of waiters, MRS. SORBY comes out conversing with two gentlemen. Gradually the whole company follows, amongst them WERLE. Last come HIALMAR EKDAL and GREGERS WERLE.]

MRS. SORBY *[in passing, to the servant]*, Pettersen, we'll have the coffee in the music-room.

PETERSEN. Very well, Mrs. Sorby.

[She goes with the two gentlemen into the inner room, and then out to the right, PETERSEN and JENSEN go out the same way,

A FLABBY GENTLEMAN *[to a THIN-HAIRED GENTLEMAN]*. Whew! What a dinner!—It was a stiff bit of work!

THE THIN-HAIRED GENTLEMAN. Oh, with a little goodwill one can get through an astonishing lot in three hours.

THE FLABBY GENTLEMAN. Yes, but afterwards, afterwards, my dear Chamberlain!

A THIRD GENTLEMAN. I hear the coffee and maraschino are to be served in the music-room.

THE FLABBY GENTLEMAN. Bravo! Perhaps Mrs. Sorby will play us something.

THE THIN-HAIRED GENTLEMAN [*in a low voice*]. If only Mrs. Sorby doesn't play us a tune we don't like!

THE FLABBY GENTLEMAN. Oh no, not she! Bertha will never turn against her old friends.

[They laugh and pass into the inner room.]

WERLE [*in a low voice, dejectedly*]. I don't think anybody noticed it, Gregers.

GREGERS [*looks at him*]. Noticed what?

WERLE. Didn't you notice it either?

GREGERS. Why, what do you mean?

WERLE. We were thirteen at table.

GREGERS. Indeed? Were there thirteen of us?

WERLE [*glances towards HIALMAR EKDAL*]. Twelve is our ordinary party. [*To the others.*] This way, gentlemen!

[*WERLE and the others, all except HIALMAR and GREGERS, go out by the back, to the right.*]

HIALMAR [*who has overheard the conversation*]. You oughtn't to have invited me, Gregers.

GREGERS. What! Not ask my best and only friend to a party supposed to be in my honour——!

HIALMAR. But I don't think your father likes it. You see I'm quite outside his set.

GREGERS. SO I hear. But I wanted to see you and talk with you, for I certainly shan't be staying long. Ah, we two old schoolfellow's have drifted far apart from each other. It must be sixteen or seventeen years since we met.

HIALMAR. IS it so long?

GREGERS. It is indeed. Well, how goes it with you? You look well. You've grown stout and almost portly.

HIALMAR. H'm, "portly" you can scarcely call it; but I daresay I look a little more of a man than I did.

GREGERS. Yes, you do; your outer man's in first-rate condition.

HIALMAR. Ah but the inner man! That's another matter, I can tell you! Of course you know of the terrible catastrophe that has befallen me and mine since we last met.

GREGERS *{more softly}*. How is your father getting on now?

HIALMAR. Don't let's talk of it, old fellow. Of course my poor unhappy father lives with me. You see he hasn't another soul in the world to care for him. But you can understand that this is a miserable subject for me. Tell me how you've been getting on up at the works.

GREGERS. I've had a delightfully lonely time of it; plenty of leisure to reflect on things in general. Come over here; let's make ourselves comfortable.

[He seats himself in an armchair by the fire and pulls HIALMAR down into another alongside of it.]

HIALMAR *[sentimentally]*. After all, Gregers, I thank you for inviting me to your father's table; for I take it as a sign that you've got over your feeling against me.

GREGERS *[surprised]*. How could you imagine I had any feeling against you?

HIALMAR. You had at first, you know.

GREGERS. HOW at first?

HIALMAR. After the great misfortune. It was natural enough that you should. Your father was within an ace of being drawn into that—well, that terrible business.

GREGERS. Why should that give me any feeling against you? Who put that into your head?

HIALMAR. I know it did, Gregers; your father told me so himself.

GREGERS *[starts]*. My father! Oh indeed. H'm—was that why you never let me hear from you—not a single word.

HIALMAR. Yes.

GREGERS. Not even when you took to photography?

HIALMAR. Your father said I'd better not write you about anything.

GREGERS *[looking straight before him]*. Well, well, perhaps

he was right. But tell me now, Hialmar: are you pretty well satisfied with your present position?

HALMAR [*with a little sigh*]. Oh yes, I am; I've really no cause to complain. At first, you know, I felt it a little strange. It was such a totally new state of things for me. But of course my whole circumstances were totally changed. Father's utter, irretrievable ruin—the shame and disgrace of it, Gregers——

GREGERS [*affected*]. Yes, yes; I understand.

HALMAR. I couldn't think of remaining at college; there wasn't a shilling to spare; on the contrary, there were debts; principally to your father, I believe——

GREGERS. H'm——

HALMAR. Well, you see, I thought it best to break once for all with my old surroundings and associations. It was your father that specially urged me to it; and since he interested himself so much in me——

GREGERS. Father did?

HALMAR. Yes, you knew that, didn't you? Where do you suppose I got the money to learn photography, and to furnish a studio, and make a start? All that costs a pretty penny, I can tell you.

GREGERS. And my father provided the money?

HALMAR. Yes, my dear fellow, didn't you know? I understood him to say he had written to you about it.

GREGERS. Not a word about *his* part in the business. He must have forgotten it. Our correspondence has always been purely a business one. So it was my father that——!

HALMAR. Yes, certainly. He didn't wish it to be generally known; but he it was. And of course it was he too that put me in a position to marry. Don't you—don't you know about that either?

GREGERS. No, I haven't heard a word of it. [*Shakes him by the arm.*] But, my dear Hialmar, I can't tell you what pleasure all this gives me—and regret too. I've perhaps done my father injustice after all—in some things. This proves that there's some good in his nature. It shows a sort of compunction——

HALMAR. Compunction——?

GREGERS. Yes, or whatever you like to call it. Oh, I can't tell you how glad I am to hear this of father.—And so you're married, Hialmar! That's farther than I shall ever get. Well, I hope you're happy in your married life?

HALMAR. Yes, thoroughly happy. She's as good a wife as a jnan could wish for. And she's by no means without education.

GREGERS [*rather surprised*]. No, surely not.

HALMAR. You see, life is itself an education. Her daily intercourse with me——And then we know one or two rather remarkable men, who come a good deal about us. I assure you you'd hardly know Gina again.

GREGERS. Gina?

HALMAR. Yes; have you forgotten that her name's Gina?

GREGERS. Whose name? I really don't know——

HALMAR. Don't you remember that she used to be in service here?

GREGERS [*looks at him*]. Is it Gina Hansen——?

HALMAR. Yes, of course it's Gina Hansen.

GREGERS.——who kept house for us during the last year of my mother's illness?

HALMAR. Yes, exactly. But, my dear friend, I'm quite sure your father wrote you that I was married.

GREGERS [*who has risen*]. Oh yes, he mentioned it; but not that—[*walking about the room*]. Stay—perhaps after all—now that I think of it. My father always writes such short letters. [*Half seats himself on the arm of the chair.*] Now, tell me, Hialmar—this interests me—how did you come to know Gina—your wife?

HALMAR. The simplest thing in the world. Gina didn't stay here long; everything was so much upset at that time, with your mother's illness and so forth, that Gina wasn't equal to it all, and so she gave notice and left. That was the year before your mother died—or perhaps it was the same year.

GREGERS. It was the same year. I was up at the works then. But afterwards?

HALMAR. Then Gina lived for a year at home with her mother, a Madam Hansen, an excellent hardworking woman,

who kept a little eating-house. She had a room to let too; a very pretty, comfortable room.

GREGERS. And I suppose you were lucky enough to secure it?

HIALMAR. Yes; it was your father that recommended it to me. So you see it was there I really came to know Gina.

GREGERS. And then you got engaged?

HIALMAR. Yes. It doesn't take young people long to fall in love——; h'm——

GREGERS [*gets up and walks about a little*']. Tell me, was it after your engagement—was it then that my father—I mean was it then that you began to take up photography?

HIALMAR. Yes, precisely. I wanted to get on and be able to set up house as soon as possible; and your father and I agreed that this photography business was the readiest way. Gina thought so too. Oh, and there was another thing in its favour, you know: it happened, luckily, that Gina had learnt to retouch.

GREGERS. That chimed in marvellously.

HIALMAR [*pleased, rises*]. Yes, didn't it?. Quite marvellously, you know!

GREGERS. Yes, no doubt. My father seems to have been almost a kind of providence for you.

HIALMAR [*with emotion*]. He didn't forsake his old friend's son in the hour of his need. He has a good heart, you see.

MRS. SORBY [*enters, arm-in-arm with WERLE*]. Nonsense, my dear Mr. Werle; you mustn't stop there any longer staring at the lights. It's not good for you.

WERLE [*Lets go her arm and passes his hand over his eyes*], I believe you're right.

[*PETTERSEN and JENSEN come round with refreshment trays,*

MRS. SORBY [*to the GUESTS in the other room*]. This way, gentlemen; if any one wants a glass of punch, he must be so good as to come in here.

THE FLABBY GENTLEMAN [*comes up to MRS. SORBY*]. Surely it isn't possible that you've suspended our cherished tobacco-privileges?

MRS. SORBY. Yes. No smoking in Mr. Werle's quarters, Chamberlain.

THE THIN-HAIRED GENTLEMAN. **When did you enact these** stringent amendments on the cigar law, Mrs. Sorby?

MRS. SORBY. After the last dinner, Chamberlain, when certain persons permitted themselves to overstep the mark.

THE THIN-HAIRED GENTLEMAN. And may one never overstep the mark a little bit, Madam Bertha? Not the least little bit?

MRS. SORBY. Not in any way, Mr. Balle.

[Most of the GUESTS have assembled in the study; SERVANTS hand round glasses of punch,

WERLE *[to HIALMAR, who is standing beside a table]*. What are you studying there, Ekdal?

HIALMAR. Only an album, Mr. Werle.

THE THIN-HAIRED GENTLEMAN *[who is wandering about]*. Ah, photographs! They're quite in your line of course.

THE FLABBY GENTLEMAN *[in an armchair]*. Haven't you brought any of your own with you?

HIALMAR. NO, I haven't.

THE FLABBY GENTLEMAN. YOU ought to have; looking at pictures is good for the digestion.

THE THIN-HAIRED GENTLEMAN. And it contributes to the entertainment, you know.

A SHORT-SIGHTED GENTLEMAN. And all contributions are thankfully received.

MRS. SORBY. The Chamberlains mean that when one is invited out one should do something to earn one's dinner, Mr. **Ekdal**.

THE FLABBY GENTLEMAN. Where one dines so well, that duty should be a pleasure.

THE THIN-HAIRED GENTLEMAN. And of course when it's a question of the struggle for life——

MRS. SORBY. I quite agree with you!

[They continue the conversation, with laughter and joking.

GREGERS *[softly]*. You must join in, Hialmar.

HIALMAR *[writhing]*. What am I to talk about?

THE FLABBY GENTLEMAN. Don't you think, Mr. Werle, that Tokay may be considered a tolerably safe wine—from the medical point of view, I mean?

WERLB [*by the fire*]* I can answer for the Tokay you had to-day, at any rate; it's of one of the very finest seasons. Of course you would notice that.

THE FLABBY GENTLEMAN. Yes, it had a remarkably delicate flavour.

(HIALMAR [*shyly*]. Is there any difference in the seasons?)

THE FLABBY GENTLEMAN [*laughs*]. Come! That's good!

WERLE [*smiles*]. It really doesn't pay to set fine wine before you.

THE THIN-HAIRED GENTLEMAN. Tokay is like photographs, Mr. Ekdal; it must have sunshine. Isn't that so?

MRS. SORBY. And it's exactly the same with Chamberlains—they, too, need sunshine,¹ as the saying is.

THE THIN-HAIRED GENTLEMAN. Oh fie! That's a very stale sarcasm!

THE SHORT-SIGHTED GENTLEMAN. Mrs. Sorby is coming out.

THE FLABBY GENTLEMAN.—and at our expense. [*Threatening her,*] Oh, Madam Bertha, Madam Bertha!

MRS. SORBY. Yes, and there's not the least doubt that the seasons differ greatly. The old vintages are the finest.

THE SHORT-SIGHTED GENTLEMAN. Do you reckon me amongst the old?

MRS. SORBY. Oh, far from it.

THE THIN-HAIRED GENTLEMAN. There now! But *me*, dear Mrs. Sorby—?

THE FLABBY GENTLEMAN. Yes, and me? What vintage do you think we belong to?

MRS. SORBY. I think you belong to the sweet vintages, gentlemen.

[*She sips a glass of punch. The gentlemen laugh and flirt with her,*

WERLE. Mrs. Sorby can always find a loop-hole—when she wants to. Fill your glasses, gentlemen! Pettersen, will you attend to—! Gregers, suppose we have a glass together. [GREGERS *does not move,*] Won't you join us, Ekdal? I couldn't find a chance of drinking with you at table.

¹ The " sunshine " of Court favour.

[GRABBERG, *the Bookkeeper, looks in through the baize door,*

GRABBERG. Excuse me, sir, but I can't get out.

WERLE. Have you been locked in again?

GRABBERG. Yes, and Flakstad has gone away with the keys.

WERLE. Well, you can pass out this way.

GRABBERG. But there's some one else——

WERLE. All right; come through, both of you. Don't be afraid. [GRABBERG and OLD EKDAL *come out of the office,*

WEKLE [*involuntarily*]. Ugh! Pah!

[*The laughter and talk among the GUESTS cease, HIALMAR shrinks back at the sight of his father, puts doivn his glass, and turns towards the fireplace,*

EKDAL [*does not look up, but makes little bows to both sides as he passes, murmuring*]. Beg pardon, come the wrong way.

Door locked—door locked. Beg pardon.

[*He and GRABBERG go out by the back, to the right.*

WERLE [*between his teeth*]. Confound that Grabberg!

GREGERS [*open-mouthed and staring, to HIALMAR*]. Why surely that wasn't—!

THE FLABBY GENTLEMAN. What's that? Who was it?

GREGERS. Oh, nobody; only the bookkeeper and some one with him.

THE SHORT-SIGHTED GENTLEMAN [*to HIALMAR*]. Did you know that man?

HIALMAR. I don't know—I didn't notice——

THE FLABBY GENTLEMAN. What the deuce is the matter?

[*He goes over to some others who are talking softly.*

MRS. SORBY [*whispers to the SERVANT*]. Give him something outside;—something good, mind.

PETTERSEN [*nods*], I'll see to it. [*Goes out,*

GREGERS [*softly and with emotion, to HIALMAR*]. So that was really he!

HIALMAR. Yes.

GREGERS. And yet you could stand there and deny that you knew him!

HIALMAR [*whispers vehemently*]. But how could I——

GREGERS.——acknowledge your own father?

HIALMAR [*with pain*]. Oh, if you were in my place——

[The conversation amongst the GUESTS, which has been carried on in a low tone, now swells into constrained boisterousness.]

THE THIN-HAIRED GENTLEMAN *[approaching HIALMAR and GREGERS in a friendly manner]*. Aha! Reviving old college memories, eh? Don't you smoke, Mr. Ekdal? Have a light? Oh, by-the-by, we mustn't——

HIALMAR. No, thank you, I won't——

THE FLABBY GENTLEMAN. Haven't you a nice little poem you could recite for us, Mr. Ekdal? You used to recite so charmingly.

HIALMAR. I'm sorry I can't remember anything.

THE FLABBY GENTLEMAN. Oh, that's a pity. Well, what shall we do, Balle?

[Both Gentlemen move away and pass into the other room.]

HIALMAR *[gloomily]*, I'm going, Gregers! When one has felt the crushing hand of Fate on one's head, you know—— Say good-bye to your father for me.

GREGERS. Yes, yes. Are you going straight home?

HIALMAR. Yes. Why?

GREGERS. Oh, because I may perhaps look in on you later.

HIALMAR. NO, you mustn't do that. You mustn't come to my home. Mine is a melancholy dwelling, Gregers; especially after a splendid banquet like this. "We can always meet somewhere in the town.

MRS. SORBY *[who has approached softly]*. Are you going, Ekdal?

HIALMAR. Yes.

MRS. SORBY. Remember me to Gina.

HIALMAR. Thanks.

MRS. SORBY. And say I'm coming up to see her one of these days.

HIALMAR. Yes, thank you. *[To GREGERS.]* Stay here, I'll slip out unobserved.

[He saunters away, then into the other room, and so out to the right.]

MRS. SORBY *[softly to the SERVANT, who has come back]*. Well, did the old man get something to take with him?

PETTERSEN. Yes; I gave him a bottle of cognac.

MRS. SORBY. Oh, you might have thought of something better than that.

PETTERSEN. Oh no, Mrs. Sorby; cognac is what he likes best in the world.

THE FLABBY GENTLEMAN [*in the doorway, with a sheet of music in his hand*]. Shall we have a little music, Mrs. Sorby?

MRS. SORBY. Yes, by all means, let us.

THE GUESTS. Bravo, bravo!

[*She goes with all the GUESTS through the back room, out to the right. GREGERS remains standing by the fire. WERLE is looking for something on the writing-table, and appears to wish that GREGERS would go; as GREGERS does not move, WERLE goes towards the door.*

GREGERS. Father, won't you stop a moment?

WERLE [*stops*]. What is it?

GREGERS. I must have a word with you.

WERLE. Can't it wait till we're alone?

GREGERS. NO, it can't; for perhaps we'll never be alone together.

WERLE [*comes nearer*]. What do you mean?

[*During the following, pianoforte music is heard from the distant music-room.*

GREGERS. How has that family been allowed to go so miserably to the wall?

WERLE. I suppose you mean the Ekdals.

GREGERS. Yes, I mean the Ekdals. Lieutenant Ekdal and you once stood in such close relations.

WERLE. Unfortunately our relations were too close; that I have felt to my cost for many a year. It's thanks to him that I, yes /, have had a kind of slur cast upon my reputation.

GREGERS [*softly*]. Are you sure that he alone was to blame?

WERLE. Who else do you suppose——?

GREGERS. You and he acted together in that affair of the forests——

WERLE. But wasn't it Ekdal that drew up the map of the forest tracts—that fraudulent map? It was he who cut down timber illegally on Government ground. In fact, the whole

management was in his hands. I was quite in the dark as to what Lieutenant Ekdal was doing.

GREGERS. Lieutenant Ekdal seems to have been in the dark himself, as to what he was doing..

WERLE. That may be. But the fact remains that he was found guilty and I acquitted.

GREGERS. Yes, of course I know that nothing was proved against you.

WERLE. Acquittal is acquittal. Why do you rake up these old troubles that turned my hair grey before its time? Is that the sort of thing you've been going and brooding over all these years? I can assure you, Gregers, here in the town the story's been forgotten long ago—so far as I am concerned.

GREGERS. But that unhappy Ekdal family!

WERLE. What would you have had me do for the people? When Ekdal came out of prison he was a broken-down man, fit for nothing. There are people, in the world who sink to the bottom the moment they get a couple of shot in their body and never come to the surface again, you may take my word for it, Gregers, I've done all I could without positively exposing myself, and giving rise to all sorts of suspicion and gossip—

GREGERS. Suspicion——? Oh, yes, I see.

WERLE. I've given Ekdal copying to do from the office, and I pay him far, far more for it than his work is worth——

GREGERS [*without looking at him*], H'm, I don't doubt that.

WERLE. YOU laugh? Perhaps you doubt me? Well, I certainly can't refer you to my books, for I never enter payments of that sort.

GREGERS [*smiles coldly*]. No, there are certain payments it's best not to keep any account of.

WERLE [*starts*]. What do you mean by that?

GREGERS [*mustering up courage*]. Have you entered what it cost you to have Hjalmar Ekdal taught photography?

WERLE. I? How entered it?

GREGERS. I've learnt that it was you who paid for it. And I've learnt, too, that it was you who generously enabled him to make a start in life.

WERLE. Well, and yet you say I've done nothing for the Ekdals! I can assure you these people have cost me enough in all conscience.

GREGERS. Have you entered any of these expenses in your books?

WERLE. Why do you ask?

GREGERS. Oh, I have my reasons. Now tell me: when you interested yourself so warmly in your old friend's son—wasn't that just when he was going to get married?

WERLE. Why, how the deuce—after all these years, how can I——?

GREGERS. You wrote me a letter about that time—a business letter, of course; and in a postscript you mentioned—quite briefly—that Hjalmar Ekdal had married a Miss Hansen.

WERLE. Yes, that was quite right. That was her name.

GREGERS. But you didn't tell me that this Miss Hansen was Gina Hansen, our former housekeeper.

WERLE [*with a forced laugh of derision*]. Well, upon my word, it didn't occur to me that you were so particularly interested in our former housekeeper.

GREGERS. NO more I was. But [*lowers his voice*] there were others in this house who were particularly interested in her.

WERLE. What do you mean by that? [*Flaring up.*] You can't be alluding to me?

GREGERS [*softly but firmly*]. Yes, I am alluding to you.

WERLE. And you dare—you presume to——! How can he—that thankless hound—that photographer fellow—how dare he go making such insinuations?

GREGERS. Hjalmar has never hinted a word of it. I don't believe he has the faintest suspicion of such a thing.

WERLE. Then where have you got it from? Who can have told you anything of the kind?

GREGERS. My poor unfortunate mother told me, and that the very last time I saw her.

WERLE. Your mother! I might have known as much! You and she—you always held together. It was she who first turned you against me.

GREGERS. No, it was all the suffering she had to go through, until she broke down and came to such a pitiful end.

WERLE. Oh, she had no suffering to go through; not more than most people, at all events. But there's no getting on with morbid, overstrained creatures. I've found that often enough. And so you could go and nurse such a suspicion—go and burrow into all sorts of old rumours and slanders against your own father! I must say, Gregers, I really think that at your age you might be doing something more useful.

GREGERS. Yes, it's high time.

WERLE. Then perhaps your mind would be easier than it seems to be now. What can be your object in remaining up at the works, year out and year in, drudging away like a common clerk, and not receiving a farthing more than the ordinary monthly wage? It's absolute folly.

GREGERS. Ah, if I were only sure of that.

WERLE. I understand you well enough. You want to be independent, and not beholden to me for anything. Now there just happens to be an opportunity for you to become independent, your own master in everything.

GREGERS. Indeed? In what way?

WERLE. When I wrote you insisting on your coming to town at once—h'm——

GREGERS. Yes, what do you really want me for? I've been waiting all day to know.

WERLE. I propose to offer you a partnership in the firm.

GREGERS. I! In your firm? As partner?

WERLE. Yes. It wouldn't involve our being constantly together. You could look after the business here, and I should move up to the works.

GREGERS. *YOU* would?

WERLE. Yes. You see I'm not so fit for work as I once was. I'm obliged to spare, my eyes gregers; they've begun to be rather weak

GREGERS. They've always been so.

WERLE. Not as they are now. And besides—circumstances might possibly make it desirable for me to live up there—for a time, at any rate.

GREGERS. I could never have imagined such a thing.

WERLE. Listen, Gregers: there are many things that form a barrier between us; but we're father and son after all. It seems to me we might manage to come to some sort of understanding with each other.

GREGERS. Outwardly, you mean, of course?

WERLE. Well, even that would be something. Think it over, Gregers. Don't you think we might, eh?

GREGERS [*looking at him coldly*]. There's something behind all this.

WERLE. HOW so?

GREGERS. You want to make use of me in some way.

WERLE. In such a close relationship as ours, each can always be useful to the other.

GREGERS. Yes, people say so.

WERLE. I want to have you at home with me for a time now. I'm a lonely man, Gregers; I've always felt lonely, all my life through; but most of all now that I'm getting up in years. I need to have somebody beside me——

GREGERS. YOU have Mrs. Sorby.

WERLE. Yes, I have her; and she has become, so to speak, almost indispensable to me. She is bright and even-tempered; she enlivens the house; and that's such a great thing for me.

GREGERS. Well then, you have everything just as you wish.

WERLE. Yes, but I'm afraid it can't last. A woman so placed may easily find herself in a false position, in the eyes of the world. For that matter, it does a man no good either.

GREGERS. Oh, when a man gives such dinners as you give, he can risk a great deal.

WERLE. Yes, but she, Gregers? I'm afraid she won't accept the situation much longer; and even if she did—even if, out of attachment to me, she were to disregard gossip and scandal and all that——? Do you think, Gregers—you with your highly developed sense of justice——

GREGERS [*interrupts him*]. Tell me in one word: are you thinking of marrying her.

WERLE. Suppose I was thinking of it? What then?

GREGERS. That's what I say: what then?

WERLE. Would you be inflexibly opposed to it ?

GREGERS. Not at all. Not by any means.

WERLE. I didn't know whether your devotion to your mothers memory——

GREGERS. I am not overstrained.

WERLE. Well, whatever you may or may not be, at all events you've lifted a great weight from my mind. I'm extremely pleased that I can reckon on your concurrence in this matter.

GREGERS [*looking intently at him*]. Now I see what you want to do with me.

WERLE. TO do with you ? What an expression!

GREGERS. Oh, don't let us be nice in our choice of words—not when we're alone together, at any rate. [*With a short laugh.*] Well well! This is the reason why I had to come to town in person. For the sake of Mrs. Sorby, we're to get up a pretence at family life in the house—a tableau of filial affection. That'll be something new indeed.

WERLE. HOW dare you speak in that tone!

GREGERS. Was there ever any family life here? Never since I can remember. But now I suppose you require something of the sort. No doubt it'll have an excellent effect when it's reported that the son has hastened home, on the wings of filial piety, to the grey-haired father's wedding-feast. What'll remain of all the rumours as to the wrongs the poor dead mother had to put up with ? Not a vestige. Her son annihilates them at one stroke.

WERLE. Gregers—I believe there's no one in the world you dislike as much as me.

GREGERS [*softly*], I've seen you

WERLE. You've seen me with your mother's eyes. [*Lowers his voice a little.*] But you should remember—that her vision was clouded now and then.

GREGERS [*trembling*]. I see what you're hinting at. But who was to blame for mother's unfortunate weakness? Why, you, and all these——! The last of them was that woman you palmed off upon Hjalmar Ekdal, when you no longer——
Ugh!

WERLE [*shrugs his shoulders*]. Word for word as if it were your mother speaking!

GREGERS [*without heeding*]. And tjhere he sits now, with his great confiding, childlike mind, in the midst of the deception—lives under the same roof with such a creature, and does not know that what he calls his home is built upon a lie! [*Comes a step nearer.*] When I look back upon your past, I seem to see a battle-field with shattered lives on every hand.

WERLE. I almost think the chasm that divides us is too wide.

GREGERS [*bowing, with self-command*]. So I have observed ; and therefore I take my hat and go.

WERLE. You're going! out of the house ?

GREGERS. Yes, for at last I see my mission in life!

WERLE. What mission ?

GREGERS. You would only laugh if I told you.

WERLE. A lonely man doesn't laugh so easily, Gregers.

GREGERS [*pointing towards the background*]. Look, father,—the Charaberlains, are playing blind-man's buff with Mrs. Sorby. Good-night and good-bye.

[He goes out by the back to the right. Sounds of laughter and merriment from the COMPANY, who appear in the outer room.]

WERLE [*muttering contemptuously after GREGERS*]. Ha—— Poor wretch—and he says he's not overstrained !

A C T I I

HIALMAR EKDAL'S studio, a good-sized room at the top of the house. On the right, a sloping roof of large panes of glass, half covered by a blue curtain. In the right-hand corner, at the back, the entrance door; further forward, on the same side, a door leading to the sitting-room. Two corresponding doors on the opposite side, and between them an iron stove. At the back a wide double sliding-door. The studio is plainly but comfortably fitted up and furnished. Between the doors on the right, standing out a little from the wall, a sofa with a table and some chairs; on the left a lighted lamp with a

shade; beside the stove an old armchair. Photographic instruments and apparatus of different kinds lying about We room. Against the back wall, to the left of the double door, stands a bookcase containing a few books, boxes, and bottles of chemicals, instruments, tools, and other objects. Photographs and small articles, such as camel's-hair pencils, paper, and so forth, lie on the table.

GINA EKDAL *sits on a chair by the table, sewing. HEDVIG is sitting on the sofa with her hands shading her eyes and her thumbs in her ears, reading a Book.*

GINA [*glances once or twice at HEDVIG, as if with secret anxiety; then says:*] Hedvig! [HEDVIG *does not hear. GINA repeats more loudly.*] Hedvig!

HEDVIG [*takes away her hands and looks up*]. Yes, mother?

GINA. Hedvig dear, you mustn't sit reading any longer now.

HEDVIG. Oh, mother, mayn't I read a little more? Just a little bit?

GINA. No, no, you must put away your book now. Your father doesn't like it; he never reads himself in the evening.

HEDVIG [*shuts the book*]. No, father doesn't care much about reading.

GINA [*puts aside her sewing and takes up a lead pencil and a little account-book from the table*]. Can you remember how much we paid for the butter to-day?

HEDVIG. It was one crown sixty-five.

GINA. That's right. [*Puts it down.*] It's terrible what a lot of butter we get through in this house. Then there was the smoked sausage, and the cheese—let me see—[*writes*]—and the ham—h'm. [*Adds up.*] Yes, that makes just——

HEDVIG. And then the beer.

GINA. Yes, of course. [*Writes.*] How it mounts up! But we can't do with less.

HEDVIG. But then you and I didn't need anything hot for dinner, as father was out.

GINA. NO, that was a good thing. And then I took eight crowns fifty for photographs.

HEDVIG. Really! So much as that?

GINA. Exactly eight crowns fifty.

[Silence. GINA takes up her sewing again. HEDVIG takes paper and pencil and begins to draw, shading her eyes with her left hand.]

HEDVIG. Isn't it jolly to think that father's at Mr. Werle's big dinner party?

GINA. You can't say that he's exactly Mr. Werle's guest. It was the son that invited him. [After a pause.] We've nothing to do with that Mr. Werle.

HEDVIG. I'm longing for father to come home. He promised to ask Mrs. Sorby for something nice for me.

GINA. Yes, there are plenty of good things going in that house, I can tell you.

HEDVIG [continues drawing]. I believe I'm rather hungry too.

[OLD EKDAL, with the paper parcel under his arm and another parcel in his coat pocket, comes in through the entrance door.]

GINA. How late you are to-day, grandfather!

EKDAL. They'd closed the office. Had to wait in Graberg's room. And then they let me through—h'm.

HEDVIG. Did you get some fresh copying, grandfather?

EKDAL. This whole packet. Just look.

GINA. That's capital.

HEDVIG. And you've got another parcel in your pocket.

EKDAL. Eh? Oh, nonsense, that's nothing. [Puts his stick away in a corner.] This work'll keep me a long time, Gina. [Opens one of the sliding-doors in the back wall a little.] Hush! [Peeps into the room for a moment, then pushes the door carefully to again.] Hee-hee! They're fast asleep, all the lot of them. And she's gone into the basket herself. Hee-hee!

HEDVIG. Are you sure she's not cold in that basket, grandfather?

EKDAL. Not a bit of it! Cold? With all that straw? [Goes towards the farther door on the left.] There are matches in here, I suppose.

GINA. The matches are on the drawers.

[EKDAL *goes into his room.*

HEDVIG. It's nice that grandfather's got all that copying.

GINA. Yes, poor old father,* it means a bit of pocket-money for him.

HEDVIG. And he won't be able to sit the whole forenoon down at that horrid Madam Eriksen's.

GINA. NO more he will.

[*Short silence,*

HEDVIG. DO you suppose they're still at the dinner-table?

GINA. Goodness knows; very likely.

HEDVIG. Think of all the delicious things father's having to eat! I'm^certain he'll be in Splendid spirits when he comes. Don't you think so mother?

GINA. Yes; and if only we could tell him that we'd got the room let——

HEDVIG. Butwe don't need that this evening.

GINA. Oh, we'd be none the worse of it, I can tell you. It's no use to us as it is.

HEDVIG. I mean that we don't need it this evening, for father'll be in a good humour anyhow. We'd better save up the room for another time.

GINA [*tools across at her*]. Are you glad when you've some good news to tell father when he comes home in the evening?

HEDVIG. Yes; for then we have a pleasanter time.

GINA [*thinking to herself*]. Yes, there's something in that.

[OLD EKDAL *comes in again and is going out by the foremost door to the left.*

GINA [*half turning in her chair*]. Do you want something out of the kitchen, grandfather?

EKDAL. Yes, I do, yes. Don't you trouble. [*Goes out.*]

GINA. He's not raking away at the fire, is he? [*Waits a moment.*] Hedvig, go and see what he's about.

[EKDAL *comes in again with a small jug of steaming hot water.*

HEDVIG. Are you getting some hot water, grandfather?

EKDAL. Yes, I am. Want it for something. Want to write, and the ink has got as thick as porridge,—h'm.

GINA. But you ought to have supper first, grandfather. It's laid in there.

EKDAL. Can't be bothered with supper, Gina. Very busy, I tell you. No one's to come to my room. No one—h'm.

[He goes into his room; GINA and HEDVIG look at each other.]

GINA *[softly]*. Can you imagine where he's got money from?

HEDVIG. From Graberg, I daresay.

GINA. Not a bit of it. Graberg always sends the money to me.

HEDVIG. Then he must have got a bottle on credit somewhere.

GINA. Poor grandfather, who'd give him credit?

[HIALMAR EKDAL, in an overcoat and grey felt hat, comes in from the right.]

GINA *[throws down her sewing and rises]*. Why, Ekdal, are you here already?

HEDVIG *[at the same time, jumping up]*. Fancy your coming so soon, father!

HIALMAR *[taking off his hat]*. Yes, most of the people were coming away.

HEDVIG. So early?

HIALMAR. Yes, it was a dinner-party, you know.

[Is taking off his overcoat.]

GINA. Let me help you.

HEDVIG. Me too.

[They draw off his coat; GINA hangs it up on the back wall.]

HEDVIG. Were there many there, father?

HIALMAR. Oh no, not many. We were about twelve or fourteen at table.

GINA. And you had some talk with them all?

HIALMAR. Oh yes, a little; but Gregers took me up most of the time.

GINA. Is Gregers as ugly as ever?

HIALMAR. Well, he's not very much to look at. Hasn't the old man come home?

HEDVIG. Yes, grandfather's in his room, writing.

HIALMAR. Did he say anything ?

GINA. No, what should he say ?

HIALMAR. Didn't he say anything about——? I fancy I heard that he'd been with Graberg. I'll go in to him for a moment.

GINA. No, no, better not.

HIALMAR. Why not? Did he say he didn't want me to go in?

GINA. He doesn't want to see anybody this evening——

HEDVIG [*making signs*], H'm—h'm!

GINA [*not noticing*],——he's been in to fetch hot water——

HIALMAR. Aha! Then he's——?

GINA. Yes, I suppose so.

HIALMAR. O God! my poor old white-haired father!—Well, well; there let him sit and get all the enjoyment he can.

[OLD EKDAL, *in an indoor coat and with a lighted pipe, comes from his room,*

EKDAL. Got home? Thought it was you I heard talking.

HIALMAR. Yes, I've just come.

EKDAL. You didn't see me, did you ?

HIALMAR. NO; but they said you'd passed through—so I thought I'd follow you.

EKDAL. H'm, kind of you, Hialmar. Who were they, all those fellows?

HIALMAR. Oh, all sorts of people. There was Chamberlain Flor, and Chamberlain Balle, and Chamberlain Kaspersen, and Chamberlain—this, that, and the other—I don't know who all——

EKDAL [*nodding*]. Hear that, Gina! He's been with nothing but Chamberlains.

GINA. Yes, I hear they're terribly genteel in that house nowadays.

HEDVIG. Did the Chamberlains sing, father? Or did they read aloud?

HIALMAR. NO, they only chattered. They wanted me to recite something for them; but I knew better than that.

EKDAL. Didn't you do it ?

GINA. Oh, you might have done it.

HALMAR. No one mustn't be, at every body's beck and call.
[Walks about the room.] Lwon't, at any rate.

EKDAL. No, no; Hialmar's not to be had for the asking.

HALMAR. I don't see why I should bother myself to entertain people on the rare occasions when I go into society. Let the others exert themselves. These fellows go from one great dinner-table to the next and gorge and guzzle day out and day in. It's for them to bestir themselves and do something in return for all the good food they get.

GINA. But you didn't say that?

HALMAR [humming]. Ho-ho-ho——; faith, I gave them a bit of my mind.

EKDAL. Not the Chamberlains!

HALMAR. Oh, why not? [Lightly.] We got into a little dispute about Tokay afterwards.

EKDAL. Tokay! There's a fine wine for you?

HALMAR [comes to a standstill]. It may be a fine wine. But of course you know the vintages differ; it all depends on how much sunshine the grapes have got.

GINA. Why, you know everything, Ekdal.

EKDAL. And did they dispute that?

HALMAR. They tried to; but they didn't much like being told that it was just the same with Chamberlains—that with them, too, different batches were of different qualities.

GINA. What things you think of!

EKDAL. Hee-hee! So they got that in their pipes too.

HALMAR. Right to their faces.

EKDAL. DO you hear that, Gina? He said it right to the Chamberlains' faces.

GINA. Just think——! Right to their faces!

HALMAR. Yes, but I don't want it talked about. One doesn't speak of such things. The whole affair passed off in all friendliness, of course. They were nice, genial fellows; I didn't want to wound them—not I!

EKDAL. Right to their faces!

HEDVIG [caressingly]. How nice it is to see you in a dress-coat! It suits you, father.

HALMAR. Yes, doesn't it? And this one really sits to perfection. It fits almost as if it had been made for me;—a little tight in the arm-holes perhaps;—help me, Hedvig. [*Takes off the coat.*] I think I'll put on my jacket. Where's my jacket, Gina?

GINA. Here it is. [*Brings the jacket and helps him.*]

HALMAR. That's it! Don't forget to send the coat back to Molvik first thing to-morrow morning.

GINA [*laying it away*]. I'll be sure and see to it.

HALMAR [*stretching himself*]. After all, this is more comfortable. A free-and-easy indoor costume suits my whole personality better. Don't you think so, Hedvig?

HEDVIG. Yes, father.

HALMAR. When I loosen my necktie into a pair of flowing ends—like this—eh?

HEDVIG. Yes, that goes so well with your moustache and the sweep of your curls.

HALMAR. I shouldn't call them curls exactly; I'd rather say locks.

HEDVIG. Yes, but they're really big curls.

HALMAR. NO, locks.

HEDVIG [*after a pause, twitching his jacket*]. Father!

HALMAR. Well, what is it?

HEDVIG. Oh, you know very well.

HALMAR. NO, really I don't—

HEDVIG [*half laughing, half whimpering*]. Oh yes, father; now don't tease me any longer!

HALMAR. Why, what do you mean?

HEDVIG [*shaking him*]. Oh, nonsense; come, where are they, father? All the good things you promised me, you know?

HALMAR. Oh—if I haven't forgotten all about them!

HEDVIG. NOW you're only making game of me, father! Oh, it's a shame! Where have you put them?

HALMAR. NO, I positively forgot to get anything. But wait a little! I've got something else for you, Hedvig.

[*Goes and searches in the coat pockets.*]

HEDVIG [*skipping and clapping her hands*]. Oh mother, mother!

GINA. There, you see; if only you give him time——

HIALMAR [*with a paper*]. Look, here it is.

HEDVIG. That? Why, that's only a paper.

HIALMAR. That's the bill of fare, the whole bill of fare. Here you see: "Menu"—that means bill of fare.

HEDVIG. Haven't you anything else?

HIALMAR. I forgot the other things, I tell you. But you may take my word for it, these dainties are very unsatisfying. Sit down at the table and read the bill of fare, and then I'll describe to you how the dishes taste. Here you are, Hedvig.

HEDVIG [*gulping down her tears*]. Thank you.

[*She seats herself, but does not read; GINA makes signs to her;*

HIALMAR notices it.

HIALMAR [*walking up and down the room*]. No one knows how much the father of a family has to think of; and if he forge'ts the slightest thing, he's treated to sour faces at once. Well, well, one gets used to that too. [*Stops near the stove, by the old mans chair.*] Have you peeped in there this evening, father?

EKDAL. Yes, to be sure I have. She's gone into the basket.

HIALMAR. Ah, she's gone into the basket! Then she's beginning to get used to it.

EKDAL. , Yes; just as I prophesied. But you know there are still a few little things——

HIALMAR. A few improvements, yes.

EKDAL. They're quite necessary, you know.

HIALMAR. Yes. Let's have a talk about the improvements, father. Come, and we'll sit on the sofa.

EKDAL. All right. H'm, let me fill my pipe first. Must just clean it too. H'm. [*He goes into his room.*

GINA [*smiling at HIALMAR*]. His pipe!

HIALMAR. Oh yes, yes, Gina; let him alone——; the poor shipwrecked old man.—Yes, these improvements—we'd better get them out of hand to-morrow.

GINA. You'll hardly have time to-morrow, Ekdal.

HEDVIG [*interposing*]. Oh yes he will, mother I

GINA.——for remember those copies that have to be re-touched; they've sent for them time after time.

HIALMAR. Oh, bother the copies. I'll soon get them finished. Have any new orders come in?

GINA. No, worse luck; to-morrow I've nothing but those two sittings, you know.

HIALMAR. Nothing else? Oh no, when one doesn't set about things with a will——

GINA. But what more can I do? Don't I advertise in the papers as much as we can afford?

HIALMAR. Yes, the papers, the papers; you see how much good *that* does. And I suppose no one has been to see the room either?

GINA. NO, not yet.

HIALMAR. That was only to be expected. Unless one's on the alert——The thing is to make a real effort, Gina.

HEDVIG [*going towards him*]. Shall I fetch you the flute, father?

HIALMAR. NO; no flute for me; / want no pleasures in this world. [*Walking about.*] Yes, I'll work to-morrow; you'll see if I don't. You may be sure I'll work as long as my strength holds out.

GINA. But my dear good Ekdal, I didn't mean it in that way.

HEDVIG. Father, shall I bring in a bottle of beer?

HIALMAR. NO, certainly not. I require nothing, nothing——[*comes to a standstill*]. Beer? Were you talking about beer?

HEDVIG [*cheerfully*]. Yes, father; beautiful fresh beer.

HIALMAR. Well——since you insist upon it, you may bring in a bottle.

GINA. Yes, do; and we'll be nice and cosy.

[HEDVIG runs towards the kitchen door.

HIALMAR [*by the stove, stops her, looks at her, puts his arm round her neck, and presses her to him*]. Hedvig, Hedvig!

HEDVIG [*joyfully and in tears*]. My dear, kind father!

HIALMAR. NO, don't call me that. Here have I been reveling at the rich man's table,—been sitting and gorging myself at the groaning board——! And I couldn't even——!

GINA [*sitting at the table*]. Oh nonsense, nonsense, Ekdal.

HALMAR. Oh, but you mustn't be too hard upon me. **You** know that I love you for all that.

HEDVIG [*throwing her arms round him*]. And we love you, oh so dearly, father!

HALMAR. And if I'm unreasonable sometimes—why then—you must remember that J'm a man., beset by a host of cares. There there! [*Dries her eyes.*] No beer at such a moment as this. Give me the flute. [HEDVIG runs to the bookcase and fetches it.] Thanks! That's right. With my flute in my hand and you two at my side—ah——!

[HEDVIG seats herself at the table near GINA; HALMAR wanders up and down, then sets energetically to work and plays a Bohemian peasant dance, but in a slow plaintive tempo, and with sentimental expression.

HALMAR [*breaking off the melody, holds out his left hand to GINA, and says with emotion*]. Our roof may be poor and humble, Gina; but it is home. And with all my heart I say: here dwells my happiness.

[*He begins to play again; almost immediately after, a knocking is heard at the entrance door.*

GINA [*rising*]. Hush, Ekdal,—I think there's somebody coming.

HALMAR [*laying the flute in the bookcase*]. There! Again! [GINA goes and opens the door.

GREGERS WERLE [*in the passage*]. Excuse me——

GINA [*starting back slightly*]. Oh !

GREGERS.—Doesn't Mr. Ekdal, the photographer, live here?

GINA. Yes, he does.

HALMAR [*going towards the door*]. Gregers! **You** here after all? Well, come in, then.

GREGERS [*coming in*]. I told you I would come and look you up.

HALMAR. But this evening——? Have you left the party?

GREGERS. I've left both the party and my father's house—— Good-evening, Mrs. Ekdal. I don't know whether you recognise me?

GINA. Oh yes; it's not difficult to know young Mr. Werle again.

GREGERS. No, I'm like my mother; and of course you remember her.

HALMAR. Have you left the house, do you say?

GREGERS. Yes, I've gone to a hotel.

HALMER. Indeed. Well, since you've come, take off your coat and sit down.

GREGERS. Thanks.

[He draws off his overcoat. He is now dressed in a plain grey suit of a countrified cut.]

HALMAR. Here, on the sofa. Make yourself comfortable.

[GREGERS seats himself on the sofa; HALMAR takes a chair at the table.]

GREGERS *[looking around him]*. So these are your quarters, Hialmar—this is your home.

HALMAR. This is the studio, as you see—

GINA. But it's the largest of our rooms, so we generally sit here.

HALMAR. We used to live in a better place; but this flat has one great advantage: there are such capital outer rooms—

GINA. And we have a room on the other side of the passage, that we can let.

GREGERS *[to HALMAR]*. Ah, so you have lodgers too?

HALMAR. NO, not yet. They're not so easy to find, you see; you've got to keep your eyes about you. *[To HEDVIG.]* What about that beer?

[HEDVIG nods and goes out into the kitchen.]

GREGERS. Your daughter, I suppose?

HALMAR. Yes, that's Hedvig.

GREGERS. And she's your only child?

HALMAR. Yes, the only one. She's the joy of our lives, and—*[lowering his voice]*—at the same time our deepest sorrow, Gregers.

GREGERS. What do you mean?

HALMAR. She's in danger of losing her eyesight.

GREGERS. Becoming blind?

HALMAR. Yes. Only the first symptoms have appeared as

yet, and she may not feel it much for some time. But the doctor has warned us. It's coming, inexorably.

GREGERS. What an awful misfortune! How do you account for it?

HALMAR [*sighs*]. Hereditary, no doubt.

GREGERS [*starting*]. Hereditary?

GINA. Ekdal's mother had weak eyes.

HALMAR. Yes, so my father says; I can't remember her.

GREGERS. Poor child! And how does she take it?

HALMAR. Oh, you can imagine we haven't the heart to tell her of it. She suspects no danger. Gay and careless and chirping like a little bird, she's fluttering into the eternal night of her life. [*Overcome.*] Oh, it's cruelly hard for me, Gregers.

[HEDVIG *brings a tray with her and beer glasses, which she sets upon the table.*

HALMAR [*stroking her hair*]. Thanks, thanks, Hedvig.

[HEDVIG *puts her arm round his neck and whispers in his ear.*

HALMAR. No, no bread and butter just now. [*Looks up.*] But perhaps you'd like some, Gregers.

GREGERS [*with a gesture of refusal*]. No, no, thank you.

HALMAR [*still melancholy*]. Well, you can bring in a little all the same. If you have a crust, that's all I want. And put plenty of butter on it, mind.

[HEDVIG *nods gaily and goes out into the kitchen at in.*

GREGERS [*who has been following her with his eyes*]. She seems quite strong and healthy otherwise.

GINA. Yes. In other ways there's nothing amiss with her, thank goodness.

GREGERS. She promises to be very like you, Mrs. Ekdal. How old is she now?

GINA. Hedvig will soon be exactly fourteen; her birthday is the day after to-morrow.

GREGERS. She's pretty tall for her age.

GINA. Yes, she's shot up wonderfully this last year.

GREGERS. It makes one realise one's own age to see these young people growing up.—How long is it now since you were married?

GINA. We've been married—let me see—nearly fifteen years.

GREGERS. Is it so long as that ?

GINA [*becomes attentive; looks at him*]. Yes, it is indeed.

HALMAR. Yes, so it is. Fifteen years all but a few months. [*Changing his tone.*] They must have been long years for you, up at the works, Gregers.

GREGERS. They seemed long while I was living them; now they're over, I hardly know how the time has gone.

[*OLD EKDAL comes from his room without his pipe, but with his old-fashioned uniform cap on his head; his gait is somewhat unsteady.*]

EKDAL. There, Hjalmar, now we can have a good talk about this—h'm—what was it again ?

HALMAR [*going towards him*]. Father, we've a visitor here—Gregers Werle.—I don't know if you remember him.

EKDAL [*looking at GREGERS, who has risen*]. Werle? Is that the son? What does he want with me ?

HALMAR. Nothing; it's me he's come to see.

EKDAL. Oh! Then there's nothing wrong ?

HALMAR. NO, of course not.

EKDAL [*swinging his arms*]. Not that I'm afraid, you know; but——

GREGERS [*goes over to him*]. Let me give you a greeting from your old hunting-grounds, Lieutenant Ekdal.

EKDAL. Hunting-grounds?

GREGERS. Yes, up in Hoidal, about the works, you know.

EKDAL. Oh, up there. Yes, I knew all those places well in the old times.

GREGERS. YOU were a great sportsman then.

EKDAL. SO I was, I don't deny it. You're looking at my uniform cap. I don't ask anybody's leave to wear it in the house. So long as I don't go out in the streets with it——

[*HEDVIG brings a plate of bread and butter, which she puts upon the table.*]

HALMAR. Sit down, father, and have a glass of beer. Help yourself, Gregers.

[*EKDAL mutters and stumbles over to the sofa.* GREGERS

seats himself on the chair nearest to him, HIALMAR on the other side of GREGERS. GINA sits a little way from the table, sewing; HEDVIG stands beside her father.

GREGERS. Can you remember, Lieutenant Ekdal, how Hialmar and I used to come up and visit you in the summer and at Christmas?

EKDAL. Did you? No, no, no; I don't remember it. But sure enough I've been a great sportsman. I've shot bears too. I've shot nine of them.

GREGERS [*looking sympathetically at him*]. And now you never get any shooting?

EKDAL. Can't say that, sir. Get a shot now and then perhaps. Of course not in the old way. For the woods, you see—the woods, the woods——! [*Drinks.*] Are the woods fine up there now?

GREGERS. Not so fine as in your time. They've been thinned a good deal.

EKDAL. Thinned? [*More softly, and as if afraid.*] It's dangerous work that. Bad things come of it. The woods avenge themselves.

HIALMAR [*filling up his glass*]. Come—a little more, father.

GREGERS. HOW can a man like you—such a man for the open air—live in the midst of a stuffy town, boxed within four walls?

EKDAL [*laughs quietly and glances at HIALMAR*]. Oh, it's not so bad here. Not at all so bad.

GREGERS. But don't you miss all that you used to be so fond of—the cool sweeping breezes, the free life in the woods and on the uplands, amongst beasts and birds——?

EKDAL [*smiling*]. Hialmar, shall we let him see it?

HIALMAR [*hastily and a little embarrassed*]. Oh no, no, father; not this evening.

GREGERS. What does he want to show me?

HIALMAR. Oh, it's only something—you can see it another time.

GREGERS [*continues, to the old man*]. You see, I've been thinking, Lieutenant Ekdal, that you should come up with me to the works; I'm sure to be going back soon. You could

probably get some copying there too. And here, you have nothing on earth to interest you—nothing to liven you up.

EKDAL [*stares in astonishment at him*]. Have / nothing on earth to——!

GREGERS. Of course you have Hialmar; but then he has his own family. And a man like you, who has always had such a passion for what is free and wild——

EKDAL [*thumps the table*], Hialmar, he *shall* see it!

HIALMAR. Oh but, father, is it worth while? It's all dark.

EKDAL. Nonsense; it's moonlight. [*Rises.*] He *shall* see it, I tell you. Let me "pass!" Come and help me, Hialmar!

HEDVIG. Oh yes, do, father!

HIALMAR [*rising*']. Very well, then.

GREGERS [*to GINA*]. What is it?

GINA. Oh, you mustn't think it's anything so very wonderful.

[EKDAL and HIALMAR have gone to the back wall and are each pushing back a side of the sliding-door; HEDVIG helps the old man; GREGERS remains standing by the sofa; GINA sits still and sews. Through the open doorway a large, deep, irregular garret is seen with odd nooks and corners; a couple of stove-pipes running through it, from rooms below. There are skylights through which clear moonlight shines in on some parts of the great room; others lie in deep shadow.

EKDAL [*to GREGERS*]. You may come right in if you like.

GREGERS [*going over to them*]. But what is it?

EKDAL. Come and see. H'm.

HIALMAR [*somewhat embarrassed*]. This belongs to father, you understand.

GREGERS [*at the door, looks into the garret*]. Why, you keep poultry, Lieutenant Ekdal!

EKDAL. Should think we did keep poultry. They've gone |to roost now. But you should just see our fowls by daylight!

HEDVIG. And there's a——

EKDAL. Hush—hush; don't say anything about it yet.

GREGERS. And you've got pigeons too, I see.

EKDAL. Oh yes, haven't we got pigeons! They have their

nests up there under the roof-tree; for pigeons like to roost high, you see.

HALMAR. They aren't all common pigeons.

EKDAL. Common! Should think not indeed! We have tumblers, and a pair of pouters too. But come here! Can you see that hutch down there by the wall?

GREGERS. Yes; what do you use it for?

EKDAL. That's where the rabbits sleep, sir.

GREGERS. Dear me, so you've rabbits too?

EKDAL. Yes, I believe you, we have rabbits! He's asking if we have rabbits, Hialmar! H'm. But now comes *the* thing, you must know; here we have it; move away, Hedvig. Stand here; that's right,—and now look down there. Don't you see a basket with straw in it?

GREGERS. Yes. And I see there's a fowl *in* the basket.

EKDAL. H'm—" a fowl "——

GREGERS. Isn't it a duck?

EKDAL [*hurt*]. Yes, of course it's a duck.

HALMAR. But what *kind* of duck, do you think?

HEDVIG. It's not just a common duck.

EKDAL. Hush!

GREGERS. And it's not a Turkish duck either.

EKDAL. No, Mr.—Werle; it's not a Turkish duck; for it's a wild duck!

GREGERS. NO, is it really? A wild duck?

EKDAL. Yes, it is. That "fowl" as you call it—is the wild duck. It's our wild duck, sir.

HEDVIG. My wild duck. She belongs to me.

GREGERS. And can it live up here in the garret? Does it thrive?

EKDAL. Of course it has a trough of water to splash about in, you know.

HALMER. Fresh water every other day.

GINA [*turning towards HALMAR*]. But my dear Ekdal, it's getting icy cold here.

EKDAL. H'm, let's shut up, then. It's as well not to disturb their night's rest, too. Close up, Hedvig.

[HALMAR and HEDVIG push the garret doors together.]

EKDAL. Another time you shall see her properly. [*Sits himself in the armchair by the stove.*] Oh, they're curious things, these wild ducks, I can tell you.

GREGERS. HOW did you manage to catch it, Lieutenant Ekdal?

EKDAL. I didn't catch it. There's a certain man in this town whom we have to thank for it.

GREGERS [*starts slightly*]. That man wasn't my father, was he?

EKDAL. You've hit it. Your father and no one else. H'm.

HIALMAR. It was odd that you should guess that, Gregers.

GREGERS. You were telling me that you owed such a lot of things to my father; and so I thought perhaps——

GINA. But we didn't get the duck from Mr. Werle himself——

EKDAL. It's Hakon Werle we have to thank for her, all the same, Gina. [*To GREGERS.*] He was out in a boat, you see, and he shot her. But your father's sight is pretty bad now. H'm; he only wounded her.

GREGERS. Ah! She got a couple of shot in her body, I suppose.

HIALMAR. Yes, two or three.

HEDVIG. She was hit under the wing, so that she couldn't fly.

GREGERS. And so she dived to the bottom, eh?

EKDAL [*sleepily, in a thick voice*]. Of course. Wild ducks always do that. They shoot to the bottom as deep as they can get, sir, and bite themselves fast in the tangle and seaweed and all the confounded stuff that grows down there. And they never come up again.

GREGERS. But your wild duck came up again, Lieutenant Ekdal.

EKDAL. Your father had such an extraordinarily clever dog. And that dog—he dived in after the duck and fished her up again.

GREGERS [*who has turned to HIALMAR*]. And then you took her in here!

HALMAR. Not at once; at first she was taken home to your father's house; but she wouldn't thrive there; so Pettersen was told to put an end to her.

EKDAL [*half asleep*], H'm, yes, Pettersen—that ass——

HALMAR [*speaking more softly*]. That's how we got her, you see; for father knows Pettersen a little; and when he heard about the wild duck he got him to hand her over to us.

GREGERS. And she thrives all right in the garret there?

HALMAR. Yes, wonderfully well. She's got fat. You see she's been in there so long now that she's forgotten her natural wild life; and it all depends on that.

GREGERS. You're right there, Hialmar. Only never let her get a glimpse of the sky and the sea——But I mustn't stop any longer; I think your father's asleep.

HALMAR. Oh, as for that——

GREGERS. But, by-the-by—you said you had a room to let—a spare room?

HALMAR. Yes; what then? Do you know of anybody——

GREGERS. Can I have that room?

HALMAR. YOU?

GINA. Oh no, Mr. Werle, *you*——

GREGERS. May I have the room? If so, I'll take possession first thing to-morrow morning.

HALMAR. Yes, with the greatest pleasure——

GINA. But, Mr. Werle, it's not at all the sort of room for *you*.

HALMAR. Gina! how can you say that?

GINA. Well, the room's neither large enough nor light enough, and——

GREGERS. That doesn't matter, Mrs. Ekdal.

HALMAR. I call it quite a nice room, and not badly furnished either.

GINA. But remember the two that live underneath.

GREGERS. What two?

GINA. Oh, one of them has been a tutor——

HALMAR. He's a Mr. Molvik.

GINA. And then there's a doctor called Relling.

GREGERS. Relling? I know him a little; he practised for a time up in Hoidal.

GINA. They're a pair of regular ne'er-do-wells. They're often out on the loose in the evenings, and then they come home very late, and they're not always quite——

GREGERS. One soon gets accustomed to that sort of thing. I hope I'll be like the wild duck——

GINA. H'm; I think you ought to sleep upon it first, all the same.

GREGERS. YOU seem very unwilling to have me in the house, Mrs. Ekdal.

GINA. Oh no! how can you think so?

HIALMAR. Well, you really behave strangely about it, Gina. *[To GREGERS.]* Then you're thinking of staying in the town for the present?

GREGERS *[putting on his overcoat]*. Yes, now I'm thinking of remaining here.

HIALMAR. And yet not at your father's? What do you propose to do?

GREGERS. Ah, if I only knew that, I shouldn't be so badly off! But when one has the misfortune to be called Gregers——! "Gregers"—and then "Werle" after it; did you ever hear anything so hideous?

HIALMAR. Oh, I don't think so at all.

GREGERS. Ugh! Bah! I feel as if I should like to spit upon the fellow that answers to such a name. When one has the misfortune to be Gregers—Werle in this world, as I am——

HIALMAR *[laughs]*. Ha ha! If you weren't Gregers Werle, what would you like to be?

GREGERS. If I could choose, I should like best to be a clever dog.

GINA. A dog!

HEDVIG *[involuntarily]*. Oh no!

GREGERS. Yes, an extraordinarily clever dog; one that goes to the bottom after wild ducks when they dive and bite themselves fast in tangle and seaweed, down among the ooze.

HIALMAR. Look here now, Gregers—I don't understand a word of all this.

GREGERS. Oh well, I daresay it's not worth understanding. Then I'll move in early to-morrow morning. [*To GiNA.*] I won't give you any trouble, for I do everything for myself. [*To HIALMAR.*] We'll leave the rest till to-morrow. Good-night, Mrs. Ekdal. [*Nods to HEDVIG.*] Good-night.

GINA. Good-night, Mr. Werle.

HEDVIG. Good-night.

HIALMAR [*who has lighted a candle*]. Stop a minute, I must show you a light; it's sure to be dark on the stairs.

[GREGERS and HIALMAR go out through the passage door.

GiNA [*looking straight before her, with her sewing in her lap*]. Wasn't that strange talk about his wanting to be a dog!

HEDVIG. DO you know, mother, I believe he meant something quite different by that.

GINA. What should he mean?

HEDVIG. Oh, I don't know; but it seemed to me he meant something different from what he said, all the time.

GINA. DO you think so? Yes, it was strange.

HIALMAR [*comes back*]. The lamp was still burning. [*Puts out the candle and sets it down.*] Ah, now one can get a mouthful of food at last. [*Begins to eat the bread and butter.*] Well, you see, Gina—if you just keep your eyes open——

GINA. HOW, keep your eyes open?

HIALMAR. Why, aren't we lucky to have got the room let at last? And just think—to a person like Gregers—a good old friend.

GINA. I don't know what to say about it.

HEDVIG. Oh, mother, you'll see; it'll be such fun!

HIALMAR. You're very strange. You were so bent upon letting the room before, and now you don't like it.

GINA. Yes, I do, Ekdal; if it had only been to some one else——But what do you suppose Mr. Werle will say?

HIALMAR. Old Werle? It doesn't concern him.

GINA. But surely you can see that something's gone wrong between them again, as the young man's leaving home. You know very well how matters stand between those two.

HIALMAR. Yes, that's very likely, but——

GINA. And now Mr. Werle may think that iYs you who have egged him on——

HALMAR. Let him think so, then! Mr. Werle has done a great deal for me; far be it from me to deny it. But that doesn't make me everlastingly dependent upon him.

GINA. But, my dear Ekdal, mayn't grandfather suffer for it? Perhaps he'll lose the little bit of work he gets from Graberg now.

HALMAR. I'm inclined to say : so much the better! Isn't it humiliating for a man like me to see his grey-haired father going about as a pariah? But the fullness of time will soon come now, I trust. [*Takes a fresh piece of bread and butter,*] As sure as I've a mission in life, I mean to fulfil it now.

HEDVIG. Oh yes, father, do !

GINA. Hush, don't wake him !

HALMAR [*more softly*], I will fulfil it, I say. The day will come when——And therefore it's a good thing that we've let the room, for that makes me more independent. The man who has a mission in life must be independent. [*By the arm-chair, with emotion,*] Poor old white-haired father! Rely on your Hialmar. He has broad shoulders—strong shoulders, at any rate. you shall yet wake up some fine and——[*To GINA.*] Don't you believe it ?

GINA [*rising*']. Yes, of course I do; but in the meantime let's see about getting him to bed.

HALMAR. Yes, come.

[They take hold of the old man carefully.]

ACT III

HALMAR EKDAL'S studio. *It is morning; the daylight shines through the large window in the slanting roof; the curtain is drawn back.*

HALMAR *is sitting at the table, busy retouching a photograph; several others lie before him. Presently GINA, in her hat and cloak, enters by the passage door; she has a covered basket on her arm.*

HALMAR. Back already, Gina?

GINA. Oh yes, one has to look sharp.

[Sets her basket on a chair, and takes off her things.]

HALMAR. Did you look in at Gregers' room?

GINA. Yes, I did. It's a rare sight, I can tell you; he's begun by making a pretty mess of it.

HALMAR. Indeed?

GINA. He was determined to do everything for himself, he said; so when he set to work to light the stove, he must needs screw the damper round until the whole room was full of smoke. Ugh! It smelt like——

HALMAR. Well, really!

GINA. But that's not the worst of it; for then he wanted to put out the fire, and poured all the water from his ewer into the stove, so that the floor was swimming like a pig-sty.

HALMAR. How annoying!

GINA. I've got the porter's wife to clear up after him, pig that he is! But the room won't be habitable till the afternoon.

HALMAR. What's he doing with himself in the meantime?

GINA. He said he was going out for a little while.

HALMAR. I looked in upon him too, for a moment—after you had gone.

GINA. SO I heard. You've asked him to lunch.

HALMAR. Just to a little bit of early lunch, you know. It's his first day—we can hardly do less. You've got something in the house, I suppose?

GINA. I'll have to find something or other.

HALMAR. And don't be too sparing, for I think Relling and Molvik are coming up too. I just met Relling on the stairs, you see; so I had to——

GINA. Oh, are we to have those two as well?

HALMAR. Good Lord—a couple more or less can't make any difference.

OLD EKDAL *[opens his door and looks *»]*. I say, Hialmar——*[sees GINA.]* Oh!

GINA. Do you want anything, grandfather?

EKDAL. Oh no, it doesn't matter. H'm! *[Retires again.]*

GINA [*takes up the basket*]. Be sure you see that he doesn't go out.

HALMAR. All right, all right.—And, Gina, it wouldn't be amiss if you had a little herring-salad; Relling and Molvik were out on the loose again last night.

GINA. If only they don't come up too soon for me——

HALMAR. No, of course they won't; take your own time.

GINA. Very well; and meanwhile you can be working a bit.

HALMAR. Well, I *am* working! I'm working as hard as I can!

GINA. Then you'll have that job off your hands, you see.

[She goes out to the kitchen with her basket.

[HALMAR sits for a time working at the photograph; he does it lazily and listlessly.

EKDAL [*peeps in, looks round the studio and says softly*].

Are you busy?

HALMAR. Yes, I'm toiling away at these pictures——

EKDAL. Well, well, of course—since you're so busy—h'm!

[He goes out again; the door stands open.

HALMAR [*continues for some time in silence; then he lays down his brush and goes over to the door*]. Are you busy, father?

EKDAL [*in a grumbling tone, inside*]. If you're busy, I'm busy too. H'm!

HALMAR. Oh, all right. *[Goes to his work again.*

EKDAL [*presently, coming to the door again*]. H'm; I say, Hialmar, I'm not so very busy, you know.

HALMAR. I thought you were writing.

EKDAL. Oh, devil take it! Can't Graberg wait a day or two? It's not a matter of life and death, I should think.

HALMAR. No; and you're not his slave either.

EKDAL. And about that other business in there——

HALMAR. Just what I was thinking of. Do you want to go in? Shall I open the door for you?

EKDAL. Well, it wouldn't do any harm.

HALMAR [*rises*]. Then we'd have that off our hands.

EKDAL. Yes, exactly. It's got to be ready first thing to-morrow. It is to-morrow, isn't it? H'm?

HIALMAR. Yes, of course it's to-morrow.

[HIALMAR and EKDAL push aside the sliding door. The morning sun is shining in through the skylights; some doves are flying about; others are perched, cooing, upon the rafters; the hens cackle now and then, farther back in the garret.]

HIALMAR. There, now you can get to work, father.

EKDAL [*goes in*]. Aren't you coming too?

HIALMAR. Well, really, do you know——; I almost think——[*Sees GINA at the kitchen door.*] I? No; I haven't time; I must work.—But now for our new dodge——

[*He pulls a cord; a curtain slips down inside, the lower part consisting of a piece of sailcloth, the upper part of a stretched net. The floor of the garret is thus no longer visible.*]

HIALMAR [*goes to the table*]. There! Now I can sit in peace for a little while.

GINA. Is he rampaging in there again?

HIALMAR. Would you have preferred him to slip down to Madam Eriksen's? [*Seats himself.*] Do you want anything? You were saying——

GINA. I was only going to ask if you think we can lay the lunch-table here?

HIALMAR. Yes; nobody has made any early appointment, I suppose?

GINA. NO, we've no one to-day except those two sweethearts that are to be taken together.

HIALMAR. Why the deuce couldn't they be taken together another day!

GINA. But my dear Ekdal, I told them to come in the afternoon, when you're having your nap.

HIALMAR. Oh, that's capital. Very well, we'll have lunch here, then.

GINA. All right; but there's no hurry about laying the cloth; you can have the table for an hour yet.

HIALMAR. Do you think Pm not sticking at my work? I'm at it as hard as I can!

GINA. Then you'll be free later, you know.

[Goes out into the kitchen again. Short pause.]

EKDAL *[in the garret doorway, behind the net]*. Hialmar!

HIALMAR. Well?

EKDAL. Afraid we'll have to move the water-trough, after all.

HIALMAR. That's what I've been saying all along.

EKDAL. H'm—h'm—h'm. *[Goes away from the door again.]*

[HIALMAR goes on working a little; glances towards the garret and half rises. HEDVIG comes in from the kitchen.]

HIALMAR *[sits down again hurriedly]*. What do you want?

HEDVIG. I only wanted to come in beside you, father.

HIALMAR *[after a pause]*. It seems to me you go poking your nose everywhere. Are you set to watch me?

HEDVIG. NO, not at all.

HIALMAR. What's mother doing out there?

HEDVIG. Oh, mother's in the middle of making the herring-salad. *[Goes to the table.]* Isn't there any little thing I could help you with, father?

HIALMAR. Oh no. I must bear the whole burden—so long as my strength holds out. You needn't trouble, Hedvig; if only your father keeps his health——

HEDVIG. Oh no, father! You shan't talk in that horrible way.

[She wanders about a little, stops by the doorway, and looks into the garret.]

HIALMAR. What's he doing?

HEDVIG. I think he's making a new path to the water-trough.

HIALMAR. He'll never manage it by himself! And I'm doomed to sit here——!

HEDVIG *[goes to him]*. Let me take the brush, father; I know how to do it.

HIALMAR. Oh, nonsense; you'll only hurt your eyes.

HEDVIG. Not a bit. Give me the brush.

HIALMAR *[rising]*. Well, it'll only take a minute or two.

HEDVIG. Pooh, what harm can it do, then? *[Takes the*

brush.] There! [*Sets herself.*] And here's one I can begin upon.

HIALMAR. But mind you don't hurt your eyes! Do you hear? /wqn ^ tbg answerable; you must Jake the responsibility upon yourself—so I tell you!

HEDVIG [*retouching*]. Yes, yes, all right.

HIALMAR. You're quite clever at it, Hedvig. Only a minute or two, you know. [*He slips through by the edge of the curtain into the garret, HEDVIG sits at her work. HIALMAR and EKDAL are heard disputing inside.*]

HIALMAR [*appears behind the net*], I say, Hedvig—give me those pincers that are lying on the shelf. And the chisel. [*Turns away inside.*] Now you shall see, father. Just let me show you what I mean.

[*HEDVIG has fetched the required tools from the shelf, and hands them in to him.*]

HIALMAR. Ah, thanks. He couldn't have got on without me.

[*Goes in again; they are heard carpentering and talking inside. HEDVIG stands looking in at them. A moment later there is a knock at the passage door; she does not notice it, GREGERS WERLE [bareheaded, in indoor dress, enters and stops near the door], H'm——!*]

HEDVIG [*turns and goes towards him*]. Good-morning. Please come in.

GREGERS. Thank you. [*Looks towards the garret.*] You seem to have workpeople in the house.

HEDVIG. NO, it's only father and grandfather. I'll tell them you are here.

GREGERS. NO, no, don't do that; I'd rather wait a little.

[*Sets himself on the sofa.*]

HEDVIG. It's so untidy here.

[*Begins to clear away the photographs.*]

GREGERS. Oh, don't move them. Are those pictures that have to be finished?

HEDVIG. Yes, they're a few I was helping father with.

GREGERS. Don't let me disturb you at all.

HEDVIG. Oh no.

[She gathers the things to her and sits down to work; GREGERS looks at her, meanwhile, in silence.]

GREGERS. Did the wild duck sleep well last night ?

HEDVIG. Yes, I think so, thanks.

GREGERS *[turning towards the garret]*. It looks quite different by day from what it did last night in the moonlight.

HEDVIG. Yes, it varies so much. It looks different *in* the morning and in the afternoon; and it's different on rainy days from what it is in fine weather.

GREGERS. Have you noticed that ?

HEDVIG. Yes, how could I help it ?

GREGERS. Are *you* fond of being in there with the wild duck?

HEDVIG. Yes, when I can manage it——

GREGERS. Perhaps you haven't much leisure; you go to school, I daresay?

HEDVIG. NO, not now; father's afraid of me hurting my eyes.

GREGERS. Oh; then he reads with you himself ?

HEDVIG. Father has promised to read with me; but he hasn't had time yet.

GREGERS. Then is there nobody else that helps you a little?

HEDVIG. Yes, Mr. Molvik; but he's not always exactly——quite——

GREGERS. Sober?

HEDVIG. Yes, I suppose that's it!

GREGERS. Ah, then you've time for anything you please. And in there I suppose it's a sort of world by itself ?

HEDVIG. Oh yes, quite. And there are such lots of wonderful things.

GREGERS. Indeed?

HEDVIG. Yes, there are big cupboards full of books, and a great many of the books have pictures in them.

GREGERS. Aha!

HEDVIG. And there's an old bureau with drawers and flaps, and a big clock with figures that come out. But it doesn't go now.

GREGERS. SO time has come to a standstill in there—in the wild duck's domain.

HEDVIG. Yes. And there's an old paint-box and things of that sort; and all the books.

GREGERS. And you read the books, I suppose?

HEDVIG. Oh yes, when I get the chance. Most of them are English, though, and I don't understand English. But then I look at the pictures.—There's one great big book called "Harrison's History of London." ¹ It must be a hundred years old; and there are such heaps of pictures in it. At the beginning there's Death with an hour-glass, and a girl. I think that's horrid. But then there are all the other pictures of churches, and castles, and streets, and big ships sailing on the sea.

GREGERS. But tell me, where did all these wonderful things come from?

HEDVIG. Oh, an old sea captain once lived here, and he brought them home. They used to call him "The Flying Dutchman." That was curious, because he wasn't a Dutchman.

GREGERS. Wasn't he?

HEDVIG. No. But he disappeared at last; and so he left all these things behind him.

GREGERS. Tell me, now, when you're sitting in there looking at the pictures, don't you wish you could travel and see the great world itself?

HEDVIG. Oh no! I mean always to stay at home and help father and mother.

GREGERS. TO finish photographs?

HEDVIG. No, not only that. I should love above everything to learn to engrave pictures like those in the English books.

GREGERS. H'm. What does your father say to that?

HEDVIG. I don't think father likes it; he's so strange about that. Only think, he talks of my learning basket-making, and straw-plaiting! But I don't think *that* would lead to much.

GREGERS. Oh no, I don't think so either.

HEDVIG. But father was right in saying that if I had learnt

¹ *A New and Universal History of the Cities of London and Westminster* by Walter Harrison. London, 1775, folio.

basket-making I could have made the new basket for the wild duck.

GREGERS. SO you could; and it was, strictly speaking, your business, wasn't it?

HEDVIG. Yes, for it's m y wild duck.

GREGERS. Of course it is.

HEDVIG. Yes, it belongs to me. But I lend it to father and grandfather as often as they please.

GREGERS. Indeed? What do they do with it?

HEDVIG. Oh, they look after it, and build places for it, and soon.

GREGERS. NO doubt; for the wild duck is by far the most distinguished inhabitant of the garret, I suppose.

HEDVIG. Yes, indeed she is; for she's a real wild fowl, you know. And she's so much to be pitied; she has no one to care for, poor thing.

GREGERS. She has no family, as the rabbits have——

HEDVIG. NO. The hens too, many of them, were chickens together; but she's been taken right away from all her belongings. And then there's such a lot that's strange about the wild duck. Nobody knows her, and nobody knows where she came from either.

GREGERS. And she has been down in the depths of the sea.

HEDVIG [*with a quick glance at him, represses a smile and asks*]. Why do you say, "the depths of the sea"?

GREGERS. What else should I say?

HEDVIG. YOU could say, "the bottom of the sea." *

GREGERS. Oh, mayn't I just as well say the depths of the sea?

HEDVIG. Yes; but it sounds so strange to me when other people speak of the depths of the sea.

GREGERS. Why so? Tell me why?

HEDVIG. NO, I won't; because it's so stupid.

GREGERS. Oh no, I'm sure it's not. Do tell me why you smiled.

GREGERS here uses the poetical, or at any rate old-fashioned, expression "havsens bund," while HEDVIG asks him rather to use the more commonplace "havets bund" or "havbunden."

HEDVIG. Well, this is the reason: whenever I come to realise suddenly—in a flash—what's in there, it always seems to me that the whole room and everything in it should be called "the depths of the sea."—But that's so stupid.

GREGERS. YOU mustn't say that.

HEDVIG. Yes, because it's only a garret.

GREGERS [*looks fixedly at her*]. Are you so sure of that?

HEDVIG [*astonished*]. That it's a garret?

GREGERS. Are you quite certain of it?

[HEDVIG is silent, and looks at him open-mouthed. GINA comes in from the kitchen with the table things.

GREGERS [*rising*]. I've come in upon you too early.

GINA. Oh, you must be somewhere; and we're nearly ready now, any way. Clear the table, Hedvig.

[HEDVIG clears away her things; she and GINA lay the cloth during the following. GREGERS seats himself in the arm-chair, and turns over an album.

GREGERS. I hear you can retouch, Mrs. Ekdal.

GINA [*with a side glance*]. Yes, I can.

GREGERS. That was exceedingly lucky.

GINA. HOW lucky?

GREGERS. Since Ekdal was to be a photographer, I mean.

HEDVIG. Mother can take photographs too.

GINA. Oh, yes. I've had to teach myself that too.

GREGERS. SO it's you that really carry on the business, I suppose?

GINA. Yes, when Ekdal hasn't time himself.

GREGERS. He's a great deal taken up with his old father, no doubt.

GINA. Yes; and Ekdal isn't the sort of man to do nothing but take portraits of everyday people.

GREGERS. I quite agree with you; but having once gone in for the thing——

GINA. YOU know, Mr. Werle, Ekdal's not like one of your common photographers.

GREGERS. Of course not; but still——

[A shot is fired within the garret.

GREGERS [*starting up*]. **What's that?**

GINA. **Ugh!** Now they're firing again!

GREGERS. Have they firearms in there?

HEDVIG. They're out shooting.

GREGERS. What! [*At the door of the garret.*] Are you shooting, Hialmar?

HALMAR [*inside the net*]. Are you there? I didn't know; I was so taken up———[*To HEDVIG.*] Why didn't you let us know? [*Comes into the studio.*]

GREGERS. DO you go shooting in the garret?

HALMAR [*showing a double-barrelled pistol*]. Oh, only with this.

GINA. Yes, you and grandfather will do yourselves an injury some day with that pigstol.

HALMAR [*with irritation*]. I believe I've told you that this kind of firearm is called a *pistol*.

GINA. Oh, that's not much better, that I can see.

GREGERS. SO you've become a sportsman too, Hialmar?

HALMAR. Only a little rabbit-shooting now and then. It's mostly to please father, you understand.

GINA. Men are so strange; they must always have something to pervert themselves with.

HALMAR [*snappishly*]. Just so; we must always have something to *divert* ourselves with.

GINA. Yes, that's exactly what I say.

HALMAR. H'm. [*To GREGERS.*] YOU see the garret's luckily so situated that no one can hear us shooting. [*Lays the pistol on the top shelf of the bookcase.*] Don't touch the pistol, Hedvig! One of the barrels is loaded, remember that.

GREGERS [*looking through the net*]. You have a fowling-piece too, I see.

HALMAR. That's father's old gun. It's no use now; there's something gone wrong with the lock. But it's fun to have it all the same, for we can take it to pieces now and then, and grease it and screw it together again.—Of course it's mostly father that fiddle-faddles with all that sort of thing.

HEDVIG [*beside GREGERS*]. Now you can see the wild duck properly.

GREGERS. I'm just looking at her. She droops one wing rather, I think.

HEDVIG. Well, no wonder; she was wounded, you know.

GREGERS. And she trails one foot a little. Isn't that so?

HALMAR. Perhaps a very little bit.

HEDVIG. Yes, it was by that foot the dog seized her.

HALMAR. But otherwise she hasn't the least thing the matter with her, and that's really wonderful for a creature that's got a charge of shot in her body, and has been between a dog's teeth——

GREGERS [*with a glance at HEDVIG*].———And that's been in the depths of the sea—so long.

HEDVIG [*smiling*]. Yes.

GINA [*laying the table*]. That blessed wild duck! What a lot of fuss you make over her.

HALMAR. H'm—is lunch nearly ready?

GINA. Yes, directly. Hedvig, you must come and help me now. [*GINA and HEDVIG go out into the kitchen,*]

HALMAR [*in a low voice*], I think you'd better not stand there looking in at father; he doesn't like it. [*GREGERS moves away from the garret door,*] I may as well shut up before the others come. [*Claps his hands to send the fowls back,*] Ssh—ssh, in with you! [*Draws up the curtain and pulls the doors together.*] All these appliances are my own invention. It's really amusing to have things of this sort to potter about, and to put to rights when they get out of order. And it's quite necessary, you see; for Gina objects to having rabbits and fowls in the studio.

GREGERS. Of course. I suppose it's your wife that's the ruling spirit here?

HALMAR. I generally leave the details of business to her; for then I can take refuge in the parlour and think of more important things.

GREGERS. What things may they be, Hialmar?

HALMAR. I wonder you haven't asked about that sooner. But perhaps you haven't heard of the invention?

GREGERS. The invention? No.

HALMAR. Really? Haven't you? Oh no, out there in the wilderness——

GREGERS. SO you've invented something, have you?

HALMAR. I haven't quite completed it yet; but I'm working at it. You can imagine that when I resolved to give myself up to photography, it wasn't with the idea of doing nothing but take portraits of all sorts of everyday people.

GREGERS. NO; your wife was saying the same thing just now.

HALMAR. I swore that if I consecrated my powers to this handicraft I would so exalt it that it should become both an art and a science. And therefore I resolved to devote myself to this great invention.

GREGERS. And what's the nature of the invention? What is it to do?

HALMAR. Oh, my dear fellow, you mustn't ask for details yet. It takes time, you see. And you mustn't think that my motive is vanity. It's not for my own sake that I'm working. Oh no; it's my life's mission that stands before me night and day.

GREGERS. What is your life's mission?

HALMAR. Do you forget the old man with the silver hair?

GREGERS. Your poor father? Well, but what can you do for him?

HALMAR. I can awaken his self-respect from the dead, by raising the name of Ekdal to honour and dignity again.

GREGERS. Then that's your life's mission?

HALMAR. Yes. I want to save the shipwrecked man. For shipwrecked he was by the very first blast of the storm. Even while those terrible investigations were going on, he was no longer himself. That pistol there—the one we use to shoot rabbits with—has played its part in the tragedy of the house of Ekdal.

GREGERS. The pistol? Indeed?

HALMAR. When the sentence of imprisonment was passed—he had the pistol in his hand——

GREGERS. Had he——?

HALMAR. Yes; but he dared not use it. His courage failed

him. So broken, so demoralised was he even then! Oh, can you understand it? He, a soldier; he, who had shot nine bears, and who was descended from two lieutenant-colonels—one after the other, of course.—Can you understand it, Gregers?

GREGERS. Yes, I understand it well enough.

HIALMAR. I don't. And once more the pistol played a part in our family history. When he had put on the grey clothes and was under lock and key—oh, that was a terrible time for me, I can tell you. I had the blinds drawn down over both my windows. When I peeped out I saw the sun shining as usual. I couldn't understand it. I saw the people going along the street, laughing and talking about indifferent things. I couldn't understand it. It seemed to me that the whole of existence must be at a standstill—as if under an eclipse.

"GREGERS. I felt like that too, when my mother died.

HIALMAR. In that hour Hialmar Ekdal pointed the pistol at his own breast.

GREGERS. You too thought of——!

HIALMAR. Yes.

GREGERS. But you didn't fire?

HIALMAR. NO. At the decisive moment I won the victory over myself. I remained in life. But I can assure you it takes some courage to choose life under those circumstances.

GREGERS. Well, that depends on how one takes it.

HIALMAR. Yes, entirely. But it was all for the best, for now I shall soon perfect my invention; and Dr. Relling thinks, as I do myself, that father will be allowed to wear his uniform again. I will ask for that as my only reward.

GREGERS. SO that's what he meant about his uniform?

HIALMAR. Yes, that's what he most yearns for. You can't imagine how my heart bleeds for him. Every time we celebrate any little family festival—for example, Gina's and my wedding-day, or whatever it may be—in comes the old man in the lieutenant's uniform of happier days. But if he only hears a knock at the door—for he daren't show himself to strangers, you know—he hurries back to his room again as fast as his legs can carry him. Oh, it's heartrending for a son to see such things!

GREGERS. **How long do you think it will be before your invention is completed?**

HALMAR. Come now, you mustn't expect me to enter into particulars **like** that. An invention is a thing one hasn't entire control over. It depends largely on intuition—on inspiration—and it's almost impossible to predict when the inspiration may come.

GREGERS. But it's advancing?

HALMAR. Yes, certainly, it's advancing. I turn it over in my mind every day: I'm full of it. Every afternoon, when I've had my dinner, I shut myself up in the parlour where I can ponder undisturbed. But I can't be goaded to it; it's not a bit of good; Relling says so too.

GREGERS. And don't you think that all that business in the garret draws you off and distracts you too much?

HALMAR. NO, no, no, quite the contrary. You mustn't say that. I can't be everlastingly absorbed in the same laborious train of thought. I must have something outside of it to fill up the pauses. The inspiration, the intuition, you see—when it comes, it comes, and there's an end of it.

GREGERS. My dear Hialmar, I almost think you have something of the wild duck in you.

HALMAR. Something of the wild duck? How do you mean?

GREGERS. You've dived down and bitten yourself fast in the undergrowth.

HALMAR. Are you alluding to the almost fatal shot that has broken father's wing—and mine too?

GREGERS. Not mainly to that. I don't say that you've been wounded; but you've strayed into a poisonous marsh, Hialmar; you have an insidious disease within you, and you've sunk down to die in the dark.

HALMAR. I? To die in the dark? Look here, Gregers, you must really leave off talking such nonsense.

GREGERS. Don't be afraid; I will try to help you up again. I, too, have a mission in life now; I found it yesterday.

HALMAR. That's all very well; but you'll please leave *me* out of it. I can assure you that—apart from my easily ex-

plained melancholy, of course—I am as contented as any one **can** wish to be.

GREGERS. Your contentment is an effect of the marsh vapours.

HALMAR. Now, my dear Gregers, pray don't go on about disease and poison; I'm not used to that sort of talk. In my house, nobody ever speaks to me about unpleasant things.

GREGERS. Ah, I can easily believe that.

HALMAR. It's not good for me, you see. And there aren't any marsh vapours here, as you express it. The poor photographer's roof is lowly, I know—and my circumstances are narrow. But I'm an inventor, and I'm the breadwinner of a family. That exalts me above my mean surroundings.—Ah, here comes lunch!

[GINA and HEDVIG bring bottles of ale, a decanter of brandy, glasses, etc. At the same time, RELING and MOLVIK enter from the passage; they are both without hat or overcoat. MOLVIK is dressed in black.]

GINA [setting things upon the table]. Oh, you two have come in the nick of time.

RELING. Molvik got it into his head that he could smell herring-salad, and then there was no holding him. Good-morning again, Ekdal.

HALMAR. Gregers, may I introduce Mr. Molvik. Doctor——Oh, you know Relling, don't you?

GREGERS. Yes, slightly.

RELING. Oh, Mr. Werle, junior! Yes, we two have been on each other's tracks up at the Hoidal works. You've just moved in?

GREGERS. I moved in this morning.

RELING. Molvik and I live right underneath you; so you haven't far to go for the doctor and the clergyman, if you should need them.

GREGERS. Thanks, it's not unlikely; for yesterday we were thirteen at table.

HALMAR. Oh, come now, don't let's get upon unpleasant subjects again!

RELLING. YOU can make your mind easy, Ekdal; I'll be hanged if the finger of fate points to you.

HIALMAR. I hope not, for the sake of my family. But let us sit down and eat and drink and be merry.

GREGERS. Shan't we wait for your father ?

HIALMAR. NO, he'll have his taken in to him later. Come along I

[*The MEN seat themselves at table, and eat and drink. GINA and HEDVIG go in and out and wait upon them.*]

RELLING. Molvik was frightfully screwed yesterday, Mrs. Ekdal.

GINA. Really ? Yesterday again ?

RELLING.* Didn't you hear him when I brought him home last night ?

GINA. NO, I can't say I did.

RELLING. That was a good thing, for Molvik was disgusting last night.

GINA. IS that true, Molvik ?

MOLVIK. Let us blot out last night's proceedings. That sort of thing is totally apart from my better self.

RELLING [*to GREGERS*]. It comes over him like a sort of possession, and then I have to go out on the loose with him. Mr. Molvik is daemonic, you see.

GREGERS. Daemonic ?

RELLING. Molvik's daemonic, yes.

GREGERS. H'm.

RELLING. And daemonic natures are not made to walk straight through the world; they must meander a little now and then.—Well, so you still stick up there at those horrible grimy works ?

GREGERS. I have stuck there until now.

RELLING. And did you manage to enforce that claim you went about asserting ?

GREGERS. Claims ? [*Understands him.*] Ah, I see.

HIALMAR. Have you been enforcing claims, Gregers ?

GREGERS. Oh, nonsense.

RELLING. Faith, but he has, though ! He went round to all

the cotters¹ cabins, presenting something he called the claim of the ideal.

GREGERS. I was young then.

RELLING. You're right; you were very young. And as for the claim of the ideal—you never got it honoured while I was up there.

GREGERS. Nor since either.

RELLING. Ah, then you've learnt to knock a little discount off, I expect.

GREGERS. Never, when I stand before a true man.

HIALMAR. Well, that's reasonable, I should say. A little butter, Gina.

RELLING. And a slice of bacon for Molvik.

MOLVIK. Ugh! not bacon! [*A knock at the garret door.*]

HIALMAR. Open the door, Hedvig; father wants to come out.

[*HEDVIG goes over and opens the door a little way; EKDAL comes in with a fresh rabbit skin; she closes the door after him.*]

EKDAL. Good-morning, gentlemen! Good sport to-day. Shot a big one.

HIALMAR. And you've skinned it before I came!

EKDAL. Salted it too. It's good tender meat, is rabbit; it's sweet; it tastes like sugar. Good appetite to you, gentlemen! [*Goes into his room.*]

MOLVIK [*rising*]. Excuse me——; I can't——; I must go downstairs as quickly as——

RELLING. Drink some soda water, man!

MOLVIK [*hurrying away*]. Ugh—ugh!

[*Goes through the passage door.*]

RELLING [*to HIALMAR*]. Let's drain a glass to the old hunter.

HIALMAR [*clinks glasses with him*]. To the man of daring deeds that has looked death in the face!

RELLING. TO the grey-haired——[*drinks*]. I say, is his hair grey or white?

HIALMAR. Something between the two, I think; for that matter, he hasn't very many hairs left on his head.

REIXING. Well, one can get through the world with a wig. After all, you're a happy man, Ekdal; you have this noble mission to strive for——

HIALMAR. And I do strive, I can tell you.

RELLING. And you have your excellent wife, waddling¹ quietly in and out in her felt slippers, and making everything cosy and comfortable about you.

HIALMAR. Yes, Gina [*nods to her*], you're a good companion on the path of life.

GINA. Oh, don't sit there criticising me.

RELLING. And your Hedvig too, Ekdal!

HIALMAR [*affected*]. The child, yes! The child before everything! Hedvig, come here to me. [*Strokes her hair.*] What day is it to-morrow, eh?

HEDVIG [*shaking him*]. Oh no, you're not to say anything, father!

HIALMAR. It cuts me to the heart when I think how poor an affair it'll be; only a little festivity in the garret——

HEDVIG. Oh, but that's just what I like!

RELLING. Just you wait till the wonderful invention sees the light, Hedvig!

HIALMAR. Yes, indeed! then you shall see——! Hedvig, I've resolved to make your future secure. You shall live in comfort all your days. I will demand something or other for you. That shall be the poor inventor's sole reward.

HEDVIG [*whispering, with her arms round his neck*]. Oh, you dear, kind father!

RELLING [*to GREGERS*]. Don't you find it delightful, for once in a way, to sit at a well-spread table in a happy family circle?

HIALMAR. Yes, I really prize these social hours.

GREGERS. For my part, I don't thrive in marsh vapours.

RELLING. Marsh vapours?

HIALMAR. Oh, don't begin with that talk again!

¹ This speech of RELING is exceedingly difficult. We have been sorely tempted to disregard altogether the characteristic "vagger i hofterne," for which we have failed to find any natural English equivalent. The word "waddling" seems to convey RELING'S meaning accurately enough. It is not complimentary to GINA'S carriage; but neither is "vagger i hofterne."*

GINA. Heaven knows there's no bad smell here, Mr. Werle; I give the place a good airing every blessed day.

GREGERS [*leaves the table*]. No airing will drive out the taint I mean.

HALMAR. Taint!

GINA. Yes, what do you say to that, Ekdal!

RELLING. Excuse me, but haven't you yourself brought the taint from those mines up there?

GREGERS. It's like you to call what I bring into this house a taint.

RELLING [*goes up to him*]. I tell you what it is, Mr. Werle, junior: I have a strong suspicion that you're still carrying about that claim of the ideal, large as life, *in* your coat-tail pocket.

GREGERS. I carry it in my breast.

RELLING. Well, wherever you've got it, I advise you not to come dunning us with it here, so long as I'm on the premises.

GREGERS. And if I do it all the same?

RELLING. Then you'll go head-foremost downstairs; now I've warned you.

HALMAR [*rising*]. Oh, but Mr. Relling——!

GREGERS. Yes, just you turn me out——

GINA [*steps between them*]. You mustn't do that, Relling. But I must say, Mr. Werle, that it ill becomes you to talk about swamps and taints, after all the mess you made with your stove.

[*A knock at the passage door.*]

HEDVIG. Mother, there's somebody knocking.

HALMAR. There now, we're going to have a whole lot of people!

GINA. Let me go——[*Goes over and opens the door. starts, and draws back.*] Oh—oh dear!

[*WERLE, in a fur coat, advances one step into the room.*]

WERLE. Excuse me; but I think my son is staying here.

GINA [*with a gulp*]. Yes.

HALMAR [*approaching him*]. Won't you do us the honour to——?

WERLE. Thank you, I merely wish to speak to my son.

GREGERS. What is it? Here I am.

WERLE. I wish to speak with you in your room.

GREGERS. In my room ?—well—[*is going*].

GINA. No, your room's not in a fit state to——

WERLE. Well then, out in the passage there; I want to have a few words with you alone.

HIALMAR. You can do that here, sir. Come into the parlour, Relling.

[HIALMAR *and* RELING *go off to the right*. GINA *takes* HEDVIG *with her into the kitchen*.

GREGERS [*after a short pause*"]. Well, now we're alone.

WERLE. From something you let fall last evening, and from your coming to lodge with the Ekdals, I can't help inferring that you have some hostile intention towards me.

GREGERS. I intend to open Hialmar Ekdal's eyes. He shall see his position as it really is—that is all.

WERLE. Is that the mission in life you spoke of yesterday?

GREGERS. Yes. You have left me no other.

WERLE. Is it I that have crippled your mind, Gregers?

GREGERS. You have crippled my whole life. I'm not thinking of all that about mother—but it's thanks to you that I have a guilty conscience continually pursuing and gnawing at me.

WERLE. Aha, it's your conscience that's ill at ease, is it?

GREGERS. I ought to have taken a stand against you when the trap was set for Lieutenant Ekdal. I should have cautioned him, for I had a misgiving as to what was in the wind.

WERLE. Yes, that was the time to have spoken.

GREGERS. I did not dare to, I was so cowed and spiritless. I was mortally afraid of you, not only then, but long afterwards.

WERLE. You've got over that fear now, it appears.

GREGERS. Yes, fortunately. The wrong done to old Ekdal, both by me and by—others, can never be remedied; but Hialmar I can rescue from all the falsehood and deception that are bringing him to ruin.

WERLE. DO you think that'll be doing him a kindness?

GREGERS. I firmly believe so.

WERLE. YOU think our friend the photographer is the sort of man to appreciate such friendly offices?

GREGERS. Yes, I do.

WERLE. H'm, we shall see.

GREGERS. Besides, if I'm to go on living, I must try **and** find some cure for my sick conscience.

WERLE. It will never be well. Your conscience has been sickly from childhood. That's an inheritance from your mother, Gregers—the only inheritance she left you.

GREGERS [*with a scornful half-smile*]. Haven't you yet digested your resentment at your own miscalculation as to the fortune she would bring you?

WERLE. Don't let us get upon irrelevant subjects.—Then you keep to your purpose of setting young Ekdal upon what you imagine to be the right scent?

GREGERS. Yes, that's my fixed resolve.

WERLE. Well, in that case I might have spared myself this visit; for of course it's useless to ask you to return home with me?

GREGERS. Quite useless.

WERLE. And I suppose you won't enter the firm either?

GREGERS. NO.

WERLE. Very good. But as I'm thinking of marrying again, your share *in* the property will fall to you at once.¹

GREGERS [*quickly*]. No, I don't wish that.

WERLE. You don't wish it?

GREGERS. NO, I daren't take it, for conscience' sake.

WERLE [*after a pause*]. Are you going up to the works again?

GREGERS. No; I consider myself released from your service.

WERLE. But what are you going to do?

GREGERS. Only to fulfil my mission, nothing more.

WERLE. Well, but afterwards? What are you going to live upon?

GREGERS. I have laid by a little out of my salary.

WERLE. HOW long will *that* last?

GREGERS. I think it will last out my time.

WERLE. What do you mean?

GREGERS. I shall answer no more questions.

WERLE. Good-bye, then, Gregers.

¹ By Norwegian law, before a widower can marry again, a certain proportion of his property must be settled on his children by his former marriage.

GREGERS. Good-bye. [WERLE goes.]

HIALMAR [*peeping in*]. He's gone, isn't he ?

GREGERS. Yes.

[HIALMAR and RELING enter; also GINA and HEDVIG from the kitchen.]

RELLING. That lunch was a failure.

GREGERS. Put on your coat, Hialmar; I want you to come for a long walk with me.

HIALMAR. With pleasure. What was it your father wanted? Anything about me?

GREGERS. Come along. We must have a talk. I'll go and put on my overcoat. [Goes out by the passage door.]

GINA. YOU shouldn't go out with him, Ekdal.

RELLING. No, don't you do it. Stay where you are.

HIALMAR [*gets his hat and overcoat*]. Oh, nonsense! When a friend of my youth feels impelled to open his mind to me in private——

RELLING. But deuce take it—don't you see the fellow's mad, cracked, demented!

GINA. There, you hear! His mother before him had mad fits like that sometimes.

HIALMAR. The more need for a friend's watchful eye. [To GINA.] Be sure you have dinner ready in good time. Good-bye for the present. [Goes out by the passage door.]

RELLING. It's a pity the fellow didn't go to hell through one of the Hoidal mines.

GINA. Good Lord! what makes you say that?

RELLING [*muttering*]. Oh, I have my reasons.

GINA. DO you think young Werle is really mad?

RELLING. NO, worse luck; he's no madder than people in general. But one disease he's certainly suffering from.

GINA. What is it that's wrong with him?

RELLING. Well, I'll tell you, Mrs. Ekdal. He's suffering from chronic integrity in an acute form.

GINA. Integrity?

HEDVIG. Is that a kind of disease?

RELLING. Yes, it's a national disease; but it only appears

sporadically. [*Nods to GINA.*] Thanks for your hospitality.

[*He goes out by the passage door.*]

GINA [*walking to and fro.*] Ugh, that Gregers Werle—he's always been a horrible creature.

HEDVIG [*standing by the table, and look'ng searchingly at her*']. I think all this is very strange.

A C T I V

HIALMAR EKDAL's studio. *A photograph has just been taken; a camera with the cloth over it, a pedestal, two chairs, a folding table, etc., are standing out in the room. Afternoon light; the sun is going down; a little later it begins to grow dusk.*

GINA *stands in the passage doorway, with a little box and a wet glass plate in her hand, and is speaking to somebody outside.*

GINA. Yes, certainly. When I make a promise I keep it. The first dozen shall be ready on Monday. Good-afternoon.

[*Some one is heard going downstairs. GINA shuts the door, slips the plate into the box, and puts it into the covered camera.*]

HEDVIG [*comes in from the kitchen.*] Are they gone?

GINA [*tidying up.*] Yes, thank goodness, I've got rid of them at last.,

HEDVIG. But can you imagine why father hasn't come home yet?

GINA. Are you sure he's not down in Relling's room?

HEDVIG. NO, he's not; I ran down the kitchen stair and asked just now.

GINA. And I suppose his dinner's getting cold.

HEDVIG. Yes, I can't understand it. Father's always so careful to be home to dinner!

GINA. Oh, he'll be here directly, you'll see.

HEDVIG. I wish he would come; everything seems so queer to-day.

GINA [*calls out*]. There he is!

[HIALMAR EKDAL *comes in at the passage door*.

HEDVIG [*going to him*]. Father! Oh, what a time we've been waiting for you!

GINA [*glances at him*], You've been a long time away, Ekdal.

HIALMAI? [*without looking at her*]. Rather long, yes.

[*He takes off his overcoat; GINA and HEDVIG go to help him; he motions them away.*

GINA. Perhaps you've had dinner with Werle?

HIALMAR [*hanging up his coat*]. No.

GINA [*going towards the kitchen door*]. Then I'll bring some in for you.

HIALMAR. NO; let the dinner be. I don't want anything to eat.

HEDVIG [*going nearer to him*]. Aren't you well, father?

HIALMAR. Well? Oh yes, tolerably. Gregers and I had a tiring walk.

GINA. YOU oughtn't to have gone so far, Ekdal; you're not used to it.

HIALMAR. H'm; there's many a thing a man must get used to in this world. [*Wanders about the room.*] Has any one been here whilst I was out?

GINA. Nobody but the two sweethearts.

HIALMAR. NO new orders?

GINA. NO, not to-day.

HEDVIG. There'll be some to-morrow, father, you'll see.

HIALMAR. I hope there will; for to-morrow I'm going to set to work in earnest.

HEDVIG. To-morrow! Don't you remember what day it is to-morrow?

HIALMAR. Oh yes, by-the-by——Well, the day after, then. Henceforth I mean to do everything myself; I'll do all the work alone.

GINA. What's the good of that, Ekdal? It'll only make life a burden to you. I can manage the photography; and you can go on working at your invention.

HEDVIG. And think of the wild duck, father—and all the hens and rabbits and——!

HALMAR. Don't talk to me of all that trash! From to-morrow I'll never set foot in the garret again.

HEDVIG. Oh but, father, you promised that we should have a little entertainment——

HALMAR. H'm, true. Well then, from the day after to-morrow. I'm almost inclined to wring that cursed wild duck's neck!

HEDVIG [*shrieks*]. The wild duck!

GINA. Well I never I

HEDVIG [*shaking him*]. Oh no, father; you know it's my wild duck!

HALMAR. That's why I don't do it. I haven't the heart to—for your sake, Hedvig. But in my inmost soul I feel that I ought to do it. I ought not to suffer a creature that has been in those hands under my roof.

GINA. Why, good gracious, because grandfather got it from that wretched Pettersen——

HALMAR [*wandering about*]. There are certain claims—what shall I call them?—let me say claims of the ideal—certain obligations, which a man cannot set aside without injury to his soul.

HEDVIG [*going after him*]. But think of the wild duck—the poor wild duck!

HALMAR [*stops*], I tell you I'll spare it—for your sake. Not a hair of its head shall be touched—I mean, I'll spare it. There are greater problems than that to be dealt with. But you should go out a little now, Hedvig, as usual; it's getting dusk enough for you now.

HEDVIG. NO, I don't care about going out now.

HALMAR. Yes, do; it seems to me you peer about so with your eyes; all these vapours in here are bad for you. The air is heavy under this roof.

HEDVIG. Very well then, I shall run down the kitchen stair and take a little walk. My cloak and hat?—oh, they're in my own room. Father—be sure you don't do the wild duck any harm whilst I'm out.

HIALMAR. Not a feather of its head shall be touched.
[Draws her to him,] You and I, Hedvig—we two 1
 Well, go along.

[HEDVIG nods to her parents and goes out through the kitchen.]

HIALMAR *[walks about without looking up]*. Gina.

GINA. Yes?

HIALMAR. From to-morrow, or say from the day after to-morrow, I should like to keep the household account-book myself.

GINA. DO you want to keep the accounts too, now?

HIALMAR. Yes; or to put down the receipts at any rate.

GINA. Lord help us! that's soon done.

HIALMAR. One would hardly think so; at any rate you seem to make the money go a very long way. *[Stops and looks at her.]* How do you manage it?

GINA. It's because Hedvig and I need so little.

HIALMAR. Is it the case that father is very liberally paid for the copying he does for Mr. Werle?

GINA. I don't know whether the pay is so liberal. I don't know the prices for such work.

HIALMAR. Well, what does he get, about? Let me hear!

GINA. Oh, it varies; it comes to about as much as he costs us, with a little pocket-money over.

HIALMAR. AS much as he costs us! And you've never told me this before!

GINA. No, I couldn't; it pleased you so much to think he got everything from you.

HIALMAR. And he gets it from Mr. Werle!

GINA. Oh yes; he has plenty and to spare, he has.

{TiiALMAR. Light the lamp for me, please!

GINA *[lighting the lamp]*. And of course we don't know that it's Mr. Werle himself; it may be Graberg——

HIALMAR. Why attempt such an evasion?

GINA. I don't know; I only thought——

HIALMAR. H'm!

GINA. It wasn't I that got grandfather that writing. It was Bertha, when she used to come about us.

HIALMAR. It seems to me your voice is trembling.

GINA [*putting the lampshade on*]. Is it?

HIALMAR. And your hands are shaking, aren't they?

GINA [*firmly*]. Speak straight out, Ekdal. What has he been saying about me?

HIALMAR. IS it true—can it be true that—that there was an—an understanding between you and Mr. Werle, while you were in service there?

GINA. That's not true. Not at that time. Mr. Werle did come after me, I own it. And his wife thought there was something in it, and then she made such a hocus-pocus and hurly-burly, and she knocked and drove me about so, that I left her service.

HIALMAR. But afterwards, then?

GINA. Well, then I went home. And mother—well, she wasn't the woman you took her for, Ekdal; she kept on worrying and worrying at me about one thing and another—for Mr. Werle was a widower by that time.

HIALMAR. Well, and then?

GINA. I suppose you must know it. He didn't give it up until he'd had his way.

HIALMAR [*striking his hands together*]. And this is the mother of my child! How could you hide this from me?

GINA. It was wrong of me; I ought certainly to have told you long ago.

HIALMAR. YOU should have told me at the very first; then I should have known what you were.

GINA. But would you have married me all the same?

HIALMAR. HOW can you suppose so?

GINA. That's just why I didn't dare to tell you anything then. I'd come to care for you so much, you know; and I couldn't go and make myself utterly miserable——

HIALMAR [*walks about*]. And this is my Hedvig's mother! And to know that all I see before me—[*kicks at a chair*]—all that I call my home—I owe to a favoured predecessor! Oh, that scoundrel Werle!

GINA. DO you repent the fifteen years we've lived together?

HIALMAR. Haven't you every day, every hour, repented of the spider's-web of deceit you had spun around me? Answer

me that! How could you help writhing with penitence and remorse?

GINA. My dear Ekdal, I've had plenty to do looking after the house and all the daily business——

HALMAR. Then you never think of reviewing your past?

GINA. NO; heaven knows I'd almost forgotten those old stories.

HALMAR. Oh, that blank, callous contentment! To me there is something revolting about it. Think of it—never so much as a twinge of remorse!

GINA. But tell me, Ekdal, what would have become of you if you hadn't had a wife like me?

HALMAR. Like you—!

GINA. Yes; for you know I've always been a little more practical and wide-awake than you. Of course I'm a year or two older.

HALMAR. What would have become of me!

GINA. You'd got into all sorts of bad ways when first you met me; you can't deny that.

HALMAR. SO that's what you call bad ways? Oh, you don't understand what a man goes through when he's in grief and despair—especially a man of my fiery temperament.

GINA. Well, that may be so. And I don't say I've anything to boast of; for you became a moral of a husband directly you'd a house and home of your own. And now we'd got everything so nice and cosy about us; and Hedvig and I were just thinking we'd soon be able to give ourselves a little rein, in the way of both food and clothes.

HALMAR. In the swamp of deceit, yes.

GINA. Oh, that that wretched creature had never set his foot inside our doors!

HALMAR. And I, too, thought my home such a pleasant one. That was a delusion. Where shall I now find the elasticity of spirit to bring my invention into the world of reality? Perhaps it will die with me; and then it will be your past, Gina, that will have killed it.

GINA [*nearly crying*]. You mustn't say such things, Ekdal. I've only wanted to do what was best for you all my days!

HALMAR. I ask you, what becomes of the breadwinner's dream? When I used to lie in there on the sofa and ponder over the invention, I had a clear enough presentiment that it would sap my vitality to the last drop. I felt even then that the day when I held the patent in my hand would be the day—of my release. And then it was my dream that you should live on and be known as the deceased inventor's well-to-do widow I

GINA [*drying her tears*]. No, you mustn't talk like that, Ekdal. May the Lord never let me see the day I am left a widow!

HALMAR. Oh, the whole dream has vanished. It's all over now. All over!

[GREGERS WERLE *opens the passage door cautiously and looks in.*

GREGERS. May I come in ?

HALMAR. Yes, come in.

GREGERS [*comes forward, his face beaming with satisfaction, and holds out both his hands to them*]. Well, dear friends——! [*Looks from one to the other, and whispers to*

HALMAR.] Haven't you done it yet?

HALMAR [*aloud*]. It is done.

GREGERS. It is?

HALMAR. I have passed through the bitterest moments of my life.

GREGERS. But also the most ennobling, J should think.

HALMAR. Well, we've got through it for the present.

GINA. God forgive you, Mr. Werle.

GREGERS [*in great surprise*]. But I don't understand this.

HALMAR. What don't you understand ?

GREGERS. After so great a crisis—a crisis that's to be the starting-point of an entirely new life—of a communion founded on truth and free from falsehood of any kind——

HALMAR. Yes, yes, I know; I know that quite well.

GREGERS. I confidently expected, when I entered the room, to find the light of transfiguration beaming upon me from both man and wife. And now I see nothing but dullness, oppression, gloom——

GINA. Oh, is that it?

[*Takes off the lamp-shade**

GREGERS. YOU will not understand me, Mrs. Ekdal. Ah well, *youj* I suppose, need time too——But you, Hialmar? Surely you feel a new consecration after the great crisis?

HALMAR. Yes, of course I do. That is,—in a sort of way.

GREGERS. For I'm sure there's nothing in the world to compare with the joy of forgiving one who has erred, and raising her up to one's self in love.

HALMAR. Do you think a man can so easily throw off the effects of the bitter cup I have drained ?

GREGERS. No, perhaps not a common man. But a man like you!

HALMAR. Good God! I know that well enough. But you must keep me up to it, Gregers. It takes time, you know.

GREGERS. You have a great deal of the wild duck in you, Hialmar.

[RELLING *has come in at the passage door,*

RELLING. Oho! is the wild duck to the fore again ?

HALMAR. Yes; Mr. Werle's wing-broken prey.

RELLING. Mr. Werle's——? So you're discussing him?

HALMAR. Him and—ourselves.

RELLING [*in an undertone to GREGERS*]. May the devil take you!

HALMAR. What's that you're saying?

RELLING. I was uttering a heartfelt wish that this quack-salver would take himself off. If he stops here he's sure to get you both into a mess.

GREGERS. These two won't make a mess of it, Mr. Relling. Of course I won't speak of Hialmar—him we know. But she too, in her innermost heart, has certainly something loyal and sincere——

GINA [*almost crying*]. You might have let me pass for what I was, then.

RELLING [*to GREGERS*]. Is it rude to ask what you really want in this house.

GREGERS. To lay the foundations of a true marriage.

RELLING. So you don't think Ekdal's marriage is good enough as it is ?

GREGERS. No doubt it's as good a marriage as most others, worse luck. But a *true* marriage it has never been.

HIALMAR. You have never had eyes for the claims of the ideal, Relling.

RELLING. All rubbish, my boy! But excuse me, Mr. Werle : how many—in round numbers—how many true marriages have you seen in the course of your life ?

GREGERS. Scarcely a single one.

RELLING. Nor I either.

GREGERS. But I've *seen* innumerable marriages of the opposite kind. And it has been my fate to see at close quarters what ruin such a marriage can work.

HIALMAR. A man's whole moral basis may give way under his feet; that's the terrible part of it.

RELLING. Well, I can't say I've ever been exactly married, so I don't pretend to speak with authority. But this I know, that the child enters into the marriage problem. And you must leave the child in peace.

HIALMAR. Oh—Hedvig! my poor Hedvig!

RELLING. Yes, you must be good enough to keep Hedvig outside of all this. You two are grown-up people; you can, in God's name, mess and muddle with your relations as you please. But you must deal circumspectly with Hedvig, I tell you; or else you may do her a great injury.

HIALMAR. An injury!

RELLING. Yes, or she may do herself an injury—and perhaps others too.

GINA. How can you know that, Relling ?

HIALMAR. Her sight is in no immediate danger, is it?

RELLING. I'm not talking about her sight. Hedvig is at a critical age. She'll be taking all sorts of mischief into her head.

GINA. That's true—I've noticed it already! She's taken to carrying on with the fire, out in the kitchen. She calk it playing at house-on-fire. I'm often afraid she'll really set fire to the house.

RELLING. YOU see; I thought as much.

GREGERS [*to* RELING]. But how do you account for that?

RELLING [*low*]. Her constitution's changing, sir.

HIALMAR. SO long as the child has me——! So long as I'm above ground——!

[A knock at the door.]

GINA. Hush, Ekdal; there's some one in the passage. [*Calls out.*] Come in! [MRS. SORBY, *in walking dress, comes in.*

MRS. SORBY. Good-evening.

GINA [*going towards her*]. Is that really you, Bertha?

MRS. SORBY. Yes, of course it is. But I've come inopportunately, I'm afraid?

HALMAR. No, not at all; an emissary from *that* house——

MRS. SORBY [*to GINA*]. TO tell the truth, I hoped your men-folk would be out at this time; I just ran up to have a little chat with you, and to say good-bye.

GINA. Indeed? Are you going away, then?

MRS. SORBY. Yes, to-morrow morning,—up to Hoidal. Mr. Werle has started this afternoon. [*Lightly, to GREGERS.*] He wished me to say good-bye for him.

GINA. Only fancy——!

HALMAR. SO Mr. Werle has gone? And now you're going after him?

MRS. SORBY. Yes, what do you say to that, Ekdal?

HALMAR. I say: beware!

GREGERS. I must explain the situation. My father and Mrs. Sorby are going to be married.

HALMAR. Going to be married!

GINA. Oh, Bertha, so it's come to that at last!

RELLING [*his voice quivering a little*]. This is surely not true?

MRS. SORBY. Yes, my dear Relling, it's true enough.

RELLING. You're going to marry again?

MRS. SORBY. Yes, it looks like it. Werle has got a special licence, and we're going to be married quite quietly, up at the works.

GREGERS. Then I must wish you all happiness, like a dutiful stepson.

MRS. SORBY. Thank you very much—if you mean what you say. I hope it will lead to happiness, both for Werle and for me.

RELLING. You have every reason to hope that. Mr. Werle never gets drunk, so far as I know; and I don't suppose he's in

the habit of thrashing his wives, like the late lamented horse-doctor.

MRS. SORBY. Oh now, let Sorby rest in peace. He had his good points too.

RELLING. Mr. Werle has better ones, I should think.

MRS. SORBY. He hasn't frittered away all that was good in him, at any rate. The man who does that must take the consequences.

RELLING. I shall go out with Molvik this evening.

MRS. SORBY. You mustn't do that, Relling. Don't do it—for my sake.

RELLING. There's nothing else for it. [*To HIALMAR.*] If you're going with us, come along.

GINA. No, thank you. Ekdal doesn't go in for such dispensations.

HIALMAR [*half aloud, in vexation*]. Oh, do hold your tongue!

RELLING. Good-bye, Mrs.—Werle.

[Goes out through the passage door,

GREGERS [*to MRS. SORBY*]. YOU seem to be pretty intimate with Dr. Relling.

MRS. SORBY. Yes, we've known each other for many years. At one time it seemed as if things might have gone further between us.

GREGERS. It was surely lucky for you that they didn't.

MRS. SORBY. YOU may well say that. But I've always been wary of acting on impulse. A woman can't afford absolutely to throw herself away.

GREGERS. Aren't you just the least bit afraid that I may let my father know about this old friendship?

MRS. SORBY. Why, of course I've told him all about it myself.

GREGERS. Indeed?

MRS. SORBY. Your father knows everything that could, with any truth, be said about me. I've told him all; it was the first thing I did when I became aware of his intentions.

GREGERS. Then you've been franker than most people, I think.

MRS. SORBY. I've always been frank. We womeg get on best that way.

HIALMAR. What do you say to that, Gina?

GINA. Oh, we women are very different. Some get on best one way, some another.

MRS. SORBY. Well, for my part, Gina, I believe it's wisest to act as I've done. And Werle has no secrets either, on his side. That's really the bond of union between us, you see. Now he can sit and talk with me as openly as a child. He's never had the chance to do that before. Fancy a man like him, full of health and vitality, passing his whole youth and the prime of his life in listening to nothing but moral homilies! And very often the homilies were called forth by the most imaginary offences—at least so I believe.

GINA. That's true enough.

GREGERS. If you ladies are going to indulge in mutual confidences, I had better retire.

MRS. SORBY. YOU can stay so far as that's concerned. I shan't say a word more. But I wanted you to know that I had done nothing secretly or in any underhand way. It may seem as if I'd come in for a great piece of luck; and that's true in a sense. But after all, I don't think I'm getting any more than I'm giving. I shall stand by him always, and I can tend and care for him as no one else can, now that he's getting helpless.

HIALMAR. Getting helpless?

GREGERS [to MRS. SORBY]. Don't speak of that here.

MRS. SORBY. There's no disguising it any longer, however much he would like to. He's going blind,

HIALMAR [starts]. Going blind? That's strange. He too becoming blind!

GINA. Lots of people do.

MRS. SORBY. And you can imagine what that means to a business man. Well, I shall try as well as I can to make my eyes replace his. But I mustn't stay any longer, I'm so busy just now.—Oh, by-the-by, Ekdal, I was to tell you that if there was anything Werle could do for you, you must just apply to Graberg.

GREGERS. I'm sure Hialmar will decline that offer with thanks.

MRS. SORBY. Indeed? I don't think he used to be

GINA. No, Bertha, Ekdal doesn't need anything from Mr. Werle now.

HIALMAR [*slowly, and with emphasis*']. Will you present my compliments to your future husband, and say that I intend very shortly to pay a visit to Mr. Graberg——

GREGERS. What! You don't really mean that?

HIALMAR. To pay a visit to Mr. Graberg, I say, and obtain an account of the sum I owe his principal. I will pay that debt of honour—ha, ha, ha! a debt of honour let us call it! In any case I will pay the whole, with five per cent, interest.

GINA. But, my dear Ekdal, God knows we haven't got the money to do it.

HIALMAR. Please tell your future husband that I am working assiduously at my invention. Please tell him that what stimulates me in this laborious task is the wish to free myself from a torturing burden of debt. That is my reason for proceeding with the invention. The entire profits are to be devoted to repaying your future husband's pecuniary advances.

MRS. SORBY. Something has happened here.

HIALMAR. Yes, that is so.

MRS. SORBY. Well, good-bye. I had something else to speak to you about, Gina; but it must keep till another time. Good-bye.

[HIALMAR and GREGERS bow silently. GINA follows MRS. SORBY to the door.]

HIALMAR. Not beyond the threshold, Gina!

[MRS. SORBY goes; GINA shuts the door after her.]

HIALMAR. There now, Gregers; I've got that burden of debt off my mind.

GREGERS. YOU soon will, at all events.

HIALMAR. I think my attitude may be called correct.

GREGERS. You are the man I have always taken you for.

HIALMAR. In certain cases, it's impossible to disregard the claim of the ideal. Yet, as the breadwinner of a family, I

cannot but writhe and groan under it. I can tell you it's no joke for a man without capital to attempt the repayment of a long-standing obligation, over which, so to speak, there lies the dust of oblivion. But it can't be helped: the Man in me demands his rights.

GREGERS [*putting his hand on HIALMAR'S shoulder*']. My dear Hialmar, now wasn't it a good thing I came?

HIALMAR. Yes.

GREGERS. Aren't you glad to have had your true position made clear to you?

HIALMAR [*somewhat impatiently*']. Yes, of course I am. But there's one thing that's exasperating to my sense of justice.

GREGERS. And what's that?

HIALMAR. It is that—but I don't know whether I ought to express myself so unreservedly about your father.

GREGERS. Say what you please, so far as I am concerned.

HIALMAR. Well then, isn't it exasperating to think that it's not I, but he, who will realise the true marriage?

GREGERS. How can you say such a t h i n g ?

HIALMAR. I say it because it's the case. Isn't the marriage between your father and Mrs. Sorby founded upon complete confidence, upon entire and unreserved candour on both sides? They hide nothing from each other, they keep no secrets in the background; their relation is based, if I may put it so, on mutual confession and absolution.

GREGERS. Well, what then?

HIALMAR. Well, isn't that the whole thing? Didn't you yourself say that these were just the difficulties that had to be overcome in order to found a true marriage?

GREGERS. But this is quite another matter, Hialmar. You surely don't compare either yourself or your wife with those two——? Oh, you understand me well enough.

HIALMAR. Say what you like, there's something in all this that hurts and offends my sense of justice. It really looks as if there were no just providence to rule the world.

GINA. Oh no, Ekdal; you mustn't say such things.

GREGERS. H'm; don't let's get upon those questions.

HALMAR. And yet, after all, I can't but recognise the guiding finger of fate. He's going blind.

GINA. Oh, you can't be sure of that.

HALMAR. It's indubitable. At all events we oughtn't to doubt it; for in that very fact lies the just retribution. He has blinded a confiding fellow-creature in days gone by.

GREGERS. Unfortunately he has blinded many.

HALMAR. And now comes inexorable, mysterious Fate, and demands Werle's own eyes.

GINA. Oh, how dare you say such dreadful things! I'm getting quite frightened.

HALMAR. It is profitable to dive into the night side of existence now and then.

[HEDVIG, in her hat and cloak, comes in through the passage door. She is in high spirits, and out of breath.]

GIWA. Are you back already?

HEBVG. Yes, I didn't care to go any farther. It was a good thing, too, for I met some one at the door.

HALMAR. It must have been that Mrs. Sorby.

HEDVIG. Yes.

HALMAR [*walks up and down*]. I hope you've seen her for the last time.

[*Silence.* HEDVIG, discouraged, looks first at one and then at the other, as if to ascertain their frame of mind.]

HEDVIG [*approaching, coaxingly*]. Father.

HALMAR. Well—what is it, Hedvig?

HEDVIG. Mrs. Sorby had got something for me.

HALMAR [*stops*]. For you?

HEDVIG. Yes. Something for to-morrow.

GINA. Bertha has always given you some little thing on your birthday.

HALMAR. What is it?

HEDVIG. Oh, I mustn't tell you just now. Mother is to give it to me to-morrow morning before I'm up.

HALMAR. What's all this nonsense that I'm to be kept in the dark about!

HEDVIG [*quickly*]. No, you may see it if you like. It's a big letter. [*Takes the letter out of her cloak pocket.*]

HALMAR. A letter, too ?

HEDVIG. Yes, it is only a letter. The rest will come later, I suppose. But fancy—a letter! I've never had a letter before. And there's " Miss " written upon it. [*Reads.*] " Miss Hedvig Ekdal." Only fancy—that's me!

HALMAR. Let me see that letter.

HEDVIG [*hands it to him*]. There it is.

HALMAR. That's Mr. Werle's hand.

GINA. Are you sure of that, Ekdal ?

HALMAR. Look for yourself.

GINA. Oh, do you think I know about suchlike things?

HALMAR. Hedvig, may I open the letter—and read it ?

HEDVIG. Yes, of course you may, if you want to.

GINA. NO, not to-night, Ekdal;* it's to be kept till to-morrow.

HEDVIG [*softly*]. Oh, can't you let him read it! It's sure to be something good; and then father'U be glad, and it'll all be pleasant again.

HALMAR. I may open it, then ?

HEDVIG. Yes, do, father. I'm so anxious to know what it is.

HALMAR. All right. [*Opens the letter, takes out a paper, reads it through, and appears bewildered.*] What's this——?

GINA. What does it say ?

HEDVIG. Oh yes, father, tell us!

HALMAR. Be quiet. [*Reads it through again; he has turned pale, but says with self-control.*] It's a deed of gift, Hedvig.

HEDVIG. Is it ? What sort of gift am I to have ?

HALMAR. Read for yourself.

[*HEDVIG goes over and reads for a time by the lamp.*]

HALMAR [*hall-aloud, clenching his hands*]. The eyes! The eyes!—and then that letter!

HEDVIG [*leaves off reading*]. Yes, but it seems to me that it's grandfather that's to have it.

HALMAR [*takes the letter from her*], Gina—can you understand this?

GINA. I know nothing whatever about it; tell me what's the matter.

HIALMAR. Mr. Werle writes to Hedvig that her old grandfather needn't trouble himself any longer with the copying, but that he can henceforth draw on the office for a hundred crowns a month.

GREGERS. Aha!

HEDVIG. A hundred crowns, mother! I read that.

GINA. What a good thing for grandfather.

HIALMAR. A hundred crowns a month so long as he needs it—that means, of course, so long as he lives.

GINA. Well, so he's provided for, poor dear.

HIALMAR. But there's more to come. You didn't read that, Hedvig. Afterwards this gift is to pass on to you.

HEDVIG. TO me! The whole of it?

HIALMAR. He writes that the same amount is assured to you for the whole of your life. Do you hear that, Gina?

GINA. Yes, I hear.

HEDVIG. Fancy—all that money I'm to get! [*Shakes him.*] Father, father, aren't you glad——?

HIALMAR [*eluding her*]. Glad! [*Walks about.*] Oh, what vistas—what perspectives open up before me! It's Hedvig, Hedvig that he showers these benefactions upon!

GINA. Yes, because it's Hedvig's birthday——

HEDVIG. And you'll get it all the same, father! You may be sure I shall give all the money to you and mother.

HIALMAR. TO mother, yes! There we have it.

GREGERS. Hialmar, this is a trap he's setting for you.

HIALMAR. DO you think it's another trap?

GREGERS. When he was here this morning he said: Hialmar Ekdal is not the man you imagine him to be.

HIALMAR. Not the man——!

GREGERS. YOU will see that, he said.

HIALMAR. He wanted to show you that I would let myself be put off with money——!

HEDVIG. Oh, mother, what does all this mean?

GINA. Go and take off your things.

[HEDVIG goes out by the kitchen door, half-crying.]

GREGERS. Yes, Hialmar—now we shall see who was right, he or I.

HIALMAR [*slowly tears the paper across, lays both pieces on the table, and says*]. Here is my answer.

GREGERS. Just what I expected.

HIALMAR [*goes over to GINA, who stands by the stove, and says in a low voice*]. Now please make a clean breast of it. If the connection between you and him was quite over when you—came to care for me, as you call it, why did he put us in a position to marry?

GINA. I suppose he thought our house would be open to him.

HIALMAR. Only that? Wasn't he afraid of a possible contingency?

GINA. I don't know what you mean.

HIALMAR. I want to know whether—your child has the right to live under my roof.

GINA [*draws herself up; her eyes flash*]. You ask that!

HIALMAR. YOU shall answer me this one question: Does Hedvig belong to me—or——? Well!

GINA [*looking at him with cold defiance*]. I don't know.

HIALMAR [*quivering a little*]. You don't know!

GINA. HOW should I know? A creature like *me*——

HIALMAR [*quietly, turning away from her*]. Then I have nothing more to do in this house.

GREGERS. Take care, Hialmar! Think what you're doing!

HIALMAR [*puts on his overcoat*]. In this case, there's nothing for a man like me to think twice about.

GREGERS. Yes, indeed, there are endless things to be considered. You three must be together if you're to attain the true frame of mind for self-sacrificing forgiveness.

HIALMAR. I don't want to attain it. Never, never! My hat! [*Takes his hat,*] My home has fallen in ruins about me. [*Bursts into tears,*] Gregers, I have no child!

HEDVIG [*who has opened the kitchen door*]. What is that you're saying? [*Coming to him,*] Father, father!

GINA. There, you see!

HALMAR. Don't come near me, Hedvig! Keep far away. I can't bear to see you. Oh! those eyes!——Good-bye.

[Makes for the door.

HEDVIG *[clinging tight to him and screaming loudly]*. No, no! Don't leave me!

GINA *[cries out]*. Look at the child, Ekdall! Look at the child!

HALMAR. I won't! I cannot! I must get out—away from all this!

[He tears himself away from HEDVIG, and goes out through the passage door.

HEDVIG *[with despairing eyes]*. He's going away from us, mother! He's going away from us! He'll never come back again!

GINA. Don't cry, Hedvig. Father's sure to come back again.

HEDVIG *[throws herself sobbing on the sofa]*. No, no, he'll never come home to us any more.

GREGERS. DO you believe I meant all for the best, Mrs. Ekdal?

GINA. Yes, I suppose so; but God forgive you, all the same.

HEDVIG *[lying on the sofa]*. Oh, this will kill me! What have I done to him? Mother, you must fetch him home again!

GINA. Yes, yes, yes; only calm yourself, and I'll go out and look for him. *[Puts on her outdoor things.]* Perhaps he's gone in to Rolling's. But you mustn't lie there and cry. Promise me!

HEDVIG *[weeping convulsively]*. Yes, I'll leave off; if only father comes back!

GREGERS *[to GINA, who is going]*. After all, hadn't you better leave him to fight out his bitter fight to the end?

GINA. Oh, he can do that afterwards. First and foremost we must pacify the child. *[Goes out by the passage door.*

HEDVIG *[sits up and dries her tears]*. Now you must tell me what all this means. Why doesn't father want me any more?

GREGERS. YOU mustn't ask that until you're a big girl—quite grown-up.

HEDVIG *[sobs]*. But I can't go on bearing all this misery

till I'm grown-up.—I think I know what it is.—Perhaps I'm not really father's child.

GREGERS [*uneasily*]. How could that be ?

HEDVIG. Mother might have found me. And perhaps father has just got to know it ; I've read of such things.

GREGERS. Well, but if it were so——

HEDVIG. I think he might love me just as well for all that. Yes, even more. We got the wild duck as a present, and I love it so dearly all the same.

GREGERS [*diverting the conversation*]. Ah, the wild duck, by-the-by! Let's talk about the wild duck a little, Hedvig.

HEDVIG. The poor wild duck! He doesn't want to see it any more either. Only think, he wanted to wring its neck!

GREGERS. Oh, he won't do that.

HEDVIG. NO ; but he said he wanted to. And I think it was horrid of father to say it ; for I pray for the wild duck every night, and ask that it may be preserved from death and all that is evil.

GREGERS [*looking at her*]. Do you say your prayers every night?

HEDVIG. Yes.

GREGERS. Who taught you to do that ?

HEDVIG. I myself; once when father was very ill, and had leeches on his neck, and said that death was staring him in the face.

GREGERS. Well ?

HEDVIG. Then I prayed for him as I lay in bed; and since then I've always kept it up.

GREGERS. And now you pray for the wild duck too?

HEDVIG. I thought it was best to bring in the wild duck; for she was so weakly at first.

GREGERS. DO you pray in the morning, too ?

HEDVIG. NO, of course not.

GREGERS. Why not in the morning ?

HEDVIG. In the morning it's light, and there's nothing in particular to be afraid of.

GREGERS. And your father was going to wring the neck of the wild duck that you love so dearly?

HEDVIG. NO; he said he would like to wring its neck, but he would spare it for my sake; and that was kind of father.

GREGERS [*coming a little nearer*]. But suppose you were to sacrifice the wild duck, of your own free will, for his sake?

HEDVIG [*rising*]. The wild duck!

GREGERS. Suppose you were to sacrifice, for his sake, the dearest treasure you have in the world?

HEDVIG. DO you think that would do any good?

GREGERS. Try it, Hedvig.

HEDVIG [*softly, with flashing eyes*]. Yes, I will try it.

GREGERS. Have you really the courage for it, do you think?

HEDVIG. I'll ask grandfather to shoot the wild duck for me.

GREGERS. Yes, do. But not a word to your mother about it!

HEDVIG. Why not?

GREGERS. She doesn't understand us.

HEDVIG. The wild duck! I'll try it to-morrow morning!

[GINA *comes in by the passage door,*

HEDVIG *going towards her*]. Did you find him, mother?

GINA. NO, but I heard he had called and taken Relling with him.

GREGERS. Are you sure of that?

GINA. Yes, the porter's wife said so. Molvik went with them too, she said.

GREGERS. This evening, when his mind so sorely needs to wrestle in solitude——!

GINA [*takes off her things*]. Yes, men are never to be depended on. The Lord only knows where Relling has dragged him to! I ran over to Madam Eriksen's, but they weren't there.

HEDVIG [*struggling to keep back her tears*]. Oh, if he should never come home any more!

GREGERS. He will come home again. I shall have news to give him to-morrow; and then you'll see how he'll come. You may rely upon that, Hedvig, and sleep in peace. Good-night.

[*He goes out through the passage door,*

HEDVIG [*throws herself sobbing on GINA'S neck*]. Mother, mother!

GINA [*pats her shoulder and sighs*]. Ah, yes; Relling was right, he was. That's what happens when crazy people go about presenting the claims of the what-do-you-call-it.

A C T V

HIALMAR EKDAL'S studio. Cold grey, morning light. Wet snow lies upon the large panes of the sloping roof-window, GINA comes from the kitchen with an apron and bib on, and carrying a dusting-brush and a duster; she goes towards the sitting-room door. At the same moment HEDVIG comes hurriedly in from the passage.

GINA [*stops*]. Well?

HEDVIG. Oh, mother! I almost think he's down at Relling's—

GINA. There, you see!

HEDVIG.——because the porter's wife says she could hear that Relling had two people with him when he came home last night.

GINA. That's just what I thought.

HEDVIG. But he might just as well have gone right away, if he won't come up to us.

GINA. I'll go down and speak to him, at all events.

[OLD EKDAL, in dressing-gown and slippers, and with a lighted pipe, appears at the door of his room.

EKDAL. Hialmar——Isn't Hialmar at home?

GINA. NO, he's gone out.

EKDAL. So early? And in such a furious snowstorm? Well, well; don't mind me; I can take my morning walk alone.

[*He slides the garret door aside; HEDVIG helps him; he goes in; she closes it after him.*

HEDVIG [*in an undertone*]. Only think, mother, when grandfather hears that father's going to leave us.

GINA. Oh, nonsense; grandfather mustn't hear anything about it. It was a heaven's mercy that he wasn't at home yesterday in all that hurly-burly.

HEDVIG. Yes, but——

[GREGERS *comes in by the passage door.*

GREGERS. Well, have you any news of him ?

GINA. They say he's down at Relling's.

GREGERS. At Relling's! Has he really been out with those creatures ?

GINA. Yes, like enough.

GREGERS. When he should have been yearning for solitude, for earnest self-examination——

GINA. Yes, you may well say so.

[RELLING *enters from the passage.*

HEDVIG [*going to him*]. Is father in your room?

GINA [*at the same time*]. Is he there?

RELLING. Yes, of course he is.

HEDVIG. And you never let us know!

RELLING. Yes; I'm a brute. But in the first place I had to look after the other brute; I mean our daemonic friend, of course; and then I fell asleep, so sound asleep that——

GINA. What does Ekdal say to-day ?

RELLING. He says nothing whatever.

HEDVIG. Doesn't he speak?

RELLING. Not a blessed word.

GREGERS. NO, no; I can understand that very well.

GINA. But what's he doing, then ?

RELLING. He's lying on the sofa, snoring.

GINA. Oh, is he ? Yes, Ekdal's a rare one to snore.

HEDVIG. Asleep? Can he sleep?

RELLING. Well, it certainly looks like it.

GREGERS. Very natural, after the spiritual conflict that has rent him——

GINA. And then he's not accustomed to roving about out of doors at night.

HEDVIG. It's perhaps a good thing that he's getting some sleep, mother.

GINA. Of course it is; and we must take care not to rouse him too early. Thank you, Relling. I must get the house cleaned up a bit now, and then——Come and help me, Hedvig.

[GINA *and* HEDVIG *go into the sitting-room.*

GREGERS [*turning to* RELING]. What's your theory as to the spiritual tumult that's now going on in Hialmar Ekdal?

RELLING. Upon my word I haven't noticed any spiritual tumult about him.

GREGERS. What! not at such a crisis, when his whole life has been placed on a new foundation——? How can you think that such an individuality as Hialmar's——?

RELLING. Oh, individuality—he! If he ever had any tendency to the abnormal developments you call individuality, it was extirpated, root and fibre, before he was out of his teens.

GREGERS. It would be strange if that were so, considering the loving care with which he was brought up.

RELLING. By those two affected, hysterical maiden aunts, you mean?

GREGERS. Let me tell you that they were women who never forgot the claim of the ideal—but of course, you'll simply make game of me again.

RELLING. NO, I'm in no humour for that. I know all about these ladies; for he has favoured me with floods of rhetoric on the subject of his "two soul-mothers." But I don't think he has much to thank them for. Ekdal's misfortune is that in his own circle he has always been looked upon as a shining light——

GREGERS. Not without reason, surely. Look at the depth of his mind!

RELLING. I've never discovered it. That his father believed in it I don't so much wonder; the old lieutenant has been an ass all his days.

GREGERS. He has had a childlike mind all his days; that's what you don't understand.

RELLING. Well, so be it. But then, when our dear, sweet Hialmar went to college, he immediately passed for the great light of the future amongst his comrades too. He was handsome, the rascal—red and white—a shop-girl's ideal of manly beauty; and with his superficially emotional temperament, and his sympathetic voice, and his talent for declaiming other people's verses and other people's thoughts——

GREGERS [*indignantly*]. Is it Hialmar Ekdal you're talking about in that strain?

RELLING. Yes, with your permission; I'm simply showing you the other side of the idol you're grovelling before.

GREGERS. I shouldn't have thought I was so utterly blind.

RELLING. Oh, there's nothing strange in that. You're a sick man, too, you see.

GREGERS. You're right there.

RELLING. Yes. Yours is a complicated case. First of all there's that troublesome integrity-fever; and then—what's worse—you're always in a delirium of hero-worship; you must always have something to adore, outside yourself.

GREGERS. Yes, I must certainly seek it outside myself.

RELLING. But you make such shocking mistakes about every new phoenix you think you have discovered. Here again you've come to a cotter's cabin with your claim of the ideal; the people of the house are insolvent.

GREGERS. If you don't think better than that of Hialmar Ekdal, what pleasure can you find in being everlastingly with him?

RELLING. Well, you see, I'm supposed to be a sort of a doctor—save the mark! I can't but give a hand to the poor sick people who live under the same roof with me.

GREGERS. Oh, indeed! Ekdal is sick too, is he?

RELLING. Most people are, worse luck.

GREGERS. And what remedy are you applying in Hialmar's case?

RELLING. My usual one. I'm fostering the life-illusion¹ in him.

GREGERS. Life—illusion? Is that what you said?

RELLING. Yes, I said illusion. For illusion, you know, is the stimulating principle.

GREGERS. May I ask with what illusion Hialmar is inoculated?

RELLING. NO, thanks; I don't betray professional secrets to quacksalvers. You would probably go and make a still worse muddle of him. But my method is infallible. I've applied it to

^x " Livslognen," literally " the life-lie." The context sufficiently explains the difference between Reiling's " life-illusion " and Schopenhauer's.

Molvik as well. I've made him "daemonic." That's the blister I have to put on *his* neck.

GREGERS. Isn't he really daemonic, then ?

RELLING. What the devil do you mean by daemonic? It's only a piece of hocus-pocus I've invented to keep up a spark of life in him. But for that, the poor harmless creature would have succumbed to self-contempt and despair many a long year ago. And then the old lieutenant! But he has hit upon his own cure, you see.

GREGERS. Lieutenant Ekdal? What of him ?

RELLING. Just think of the old bear-hunter shutting himself up in that dark garret to shoot rabbits! I tell you there isn't a happier sportsman in the world than that old man pottering about in there among all that rubbish. The four or five withered Christmas-trees he has saved up are the same to him as the whole great fresh Hoidal forest; the cock and the hens are big game-birds in the fir-tops; and the rabbits that flop about the garret floor are the bears he has to battle with—the mighty hunter of the mountains!

GREGERS. Poor unfortunate old man! Yes; he has had to narrow the ideals of his youth, indeed !

RELLING. While I think of it, Mr. Werle, junior, don't use that foreign word: ideals. We've got the excellent native word : lies.

GREGERS. DO you think the two things are related ?

RELLING. Yes, just about as closely as typhus and putrid fever.

GREGERS. Dr. Relling, I shall not give in until I have* rescued Hjalmar from your clutches.

RELLING. SO much the worse for him. Rob the average man of his life-illusion, and you rob him of his happiness at the same time. *[To HEDVIG, who comes in from the sitting-room.]* Well, little wild-duck-mother, I'm just going down to see whether papa is still lying meditating upon that wonderful invention of his. *[Goes out by the passage door.]*

GREGERS *[approaches HEDVIG]*. I can see by your face that you haven't done it.

HEDVIG. What? Oh, that about the wild duck. No.

GREGERS. Your courage failed when the time for action came, I suppose.

HEDVIG. No, that wasn't it. But when I awoke this morning, and remembered what we had been talking about, it seemed so strange.

GREGERS. Strange?

HEDVIG. Yes, I don't know——Yesterday evening, at the moment, I thought there was something so delightful about it; but since I've slept and thought of it again, it somehow doesn't seem worth while.

GREGERS. Ah, I thought you couldn't have grown up quite unharmed in this house.

HEDVIG. I don't care about that, if only father would come up——

GREGERS. Oh, if only your eyes had been opened to that which gives life its value—if you possessed the true, joyous, fearless spirit of sacrifice, you would soon see how he would come up to you.—But I believe in you still, Hedvig.

[He goes out by the passage door.]

[HEDVIG wanders about the room for a time; she is on the point of going into the kitchen when a knock is heard at the garret door. HEDVIG goes over and opens it a little; old EKDAL comes out; she pushes the door to again.]

EKDAL. H'm, it's not much fun to take one's morning walk alone.

HEDVIG. Wouldn't you like to go shooting, grandfather?

EKDAL. It's not the weather for it to-day. It's so dark there, you can scarcely see where you're going.

HEDVIG. DO you never want to shoot anything besides the rabbits?

EKDAL. DO you think the rabbits aren't good enough?

HEDVIG. Yes, but what about the wild duck?

EKDAL. Ho-ho! are you afraid I shall shoot your wild duck? Never in the world. Never.

HEDVIG. NO, I suppose you couldn't; they say it's very difficult to shoot wild ducks.

EKDAL. Couldn't! Should rather think I could.

HEDVIG. How would you set about it, grandfather?—I don't mean with *my* wild duck, but with others?

EKDAL. I should take care to shoot them in the breast, you know; that's the surest place. And then you must shoot against the feathers, you see—not the way of the feathers.

HEDVIG. DO they die then, grandfather?

EKDAL. Yes, they die right enough—when you shoot properly. Well, I must go in and have a wash. H'm—understand—h'm. *[Goes into his room.]*

[HEDVIG waits a little, glances towards the sitting-room door, goes over to the bookcase, stands on tiptoe, takes the double-barrelled pistol down from the shelf, and looks at it. GINA, with brush and duster, comes from the sitting-room.]

HEDVIG *hastily lays down the pistol, unobserved.*

GINA. Don't stand raking amongst father's things, Hedvig.

HEDVIG *[goes away from the bookcase]*. I was only going to tidy up a bit.

GINA. GO into the kitchen, and see if the coffee's keeping hot; I'll take his breakfast on a tray, when I go down to him.

[HEDVIG goes out. GINA begins to sweep and clean up the studio. Presently the passage door is opened with hesitation, and HIALMAR EKDAL looks in. He has on his overcoat, but not his hat; he is unwashed, and his hair is dishevelled and unkempt. His eyes are dull and heavy.]

GINA *[standing with the brush in her hand, and looking at him]*. Oh, there now, Ekdal—so you've come after all?

HIALMAR *[comes in and answers in a toneless voice]*, I come—only to depart again immediately.

GINA. Yes, yes, I suppose so. But, Lord help us! what a sight you are!

HIALMAR. A sight?

GINA. And your nice winter-coat too! Well, that's done for.

HEDVIG *[at the kitchen door]*. Mother, hadn't I better——? *[Sees HIALMAR, gives a loud scream of joy, and runs to him.]* Oh father, father!

HIALMAR *[turns away and makes a gesture of repulsion]*.

Away, away, away! [To GINA.] Keep her away from me, I say!

GINA [*in a low tone*]. Go into the sitting-room, Hedvig.

[HEDVIG goes silently in.

HALMAR [*fussily pulls out the table-drawer*']. I must have my books with me. Where are my books?

GINA. Which books?

HALMAR. My scientific books, of course; the technical magazines I use for my invention.

GINA [*searches in the bookcase*]. Is it these with paper covers?

HALMAR. Yes, of course.

GINA [*lays a heap of magazines on the table*]. Shan't I get HEDVIG to cut them for you?

HALMAR. I don't require to have them cut for me.

[*Short silence.*

GINA. Then you're still bent on leaving us, Ekdal?

HALMAR [*rummaging amongst the books*]. Yes, that's a matter of course, I should think.

GINA. Well, well.

HALMAR [*vehemently*]. How can I live here, to be stabbed to the heart every hour of the day?

GINA. God forgive you for thinking so vilely of me.

HALMAR. Prove——!

GINA. I think it's you that have got to prove.

HALMAR. After a past like yours? There are certain claims—I may almost call them claims of the ideal——

GINA. But what about grandfather? What's to become of him, poor dear?

HALMAR. I know my duty; my helpless father will come with me. I'm going out into the town to make arrangements—*H'm—[*hesitatingly*] has any one found my hat on the stairs?

GINA. NO. Have you lost your hat?

HALMAR. Of course I had it on when I came in last night; there's no doubt about that; but I couldn't find it this morning.

GINA. Lord help us! where have you been to with those two ne'er-do-wells?

HIALMAR. Oh, don't bother me about trivial things. Do you suppose I'm in the humour to remember details?

GINA. If only you haven't caught cold, Ekdal.

[Goes out into the kitchen.]

HIALMAR *[talks to himself in a low tone of irritation, whilst he empties the table-drawer']*. You're a scoundrel, Relling!—You're a low fellow!—Ah, you shameless tempter!—I wish I could get some one to murder you!

[He lays some old letters on one side, finds the torn paper of yesterday, takes it up and looks at the pieces; puts it down hurriedly as GINA enters.]

GINA *[sets a tray with coffee, etc., on the table]*. Here's a drop of something warm, if you'd like it. And there's some bread and butter and a snack of salt meat.

HIALMAR *[glancing at the tray]*. Salt meat? Never under this roof! It's true I haven't had a mouthful of solid food for nearly twenty-four hours; but no matter.—My memoranda! The commencement of my autobiography! What's become of my diary, and all my important papers? *[Opens the sitting-room door, but draws back.]* She's there, too!

GINA. Good Lord! the child must be somewhere!

HIALMAR. Come out.

[He makes room, HEDVIG comes, scared, into the studio.]

HIALMAR *[with his hand upon the door-handle, says to GINA]*. In these, the last moments I spend in my former home, I wish to be spared from interlopers. *[Goes into the room.]*

HEDVIG *[with a bound towards her mother, asks softly, trembling]*. Does that mean me?

GINA. Stay out in the kitchen, Hedvig; or, no—you'd better go into your own room. *[Speaks to HIALMAR as she goes in to him.]* Wait a bit, Ekdal; don't rummage so in the drawers; I know where everything is.

HEDVIG *[stands a moment immovable, in terror and perplexity, biting her lips to keep back the tears; then she clenches her hands convulsively, and says softly]*. The wild duck!

[She steals over and takes the pistol from the shelf, opens the garret door a little way, creeps in, and draws the door to after her.]

[HIALMAR and GINA can be heard disputing in the sitting-room.]

HIALMAR [*comes in with some manuscript books and old loose papers, which he lays upon the table*]. That portmanteau's no good! There are a thousand and one things I must drag with me.

GINA [*following with the portmanteau*]. Why not leave all the rest for the present, and only take a shirt and a pair of woollen drawers with you.

HIALMAR. Whew—all these wearisome preparations——!

[*Pulls off his overcoat and throws it upon the sofa.*]

GINA. And there's the coffee getting cold.

HIALMAR. H'm.

[*Drinks a mouthful without thinking of it, and then another.*]

GINA [*dusting the backs of the chairs*]. Your great difficulty will be to find such a big garret for the rabbits.

HIALMAR. What! Am I to drag all those rabbits with me too?

GINA. I'm sure grandfather can't get on without his rabbits.

HIALMAR. He must just get used to doing without them. Haven't / got to sacrifice very much greater things than rabbits!

GINA [*dusting the bookcase*]. Shall I put the flute in the portmanteau for you?

HIALMAR. No. No flute for me. But give me the pistol!

GINA. Do you want to take the pistol with you?

HIALMAR. Yes. My loaded pistol.

GINA [*searching for it*]. It's gone. He must have taken it in with him.

HIALMAR. Is he in the garret?

GINA. Yes, of course he's in the garret.

HIALMAR. H'm—poor lonely old man.

[*He takes a piece of bread and butter, eats it, and finishes his cup of coffee.*]

GINA. If we hadn't let that room, you could have moved in there.

HIALMAR. And continued to live under the same roof with——! Never—never!

GINA. But couldn't you put up with the sitting-room for a day or two? You could have it all to yourself.

HIALMAR. Never within these walls!

GINA. Well then, down with Relling and Molvik.

HIALMAR. Don't mention those creatures' names to me! It takes away my appetite only to think of them——Oh no, I must go out into the storm and the snow-blast—go from house to house and seek shelter for my father and myself.

GINA. But you've got no hat, Ekdal! You've lost your hat, you know.

HIALMAR. Oh, those two brutes, those slaves of all the vices! A hat must be got for me. [*Takes another piece of bread and butter.*] Something must be done. For I have no mind to throw away my life, either. [*Looks for something on the tray.*]

GINA. What are you looking for?

HIALMAR. Butter.

GINA. I'll get you some at once. [*Goes out into the kitchen.*]

HIALMAR [*calls after her*]. Oh, it doesn't matter; dry bread is all I require.

GINA [*brings a dish of butter*]. Look here; this is fresh churned.

[She pours out another cup of coffee for him; he seats himself on the sofa, spreads more butter on the already buttered bread, and eats and drinks a while in silence.]

HIALMAR. Could I, without being intruded on by any one—by any one at all—could I live in the sitting-room for a day or two?

GINA. Yes, you could quite well, if you only would.

HIALMAR. For I see no possibility of getting all father's things out in such a hurry.

GINA. And besides, you'll have to tell him first that you don't mean to live with us others any longer.

HIALMAR [*pushes away his coffee cup*]. Yes, there's that too; I'll have to lay bare the whole complicated history to him——I must turn matters over; I must have breathing-time; I can't take the whole burden upon my shoulders in a single day.

GINA. No, especially in such horrible weather as it is outside.

HIALMAR [*touching WERLE'S letter*], I see that paper is still lying about here.

GINA. Yes, / haven't touched it.

HIALMAR. So far as I'm concerned it's mere waste paper——

GINA. Well, I ' m certainly not thinking of making any use of it.

HIALMAR.——but we'd better not let it get lost all the same—in all the upset when I move, it might easily——

GINA. I'll take care of it, Ekdal.

HIALMAR. The donation is really made to father, and it rests with him to accept or decline it.

GINA [*sighs*]. Yes, poor old father——

HIALMAR. T O make quite safe——Where shall I find some gum ?

GINA [*goes to the bookcase*]. Here's the gum-pot.

HIALMAR. And a brush ?

GINA. Here's the brush too. [*Brings him the things,*

HIALMAR [*takes a pair of scissors*]. Just a strip of paper at the back——[*clips and gums*]. Far be it from me to lay hands upon what is not my own—and least of all upon what belongs to a destitute old man—and to—the other as well.—There now. Let it lie there for a time; and when it's dry, take it away. I wish never to see that document again. Never !

[GREGERS WERLE *enters from the passage,*

GREGERS [*somewhat surprised*]. What—are you sitting here, Hialmar ?

HIALMAR [*rises hurriedly*]. I had sunk down from fatigue.

GREGERS. You've been having breakfast, I see.

HIALMAR. The body sometimes makes its claims felt too,

GREGERS. What have you *decided* to do ?

HIALMAR. For a man like me, there's only one way to go. I'm just putting my most important things together. But it takes time, you know.

GINA [*rather impatiently*]. Am I to get the room ready for you, or shall I pack your portmanteau ?

HIALMAR [*after a glance of annoyance at GREGERS*]. Pack—and get the room ready I

GjNA [takes the portmanteau]. Very well; then I'll put in the shirt and the other things.

[Goes into the sitting-room and draws the door to after her.

GREGERS *[after a short silence],* I never thought this would be the end of it. Do you really feel it a necessity to leave house and home?

HIALMAR *[wanders about restlessly].* What would you have me do?—I am not fitted to bear unhappiness, Gregers. I must feel secure and at peace in my surroundings.

GREGERS. But can't you feel that here? Just try it. It seems to me you have firm ground to build upon now—if only you start afresh. And remember, you have your invention to live for.

HIALMAR. Oh, don't talk about my invention. It's perhaps still in the dim distance.

GREGERS. Indeed!

HIALMAR. Why, great heavens, what would you have me invent? Other people have invented almost everything already. It's more and more difficult every day——

GREGERS. And you've devoted so much work to it.

HIALMAR. It was that blackguard Relling that urged me to it.

GREGERS. Relling?

HIALMAR. Yes, it was he that first led me to notice my aptitude for making some notable discovery in photography.

GREGERS. Aha—it was Relling!

HIALMAR. Oh, I've been so truly happy over it! Not so much for the sake of the invention itself, but because Hedvig believed in it—believed in it with a child's whole earnestness of faith. At least, I've been fool enough to go and imagine that she believed in it.

GREGERS. Can you really think that Hedvig has been false towards you?

HIALMAR. I can think anything now. It's Hedvig that stands in my way. She will blot out the sunlight from my whole life.

GREGERS. Hedvig! Is it Hedvig you're talking of? How should she blot out your sunlight?

HIALMAR *[without answering]*, I have loved that child so unspeakably. I have felt so unspeakably happy every time I came home to my poor room, and she flew to meet me, with her sweet little short-sighted eyes. Oh, confiding fool that I have been! I loved her unspeakably; and I yielded myself up to the dream, the delusion, that she loved me unspeakably in return.

GREGERS. Do you call that a delusion?

HIALMAR. How should I know? I can't get anything out of Gina,* and besides, she's totally blind to the ideal side of these complications. But to you I feel impelled to open my mind, Gregers. I can't shake off this frightful doubt—perhaps Hedvig has never really and honestly loved me.

GREGERS. What would you say if she were to give you a proof of her love? *[Listens.]* What's that? I thought I heard the wild duck——?

HIALMAR. It's the wild duck quacking. Father's in the garret.

GREGERS. IS he? *[His face lights up with joy.]* I say you may yet have proof that your poor misunderstood Hedvig loves you!

HIALMAR. Oh, what proof can she give me? I dare not believe in any assurances from that quarter.

GREGERS. Hedvig does not know what deceit means.

HIALMAR. Oh, Gregers, that's just what I can't be certain about. Who knows what Gina and that Mrs. Sorby may many a time have sat here whispering and tattling about? And Hedvig usually has her ears open, I can tell you. Perhaps the deed of gift didn't come so unexpectedly after all. In fact, I'm not sure but that I gathered something of the sort.

GREGERS. What spirit is this that has come over you?

HIALMAR. I've had my eyes opened. Just you notice;—you'll see, the deed of gift is only a beginning. Mrs. Sorby has always been a good deal taken up with Hedvig; and now she has the power to do whatever she likes for the child. They can take her from me whenever they please.

GREGERS. Hedvig will never leave you.

HIALMAR. Don't be so sure of that. If only they beckon to her and throw out a golden bait——! Oh, and I have loved

her so unspeakably! I would have counted it my highest happiness to take her tenderly by the hand and lead her, as one leads a timid child through a great dark empty room!—I am cruelly certain now that the poor photographer in his humble attic has never really and truly been anything to her. She has only cunningly contrived to keep on a good footing with him until the time came.

GREGERS. You don't believe that yourself, Hialmar.

HALMAR. That's just the terrible part of it—I don't know what to believe—I never can know it. But can you really doubt that it must be as I say? Ho-ho, you rely too much upon the claim of the ideal, my good Gregers! If those others came, with the glory of wealth about them, and called to the child: "Leave him: come to us: here life awaits you"——!

GREGERS [*quickly*]. Well, what then?

HALMAR. If I then asked her: Hedvig, are you willing to renounce that life for me? [*Laughs scornfully.*] No, thank you! You'd soon hear what answer I should get.

[*A pistol shot is heard from within the garret.*]

GREGERS [*loudly and joyfully*], Hialmar!

HALMAR. There now; he must needs go shooting too.

GINA [*comes in*]. Oh, Ekdal, I can hear grandfather blazing away in the garret by himself.

HALMAR. I'll look in.

GREGERS [*eagerly, with emotion*]. Wait a bit! Do you know what that was?

HALMAR. Yes, of course I know.

GREGERS. NO, you don't know. But / do. That was the proof!

HALMAR. What proof?

GREGERS. It was a child's act of sacrifice. She has got your father to shoot the wild duck.

HALMAR. TO shoot the wild duck!

GINA. Oh, think of that——!

HALMAR. What was that for?

GREGERS. She wanted to sacrifice to you her most cherished possession; for then she thought you would surely come to love her again.

HALMAR [*tenderly, with emotion*]. Oh, poor child!

GINA. What things she thinks of!

GREGERS. She only wanted your love again, Hialmar. She couldn't live without it.

GINA [*struggling with her tears*]. There, you can see for yourself, Ekdal.

HALMAR. Gina, where is she?

GINA [*sniffs*]. Poor dear, she's sitting out in the kitchen, I daresay.

HALMAR [*goes over, tears open the kitchen door, and says*], Hedvig, come, come in to me! [*Looks round,*] No, she's not here.

GINA. Then she must be in her own little room.

HALMAR [*without*]. No, she's not here either. [*Comes in.*] She must have gone out.

GINA. Yes, you wouldn't have her anywhere in the house.

HALMAR. Oh, if she would only come home quickly, so that I can tell her——Everything will come right now, Gregers; now I believe we can begin life afresh.

GREGERS [*quietly*], I knew it; I knew the child would make amends.

[OLD EKDAL *appears at the door of his room; he is in full uniform, and is busy buckling on his sword,*

HALMAR [*astonished*]. Father! Are you there?

GINA. Have you been firing in your room?

EKDAL [*resentfully, approaching*]. So you go shooting alone, Hialmar?

HALMAR [*excited and confused*]. Then it wasn't you that fired that shot in the garret?

EKDAL. *Me* that fired? H'm.

GREGERS [*calls out to HALMAR*]. She has shot the wild duck herself!

HALMAR. What can it mean? [*Hastens to the garret door, tears it aside, looks in and calls loudly,*] Hedvig!

GINA [*runs to the door*]. Good God, what's that!

HALMAR [*goes in*]. She's lying on the floor!

GREGERS. Hedvig! lying on the floor.

[*Goes in to HALMAR.*

GINA [*at the same time*], Hedvig! [*Inside the garret,*]
No, no, no!

EKDAL. **Ho-ho! does she go shooting too, now?**

[HIALMAR," GINA, and GREGERS carry HEDVIG into the studio; in her dangling right hand she holds the pistol fast clasped in her fingers,

HIALMAR [*distracted*]. **The pistol has gone off. She has wounded herself. Call for help! Help!**

GINA [*runs into the passage and calls down*], Relling!
Relling! Doctor Relling; come up as quick as you can!

[HIALMAR and GREGERS lay HEDVIG down on the sofa,

EKDAL [*quietly*]. **The woods avenge themselves.**

HIALMAR [*on his knees beside HEDVIG*], **She'll soon come to now. She's coming to——; yes, yes, yes.**

GINA [*who has come in again*]. **Where has she hurt herself? I can't see anything——**

[RELLING comes hurriedly, and immediately after him MOL-VIK; the latter without his waistcoat and necktie, and with his coat open,

RELLING. **What's the matter here?**

GINA. **They say Hedvig has shot herself.**

HIALMAR. **Come and help us!**

RELLING. **Shot herself!**

[*He pushes the table aside and begins to examine her.*

HIALMAR [*kneeling and looking anxiously up at him*]. **It can't be dangerous? Speak, Relling! She's scarcely bleeding at all. It can't be dangerous?**

RELLING. **How did it happen?**

HIALMAR. **Oh, we don't know——!**

GINA. **She wanted to shoot the wild duck.**

RELLING. **The wild duck?**

HIALMAR. **The pistol must have gone off.**

RELLING. **H'm. Indeed.**

EKDAL. **The woods avenge themselves. But I'm not afraid, all the same.** [*Goes into the garret and closes the door after him.*

HIALMAR. **Well, Relling—why do you say nothing?**

RELLING. **The ball has entered the breast.**

HIALMAR. **Yes, but she's coming to!**

RELLING. Surely you can see that Hedvig is dead.

GINA [*bursts into tears*]. Oh, my child, my child !

GREGERS [*huskily*]. In the depths of the sea——

HIALMAR [*jumps up*]. No, no, she must live! Oh, for God's sake, Relling—only a moment—only just till I can tell her how unspeakably I loved her all the time !

RELLING. . The bullet has gone through her heart. Internal hemorrhage. Death must have been instantaneous.

HIALMAR. And I ! I hunted her from me like an animal! And she crept terrified into the garret and died for love of me! [*Sobbing.*] I can never atone to her! I can never tell her——! [*Clenches his hands and cries, upwards.*] O thou above——! If thou *art* there! Why hast thou done this thing to me!

GINA. Hush, hush, you mustn't speak so wildly. We had no right to keep her, I suppose.

MOLVIK. The child is not dead, but sleepeth.

RELLING. Bosh!

HIALMAR [*becomes calm, goes over to the sofa, folds his arms, and looks at HEDVIG*]. There she lies so stiff and still.

RELLING [*tries to loosen the pistol*]. It's so tight, so tight.

GINA. No, no, Relling, don't break her fingers; let the pigstol be.

HIALMAR. She shall take it with her.

GINA. Yes, let her. But the child mustn't lie here for a show. She shall go into her own little room. Help me in with her, Ekdal. [*HIALMAR and GINA take HEDVIG between them.*]

HIALMAR [*as they are carrying her*]. Oh, Gina, Gina, can you survive this!

GINA. We must help each other to bear it. For now, at least, she belongs to both of us.

MOLVIK [*stretches out his arms and mumbles*]. Blessed be the Lord; to earth thou shalt return; to earth thou shalt return——

RELLING [*whispers*]. Hold your tongue, you fool; you're drunk.

[*HIALMAR and GINA carry the corpse out through the kitchen*]

door. RELLING *shuts it after them.* MOLVIK *slinks out into the passage.*

RELLING [*goes over to GREGERS and says*]. No one shall ever convince me that the pistol went off by accident.

GREGERS [*who has stood terrified, with convulsive twitchings*]. Who can say how the dreadful thing happened?

RELLING. The powder has burnt the body of her dress. She must have pressed the pistol right against her breast and fired.

GREGERS. Hedvig has not died in vain. Did you not see how sorrow set free what is noble in him?

RELLING. Most people are ennobled by the actual presence of death. But how long do you suppose this nobility will last?

GREGERS. Will it not endure and increase throughout his life?

RELLING. Before a year is over, little Hedvig will be nothing to him but a pretty theme for declamation.

GREGERS. How dare you say that of Hjalmar Ekdal?

RELLING. We shall talk of this again, when the grass has first withered on her grave. Then you'll hear him spout about "the child too early torn from her father's heart"; then you'll see him steep himself in a syrup of sentiment and self-admiration and self-pity. Just you see!

GREGERS. If you're right and I'm wrong, then life is not worth living.

RELLING. Oh, life would be quite tolerable, after all, if only we could be rid of the confounded duns that keep on pestering us, in our poverty, with the claim of the ideal.

GREGERS [*looking straight before him*]. In that case, I'm glad that my destiny is what it is.

RELLING. Excuse me—what *is* your destiny?

GREGERS [*going*]. To be the thirteenth at table.

RELLING. The devil it is.

Curtain

ROSMERSHOLM
(1886)

TRANSLATED BY
CHARLES ARCHER

CHARACTERS

JOHANNES ROSMER, *of Rosmersholm, formerly clergyman of the parish.*

REBECCA WEST, *in charge of Rosme/s household.*

RECTOR¹ KROLL, *Rosmer's brother-in-law.*

ULRIC BRENDEL.

PETER MORTENSGARD.²

MADAM HELSETH, *housekeeper at Rosmersholm.*

The action takes place at Rosmersholm, an old family seat near a small coast town in the west of Norway.

¹ " Rector " in the Scotch and Continental sense of headmaster of a school, not in the English sense of a beneficed clergyman.

² Pronounce *Mortensgore*.

R O S M E R S H O L M

I N T R O D U C T I O N

The years between the publication of *The Wild Duck* and *Rosmersholm* were decisive in turning Ibsen's interests away from political and social problems to those of human psychology. *Rosmersholm* followed in the backwash of Ibsen's last attempt to take an active part in public life.

The earliest work on *Rosmersholm* began in the winter of 1884-5, and Ibsen intended to have the play ready for publication the following Christmas. Other events, however, intervened. His wife had returned from a visit to Norway with her son and had reported that Ibsen was even more in the black books of the conservatives than he had imagined. Bjørnson, from whom he had been separated for twenty years, asked him to stay with him in Schwaz. He began to feel a desire to return to Norway, which he had not seen for ten years, and talked of buying a house and settling down there for the rest of his life. He refused Bjørnson's offer of the managership of Christiania Theatre, but decided nevertheless to return home. In May he left Rome for the last time in his life, and in the beginning of June he arrived in Christiania. He certainly confirmed his wife's report of the hostility of conservative opinion. His hopes in the new liberal government were dashed by their refusal of a grant to the free-thinker Alexander Kielland in a debate at which Ibsen was present in the Storting on June 10th. He went to Trondhjem, where, in a speech to the workers, he expressed his regret at the lack of individual freedom in the country and insisted on the need for democracy being ennobled by an element of "aristocracy of character, the aristocracy of the will and of the mind. It is this alone which can make us free."

After a month at Trondhjem, **Ibsen** spent two months at **Molde on the west** coast. Here he sedulously avoided his old

conservative friend Lorentz Dietrichson, but broke his isolation for four days to associate exclusively with Count Carl Snoilsky, the Swedish aristocrat and poet, whose personality was one of the determining factors in the shaping of Rosmer's character. From Molde he went to Bergen, where he met many old friends. His visit to Norway, however, finally ended in an uproar when he refused to be feted by the students' union in a torchlight procession on his departure from Christiania because he did not wish to be associated with students who were so old-fashioned as to have Lorentz Dietrichson as their president. He proposed they should elect a new president instead. He went to Copenhagen, where he consented to be the guest of the radical students' union, when Georg Brandes publicly alluded to the Norwegian students in unflattering terms. A bitter and petty public quarrel ensued between Ibsen and Dietrichson. In November Ibsen, with Bjørnson, Lie, Kielland, and Camille Collett, was elected an honorary member of a new liberal students' union in Christiania. Ibsen, however, soon became disillusioned at the parochial small-mindedness of this new group, wrote to Brandes expressing his disgust, and finally, in 1891, was reconciled with Dietrichson, to whom he apologised and confessed that he alone really knew the true state of affairs in Norway at the time. Ibsen's experience of the self-interest and narrow-mindedness of so-called free-thinkers is repeated in the victimisation of Rosmer in the play.

Ibsen returned from Norway to settle again in Munich, where he lived a retired and regular life, receiving many guests in his flat at Maximilianstrasse 32, but seldom going out himself except on his regular sorties to the Cafe Maximilian or the Zum Hoftheater restaurant. The latter he finally deserted because someone was tactless enough to put a stove in the place of his regular seat.

He settled down to writing *Rosmersholm* immediately after his return from Norway, but was at first distracted by his experiences and by those of Brandes, who had also suffered from the pettiness of the Norwegian liberals. His state of mental distraction at the beginning is reflected in the drafts and notes for the play, which was continuously rewritten. The title was

changed from *White Horses*, and all the characters except Mortensgard and Madam Helseth have their names altered or exchanged, while themes are suppressed, revived, and then finally suppressed again. On February 14th, 1886, he wrote to Snoilsky of his work on a new play "which I have long had in mind, and for which I made more or less detailed studies during my tour of Norway last summer." A week later he wrote to Fallesen that his new play could not be expected to be ready before the autumn. To Brandes he wrote later that he had only begun "to set pen to paper seriously in June." This remodelling of the play began on June 15th. On July 13th he wrote to his publisher Hegel that this draft was ready, but he did not actually finish till September 27th. *Rosmersholm* was published on November 23rd, 1886, in an edition of 8,000 copies.

Rosmersholm, like *Ghosts*, is built up on the conflict of past and present, and possibly the original title of the play, *White Horses*, taken from the family ghost, was changed in order to avoid too great a similarity with the title of the earlier play. The whole play is a long revelation of past events, precipitated by the introduction of the conventional messenger from the outer world in the form of Ulric Brendel. *Rosmersholm* has many themes that remind one of *Ghosts*, such as the incest motif and the ghosts of the past, which for Rosmer take the form of aristocratic family traditions, while he has been able to free himself from the religious and moral prejudices which still obsessed Mrs. Alving.

The estate of Rosmersholm is obviously a reminiscence of Moldegard, where Ibsen had spent his summer holiday. Also in the final draft of the play the action takes place in the summer, whereas in the original *White Horses* it was in the winter. The character of Rosmer, while being a distillation of ideas which had long obsessed Ibsen, is closely traced on the figure of Carl Snoilsky, the Swedish aristocrat whom he met at Molde and whom he had known and admired ever since their first meeting in Rome in 1864. Snoilsky was one of the outstanding Swedish poets of the period, in sympathy with working-class and liberal movements, but as he wrote to Estlander: "However, I

realise my chief fault—not to have lived the life of the *people* from youth up—education and upbringing in a one-sided classical direction have made me like the great majority of our literary men, less suited to speak to the lower classes a language they understand." It was in this state of disillusionment that Ibsen met Snoilsky in Molde, and no wonder that in the early drafts the future Rosmer is designated as S., later to be followed by the Swedish-sounding name Rosenhjelm. Also in the second draft, Rebecca is Rosmer's second wife, a patent recollection of Snoilsky's own personal drama when, in 1879, he resigned his post in the Swedish Ministry for Foreign Affairs, went abroad, divorced, and married a relative of his former wife, the widow Countess Ebba Piper. Later his former wife died of consumption, and it was generally rumoured that her death had been hastened by Snoilsky's sudden decision and by Ebba Piper's treatment of her. Another Swedish nobleman whom Ibsen did not meet personally till after the writing of *Rosmersholm* was Urban von Feilitzen, a man who had supported Ibsen in his writings, and whose character seems in many ways to have helped to fill out the picture of Rosmer, particularly his fear of sex, his insistence on the purity of women, and his intense cultivation of the intellect as a bulwark against the emotions.

The influence of Nietzsche has been considered as playing a part in Ibsen's aristocratic ideals, and in the character of Rebecca West we find an excellent example of Nietzsche's blond beast. Actually Ibsen was quite unaware of Nietzsche's philosophy at the time of writing *Rosmersholm* and did not learn anything of Nietzsche until Brandes delivered his famous lectures in 1888.

It is interesting to note from the drafts how Rosmer stands as a fairly complete character from the beginning, while Rebecca grows in the process of writing to the stature of the earlier passionate women of his historical tragedies. She is originally the governess of the two daughters, who are later eliminated. We then find her as a domestic Miss Radeck, later she becomes Rosmer's second wife, then she becomes the companion Miss Dankert, and finally the passionate Rebecca West, the murderer, the incestuous mistress of her own father, and eventually

Rosmer's mistress and companion in suicide, an elemental creation from the wilds of Finnmarken.

Gunnar Heiberg has spoken of *Rosmersholm* as the story of a man and woman who loved one another so deeply that they exchanged souls. It was the intense development of Rebecca's character in the course of writing which made this conflict possible, this conflict of souls or consciences, Rosmer's rooted as it was in death and tradition, Rebecca's in life and its sins and in wild, natural surroundings free from the oppressive human influence of Rosmersholm.

p. F. D. T.

ROSMERSHOLM

A PLAY IN FOUR ACTS

ACT I

Sitting-room at Rosmersholm; spacious, old-fashioned, and comfortable. In front, on the right, a stove decked with fresh birch-branches and wild flowers. Farther back, on the same side, a door. In the back wall, folding-doors opening into the hall. To the left, a window, and before it a stand with flowers and plants. Beside the stove a table with a sofa and easy-chairs. On the walls, old and more recent portraits of clergymen, officers, and government officials in uniform. The window is open; so are the door into the hall and the house door beyond. Outside can be seen an avenue of fine old trees, leading up to the house. It is a summer evening, after sunset.

REBECCA WEST *is sitting in an easy-chair by the window, and crocheting a large white woollen shawl, which is nearly finished. She now and then looks out expectantly through the leaves of the plants.* MADAM HELSETH *presently enters from the right.*

MADAM HELSETH. I suppose I had better begin to lay the table, Miss?

REBECCA WEST* Yes, please do. The Pastor must soon be in now.

MADAM HELSETH. Don't you feel the draught, Miss, where you're sitting?

REBECCA. Yes, there is a little draught. Perhaps you had better shut the window.

[MADAM HELSETH *shuts the door into the hall, and then comes to the window.*

MADAM HELSETH [*about to shut the window, looks out*]. Why, isn't that the Pastor over there?

REBECCA [*hastily*]. Where? [*Rises,*] Yes, it is he. [*Behind the curtain.*] Stand aside—don't let him see us.

MADAM HELSETH [*keeping back from the window*]. Only think, Miss—he's beginning to take the path by the mill again.

REBECCA. He went that way the day before yesterday too. [*Peeps out between the curtains and the window-frame.*] But let us see whether——

MADAM HELSETH. Will he venture across the foot-bridge?

REBECCA. That is what I want to see. [*After a pause.*] No, he is turning. He is going by the upper road again. [*Leaves the window.*] A long way round.

MADAM HELSETH. Dear Lord, yes. No wonder the Pastor thinks twice about setting foot on t h a t bridge. A place where a thing like that has happened——

REBECCA [*folding up her work*]. They cling to their dead here at Rosmersholm.

MADAM HELSETH. Now / would say, Miss, that it's the dead that cling to Rosmersholm.

REBECCA [*looks at her*]. The dead?

MADAM HELSETH. Yes, it's almost as if they couldn't tear themselves away from the folk that are left.

REBECCA. What makes you fancy that?

MADAM HELSETH. Well, if it wasn't for that, there would be no White Horse, I suppose.

REBECCA. NOW what is all this about the White Horse, Madam Helseth?

MADAM HELSETH. Oh, I don't like to talk about it. And, besides, you don't believe in such things.

REBECCA. **DO you believe in it, then ?**

MADAM HELSETH [*goes and shuts the window*]. **Oh, you'd only be for laughing at me, Miss. [*Looks out,* Why, isn't that Mr. Rosmer on the mill-path again——?**

REBECCA [*looks out*]. **That man there ? [*Goes to the window,* No, that's the Rector!**

MADAM HELSETH. **Yes, so it is.**

REBECCA. **This is delightful. You may be sure he's coming here.**

MADAM HELSETH. **He goes straight over the foot-bridge, he does. And yet she was his sister, his own flesh and blood. Well, I'll go and lay the table then, Miss West.**

[*She goes out to the right, REBECCA stands at the window for a short time; then smiles and nods to some one outside. It begins to grow dark,*

REBECCA [*goes to the door on the right*]. **Oh, Madam Helseth, you might let us have some little extra dish for supper. You know what the Rector likes best.**

MADAM HELSETH [*outside*]. **Oh yes, Miss, I'll see to it.**

REBECCA [*opens the door to the hall*]. **At last——! How glad I am to see you, my dear Rector.**

RECTOR KROLL [*in the hall, laying down his stick*]. **Thanks. Then I am not disturbing you ?**

REBECCA. **You ? How can you ask ?**

KROLL [*comes in*]. **Amiable as ever. [*Looks round,* Is Rosmer upstairs in his room ?**

REBECCA. **No, he is out walking. He has stayed out rather longer than usual; but he is sure to be in directly. [*Motioning him to sit on the sofa,* Won't you sit down till he comes ?**

KROLL [*laying down his hat*]. **Many thanks. [*Sits down and looks about him,* Why, how you have brightened up the old room! Flowers everywhere!**

REBECCA. **Mr. Rosmer is so fond of having fresh, growing flowers about him.**

KROLL. **And you are too, are you not ?**

REBECCA. **Yes; they have a delightfully soothing effect on me. We had to do without them though, till lately.**

KROLL [*nods sadly*]. Yes, their scent was too much for poor Beata.

REBECCA. Their colours, too. They quite bewildered her——

KROLL. I remember, I remember. [*In a lighter tone.*] Well, how are things going out here?

REBECCA. Oh, everything is going its quiet, jog-trot way. One day is just like another.—And with you? Your wife——?

KROLL. Ah, my dear Miss West, don't let us talk about my affairs. There is always something or other amiss in a family; especially in times like these.

REBECCA [*after a pause, sitting down in an easy-chair beside the sofa*]. How is it you haven't once been near us during the whole of the holidays?

KROLL. Oh, it doesn't do to make oneself a nuisance——

REBECCA. If you knew how we have missed you——

KROLL. And then I have been away——

REBECCA. Yes, for the last week or two. We have heard of you at political meetings.

KROLL [*nods*]. Yes, what do you say to that? Did you think I would turn political agitator in my old age, eh?

REBECCA [*smiling*]. Well, you have always been a bit of an agitator, Rector Kroll.

KROLL. Why yes, just for my private amusement. But henceforth it is to be no laughing matter, I can tell you.—Do you ever see those radical newspapers?

REBECCA. Well yes, my dear Rector, I can't deny that——

KROLL. My dear Miss West, I have nothing to say against it—nothing in y o u r case.

REBECCA. NO, surely not. One likes to know what's going on—to keep up with the time——

KROLL. And of course I should not think of expecting you, as a woman, to side actively with either party in the civil contest—I might almost say the civil war—that is raging amongst us.—But you have seen then, I suppose, how these gentlemen of "the people" have been pleased to treat me? What infamous abuse they have had the audacity to heap on me?

REBECCA. Yes; but it seems to me you gave as good as you got,

KROLL. SO I did, though I say it that shouldn't For now I have tasted blood; and they shall soon find to their cost that I am not the man to turn the other cheek——[Breaks off.] But come come—don't let us get upon that subject this evening—it's too painful and irritating.

REBECCA. Oh no, don't let us talk of it.

KROLL. Tell me now—how do you get on at Rosmersholm, now that you are alone. Since our poor Beata——

REBECCA. Thank you, I get on very well. Of course one feels a great blank in many ways—a great sorrow and longing. But otherwise*——

KROLL. And do you think of remaining here?—permanently, I mean.

REBECCA. My dear Rector, I really haven't thought about it, one way or the other. I have got so used to the place now, that I feel almost as if I belonged to it.

KROLL. Why, of course you belong to it.

REBECCA. And so long as Mr. Rosmer finds that I am of any use or comfort to him—why, so long, I suppose, I shall stay here.

KROLL [looks at her with emotion]. Do you know—it is really fine for a woman to sacrifice her whole youth to others as you have done.

REBECCA. Oh, what else should I have had to live for?

KROLL. First, there was your untiring devotion to your paralytic and exacting foster-father——

REBECCA. YOU mustn't suppose that Dr. West was such a charge when we were up in Finmark. It was those terrible boat-voyages up there that broke him down. But after we came here—well yes, the two years before he found rest were certainly hard enough.

KROLL. And the years that followed—were they not even harder for you?

REBECCA. Oh, how can you say such a thing? When I was so fond of Beata—and when she, poor dear, stood so sadly in need of care and forbearance.

KROLL. HOW good it is of you to think of her with so much kindness!

REBECCA [*moves a little nearer*]. My dear Rector, you say that with such a ring of sincerity that I cannot think there is any ill-feeling lurking in the background.

KROLL. Ill-feeling? Why, what do you mean?

REBECCA. Well, it would be only natural if you felt it painful to see a stranger managing the household here at Rosmersholm.

KROLL. Why, how on earth——!

REBECCA. But you have no such feeling? [*Takes his hand*]. Thanks, my dear Rector; thank you again and again.

KROLL. HOW on earth did you get such an idea into your **head?**

REBECCA. I began to be a little afraid when your visits became so rare.

KROLL. Then you have been on a totally wrong scent, Miss West. Besides——after all, there has been no essential change. Even while poor Beata was alive——in her last unhappy days——it was you, and you alone, that managed everything.

REBECCA. That was only a sort of regency in Beata's name.

KROLL. Be that as it may——Do you know, Miss West——for my part, I should have no objection whatever *if* you——But I suppose I mustn't say such a thing.

REBECCA. What must you not say?

KROLL. If matters were to shape so that you took the empty place——

REBECCA. I have the only place I want, Rector.

KROLL. In fact, yes; but not in——

REBECCA [*interrupting gravely*]. For shame, Rector Kroll. How can you joke about such things?

KROLL. Oh well, our good Johannes Rosmer very likely thinks he has had more than enough of married life already. But nevertheless——

REBECCA. YOU are really too absurd, Rector.

KROLL. Nevertheless——Tell me, Miss West——if you will forgive the question——what is your age?

REBECCA. I'm sorry to say I am over nine-and-twenty, Rector; I am in my thirtieth year.

KROLL. Indeed. And Rosmer—how old is he? Let me see: he is five years younger than I am, so that makes him well over forty-three. I think it would be most suitable.

REBECCA [*rises*]. Of course, of course; most suitable.—Will you stay to supper this evening?

KROLL. Yes, many thanks; I thought of staying. There is a matter I want to discuss with our good friend.—And I suppose, Miss West, in case you should take fancies into your head again, I had better come out pretty often for the future—as I used to in the old days.

REBECCA. Oh yes, do—do. [*Shakes both his hands,*] Many thanks—how kind and good you are!

KROLL [*gruffly*]. Am I? Well, that's not what they tell me at home.

JOHANNES ROSMER *enters by the door on the right.*

REBECCA. Mr. Rosmer, do you see who is here?

JOHANNES ROSMER. Madam Helseth told me.

[RECTOR KROLL *has risen.*

ROSMER [*gently and softly, pressing his hands*]. Welcome back to this house, my dear Kroll. [*Lays his hands on KROLL'S shoulders and looks into his eyes.*] My dear old friend I I knew that sooner or later things would come all right between us.

KROLL. Why, my dear fellow—do you mean to say you too have been so foolish as to fancy there was anything wrong?

REBECCA [*to ROSMER*]. Yes, only think—it was nothing but fancy after all!

ROSMER. IS that really the case, Kroll? Then why did you desert us so entirely?

KROLL [*gravely, in a low voice*]. Because my presence would always have been reminding you of the years of your unhappiness, and of—the life that ended in the mill-race.

ROSMER. Well, it was a kind thought—you were always considerate. But it was quite unnecessary to remain away on that account.—Come, sit here on the sofa. [*They sit down.*] No, I assure you, the thought of Beata has no pain for me. We

speak of her every day. We feel almost as if she were still one of the household.

KROLL. Do you really ?

REBECCA [*lighting the lamp*]. Yes, indeed we do.

ROSMER. It is quite natural. We were both so deeply attached to her. And both Rebec—both Miss West and I know that we did all that was possible for her in her affliction. We have nothing to reproach ourselves with.—So I feel nothing but a tranquil tenderness now at the thought of Beata.

KROLL. YOU dear, good people! Henceforward, I declare I shall come out and see you every day.

REBECCA [*seats herself in an armchair*]. Mind, we shall expect you to keep your word.

ROSMER [*with some hesitation*]. My dear Kroll—I wish very much that our intercourse had never been interrupted. Ever since we have known each other, you have seemed predestined to be my adviser—ever since I went to the University.

KROLL. Yes, and I have always been proud of the office. But is there anything particular just now—?

ROSMER. There are many things that I would give a great deal to talk over with you, quite frankly—straight from the heart.

REBECCA. Ah yes, Mr. Rosmer—that must be such a comfort—between old friends—

KROLL. Oh, I can tell you I have still more to talk to you about. I suppose you know I have turned a militant politician?

ROSMER. Yes, so you have. How did that come about ?

KROLL. I was forced into it in spite of myself. It is impossible to stand idly looking on any longer. Now that the Radicals have unhappily come into power, it is high time something should be done—so I have got our little group of friends in the town to close up their ranks. I tell you it is high time!

REBECCA [*with a faint smile*]. Don't you think it may even be a little late ?

KROLL. Unquestionably it would have been better if we had checked the stream at an earlier point in its course. But who could foresee what was going to happen? Certainly not I. [*Rises and walks up and down.*] But now I have had my eyes

opened once for all; for now the spirit of revolt has crept into the school itself.

ROSMER. Into the school? Surely not into your school?

KROLL. I tell you it has—into my own school. What do you think? It has come to my knowledge that the sixth-form boys—a number of them at any rate—have been keeping up a secret society for over six months; and they take in Mortensgard's paper!

REBECCA. The "Beacon"?

KROLL. Yes; nice mental sustenance for future government officials, is it not? But the worst of it is that it's all the cleverest boys in the form that have banded together in this conspiracy against me. Only the dunces at the bottom of the class have kept out of it.

REBECCA. DO you take this so very much to heart, Rector?

KROLL. DO I take it to heart! To be so thwarted and opposed in the work of my whole life! [*Lower.*] But I could almost say I don't care about the school—for there is worse behind. [*Looks round.*] I suppose no one can hear us?

REBECCA. Oh no, of course not.

KROLL. Well then, I must tell you that dissension and revolt have crept into my own house—into my own quiet home. They have destroyed the peace of my family life. .

ROSMER [*rises*]. What! Into your own house——?

REBECCA [*goes over to the RECTOR*]. My dear Rector, what has happened?

KROLL. Would you believe that my own children——In short, it is Laurits that is the ringleader of the school conspiracy; and Hilda has embroidered a red portfolio to keep the "Beacon" in.

ROSMER. I should certainly never have dreamt that, in your own house——

KROLL. No, who would have dreamt of such a thing? In my house, the very home of obedience and order—where one will, and one only, has always prevailed——

REBECCA. How does your wife take all this?

KROLL. Why, that is the most incredible part of it. My wife, who all her life long has shared my opinions and concurred

in my views, both in great things and small—she is actually inclined to side with the children on many points. And she blames me for what has happened. She says I tyrannise over the children. As if it weren't necessary to——Well, you see how my house is divided against itself. But of course I say as little about it as possible. Such things are best kept quiet. *[Wanders up the room.]* Ah, well, well, well.

[Stands at the window with his hands behind his back, and looks out.]

REBECCA *[comes up close to ROSMER, and says rapidly and in a low voice, so that the RECTOR does not hear her.]* Do it now!

ROSMER *[also in a low voice].* Not this evening.

REBECCA *[as before].* Yes, just this evening.

[Goes to the table and busies herself with the lamp.]

KROLL *[comes forward].* Well, my dear Rosmer, now you know how the spirit of the age has overshadowed both my domestic and my official life. And am I to refrain from combating this pernicious, subversive, anarchic spirit, with any weapon I can lay my hands on? Fight it I will, trust me for that; both with tongue and pen.

ROSMER. Have you any hope of stemming the tide in that way?

KROLL. At any rate I shall have done my duty as a citizen in defence of the State. And I hold it the duty of every right-minded man with an atom of patriotism to do likewise. In fact—that was my principal reason for coming out here this evening.

ROSMER. Why, my dear Kroll, what do you mean——? What can I——?

KROLL. YOU can stand by your old friends. Do as we do. Lend a hand, with all your might.

REBECCA. But, Rector Kroll, you know Mr. Rosmer's distaste for public life.

KROLL. He must get over his distaste.—You don't keep abreast of things, Rosmer. You bury yourself alive here, with your historical collections.. Far be it from me to speak disrespectfully of family trees and so forth; but, unfortunately, this is no time for hobbies of that sort. You cannot imagine the

state things are in, all over the country. There is hardly a single accepted idea that hasn't been turned topsy-turvy. It will be a gigantic task to get all the errors rooted out again.

ROSMER. I have no doubt of it. But I am the last man to undertake such a task.

REBECCA. And besides, I think Mr. Rosmer has come to take a wider view of life than he used to.

KROLL [*with surprise*]. Wider?

REBECCA. Yes; or freer, if you like—less one-sided.

KROLL. What is the meaning of this? Rosmer—surely you are not so weak as to be influenced by the accident that the leaders of the mob have won a temporary advantage?

ROSMER. My dear Kroll, you know how little I understand of politics. But I confess it seems to me that within the last few years people are beginning to show greater independence of thought.

KROLL. Indeed! And you take it for granted that that must be an improvement! But in any case you are quite mistaken, my friend. Just inquire a little into the opinions that are current among the Radicals, both out here and in the town. They are neither more nor less than the wisdom that's retailed in the "Beacon."

REBECCA. Yes; Mortensgard has great influence over many people hereabouts.

KROLL. Yes, just think of it! A man of his foul antecedents—a creature that was turned out of his place as a school-master on account of his immoral life! A fellow like that sets himself up as a leader of the people! And succeeds too! Actually succeeds! I hear he is going to enlarge his paper. I know on good authority that he is on the look-out for a capable assistant.

REBECCA. I wonder that you and your friends don't set up an opposition to him.

KROLL. That is the very thing we are going to do. We have to-day bought the "County News"; there was no difficulty about the money question. But———[*Turns to ROSMER.*] Now I come to my real errand. The difficulty lies in the conduct of the paper—the editing———Tell me, Rosmer—don't

you feel it your duty to undertake it, for the sake of the good cause?

ROSMER [*almost in consternation*]. I !

REBECCA. Oh, how can you think of such a thing?

KROLL. I can quite understand your horror of public meetings, and your reluctance to expose yourself to their tender mercies. But an editor's work is less conspicuous, or rather——

ROSMER. N O no, my dear friend, you must not ask me to do this.

KROLL. I should be quite willing to try my own hand at that style of work too; but I couldn't possibly manage it. I have such a multitude of irons in the fire already. But for you, with no profession to tie you down——Of course the rest of us would give you as much help as we could.

ROSMER. I cannot, Kroll. I am not fitted for it.

KROLL. Not fitted? You said the same thing when your father preferred you to the living here——

ROSMER. And I was right. That was why I resigned it.

KROLL. Oh, if only you are as good an editor as you were a clergyman, we shall not complain.

ROSMER. M y dear Kroll—I tell you once for all—I cannot do it.

KROLL. Well, at any rate, you will lend us your name.

ROSMER. M y name ?

KROLL. Yes, the mere name, Johannes Rosmer, will be a great thing for the paper. We others are looked upon as confirmed partisans—indeed I hear I am denounced as a desperate fanatic—so that if we work the paper in our own names, we can't reckon upon its making much way among the misguided masses. You, on the contrary, have always kept out of the fight. Everybody knows and values your humanity and uprightness—your delicacy of mind—your unimpeachable honour. And then the prestige of your former position as a clergyman still clings to you; and, to crown all, you have your grand old family name!

ROSMER. Oh, my name——

KROLL [*points to the portraits*']. Rosmers of Rosmersholm—clergymen and soldiers; government officials of high place and trust; gentlemen to the finger-tips, every man of them—a **family**

that for nearly two centuries has held its place as the first in the district. [*Lays his hand on ROSMER'S shoulder.*] Rosmer—you owe it to yourself and to the traditions of your race to take your share in guarding all that has hitherto been held sacred in our society. [*Turns round,*] What do you say, Miss West?

REBECCA [*laughing softly, as if to herself.*] My dear Rector—I can't tell you how ludicrous all this seems to me.

KROLL. What do you say? Ludicrous?

REBECCA. Yes, ludicrous. For you must let me tell you frankly——

ROSMER [*quickly.*] No, no—be quiet! Not just now!

KROLL [*looks from one to the other.*] My dear friends, what on earth——? [*Interrupting himself.*] H'm!

MADAM HELSETH *appears in the doonway on the right.*

MADAM HELSETH. There's a man out in the kitchen passage that says he wants to see the Pastor.

ROSMER [*relieved.*] Ah, very well. Ask him to come in.

MADAM HELSETH. Into the sitting-room?

ROSMER. Yes, of course.

MADAM HELSETH. But he looks scarcely the sort of man to bring into the sitting-room.

REBECCA. Why, what does he look like, Madam Helseth?

MADAM HELSETH. Well, he's not much to look at, Miss, and that's a fact.

ROSMER. Did he not give his name?

MADAM HELSETH. Yes—I think he said his name was Hekman or something of the sort.

ROSMER. I know nobody of that name.

MADAM HELSETH. And then he said he was called Uldric too.

ROSMER [*in surprise,*] Uldric Hetman! Was that it?

MADAM HELSETH. Yes, so it was—Hetman.

KROLL. I've surely heard that name before——

REBECCA. Wasn't that the name he used to write under—that strange being——

ROSMER [*to KROLL,*] It is Uldric Brendel's pseudonym.

KROLL. That black sheep Uldric Brendel's—of course it is.

REBECCA. Then he is still alive.

ROSMER. I heard he had joined a company of strolling players.

KROLL. When last / heard of him, he was in the House of Correction.

ROSMER. Ask him to come in, Madam Helseth.

MADAM HELSETH. Oh, very well. *[She goes out.]*

KROLL. Are you really going to let a man like that into your house ?

ROSMER. YOU know he was once my tutor.

KROLL. Yes, I know he went and crammed your head full of revolutionary ideas, until your father showed him the door—with his horsewhip.

ROSMER *[with a touch of bitterness]*. Father was a martinet at home as well as in his regiment.

KROLL. Thank him in his grave for that, my dear Rosmer.—Well!

[MADAM HELSETH opens the door on the right for ULRIC BRENDEL, and then withdraws, shutting the door behind him. He is a handsome man, with grey hair and beard; somewhat gaunt, but active and well set up. He is dressed like a common tramp; threadbare frock-coat; worn-out shoes; no shirt visible. He wears an old pair of black gloves, and carries a soft, greasy felt hat under his arm, and a walking-stick in his hand.]

ULRIC BRENDEL *[hesitates at first, then goes quickly up to the RECTOR, and holds out his hand]*. Good evening, Johannes!

KROLL. Excuse me——

BRENDEL. Did you expect to see me again? And within these hated walls too ?

KROLL. Excuse me———*[Pointing.]* T h e r e——

BRENDEL *[turns]*. Right. There he is. Johannes—my boy—my best-beloved——!

ROSMER *[takes his hand]*. My old teacher.

BRENDEL. Notwithstanding certain painful memories, I could not pass by Rosmersholm without paying you a flying visit.

ROSMER. YOU are heartily welcome here now. Be sure of

BRENDEL. Ah, this charming lady——? [*Bows.*] Mrs. Rosmer, of course.

ROSMER. Miss West.

BRENDEL. A near relation, no doubt. And yonder unknown——? A brother of the cloth, I see.

ROSMER. Rector Kroll.

BRENDEL. Kroll? Kroll? Wait a bit?—Weren't you a student of philology in your young days?

KROLL. Of course I was.

BRENDEL. Why, "*Donnerwetter*, then I knew you!

KROLL. Pardon me——

BRENDEL. Weren't you——

KROLL. Pardon me——

BRENDEL.——one of those myrmidons of morality that got me turned out of the Debating Club?

KROLL. Very likely. But I disclaim any closer acquaintanceship.

BRENDEL. Well, well! *Nach Belieben, Herr Doctor.* It's all one to me. Ulric Brendel remains the man he is for all that.

REBECCA. YOU are on your way into town, Mr. Brendel?

BRENDEL. YOU have hit it, gracious lady. At certain intervals, I am constrained to strike a blow for existence. It goes against the grain; but—*enfin*—imperious necessity——

ROSMER. Oh but, my dear Mr. Brendel, you must allow me to help you. In one way or another, I am sure——

BRENDEL. Ha, such a proposal to me! Would you desecrate the bond that unites us? Never, Johannes, never!

ROSMER. But what do you think of doing in town? Believe me, you won't find it easy to——

BRENDEL. Leave that to me, my boy. The die is cast. Simple as I stand here before you, I am engaged in a comprehensive campaign—more comprehensive than all my previous excursions put together. [*To RECTOR KROLL.*] Dare I ask the Herr Professor—*unter uns*—have you a tolerably decent, reputable, and commodious Public Hall in your estimable city?

KROLL. The hall of the Workmen's Society is the largest.

BRENDEL. And has the Herr Professor any official influence in this doubtless most beneficent Society?

KROLL. I have nothing to do with it.

REBECCA [*to* BRENDEL]. YOU should apply to Peter Mortensgard.

BRENDEL. *Pardon, madame*—what sort of an idiot is he?

ROSMER. What makes you take him for an idiot?

BRENDEL. Can't I tell at once by the name that it belongs to a plebeian?

KROLL. I did not expect that answer.

BRENDEL. But I will conquer my reluctance. There is no alternative. When a man stands—as I do—at a turning-point in his career——It is settled. I will approach this individual — will open personal negotiations——

ROSMER. Are you really and seriously standing at a turning-point?

BRENDEL. Surely my own boy knows that, stand he where he may, Ulric Brendel always stands really and seriously—Yes, Johannes, I am going to put on a new man—to throw off the modest reserve I have hitherto maintained.

ROSMER. HOW——?

BRENDEL. I am about to take hold of life with a strong hand; to step forth; to assert myself. We live in a tempestuous, an equinoctial age.—I am about to lay my mite on the altar of Emancipation.

KROLL. Y o u too?

BRENDEL [*to them all*]. Is the local public at all familiar with my occasional writings?

KROLL. NO, I must candidly confess that——

REBECCA. I have read several of them. My adopted father had them in his library.

BRENDEL. Fair lady, then you have wasted your time. For, let me tell you, they are so much rubbish.

REBECCA. Indeed!

BRENDEL. What you have read, yes. My really important works no man or woman knows. No one—except myself.

REBECCA. How does that happen?

BRENDEL. Because they are not written.

ROSMER. But, my dear Mr. Brendel——

BRENDEL. You know, my Johannes, that I am a bit of a

Sybarite—a *Feinschmecker*. I have been so all my days. I like to take my pleasures in solitude; for then I enjoy them doubly—tenfold. So, you see, when golden dreams descended and enwrapped me—when new, dizzy, far-reaching thoughts were born in me, and wafted me aloft on their sustaining pinions—I bodied them forth in poems, visions, pictures—in the rough, as it were, you understand.

ROSMER. Yes, yes.

BRENDEL. Oh, what pleasures, what intoxications I have enjoyed in my time! The mysterious bliss of creation—in the rough, as I said—applause, gratitude, renown, the wreath of bays—all these I have garnered with full hands quivering with joy. I have sated myself, in my secret thoughts, with a rapture—oh! so intense, so inebriating——!

KROLL. H'm.

ROSMER. But you have written nothing down?

BRENDEL. Not a word. The soulless toil of the scrivener has always aroused a sickening aversion in me. And besides, why should I profane my own ideals, when I could enjoy them in their purity by myself? But now they shall be offered up. I assure you I feel like a mother who delivers her tender daughters into their bridegrooms' arms. But I will offer them up, none the less. I will sacrifice them on the altar of Emancipation. A series of carefully elaborated lectures—over the whole country——!

REBECCA [*with animation*]. This is noble of you, Mr. Brendel! You are yielding up the dearest thing you possess.

ROSMER. The only thing.

REBECCA [*looking significantly at ROSMER*]. HOW many are there who do as much—who d a r e do as much?

ROSMER [*returning the look*]. Who knows?

BRENDEL. My audience is touched. That does my heart good—and steels my will. So now I will proceed to action. Stay—one thing more. [*To the RECTOR.*] Can you tell me, Herr Preceptor,—is there such a thing as a Temperance Society in the town? A Total Abstinence Society? I need scarcely ask.

KROLL. Yes, there is. I am the president, at your service.

BRENDEL. I saw it in your face! Well, it is by no means impossible that I may come to you and enrol myself as a member for a week.

KROLL. Excuse me—we don't receive members by the week.

BRENDEL. *A la bonne heure*, Herr Pedagogue. Ulric Brendel has never forced himself into that sort of Society. *[Turns.]* But I must not prolong my stay in this house, so rich in memories. I must get on to the town and select a suitable lodging. I presume there is a decent hotel in the place.

REBECCA. Mayn't I offer you anything before you go?

BRENDEL. Of what sort, gracious lady ?

REBECCA. A cup of tea, or——

BRENDEL. I thank my bountiful hostess—but I am always loath to trespass on private hospitality. *[Waves his hand.]* Farewell, gentlefolks all! *[Goes toivards the door, but turns again.]* Oh, by the way—Johannes—Pastor Rosmer—for the sake of our ancient friendship, will you do your former teacher a service?

ROSMER. Yes, with all my heart.

BRENDEL. Good. Then lend me—for a day or two—a starched shirt—with cuffs.

ROSMER. Nothing else ?

BRENDEL. For you see I am travelling on foot—at present. My trunk is being sent after me.

ROSMER. Quite so. But is there nothing else ?

BRENDEL. Well, do you know—perhaps you could spare me an oldish, well-worn summer overcoat.

ROSMER. Yes, yes; certainly I can.

BRENDEL. And if a respectable pair of boots happened to go along with the coat——

ROSMER. That we can manage too. As soon as you let us know your address, we will send the things in.

BRENDEL. Not on any account. Pray do not let me give you any trouble! I will take the bagatelles with me.

ROSMER. AS you please. Come upstairs with me then.

REBECCA. Let me go. Madam Helseth and I will see to it.

BRENDEL. I cannot think of suffering this distinguished lady

REBECCA. Oh, nonsense I Come along, Mr. Brendel.

[She goes out to the right.]

ROSMER *[detaining him]*. Tell me—is there nothing else I can do for you?

BRENDEL. Upon my word, I know of nothing more. Well, yes, damn it—now that I think of it——! Johannes, do you happen to have eight crowns in your pocket?

ROSMER. Let me see. *[Opens his purse.]* Here are two ten-crown notes.

BRENDEL. Well well, never mind! I can take them. I can always get them changed in the town. Thanks in the meantime. Remember it was two tenners you lent me. Good-night, my own dear boy. Good-night, respected Sir.

[Goes out to the right, ROSMER takes leave of him, and shuts the door behind him,]

KROLL. Merciful Heaven—so that is the Ulric Brendel people once expected such great things of.

ROSMER *[quietly]*. At least he has had the courage to live his life his own way. I don't think that is such a small matter either.

KROLL. What? A life like his! I almost believe he has it in him to turn your head afresh.

ROSMER. Oh no. My mind is quite clear now, upon all points.

KROLL. I wish I could believe it, my dear Rosmer. You are so terribly impressionable.

ROSMER. Let us sit down. I want to talk to you.

KROLL. Yes; let us. *[They seat themselves on the sofa.]*

ROSMER *[after a slight pause]*. Don't you think we lead a pleasant and comfortable life here?

KROLL. Yes, your life is pleasant and comfortable now—and peaceful. You have found yourself a home, Rosmer. And I have lost mine.

ROSMER. My dear friend, don't say that. The wound will heal again in time.

KROLL. Never; never. The barb will always rankle. Things can never be as they were.

ROSMER. Listen to me, Kroll. We have been fast friends

for many and many a year. Does it seem to you conceivable that our friendship should ever go to wreck?

KROLL. I know of nothing in the world that could estrange us. What puts that into your head?

ROSMER. You attach such paramount importance to uniformity of opinions and views.

KROLL. NO doubt; but we two are in practical agreement—at any rate on the great essential questions.

ROSMER [*in a low voice*]. No; not now.

KROLL [*tries to spring up*]. What is this?

ROSMER [*holding him*]. No you must sit still—I entreat you, Kroll.

KROLL. What can this mean? I don't understand you. Speak plainly.

ROSMER. A new summer has blossomed in my soul. I see with eyes grown young again. And so now I stand——

KROLL. Where—where, Rosmer?

ROSMER. Where your children stand.

KROLL. YOU? You! Impossible! Where do you say you stand?

ROSMER. On the same side as Laurits and Hilda.

KROLL [*bows his head*]. An apostate! Johannes Rosmer an apostate!

ROSMER. I should have felt so happy—so intensely happy, in what you call my apostasy. But nevertheless I suffered deeply; for I knew it would be a bitter sorrow to you.

KROLL. Rosmer—Rosmer! I shall never get over this! [*Looks gloomily at him*]. To think that you too can find it in your heart to help on the work of corruption and ruin in this unhappy land.

ROSMER. It is the work of emancipation I wish to help on.

KROLL. Oh yes, I know. That is what both the tempters and their victims call it. But do you think there is any emancipation to be expected from the spirit that is now poisoning our whole social life?

ROSMER. I am not in love with the spirit that is in the ascendant, nor with either of the contending parties. I will try to bring together men from both sides—as many as I can—and

to unite them as closely as possible. I will devote my life and all my energies to this one thing—the creation of a true democracy in this country.

KROLL. So you don't think we have democracy enough already! For my part it seems to me we are all in a fair way to be dragged down into the mire, where hitherto only the mob have been able to thrive.

ROSMER. That is just why I want to awaken the democracy to its true task.

KROLL. What task?

ROSMER. That of making all the people of this country noble-men.

KROLL. All the people——?

ROSMER. AS many as possible, at any rate.

KROLL. By what means?

ROSMER. By freeing their minds and purifying their wills.

KROLL. You are a dreamer, Rosmer. Will you free them? Will you purify them?

ROSMER. NO, my dear friend—I will only try to arouse them to their task. They themselves must accomplish it.

KROLL. And you think they can?

ROSMER. Yes.

KROLL. By their own strength?

ROSMER. Yes, precisely by their own strength. There is no other.

KROLL [*rises*']. Is this becoming language for a priest?

ROSMER. I am no longer a priest.

KROLL. Well, but—the faith of your fathers——?

ROSMER. It is mine no more.

KROLL. NO more—!

ROSMER [*rises*]. I have given it up. I had to give it up, Kroll.

KROLL [*controlling his agitation*]. Oh, indeed———Yes, yes, yes. I suppose one thing goes with another. Was this, then, your reason for leaving the Church?

ROSMER. Yes. As soon as my mind was clear—as soon as I was quite certain that this was no passing attack of scepticism,

but a conviction I neither could nor would shake off—then I at once left the Church.

KROLL. SO this has been your state of mind all this time! And we—your friends—have heard nothing of it. Rosmer—Rosmer—how could you hide the miserable truth from us!

ROSMER. Because it seemed to me a matter that concerned myself alone. And besides, I did not wish to give you and my other friends any needless pain. I thought I might live on here, as before, quietly, serenely, happily. I wanted to read, to bury myself in all the studies that until then had been sealed books to me. I wanted to make myself thoroughly at home in the great world of truth and freedom that has been revealed to me.

KROLL. Apostate! Every word proves it. But why, then, do you confess your secret apostasy after all? And why just at this time?

ROSMER. YOU yourself have driven me to it, Kroll.

KROLL. I? Have I driven you——?

ROSMER. When I heard of your violence on the platform—when I read all the rancorous speeches you made—your bitter onslaughts on your opponents—the contemptuous invectives you heaped on them—oh, Kroll, to think that you—y o u—could come to this!—then my duty stood imperatively before me. Men are growing evil in this struggle. Peace and joy and mutual forbearance must once more enter into our souls. That is why I now intend to step forward and openly avow myself for what I am. I, too, will try my strength. Could not you—from your side—help me in this, Kroll?

KROLL. Never so long as I live will I make peace with the subversive forces in society.

ROSMER. Then at least let us fight with honourable weapons—since fight we must.

KROLL. Whoever is not with me in the essential things of life, him I no longer know. I owe him no consideration.

ROSMER. Does that apply to me too?

KROLL. It is you that have broken with me, Rosmer.

ROSMER. I s this a breach then?

KROLL. This! It is a breach with all who have hitherto been your friends. You must take the consequences.

didn't believe what was in his mind. To-morrow I will go and see him. Good-night!

REBECCA. Are you going upstairs so early to-night? After this?

ROSMEGFt To-night as usual. I feel so relieved, now it is over. „, see—I am quite calm, Rebecca. Do you, too, take it calmly. Good-night!

REBECCA. Good-night, dear friend! Sleep well!

[ROSMER goes out by the hall door; his steps are heard ascending the staircase.

[REBECCA goes and pulls a bell-rope near the stove. Shortly after, MADAM HELSETH enters from the right.

REBECCA. You can take away the supper things, Madam Helseth. Mr. Rosmer doesn't want anything, and the Rector has gone home.

MADAM HELSETH. Has the Rector gone? What was the matter with him?

REBECCA [*takes up her crochet work*]. He said he thought there was a heavy storm brewing——

MADAM HELSETH. What a strange notion! There's not a cloud in the sky this evening.

REBECCA. Let us hope he mayn't meet the White Horse! I'm afraid we shall soon be hearing something from the bogies now.

MADAM HELSETH. Lord forgive you, Miss! Don't say such awful things.

REBECCA. Well, well, well——

MADAM HELSETH [*softly*]. Do you really think someone is to go soon, Miss?

REBECCA. No; why should I think so? But there are so many sorts of white horses in this world, Madam Helseth.—Well, good-night. I shall go to my room now.

MADAM HELSETH. Good-night, Miss.

[REBECCA goes out to the right, with her crochet work.

MADAM HELSETH [*turns the lamp down, shaking her head and muttering to herself*]. Lord—Lord! That Miss West! The things she does say!

A C T I I

JOHANNES ROSMER'S *study. Entrance door on the left. At the back, a doorway with a curtain drawn aside, leading into ROSMER'S bedroom. On the right a window, and in front of it a writing-table covered with books and papers. Bookshelves and cases round the room. The furniture is simple. On the left, an old-fashioned sofa, with a table in front of it.*

JOHANNES ROSMER, *in an indoor jacket, is sitting in a high-backed chair at the writing-table. He is cutting and turning over the leaves of a pamphlet, and reading a little here and there.*

There is a knock at the door on the left.

ROSMER [*without moving*']. Come in.

REBECCA WEST [*enters, dressed in a morning gown*]. Good-morning.

ROSMER [*turning the leaves of the pamphlet*]. Good-morning, dear. Do you want anything ?

REBECCA. I only wanted to hear if you had slept well.

ROSMER. Oh I have had a beautiful, peaceful night. [*Turns.*] And you?

REBECCA. Oh yes, thanks—towards morning——

ROSMER. I don't know when I have felt so light-hearted as I do now. I am so glad I managed to speak out at last.

REBECCA. Yes, it is a pity you remained silent so long, Rosmer.

ROSMER. I don't understand myself how I could be such a coward.

REBECCA. It wasn't precisely cowardice——

ROSMER. Oh yes, dear—when I think the thing out, I can see there was a touch of cowardice at the bottom of it.

REBECCA. All the braver, then, to make the plunge at last. [*Sits on a chair at the writing-table, close to him.*] But now I want to tell you of something I have done—and you mustn't be vexed with me about it.

ROSMER. Vexed ? How can you think—— ?

REBECCA. Well, it was perhaps rather indiscreet of me, but——

ROSMER. Let me hear what it was.

REBECCA. Yesterday evening, when Ulric Brendel was leaving—I gave him a note to Peter Mortensgard.

ROSMER [*a little doubtful*]. Why, my dear Rebecca—— Well, what did you say?

REBECCA. I said that he would be doing you a service if he would look after that unfortunate creature a little, and help him in any way he could.

ROSMER. Dear, you shouldn't have done that. You have only done Brendel harm. And Mortensgard is not a man I care to have anything to do with. You know of that old episode between us.

REBECCA. But don't you think it would be as well to make it up with him again?

ROSMER. I? With Mortensgard? In what way do you mean?

REBECCA. Well, you know you can't feel absolutely secure now—after this breach with your old friends.

ROSMER [*looks at her and shakes his head*]. Can you really believe that Kroll or any of the others would try to take revenge on me? That they would be capable of——?

REBECCA. In the first heat of anger, dear——No one can be sure. I think—after the way the Rector took it——

ROSMER. Oh, you ought surely to know him better than that. Kroll is a gentleman, to the backbone. I am going into town this afternoon to talk to him. I will talk to them all. Oh, you shall see how easily it will all go——

[MADAM HELSETH *appears at the door on the left.*

REBECCA [*rises*]. What is it, Madam Helseth?

MADAM HELSETH. Rector Kroll is downstairs in the hall.

ROSMER [*rises hastily*]. Kroll!

REBECCA. The Rector! Is it possible——

MADAM HELSETH. He wants to know if he may come up and see Mr. Rosmer.

ROSMER [*to REBECCA*]. What did I tell you?—Of course

he may. [*Goes to the door and calls down the stairs.*] Come up, dear friend! I am delighted to see you.

[*ROSMER stands holding the door open. MADAM HELSETH goes out. REBECCA draws the curtain before the doorway at the back, and then begins arranging things in the room.*

RECTOR KROLL *enters, with his hat in his hand.*

ROSMER [*with quiet emotion*], I knew it couldn't be the last time——

KROLL. I see things to-day in quite a different light from yesterday.

ROSMER. Ah yes, Kroll; I was sure you would, now that you have had time to reflect.

KROLL. YOU misunderstand me completely. [*Lays his hat on the table beside the sofa.*] It is of the utmost importance that I should speak to you, alone.

ROSMER. Why may not Miss West——?

REBECCA. NO, no, Mr. Rosmer. I will go.

KROLL [*looks at her from head to foot*]. And I must ask Miss West to excuse my coming at such an untimely hour—taking her unawares before she has had time to——

REBECCA [*surprised*]. What do you mean? Do you see any harm in my wearing a morning gown about the house?

KROLL. Heaven forbid! I know nothing of what may now be customary at Rosmersholm.

ROSMER. Why, Kroll—you are not yourself to-day!

REBECCA. Allow me to wish you good-morning, Rector Kroll. [*She goes out to the left.*

KROLL. By your leave———[*Sits on the sofa.*

ROSMER. Yes, Kroll, sit down, and let us talk things out amicably.

[*He seats himself in a chair directly opposite to the* RECTOR.

KROLL. I haven't closed an eye since yesterday. I have been lying thinking and thinking all night.

ROSMER. And what do you say to things to-day?

KROLL. It will be a long story, Rosmer. Let me begin with a sort of introduction. I can give you news of Ulric Brendel.

ROSMER. Has he called on you?

KROLL. NO. He took up his quarters in a low public-house

—in the lowest company of course—and drank and stood treat as long as he had any money. Then he began abusing the whole company as a set of disreputable blackguards—and so far he was quite right—whereupon they thrashed him and pitched him out into the gutter.

ROSMER. So he is incorrigible after all.

KROLL. He had pawned the coat too; but I am told that has been redeemed for him. Can you guess by whom ?

ROSMER. Perhaps by you ?

KROLL. NO; by the distinguished Mr. Mortensgard.

ROSMER. Ah, indeed.

KROLL. I understand that Mr. Brendel's first visit was to the " idiot " and " plebeian."

ROSMER. Well, it was lucky for him——

KROLL. TO be sure it was. [*Leans over the table towards*

ROSMER.] And that brings me to a matter it is my duty to warn you about, for our old—for our former friendship's sake.

ROSMER. My dear Kroll, what can t h a t be ?

KROLL. It is this: there are things going on behind your back in this house.

ROSMER. HOW can you think so? Is it Reb—is it Miss West you are aiming at ?

KROLL. Precisely. I can quite understand it on her part. She has so long been accustomed to have everything her own way here. But nevertheless——

ROSMER. My dear Kroll, you are utterly mistaken. She and I—we have no concealments from each other on any subject whatever.

KROLL. Has she told you, then, that she has entered into correspondence with the editor of the " Beacon " ?

ROSMER. Oh, you are thinking of the few lines she sent by UlricBrendel?

KROLL. Then you have found it out. And do you approve of her entering into relations with a scurrilous scribbler, who never lets a week pass without holding me up to ridicule, both as a schoolmaster and as a public man ?

ROSMER. My dear Kroll, I don't suppose that side of the

matter ever entered her head. - And besides, of course she has full liberty of action, just as I have.

KROLL. Indeed? Ah, no doubt that follows from your new line of thought. For Miss West presumably shares your present standpoint?

ROSMER. Yes, she does. We two have worked our way forward in faithful comradeship.

KROLL [*looks at him and slowly shakes his head*]. Oh, you blind, deluded being!

ROSMER. I? Why do you say that?

KROLL. Because I dare not—I will not think the worst. No no, let me say my say out.—You really do value my friendship, Rosmer? And my respect too? Do you not?

ROSMER. I surely need not answer that question.

KROLL. Well, but there are other questions that do require an answer—a full explanation on your part.—Will you submit to a sort of investigation——?

ROSMER. Investigation?

KROLL. Yes; will you let me question you about certain things it may pain you to be reminded of? You see—this apostasy of yours—well, this emancipation, as you call it—is bound up with many other things that for your own sake you must explain to me.

ROSMER. My dear Kroll, ask what questions you please. I have nothing to conceal.

KROLL. Then tell me—what do you think was the real, the ultimate reason why Beata put an end to her life?

ROSMER. Can you have any doubt on the subject? Or, rather, can you ask for reasons for what an unhappy, irresponsible invalid may do?

KROLL. Are you certain that Beata was completely irresponsible for her actions? The doctors, at any rate, were by no means convinced of it.

ROSMER. If the doctors had ever seen her as I have so often seen her, for days and nights together, they would have had no doubts.

KROLL. I had no doubts either—then.

ROSMER. Oh no, unhappily, there wasn't the smallest room

for doubt. I have told you of her wild frenzies of passion—which she expected me to return. Oh, how they appalled me! And then her causeless, consuming self-reproaches during the last few years.

KROLL. Yes, when she had learnt that she must remain childless all her life.

ROSMER. Yes, just think of that! Such terrible, haunting agony of mind about a thing utterly beyond her control——! How could you call her responsible for her actions?

KROLL. H'm———Can you remember whether you had any books in the house at that time treating of the rationale of marriage—according to the "advanced" ideas of the day.

ROSMER. I remember Miss West lending me a work of the kind. The Doctor left her his library, you know. But, my dear Kroll, you surely cannot suppose we were so reckless as to let my poor sick wife get hold of any such ideas? I can solemnly assure you that the fault was not ours. It was her own distempered brain that drove her into these wild aberrations.

KROLL. One thing at any rate I can tell you; and that is, that poor, overstrung, tortured Beata put an end to her life in order that you might live happily—live freely, and—after your own heart.

ROSMER [*starts half up from his chair*']. What do you mean by that?

KROLL. Listen to me quietly, Rosmer; for now I can speak of it. In the last year of her life she came to me twice to pour forth all her anguish and despair.

ROSMER. On this same subject?

KROLL. NO. The first time she came, it was to declare that you were on the road to perversion—that you were going to break with the faith of your fathers.

ROSMER [*eagerly*]. What you say is impossible, Kroll! Absolutely impossible! You must be mistaken.

KROLL. Arid why?

ROSMER. Because while Beata was alive I was still wrestling with myself in doubt. And that fight I fought out alone and in utter silence. I don't think even Rebecca——

KROLL. Rebecca?

ROSMER. Oh well—Miss West. I call her Rebecca for convenience' sake.

KROLL. SO I have remarked.

ROSMER. SO it is inconceivable to me how Beata could have got hold of the idea. And why did she not speak to me myself about it? She never did—she never said a single word.

KROLL. Poor creature—she begged and implored me to talk to you.

ROSMER. And why did you not?

KROLL. At that time I never for a moment doubted that she was out of her mind. Such an accusation against a man like you!—And then she came again—about a month later. This time she seemed outwardly calmer; but as she was going she said: "They may soon expect the White Horse at Rosmersholm now."

ROSMER. Yes, yes. The White Horse—she often spoke of it.

KROLL. And when I tried to divert her mind from such melancholy fancies, she only answered: "I have not long to live; for Johannes must marry Rebecca at once."

ROSMER [*almost speechless*]. What do you say? I marry——?

KROLL. That was on a Thursday afternoon———On the Saturday evening she threw herself from the bridge into the mill-race.

ROSMER. And you never warned us——!

KROLL. YOU know very well how often she used to say that she felt her end was near.

ROSMER. Yes, I know. But nevertheless—you should have warned us!

KROLL. I did think of it; but not till too late.

ROSMER. But afterwards, why did you not——? Why have you said nothing about all this?

KROLL. What good would it have done for me to come torturing and harassing you still further? I took all she said for mere wild, empty ravings—until yesterday evening.

ROSMER. Then you have now changed your opinion?

KROLL. Did not Beata see quite clearly when she declared you were about to desert the faith of your fathers?

ROSMER [*looks fixedly, straight before him*], I cannot understand it. It is the most incomprehensible thing in the world.

KROLL. Incomprehensible or not—there it is. And now I ask you, Rosmer,—how much truth is there in her other accusation? The last one, I mean.

ROSMER. Accusation? Was that an accusation?

KROLL. Perhaps you did not notice the way she worded it. She had to go, she said—why?

ROSMER. In order that I might marry Rebecca—

KROLL. These were not precisely her words. Beata used a different expression. She said: "I have not long to live; for Johannes must marry Rebecca at once."

ROSMER [*looks at him for a moment; then rises*]. Now I understand you, Kroll.

KROLL. And what then? What is your answer?

ROSMER [*still quiet and self-restrained*]. To such an unheard-of—? The only fitting answer would be to point to the door.

KROLL [*rises*]. Well and good.

ROSMER [*stands in front of him*]. Listen to me. For more than a year—ever since Beata left us—Rebecca West and I have lived alone here at Rosmersholm. During all that time you have known of Beata's accusation against us. But I have never for a moment noticed that you disapproved of Rebecca's living in my house.

KROLL. I did not know till yesterday evening that it was an unbelieving man who was living with an—emancipated woman.

ROSMER. Ah—? Then you do not believe that purity of mind is to be found among the unbelieving and the emancipated? You do not believe that morality may be an instinctive law of their nature!

KROLL. I have no great faith in the morality that is not founded on the teachings of the Church.

ROSMER. And you mean this to apply to Rebecca and me? To the relation between us two—?

KROLL. Not even out of consideration for you two can I depart from my opinion that there is no unfathomable gulf between free thought and—h'm——

ROSMER. And what?

KROLL.———and free love,—since you will have it.

ROSMER [*in a low voice*]. And you are not ashamed to say this to me! You, who have known me from my earliest youth!

KROLL. For that very reason. I know how easily you are influenced by the people you associate with. And this Rebecca of yours—well, Miss West then—we really know little or nothing about her. In short, Rosmer—I will not give you up. And you—you must try to save yourself in time.

ROSMER. Save myself? How——?

[MADAM HELSETH *peeps in at the door on the left.*

ROSMER. What do you want?

MADAM HELSETH. I wanted to ask Miss West to step downstairs.

ROSMER. Miss West is not up here.

MADAM HELSETH. Isn't she? [*Looks round the room.*]
Well, that's strange. [*She goes.*

ROSMER. You were saying——?

KROLL. Listen to me. I am not going to inquire too closely into the secret history of what went on here in Beata's lifetime—and may still be going on. I know that your marriage was a most unhappy one; and I suppose that must be taken as some sort of excuse——

ROSMER. Oh, how little you really know me——!

KROLL. Don't interrupt me. What I mean is this : if your present mode of life with Miss West is to continue, it is absolutely necessary that the change of views—the unhappy backsliding—brought about by her evil influence—should be hushed up. Let me speak! Let me speak! I say, if the worst comes to the worst, in Heaven's name think and believe whatever you like about everything under the sun. But you must keep your views to yourself. These things are purely personal matters, after all. There is no need to proclaim them from the rooftops.

ROSMER. I feel it an absolute necessity to get out of a false and equivocal position.

KROLL. But you have a duty towards the traditions of your race, Rosmer! Remember that! Rosmersholm has, so to speak, radiated morality and order from time immemorial—yes, and respectful conformity to all that is accepted and sanctioned by the best people. The whole district has taken its stamp from Rosmersholm. It would lead to deplorable, irremediable confusion if it were known that you had broken with what I may call the hereditary idea of the house of Rosmer.

ROSMER. My dear Kroll, I cannot see the matter in that light. I look upon it as my imperative duty to spread a little light and gladness here, where the Rosmer family has from generation to generation been a centre of darkness and oppression.

KROLL [*looks at him severely*]. Yes, that would be a worthy life-work for the last of your race! No, Rosmer; let such things alone; you are the last man for such a task. You were born to be a quiet student.

ROSMER. Perhaps so. But for once in a way I mean to bear my part in the battle of life.

KROLL. And do you know what that battle of life will mean for you? It will mean a life-and-death struggle with all your friends.

ROSMER [*quietly*]. They cannot all be such fanatics as you.

KROLL. You are a credulous creature, Rosmer. An inexperienced creature too. You have no conception of the overwhelming storm that will burst upon you.

[MADAM HELSETH *looks in at the door on the left.*

MADAM HELSETH. Miss West wants to know——

ROSMER. What is it?

MADAM HELSETH. There's a man downstairs wanting to have a word with the Pastor.

ROSMER. Is it the man who was here yesterday evening?

MADAM HELSETH. NO, it's that Mortensgard.

ROSMER. Mortensgard?

KROLL. Aha! So it has come to this, has it?—Already!

ROSMER. What does he want with me? Why didn't you send him away?

MADAM HELSETH. Miss West said I was to ask if he might come upstairs.

ROSMER. Tell him I'm engaged——

KROLL [*to MADAM HELSETH*]. Let him come up, Madam Helseth. [MADAM HELSETH *goes*.

KROLL [*takes up his hat*], I retire from the field—for the moment. But the main battle has yet to be fought.

ROSMER. On my honour, Kroll—I have nothing whatever to do with Mortensgard.

KROLL. I do not believe you. On no subject and in no relation whatever will I henceforth believe you. It is war to the knife now. We will try whether we cannot disarm you.

ROSMER. Oh, Kroll—how low—how very low you have sunk!

KROLL. I? And you think you have the right to say that to me! Remember Beata!

ROSMER. Still harping upon that?

KROLL. NO. YOU must solve the enigma of the mill-race according to your own conscience—if you have anything of the sort left.

[PETER MORTENSGARD *enters softly and quietly from the left*.

He is a small, wiry man with thin reddish hair and beard.

KROLL [*with a look of hatred*]. Ah, here we have the "Beacon"—burning at Rosmersholm I [*Buttons his coat.*] Well, now I can no longer hesitate what course to steer.

MORTENSGARD [*deferentially*]. The "Beacon" may always be relied upon to light the Rector home.

KROLL. Yes; you have long shown your goodwill. To be sure there's a commandment about bearing false witness against your neighbour——

MORTENSGARD. Rector Kroll need not instruct me in the commandments.

KROLL. Not even in the seventh?

ROSMER. Kroll——!

MORTENSGARD. If I needed instruction, it would rather be the Pastor's business.

KROLL [*with covert sarcasm*]. The Pastor's? Oh yes, unquestionably Pastor Rosmer is the man for t h a t.—Good luck to your conference, gentlemen!

[*Goes out and slams the door behind him.*]

ROSMER [*keeps his eyes fixed on the closed door and says to himself*]. Well, well—so be it then. [*Turns.*] Will you be good enough to tell me, Mr. Mortensgard, what brings you out here to me?

MORTENSGARD. It was really Miss West I came to see. I wanted to thank her for the friendly note I received from her yesterday.

ROSMER. I know she wrote to you. Have you seen her then?

MORTENSGARD. Yes, for a short time. [*Smiles slightly.*] I hear there has been a certain change of views out here at Rosmersholm.

ROSMER. My views are altered in many respects. I might almost say in all.

MORTENSGARD. SO Miss West told me; and that's why she thought I had better come up and talk things over with the Pastor.

ROSMER. What things, Mr. Mortensgard?

MORTENSGARD. May I announce in the "Beacon" that there has been a change in your views—that you have joined the party of freedom and progress?

ROSMER. Certainly you may. In fact, I beg you to make the announcement.

MORTENSGARD. Then it shall appear in to-morrow's paper. It will cause a great sensation when it's known that Pastor Rosmer of Rosmersholm is prepared to take up arms for the cause of light, in t h a t sense too.

ROSMER. I don't quite understand you.

MORTENSGARD. I mean that the moral position of our party is greatly strengthened whenever we gain an adherent of serious, Christian principles.

ROSMER [*with some surprise*]. Then you do not know——? Did not Miss West tell you that too?

MORTENSGARD. What, Pastor Rosmer? Miss West was in

a great hurry. She said I was to go upstairs and hear the rest from yourself.

ROSMER. Well, in that case I may tell you that I have emancipated myself entirely, and on every side. I have broken with all the dogmas of the Church. Henceforth they are nothing to me.

MORTENSGARD [*looks at him in amazement*']. Well—if the skies were to fall I couldn't be more——! Pastor Rosmer himself announces——

ROSMER. Yes, I now stand where you have stood for many years. That, too, you may announce in the "Beacon" tomorrow.

MORTENSGARD. That too? No, my dear Pastor—excuse me—I don't think it would be wise to touch on that side of the matter.

ROSMER. Not touch on it?

MORTENSGARD. Not at present, I mean.

ROSMER. I don't understand——

MORTENSGARD. Well you see, Pastor Rosmer—you probably don't know the ins and outs of things so well as I do. But, since you have come over to the party of freedom—and, as I hear from Miss West, you intend to take an active share in the movement—I presume you would like to be of as much service as possible, both to the cause in general and to this particular agitation.

ROSMER. Yes, that is my earnest wish.

MORTENSGARD. Good. But now I must tell you, Pastor Rosmer, that if you openly declare your defection from the Church, you tie your own hands at the very outset.

ROSMER. DO you think so ?

MORTENSGARD. Yes, believe me, you won't be able to do much for the cause, *in this part of the country* at any rate. And besides—we have plenty of free-thinkers already, Pastor Rosmer—I might almost say too many. What the party requires is a Christian element—something that every one must respect. That is what we are sadly in need of. And therefore I advise you to keep your own counsel about what doesn't concern the public. That's my view of the matter, at least.

ROSMER. I understand. Then if I openly confess my apostasy, you dare not have anything to do with me ?

MORTENSGARD [*shaking his head*], I scarcely like to risk it, Pastor Rosmer. I have made it a rule for some time past not to support any one or anything that is actively opposed to the Church.

ROSMER. Then you have yourself returned to the Church ?

MORTENSGARD. That concerns no one but myself.

ROSMER. Ah, so that is it. Now I understand you.

MORTENSGARD. Pastor Rosmer—you ought to remember that I — I in particular—have not full liberty of action.

ROSMER. What hampers you ?

MORTENSGARD. The fact that I am a marked man.

ROSMER. Ah—indeed.

MORTENSGARD. A marked man, Pastor Rosmer. You, above all men, should remember that; for I have chiefly you to thank for the scandal that branded me.

ROSMER. If I had then stood where I stand now, I should have dealt more gently with your offence.

MORTENSGARD. That I don't doubt. But it is too late now. You have branded me once for all—branded me for life. I suppose you can scarcely understand what that means. But now you may perhaps come to feel the smart of it yourself, Pastor Rosmer.

ROSMER. I ?

MORTENSGARD. Yes. You surely don't suppose that Rector Kroll and his set will ever forgive a desertion like yours? I hear the " County News " is going to be very savage in future. You too may find yourself a marked man before long.

ROSMER. In personal matters, Mr. Mortensgard, I feel myself secure from attack. My life is beyond reproach.

MORTENSGARD [*with a sly smile*]. That's a large word, Mr. Rosmer.

ROSMER. Perhaps; but I have a right to use it.

MORTENSGARD. Even if you were to scrutinise your conduct as closely as you once scrutinised mine ?

ROSMER. Your tone is very curious. What are you hinting at? Anything definite?

MORTENSGARD. Yes, something definite. Only one thing. But that might be bad enough, if malicious opponents got wind of it.

ROSMER. Will you have the kindness to let me hear what it is?

MORTENSGARD. Cannot you guess for yourself, Pastor?

ROSMER. NO, certainly not. I have not the slightest idea.

MORTENSGARD. Well, well, I suppose I must come out with it then.—I have in my possession a strange letter, dated from Rosmersholm.

ROSMER. Miss West's letter, do you mean? Is it so strange?

MORTENSGARD. NO, there's nothing strange about that. But I once received another letter from this house.

ROSMER. Also from Miss West?

MORTENSGARD. No, Mr. Rosmer.

ROSMER. Well then, from whom? From whom?

MORTENSGARD. From the late Mrs. Rosmer.

ROSMER. From my wife! You received a letter from my wife!

MORTENSGARD. I did.

ROSMER. When?

MORTENSGARD. Towards the close of Mrs. Rosmer's life. Perhaps about a year and a half ago. That is the letter I call strange.

ROSMER. I suppose you know that my wife's mind was affected at that time.

MORTENSGARD. Yes; I know many people thought so. But I don't think there was anything in the letter to show it. When I call it strange, I mean in another sense.

ROSMER. And what in the world did my poor wife take it into her head to write to you about?

MORTENSGARD. I have the letter at home. She begins to the effect that she is living in great anxiety and fear; there are so many malicious people about here, she says; and they think of nothing but causing you trouble and injury.

ROSMER. Me?

MORTENSGARD. Yes, so she says. And then comes the strangest part of all. Shall I go on, Pastor Rosmer?

ROSMER. Assuredly! Tell me everything, without reserve.

MORTENSGARD. The deceased lady begs and implores me to be magnanimous. She knows, she says, that it was her husband that had me dismissed from my post as teacher; and she conjures me by all that's sacred not to avenge myself.

ROSMER. HOW did she suppose you could avenge yourself?

MORTENSGARD. The letter says that if I should hear rumours of sinful doings at Rosmersholm, I am not to believe them; they are only spread abroad by wicked people who wish to make you unhappy.

ROSMER. Is all that in the letter?

MORTENSGARD. You may read it for yourself, sir, when you please.

ROSMER. But I don't understand——! What did she imagine the rumours to be about?

MORTENSGARD. Firstly, that the Pastor had deserted the faith of his fathers. Your wife denied that absolutely—then. And next—h'm——

ROSMER. Next?

MORTENSGARD. Well, next she writes—rather confusedly—that she knows nothing of any sinful intrigue at Rosmersholm; that she has never been wronged in any way. And if any such rumours should get about, she implores me to say nothing of the matter in the "Beacon"

ROSMER. Is no name mentioned?

MORTENSGARD. None.

ROSMER. Who brought you the letter?

MORTENSGARD. I have promised not to say. It was handed to me one evening, at dusk.

ROSMER. If you had made inquiries at the time, you would have learnt that my poor unhappy wife was not fully accountable for her actions.

MORTENSGARD. I did make inquiries, Pastor Rosmer. But I must say that was not the impression I received.

ROSMER. Was it not?—But what is your precise reason for telling me now about this incomprehensible old letter?

MORTENSGARD. To impress on you the necessity for extreme prudence, Pastor Rosmer.

ROSMER. In my life, do you mean?

MORTENSGARD. Yes. You must remember that from to-day you have ceased to be a neutral.

ROSMER. Then you have quite made up your mind that I must have something to conceal?

MORTENSGARD. I don't know why an emancipated man should refrain from living his life out as fully as possible. But, as I said before, be exceedingly cautious in future. If anything should get abroad that conflicts with current prejudices, you may be sure the whole liberal movement will have to suffer for it.—Good-bye, Pastor Rosmer.

ROSMER. Good-bye.

MORTENSGARD. I shall go straight to the office and have the great news put into the "Beacon."

ROSMER. Yes; omit nothing.

MORTENSGARD. I shall omit nothing that the public need know.

[He bows and goes out. ROSMER remains standing in the doorway while he goes down the stairs. The outer door is heard to close.]

ROSMER *[in the doorway, calls softly]*. Rebecca! Re——H'm. *[Aloud.]* Madam Helseth,—is Miss West not there?

MADAM HELSETH *[from the hall]*. No, Pastor Rosmer, she's not here.

[The curtain at the back is drawn aside. REBECCA appears in the doorway.]

REBECCA. Rosmer!

ROSMER *[turns]*. What! Were you in my room? My dear, what were you doing there?

REBECCA *[goes up to him]*. I was listening.

ROSMER. Oh, Rebecca, how could you?

REBECCA. I could not help it. He said it so hatefully—that about my morning gown——

ROSMER. Then you were there when Kroll——?

REBECCA. Yes. I wanted to know what was lurking in his mind.

ROSMER. I would have told you.

REBECCA. You would scarcely have told me all. And certainly not in his own words.

ROSMER. Did you hear everything, then?

REBECCA. Nearly everything, I think. I had to go downstairs for a moment when Mortensgard came.

ROSMER. And then you came back again——?

REBECCA. Don't be vexed with me, dear friend!

ROSMER. DO whatever you think right. You are mistress of your own actions.—But what do you say to all this, Rebecca——? Oh, I seem never to have needed you so much before!

REBECCA. Both you and I have been prepared for what must happen some time.

ROSMER. NO, no—not for this.

REBECCA. Not for this?

ROSMER. I knew well enough that sooner or later our beautiful, pure friendship might be misinterpreted and soiled. Not by Kroll—I could never have believed such a thing of him—but by all those other people with the coarse souls and the ignoble eyes. Oh yes—I had reason enough for keeping our alliance so jealously concealed. It was a dangerous secret.

REBECCA. Oh, why should we care what all those people think! We know in our hearts that we are blameless.

ROSMER. Blameless? I? Yes, I thought so—till to-day. But now—now, Rebecca——?

REBECCA. Well, what now?

ROSMER. HOW am I to explain Beata's terrible accusation?

REBECCA [*vehemently*]. Oh, don't speak of Beata! Don't think of Beata any more. You were just beginning to shake off the hold she has upon you, even in the grave.

ROSMER. Since I have heard all this, she seems, in a ghostly sort of way, to be alive again.

REBECCA. Oh no—not that, Rosmer! Not that!

ROSMER. Yes, I tell you. We must try to get to the bottom of this. What can possibly have led her to misinterpret things so fatally?

REBECCA. You are surely not beginning to doubt that she was on the very verge of insanity?

ROSMER. Oh yes—that is just what I can't feel quite certain of any longer. And besides—even if she was——

REBECCA. If she was? Well, what then?

ROSMER. I mean—where are we to look for the determining cause that drove her morbid spirit over the border-line of madness?

REBECCA. Oh, why brood over problems no one can solve?

ROSMER. I cannot help it, Rebecca. I cannot shake off these gnawing doubts, however much I may wish to.

REBECCA. But it may become dangerous—this eternal dwelling upon one miserable subject.

ROSMER [*walks about restlessly, in thought*]. I must have betrayed myself in one way or another. She must have noticed how happy I began to feel from the time you came to us.

REBECCA. Yes but, dear, even if she did——?

ROSMER. Be sure it didn't escape her that we read the same books—that the interest of discussing all the new ideas drew us together. Yet I cannot understand it! I was so careful to spare her. As I look back, it seems to me I made it the business of my life to keep her in ignorance of all our interests. Did I not, Rebecca?

REBECCA. Yes, yes; certainly you did.

ROSMER. And you too. And yet——! Oh, it's terrible to think of! She must have gone about here—full of her morbid passion—saying never a word—watching us—noting everything—and misinterpreting everything.

REBECCA [*pressing her hands together*]. Oh, I should never have come to Rosmersholm!

ROSMER. TO think of all she must have suffered *in* silence! All the foulness her sick brain must have conjured up around us! Did she never say anything to you to put you at all on the alert?

REBECCA [*as if startled*]. To me! Do you think I should have stayed a day longer if she had?

ROSMER. NO, no, of course not.—Oh, what a battle she must have fought! And alone too, Rebecca; desperate and quite

alone!—and then, at last, that heart-breaking, accusing victory—in the mill-race.

[Throws himself into the chair by the writing-table, with his elbows on the table and his face in his hands.]

REBECCA *[approaches him cautiously from behind]*. Listen, Rosmer. If it were in your power to call Beat a back—to you—to Rosmersholm—would you do it?

ROSMER. Oh, how do I know what I would or would not do? I can think of nothing but this one thing—that cannot be recalled.

REBECCA. YOU were just beginning to live, Rosmer. You had begun. You had freed yourself—on every side. You felt so buoyant and happy——

ROSMER. Oh yes—I did indeed.—And now this crushing blow falls on me.

REBECCA *[behind him, rests her arms on the chair-back]*. How beautiful it was when we sat in the twilight, in the room downstairs, helping each other to lay out our new life-plans! You were to set resolutely to work in the world—the living world of to-day, as you said. You were to go as a messenger of emancipation from home to home; to win over minds and wills; to create noble-men around you in wider and wider circles. Noble-men.

ROSMER. Happy noble-men.

REBECCA. Yes—happy.

ROSMER. For it is happiness that ennobles, Rebecca.

REBECCA. Should you not say—sorrow as well? A great sorrow?

ROSMER. Yes—if one can get through it—over it—away from it.

REBECCA. That is what you must do.

ROSMER *[shakes his head gloomily]*. I shall never get over this—wholly. There will always be a doubt—a question left. I can never again know that luxury of the soul which makes life so marvellously sweet to live!

REBECCA *[bends over his chair-back, and says more softly:]* What is it you mean, Rosmer?

ROSMER *[looking up at her]*. Peaceful, happy innocence.

REBECCA [*recoils a step*]. Yes. Innocence. [*A short pause.*]

ROSMER [*with his elbow on the table, leaning his head on his hand, and looking straight before him*]. And what extraordinary penetration she showed! How systematically she put all this together! First she begins to doubt my orthodoxy—How could that occur to her? But it did occur to her; and then it grew to be a certainty. And then—yes, then of course it was easy for her to think all the rest possible. [*Sits up in his chair and runs his hands through his hair.*] Oh, all these horrible imaginings! I shall never get rid of them. I feel it. I know it. At any moment they will come rushing in upon me, and bring back the thought of the dead!

REBECCA. Like the White Horse of Rosmersholm.

ROSMER. Yes, like that. Rushing forth in the darkness—in the silence.

REBECCA. And because of this miserable figment of the brain, you will let slip the hold you were beginning to take upon the living world?

ROSMER. YOU may well think it hard. Yes, hard, Rebecca. But I have no choice. How could I ever leave this behind me?

REBECCA [*behind his chair*]. By entering into new relations.

ROSMER [*surprised, looks up*]. New relations?

REBECCA. Yes, new relations to the outside world. Live, work, act. Don't sit here brooding and groping among insoluble enigmas.

ROSMER [*rises*']. New relations? [*Walks across the floor, stops at the door and then comes back.*] One question occurs to me. Has it not occurred to you too, Rebecca?

REBECCA [*drawing breath with difficulty*]. Let me—hear—what it is?

ROSMER. What form do you think our relations will take after to-day?

REBECCA. I believe our friendship will endure—come what may.

ROSMER. That is not exactly what I meant. The thing that first brought us together, and that unites us so closely—our

common faith in a pure comradeship between man and woman——

REBECCA. Yes, yes—what of that?

ROSMER. I mean, that such a relation—as this of ours—does it not presuppose a quiet, happy, peaceful life——?

REBECCA. What then?

ROSMER. But the life I must now look forward too is one of struggle and unrest and strong agitations. For I will live my life, Rebecca! I will not be crushed to earth by horrible possibilities. I will not have my course of life forced upon me, either by the living or by—any one else.

REBECCA. NO, no—do not! Be an absolutely free man, Rosmer!

ROSMER. But can you not guess what is in my mind? Do you not know? Don't you see how I can best shake off all gnawing memories—all the unhappy past?

REBECCA. HOW?

ROSMER. By opposing to it a new, a living reality.

REBECCA [*feeling for the chair-back*], A living——. What do you mean?

ROSMER [*comes nearer*]. Rebecca—if I were to ask you—will you be my second wife?

REBECCA [*for a moment speechless, then cries out with joy*]. Your wife! Your——! I!

ROSMER. Come; let us try it. We two will be one. The place of the dead must stand empty no longer.

REBECCA. I—in Beata's place——!

ROSMER. Then she will be out of the saga—completely—for ever and ever.

REBECCA [*softly, trembling*]. Do you believe that, Rosmer?

ROSMER. It must be so! It must! I cannot—I will not go through life with a dead body on my back. Help me to cast it off, Rebecca. And let us stifle all memories in freedom, in joy, in passion. You shall be to me the only wife I have ever had.

REBECCA [*with self-command*]. Never speak of this again. I will never be your wife.

ROSMER. What! Never! Do you not think you could

come to love me? Is there not already a strain of love in our friendship?

REBECCA [*puts her hands over her ears as if in terror*]. Don't speak so, Rosmer! Don't say such things!

ROSMER [*seizes her arm*]. Yes, yes—there is a growing promise in our relation. Oh, I can see that you feel it too. Do you not, Rebecca?

REBECCA [*once more firm and calm*]. Listen to me. I tell you—if you persist in this, I will go away from Rosmersholm.

ROSMER. GO away! You! You cannot. It is impossible.

REBECCA. It is still more impossible that I should be your wife. Never in this world can I marry you.

ROSMER [*looks at her in surprise*]. You say "can"; and you say it so strangely. Why can you not?

REBECCA [*seizes both his hands*]. Dear friend—both for your own sake and for mine—do not ask why. [*Lets go his hands,*] Do not, Rosmer. [*Goes towards the door on the left,*

ROSMER. Henceforth I can think of nothing but that one question—why?

REBECCA [*turns and looks at him*]. Then it is all over.

ROSMER. Between you and me?

REBECCA. Yes.

ROSMER. It will never be all over between us two. You will never leave Rosmersholm.

REBECCA [*with her hand on the door-handle*]. No, perhaps I shall not. But if you ask me again—it is all over.

ROSMER. All over? How——?

REBECCA. For then I will go the way that Beata went. Now you know it, Rosmer.

ROSMER. Rebecca——?

REBECCA [*in the doorway, nods slowly*]. Now you know it.

ROSMER [*stares, thunderstruck, at the door, and says to himself*]. What—is—this?

ACT III

The sitting-room at Rosmersholm. The window and the entrance door are open. The sun is shining outside. Forenoon.
 REBECCA WEST, dressed as in the first actj stands at the windowj watering and arranging the flowers. Her crochet work lies in the armchair. MADAM HELSETH is moving about, dusting the furniture with a feather-brush.

REBECCA [*after a short silence*]. I can't understand the Pastor remaining so long upstairs to-day.

MADAM HELSETH. Oh, he often does that. But he'll soon be down now, I should think.

REBECCA. Have you seen anything of him ?

MADAM HELSETH. I caught a glimpse of him when I went upstairs with his coffee. He was in his bedroom dressing.

REBECCA. I asked because he was a little out of sorts yesterday.

MADAM HELSETH. He didn't look well. I wonder if there isn't something amiss between him and his brother-in-law.

REBECCA. What do you think it can be?

MADAM HELSETH. I couldn't say. Perhaps it's that Mortensgard that has been setting them against each other.

REBECCA. Likely enough.—Do you know anything of this Peter Mortensgard?

MADAM HELSETH. NO indeed. How could you think so, Miss? A fellow like him.

REBECCA. DO you mean because he edits such a low paper?

MADAM HELSETH. Oh, it's not only that.—You must have heard, Miss, that he had a child by a married woman that had been deserted by her husband ?

REBECCA. Yes, I have heard of it. But it must have been long before I came here.

MADAM HELSETH. It's true he was very young at the time; and she should have known better. He wanted to marry her too; but of course he couldn't do that. And I don't say he hasn't paid dear for it.—But, good Lord, Mortensgard has got

on in the world since those days. There's a many people run after h i m now.

REBECCA. Yes, most of the poor people bring their affairs to him when they're in any trouble.

MADAM HELSETH. Ah, and others too, perhaps, besides the poor folk——

REBECCA [*looks at her furtively*]. Indeed.

MADAM HELSETH [*by the sofa, dusting away vigorously*]. Perhaps the last people you would think likely to, Miss.

REBECCA [*busy with the flowers*]. Come now, that's only an idea of yours, Madam Helseth. You can't be sure of what you're saying.

MADAM HELSETH. You think I can't, Miss? But I can tell you I am. Why—if you must know it—I once took a letter in to Mortensgard myself.

REBECCA [*turning*]. No—did you?

MADAM HELSETH. Yes, indeed I did. And a letter that was written here at Rosmersholm too.

REBECCA. Really, Madam Helseth?

MADAM HELSETH. Yes, that it was. And it was on fine paper, and there was a fine red seal on it too.

REBECCA. And it was given to you to deliver? Then, my dear Madam Helseth, it's not difficult to guess who wrote it.

MADAM HELSETH. Well?

REBECCA. It must have been something that poor Mrs. Rosmer, in her morbid state——

MADAM HELSETH. It's you that say that, Miss, not me.

REBECCA. But what was *in* the letter? Oh, I forgot—you u can't know that.

MADAM HELSETH. H'm; what if I did know it, all the same?

REBECCA. Did she tell you what she was writing about?

MADAM HELSETH. NO, she didn't exactly do that. But Mortensgard, when he'd read it, he began questioning me backwards and forwards and up and down, so that I soon guessed what was in it.

REBECCA. Then what do you think it was? Oh my dear good Madam Helseth, do tell me.

MADAM HELSETH. **Oh no, Miss.** Not for the whole world.

REBECCA. **Oh,** you can surely tell me. We two are such good friends.

MADAM HELSETH. Lord preserve me from telling you anything about that, Miss. I can only tell you that it was something horrible that they'd got the poor sick lady to believe.

REBECCA. Who had got her to believe it?

MADAM HELSETH. Wicked people, Miss West. Wicked people.

REBECCA. Wicked——?

MADAM HELSETH. Yes, I say it again. They must have been real wicked people.

REBECCA. And who do you think it could have been?

MADAM HELSETH. Oh, I know well enough what to think. But Lord forbid / should say anything. To be sure there's a certain lady in the town—h'm!

REBECCA. I can see that you mean Mrs. Kroll.

MADAM HELSETH. Ah, she's a fine one, she is. She has always been the great lady with me. And she's never had any too much love for you neither.

REBECCA. DO you think Mrs. Rosmer was in her right mind when she wrote that letter to Mortensgard?

MADAM HELSETH. It's a queer thing a person's mind, Miss. Clean out of her mind I don't think she was.

REBECCA. But she seemed to go distracted when she learned that she must always be childless. It was that that unsettled her reason.

MADAM HELSETH. Yes, poor lady, that was a dreadful blow to her.

REBECCA [*takes up her crochet and sits in a chair by the window*]. But after all—don't you think it was a good thing for the Pastor, Madam Helseth?

MADAM HELSETH. What, Miss?

REBECCA. That there were no children. Don't you think so?

MADAM HELSETH. H'm, I'm sure I don't know what to say **about** that.

REBECCA. Oh yes, believe me, it was fortunate for him. Pastor Rosmer is not the man to have crying children about his house.

MADAM HELSETH. Ah, Miss, little children don't cry at Rosmersholm.

REBECCA [*looks at her*]. Don't cry?

MADAM HELSETH. NO. AS long as people can remember, children have never been known to cry in this house.

REBECCA. That's very strange.

MADAM HELSETH. Yes; isn't it? But it runs in the family. And then there's another strange thing. When they grow up, they never laugh. Never, as long as they live.

REBECCA. Why, how extraordinary——

MADAM HELSETH. Have you ever once heard or seen the Pastor laugh, Miss?

REBECCA. NO—now that I think of it, I almost believe you are right. But I don't think any one laughs much in this part of the country.

MADAM HELSETH. NO, they don't. They said it began at Rosmersholm. And then I suppose it spread round about, as if it was catching-like.

REBECCA. You are a very wise woman, Madam Helseth.

MADAM HELSETH. Oh, Miss, you mustn't sit there and make fun of me. [*Listens.*] Hush, hush—here's the Pastor coming down. He doesn't like to see dusting going on.

[She goes out to the right.]

[JOHANNES ROSMER, with his hat and stick in his hand, enters from the hall.]

ROSMER. Good-morning, Rebecca.

REBECCA. Good-morning, dear. [*A moment after—crocheting.*] Are you going out?

ROSMER. Yes.

REBECCA. It's a beautiful day.

ROSMER. You didn't look in on me this morning.

REBECCA. NO, I didn't. Not to-day.

ROSMER. DO you not intend to in future?

REBECCA. Oh, I don't know yet, dear.

ROSMER. Has anything come for me?

REBECCA. The " County News " has come.

ROSMER. The " County News " ?

REBECCA. There it is on the table.

ROSMER [*puts down his hat and stick*]. Is there anything——?

REBECCA. Yes.

ROSMER. And you didn't send it up ?

REBECCA. You will read it soon enough.

ROSMER. Oh, indeed? [*Takes the paper and reads, standing by the table.*]—What!—" We cannot warn our readers too earnestly against unprincipled renegades." [*Looks at her.*] They call me a renegade, Rebecca.

REBECCA. They mention no names.

ROSMER. That makes no difference. [*Reads on.*] " Secret traitors to the good cause."—" Judas-natures, who make brazen confession of their apostasy as soon as they think the most convenient and—profitable moment has arrived." " Ruthless befouling of a name honoured through generations "—" in the confident hope of a suitable reward from the party in momentary power." [*Lays down the paper on the table.*] And they can say such things of me!—Men who have known me so long and so well! Things they themselves don't believe. Things they know there is not a word of truth in—they print them all the same.

REBECCA. That is not all.

ROSMER [*takes up the paper again*]. " Inexperience and lack of judgment the only excuse "—" pernicious influence—possibly extending to matters which, for the present, we do not wish to make subjects of public discussion or accusation." [*Looks at her.*] What is this?

REBECCA. It is aimed at me, plainly enough.

ROSMER [*lays down the paper*]. Rebecca,—this is the conduct of dishonourable men.

REBECCA. Yes, they need scarcely be so contemptuous of Mortensgard.

ROSMER [*walks about the room*]. Something must be done. All that is good in human nature will go to ruin, if this is allowed to go on. But it shall not go on! Oh, what a joy

—what a joy it would be to me to let a little light into all this gloom and ugliness!

REBECCA [*rises*]. Ah yes, Rosmer. In that you have a great and glorious object to live for.

ROSMER. Only think, if I could rouse them to see themselves as they are; teach them to repent and blush before their better natures; bring them together in mutual forbearance—in love, Rebecca!

REBECCA. Yes, put your whole strength into that, and you must succeed.

ROSMER. I think success must be possible. Oh, what a delight it would be then to live one's life! No more malignant wrangling; only emulation. All eyes fixed on the same goal. Every mind, every will pressing forward—upward—each by the path its nature prescribes for it. Happiness for all—through all. [*Happens to look out of the window, starts, and says sadly.*] Ah! Not through me.

REBECCA. Not——? Not through you?

ROSMER. Nor for me.

REBECCA. Oh, Rosmer, do not let such doubts take hold of you.

ROSMER. Happiness—dear Rebecca—happiness is above all things the calm, glad certainty of innocence.

REBECCA [*looks straight before her*]. Yes, innocence——

ROSMER. Oh, you cannot know what guilt means. But

REBECCA. YOU least of all!

ROSMER [*points out of the window.*] The mill-race.

REBECCA. Oh, Rosmer——!

[MADAM HELSETH *looks in at the door.*]

MADAM HELSETH. Miss West!

REBECCA. Presently, presently. Not now.

MADAM HELSETH. Only a word, Miss.

[REBECCA *goes to the door.* MADAM HELSETH *tells her something.* *They whisper together for a few moments.*]

MADAM HELSETH *nods and goes out.*

ROSMER [*uneasily*]. Was it anything for me?

REBECCA. NO, only something about the house-work.—You

ought to go out into the fresh air, dear Rosmer. You should take a good long walk.

ROSMER [*takes up his hat*]. Yes, come. Let us go together.

REBECCA. No, dear, I can't just now. You must go alone. But shake off all these gloomy thoughts. Promise me.

ROSMER. I am afraid I shall never shake them off.

REBECCA. Oh, that such baseless fancies should take so strong a hold of you——!

ROSMER. Not so baseless, I am afraid, Rebecca. I lay awake all night thinking it over and over. Perhaps Beata saw clearly after all.

REBECCA. In what?

ROSMER. In her belief that I loved you, Rebecca.

REBECCA. Right in t h a t!

ROSMER [*lays his hat down on the table*]. The question that haunts me is this: were we two not deceiving ourselves all the time—when we called our relation friendship?

REBECCA. You mean that it might as well have been called——?

ROSMER.———love. Yes, Rebecca, that is what I mean. Even while Beata was alive, all my thoughts were for you. It was you alone I longed for. It was when you were by my side that I felt the calm gladness of utter content. If you think it over, Rebecca—did we not feel for each other from the first a sort of sweet, secret child-love—desireless, dreamless? Was it not so with you? Tell me.

REBECCA [*struggling with herself*]. Oh—I don't know what to answer.

ROSMER. And it was this close-linked life in and for each other that we took for friendship. No, Rebecca—our bond has been a spiritual marriage—perhaps from the very first. That is why there is guilt on my soul. I had no right to such happiness—it was a sin against Beata.

REBECCA. NO right to live happily? Do you believe that, Rosmer?

ROSMER. She looked at our relation with the eyes of her love—judged it after the fashion of her love. Inevitably, Beata could not have judged otherwise than she did.

REBECCA. But how can you accuse yourself because of Beata's delusion?

ROSMER. It was love for me—h e r kind of love—that drove her into the mill-race. That is an immovable fact, Rebecca. And that is what I can never get over.

REBECCA. Oh, think of nothing but the great, beautiful task you have devoted your life to.

ROSMER [*shakes his head*]. It can never be accomplished, dear. Not by me. Not after what I have come to know.

REBECCA. Why not by you ?

ROSMER. Because no cause ever triumphs that has its origin in sin.

REBECCA [*vehemently*]. Oh, these are only ancestral doubts—ancestral fears—ancestral scruples. They say the dead come back to Rosmersholm in the shape of rushing white horses. I think this shows that it is true.

ROSMER. Be that as it may; what does it matter, so long as I cannot rid myself of the feeling? And believe me, Rebecca, it is as I tell you. The cause that is to win a lasting victory must have for its champion a happy, an innocent man.

REBECCA. IS happiness so indispensable to you, Rosmer?

ROSMER. Happiness? Yes, dear,—it is.

REBECCA. TO you, who can never laugh ?

ROSMER. Yes, in spite of that. Believe me, I have a great capacity for happiness.

REBECCA. Now go for your walk, dear. A good long walk. Do you hear?—See, here is your hat. And your stick too.

ROSMER [*takes both*]. Thanks. And you won't come with me?

REBECCA. No, no; I can't just now.

ROSMER. Very well, then. You are with me none the less. [*He goes out by the entrance door. REBECCA waits a moment, cautiously watching his departure from behind the open door; then she goes to the door on the right.*]

REBECCA [*opens the door, and says in a low tone*]. Now, Madam Helseth. You can show him in now.

[*Goes towards the window.*]

[*A moment after RECTOR KROLL enters from the right. He*]

*bows silently and formally, and keeps his hat in his hand**

KROLL. He has gone out ?

REBECCA. Yes.

KROLL. Does he usually stay out long ?

REBECCA. Yes, he does. But one cannot count on him to-day. So if you don't care to meet him——

KROLL. No, no. It is you I want to speak to—quite alone.

REBECCA. Then we had better not lose time. Sit down, Rector.

[She sits in the easy-chair by the window. RECTOR KROLL sits on a chair beside her.]

KROLL. Miss West—you can scarcely imagine how deeply and painfully I have taken this to heart—this change in Johannes Rosmer.

REBECCA. We expected it would be so—at first.

KROLL. Only at first ?

REBECCA. Rosmer was confident that sooner or later you would join him.

KROLL. I ?

REBECCA. You and all his other friends.

KROLL. Ah, there you see! That shows the infirmity of his judgment in all that concerns men and practical life.

REBECCA. But after all—since he feels it a necessity to emancipate himself on all sides——

KROLL. Yes, but wait—that is just what I do not believe.

REBECCA. What do you believe then ?

KROLL. I believe that you are at the bottom of it all.

REBECCA. It is your wife who has put that in your head, Rector Kroll.

KROLL. NO matter who has put it in my head. What is certain is that I feel a strong suspicion—an exceedingly strong suspicion—when I think things over, and piece together all I know of your behaviour ever since you came here.

REBECCA *[looks at him]*, I seem to recollect a time when you felt an exceedingly strong faith in me, dear Rector. I might almost call it a warm faith.

KROLL *[in a subdued voice]*. Whom could you not bewitch — if you tried ?

REBECCA. Did I try——?

KROLL. Yes, you did. I am no longer such a fool as to believe that there was any feeling in the matter. You simply wanted to get a footing at Rosmersholm—to strike root here—and in that I was to serve you. Now I see it.

REBECCA. You seem utterly to have forgotten that it was Beata who begged and implored me to come out here?

KROLL. Yes, when you had bewitched her to. Can the feeling she came to entertain for you be called friendship? It was adoration—almost idolatry. It developed into—what shall I call it?—a sort of desperate passion.—Yes, that is the right word for it.

REBECCA. Be so good as to recollect the state your sister was in. So far as I am concerned, I don't think any one can accuse me of being hysterical.

KROLL. No; that you certainly are not. But that makes you all the more dangerous to the people you want to get into your power. It is easy for you to weigh your acts and calculate consequences—just because your heart is cold.

REBECCA. Cold? Are you so sure of that?

KROLL. I am quite certain of it now. Otherwise you could never have lived here year after year without faltering in the pursuit of your object. Well, well—you have gained your end. You have got him and everything into your power. But in order to do so, you have not scrupled to make him unhappy.

REBECCA. That is not true. It is not I—it is you yourself that have made him unhappy.

KROLL. I?

REBECCA. Yes, when you led him to imagine that he was responsible for Beata's terrible end.

KROLL. Does he feel that so deeply, then?

REBECCA. HOW can you doubt it? A mind so sensitive as his——

KROLL. I thought that an emancipated man, so called, was above all such scruples.—But there we have it! Oh yes—I admit I knew how it would be. The descendant of the men that look down on us from these walls—how could he hope to

cut himself adrift from all that has been handed down without a break from generation to generation ?

REBECCA [*looks down thoughtfully*], Johannes Rosmer's spirit is deeply rooted in his ancestry. That is very certain.

KROLL. Yes, and you should have taken that fact into consideration, if you had felt any affection for him. But that sort of consideration was no doubt beyond you. There is such an immeasurable difference between your antecedents and his.

REBECCA. What antecedents do you mean ?

KROLL. I am speaking of your origin—your family antecedents, Miss West.

REBECCA. Oh, indeed! Yes, it is quite true that I come of very humble folk. Nevertheless—

KROLL. I am not thinking of rank and position. I allude to your moral antecedents.

REBECCA. Moral——? In what sense ?

KROLL. The circumstances of your birth ?

REBECCA. What do you mean ?

KROLL. I only mention the matter because it accounts for your whole conduct.

REBECCA. I do not understand this. You must explain!

KROLL. I really did not suppose you could require an explanation. Otherwise it would have been very odd that you should have let Dr. West adopt you——

REBECCA [*rises*]. Ah! Now I understand.

KROLL.——and that you should have taken his name. Your mother's name was Gamvik.

REBECCA [*walks across the room*]. My father's name was Gamvik, Rector Kroll.

KROLL. Your mother's business must have brought her very frequently into contact with the parish doctor.

REBECCA. Yes, it did.

KROLL. And then he takes you into his house—as soon as your mother dies. He treats you harshly; and yet you stay with him. You know that he won't leave you a halfpenny—as a matter of fact, you only got a case full of books—and yet you stay on; you bear with him; you nurse him to the last.

REBECCA [*stands by the table, looking scornfully at him*].

And you account for all this by assuming that there was something immoral—something criminal about my birth?

KROLL. I attribute your care for him to involuntary filial instinct. Indeed I believe your whole conduct is determined by your origin.

REBECCA [*vehemently*]. But there is not a single word of truth in what you say! And I can prove it! Dr. West did not come to Finmark till after I was born.

KROLL. Excuse me, Miss West. He settled there the year before. I have assured myself of that.

REBECCA. YOU are mistaken, I say! You are utterly mistaken.

KROLL. YOU told me the day before yesterday that you were nine-and-twenty—in your thirtieth year.

REBECCA. Indeed! Did I say so?

KROLL. Yes, you did. And I can calculate from that——

REBECCA. Stop! You needn't calculate. I may as well tell you at once: I am a year older than I give myself out to be.

KROLL [*smiles incredulously*]. Really! I am surprised! What can be the reason of that?

REBECCA. When I had passed twenty-five, it seemed to me I was getting altogether too old for an unmarried woman. And so I began to lie about my age.

KROLL. YOU? An emancipated woman! Have you prejudices about the age for marriage?

REBECCA. Yes, it was idiotic of me—idiotic and absurd. But some folly or other will always cling to us, not to be shaken off. We are made so.

KROLL. Well, so be it; but my calculation may be right, none the less. For Dr. West was up there on a short visit the year before he got the appointment.

REBECCA [*with a vehement outburst*]. It is not true!

KROLL. IS it not true?

REBECCA. NO. My mother never spoke of any such visit.

KROLL. Did she not?

REBECCA. NO, never. Nor Dr. West either; not a word about it!

KROLL. Might not that be because they both had reasons for suppressing a year? Just as you have done, Miss West. Perhaps it is a family foible.

REBECCA [*walks about clenching and wringing her hands*]. It is impossible. You want to cheat me into believing it. This can never, never be true. It cannot! Never in this world——!

KROLL [*rises*']. My dear Miss West—why in heaven's name are you so terribly excited? You quite frighten me! What am I to think—to believe——?

REBECCA. Nothing! You are to think and believe nothing.

KROLL. Then you must really tell me how you can take this affair—this possibility—so terribly to heart.

REBECCA [*controlling herself*]. It is perfectly simple, Rector Kroll. I have no wish to be taken for an illegitimate child.

KROLL. Indeed! Well, well, let us be satisfied with that explanation—in the meantime. But in that case you must still have a certain—prejudice on that point too?

REBECCA. Yes, I suppose I have.

KROLL. Ah, I fancy it is much the same with most of what you call your "emancipation." You have read yourself into a number of new ideas and opinions. You have got a sort of smattering of recent discoveries in various fields—discoveries that seem to overthrow certain principles which have hitherto been held impregnable and unassailable. But all this has only been a matter of the intellect, Miss West—a superficial acquisition. It has not passed into your blood.

REBECCA [*thoughtfully*]. Perhaps you are right.

KROLL. Yes, look into your own mind, and you will see! And if this is the case with you, one may easily guess how it must be with Johannes Rosmer. It is sheer, unmitigated madness—it is running blindfold to destruction—for him to think of coming openly forward and confessing himself an apostate! Only think—a man of his sensitive nature! Imagine him disowned and persecuted by the circle of which he has always formed a part—exposed to ruthless attacks from all the best people in the community! He is not—he never can be the man to endure all that.

REBECCA. He must endure it! It is too late now for **him** to retreat.

KROLL. Not at all too late. By no means. What has happened can be hushed up—or at least explained away as a mere temporary aberration, however deplorable. But—one measure is certainly indispensable.

REBECCA. And what is that?

KROLL. You must get him to legalise the position, Miss West.

REBECCA. His position towards me?

KROLL. Yes. You must make him do that.

REBECCA. Then you absolutely cannot clear your mind of the idea that our position requires to be—legalised, as you call it?

KROLL. I would rather not go into the matter too closely. But I believe I have noticed that it is nowhere easier to break through all so-called prejudices than in—h'm——

REBECCA. In the relation between man and woman, you mean?

KROLL. Yes—to speak plainly—I think so.

REBECCA [*wanders across the room and looks out at the window*]. I could almost say—I wish you were right, Rector Kroll.

KROLL. What do you mean by that? You say it so strangely.

REBECCA. Oh, well—please let us drop the subject. Ah—there he comes.

KROLL. Already! Then I will go.

REBECCA [*goes towards him*]. No—please stay. There is something I want you to hear.

KROLL. Not now. I don't feel as if I could bear to see him.

REBECCA. I beg you to stay. Do! If not, you will regret it by-and-by. It is the last time I shall ask you for anything.

KROLL [*looks at her in surprise and puts down his hat*]. Very well, Miss West—so be it, then.

[*A short silence. Then JOHANNES ROSMER enters from the hall.*]

ROSMER [*sees the RECTOR, and stops in the doorway*].
What!—Are you here?

REBECCA. He did not wish to meet you, dear.¹

KROLL [*involuntarily*]. "Dear!"

REBECCA. Yes, Rector Kroll, Rosmer and I say "dear" to each other. That is one result of our "position."

KROLL. Was that what you wanted me to hear?

REBECCA. That—and a little more.

ROSMER [*comes forward*]. What is the object of this visit?

KROLL. I wanted to try once more to stop you and win you back to us.

ROSMER [*points to the newspaper*]. After what appears in that paper?

KROLL. I did not write it.

ROSMER. Did you make the slightest effort to prevent its appearance?

KROLL. That would have been to betray the cause I serve. And, besides, it was not in my power.

REBECCA [*tears the paper into shreds, crushes up the pieces and throws them behind the stove*]. There! Now it is out of sight. And let it be out of mind too. For there will be nothing more of that sort, Rosmer.

KROLL. Ah, if you could only make sure of that!

REBECCA. Come, let us sit down, dear. All three of us. And then I will tell you everything.

ROSMER [*seats himself mechanically*]. What has come over you, Rebecca? This unnatural calmness—what is it?

REBECCA. The calmness of resolution. [*Seats herself*]. Pray sit down too, Rector.

[RECTOR KROLL *seats himself on the sofa*].

ROSMER. Resolution, you say? What resolution?

REBECCA. I am going to give you back what you require in order to live your life. Dear friend, you shall have your happy innocence back again!

ROSMER. What can you mean?

¹ In the original, REBECCA here addresses ROSMER as "du" for the first time in KROLL'S presence.

REBECCA. I have only to tell you something. That will be enough.

ROSMER. Well!

REBECCA. When I came down here from Finmark—along with Dr. West—it seemed to me that a great, wide new world was opening up before me. The Doctor had taught me all sorts of things—all the fragmentary knowledge of life that I possessed in those days. [*With a struggle and in a scarcely audible voice.*] And then——

KROLL. And then?

ROSMER. But, Rebecca—I know all this.

REBECCA [*mastering herself*]. Yes, yes—you are right. You know enough about this.

KROLL [*looks hard at her*]. Perhaps I had better go.

REBECCA. NO, please stay where you are, my dear Rector. [*To ROSMER.*] Well, you see, this was how it was—I wanted to take my share in the life of the new era that was dawning with all its new ideas.—Rector Kroll told me one day that Ulric Brendel had had great influence over you while you were still a boy. I thought it must surely be possible for me to carry on his work.

ROSMER. YOU came here with a secret design——?

REBECCA. We two, I thought, should march onward in freedom, side by side. Ever onward. Ever farther and farther to the front. But between you and perfect emancipation there rose that dismal, insurmountable barrier.

ROSMER. What barrier do you mean?

REBECCA. I mean this, Rosmer: You could grow into freedom only in the clear, fresh sunshine—and here you were pining, sickening in the gloom of such a marriage.

ROSMER. YOU have never before spoken to me of my marriage in that tone.

REBECCA. No, I did not dare to, for I should have frightened you.

KROLL [*nods to ROSMER*]. Do you hear that?

REBECCA [*goes on*]. But I saw quite well where your deliverance lay—your only deliverance. And then I went to work.

ROSMER. Went to work? In what way?

KROLL. D O you mean that——?

REBECCA. Yes, Rosmer———[*Rises.*] Sit still. You too, Rector Kroll. But now it must out. It was not you, Rosmer. You are innocent. It was / that lured—that ended in luring Beata out into the paths of delusion——

ROSMER [*springs up*]. Rebecca!

KROLL [*rises from the sofa*]. The paths of delusion!

REBECCA. The paths—that led to the mill-race. Now you know it, both of you.

ROSMER [*as if stunned*]. But I don't understand——
What is it she is saying? I don't understand a word——!

KROLL. Oh yes, Rosmer, I am beginning to understand.

ROSMER. But what did you do? What can you possibly have told her? There was nothing—absolutely nothing to tell!

REBECCA. She came to know that you were working yourself free from all the old prejudices.

ROSMER. Yes, but that was not the case at that time.

REBECCA. I knew that it soon would be.

KROLL [*nods to ROSMER*]. Aha!

ROSMER. And then? What more? I must know all now.

REBECCA. Some time after—I begged and implored her to let me go away from Rosmersholm.

ROSMER. Why did you want to go—then?

REBECCA. I did not want to go; I wanted to stay here, where I was. But I told her that it would be best for us all—that I should go away in time. I gave her to understand that if I stayed here any longer, I could not—I could not tell—what might happen.

ROSMER. Then this is what you said and did!

REBECCA. Yes, Rosmer.

ROSMER. T h i s is what you call " going to work."

REBECCA [*in a broken voice*], I called it so, yes.

ROSMER [*after a pause*]. Have you confessed all now, Rebecca?

REBECCA. Yes.

KROLL. Not all.

REBECCA [*looks at him in fear*]. What more should there be?

KROLL. Did you not at last give Beata to understand that it was necessary—not only that it would be wisest, but that it was necessary—both for your own sake and Rosmer's, that you should go away somewhere—as soon as possible? Well?

REBECCA [*low and indistinctly*]. Perhaps I did say something of the sort.

ROSMER [*sinks into the armchair by the window*']. And this tissue of lies and deceit she—my unhappy, sick wife believed in! Believed in it so firmly! So immovably! [*Looks up at REBECCA.*] And she never turned to me. Never said one word to me! Oh, Rebecca—I can see it in your face—you dissuaded her from it!

REBECCA. She had conceived a fixed idea that she, as a childless wife, had no right to be here. And then she imagined that it was her duty to you to efface herself.

ROSMER. And you—you did nothing to disabuse her of the idea?

REBECCA. NO.

KROLL. Perhaps you confirmed her in it? Answer me! Did you not?

REBECCA. I believe she may have understood me so.

ROSMER. Yes, yes—and in everything she bowed before your will. And she did efface herself! [*Springs up.*] How could you—how could you play this ghastly game!

REBECCA. It seemed to me I had to choose between your life and hers, Rosmer.

KROLL [*severely and impressively*]. That choice was not for you to make.

REBECCA [*vehemently*]. You think then that I was cool and calculating and self-possessed all the time! I was not the same woman then that I am now, as I stand here telling it all. Besides, there are two sorts of will in us, I believe! I wanted Beata away, by one means or another; but I never really believed that it would come to pass. As I felt my way forward, at each step I ventured, I seemed to hear something within me cry out: No farther! Not a step farther! And yet I could not stop.

I had to venture the least little bit farther. Only one hair's-breadth more. And then one more—and always one more.—And then it happened.—That is the way such things come about.

[A short silence.]

ROSMER *[to REBECCA]*, What do you think lies before you now? After this?

REBECCA. Things must go with me as they will. It doesn't greatly matter.

KROLL. Not a word of remorse! Is it possible you feel none?

REBECCA *[coldly putting aside his question]*. Excuse me, Rector Kroll—that is a matter which concerns no one but me. I must settle it with myself.

KROLL *[to ROSMER]*. And this is the woman you are living under the same roof with—in the closest intimacy! *[Looks round at the pictures.]* Oh, if those that are gone could see us now!

ROSMER. Are you going back to town?

KROLL *[takes up his hat]*. Yes. The sooner the better.

ROSMER *[does the same]*. Then I will go with you.

KROLL. Will you! Ah yes, I was sure we had not lost you for good.

ROSMER. Come then, Kroll! Come!

[Both go out through the hall without looking at REBECCA.]

[After a moment, REBECCA goes cautiously to the window and looks out through the flowers.]

REBECCA *[speaks to herself under her breath]*. Not over the foot-bridge to-day either. He goes round. Never across the mill-race. Never. *[Leaves the window.]* Well, well, well!

[Goes and pulls the bell-rope; a moment after, MADAM HELSETH enters from the right.]

MADAM HELSETH. What is it, Miss?

REBECCA. Madam Helseth, would you be so good as to have my trunk brought down from the garret?

MADAM HELSETH. Your trunk?

REBECCA. Yes—the brown sealskin trunk, you know.

MADAM HELSETH. Yes, yes. But, Lord preserve us—are you going on a journey, Miss?

REBECCA. Yes—now I am going on a journey, Madam Helseth.

MADAM HELSETH. And immediately!

REBECCA. AS soon as I have packed up.

MADAM HELSETH. Well, I've never heard the like of that! But you'll come back again soon, Miss, of course?

REBECCA. I shall never come back again.

MADAM HELSETH. Never! Dear Lord, what will things be like at Rosmersholm when you're gone, Miss? And the poor Pastor was just beginning to be so happy and comfortable.

REBECCA. Yes, but I have taken fright to-day, Madam Helseth.

MADAM HELSETH. Taken fright! Dear, dear! how was that?

REBECCA. I thought I saw something like a glimpse of white horses.

MADAM HELSETH. White horses! In broad daylight!

REBECCA. Oh, they are abroad early and late—the white horses of Rosmersholm. *[With a change of tone.]* Well—about the trunk, Madam Helseth.

MADAM HELSETH. Yes, yes. The trunk.

[Both go out to the right.]

ACT IV

The sitting-room at Rosmersholm. Late evening. A lighted lamp, with a shade over it, on the table.

REBECCA WEST *stands by the table, packing some small articles in a hand-bag. Her cloak, hat, and the white crocheted shawl are hanging over the back of the sofa.*

[MADAM HELSETH enters from the right.]

MADAM HELSETH *[speaks in a low voice and appears ill at ease].* All your things have been taken down, Miss. They are in the kitchen passage.

REBECCA. Very well. You have ordered the carriage?

MADAM HELSETH. Yes. The coachman wants to know what time he ought to be here.

REBECCA. About eleven o'clock, I think. The steamer starts at midnight.

MADAM HELSETH [*hesitates a little*"]. But the Pastor? If he shouldn't be home by that time?

REBECCA. I shall go all the same. If I don't see him, you can tell him that I will write to him—a long letter. Tell him that.

MADAM HELSETH. Yes, writing—that may be all very well. But, poor Miss West—I do think you should try to speak to him once more.

REBECCA. Perhaps so. And yet—perhaps not.

MADAM HELSETH. Well—that I should live to see this! I never thought of such a thing.

REBECCA. What did you think then, Madam Helseth?

MADAM HELSETH. Well, I certainly thought Pastor Rosmer was a more dependable man than this.

REBECCA. Dependable ?

MADAM HELSETH. Yes, that's what / say.

REBECCA. Why, my dear Madam Helseth, what do you mean?

MADAM HELSETH. I mean what's right and true, Miss. He shouldn't get out of it in this way, that he shouldn't.

REBECCA [*looks at her*]. Come now, Madam Helseth, tell me plainly: what do you think is the reason I am going away ?

MADAM HELSETH. Well, Heaven forgive us, I suppose it can't be helped, Miss. Ah, well, well, well! But I certainly don't think the Pastor's behaving handsomelike. Mortensgard had some excuse; for her husband was alive, so that they two couldn't marry, however much they wanted to. But as for the Pastor—h'm!

REBECCA [*with a faint smile*"]. Could you have believed such a thing of Pastor Rosmer and me ?

MADAM HELSETH. NO, never in this world. At least, I mean—not until to-day.

REBECCA. But to-day, then——?

MADAM HELSETH. Well—after all the horrible things that they tell me the papers are saying about the Pastor——

REBECCA. Aha!

MADAM HELSETH. For the man that can go over to Mortensgard's religion—good Lord, I can believe anything of him.

REBECCA. Oh yes, I suppose so. But what about me? What have you to say about me?

MADAM HELSETH. Lord preserve us, Miss—I don't see that there's much to be said against you. It's not so easy for a lone woman to be always on her guard, that's certain.—We're all of us human, Miss West.

REBECCA. That's very true, Madam Helseth. We are all of us human.—What are you listening to?

MADAM HELSETH [*in a low voice*]. Oh Lord—if I don't believe that's him coming.

REBECCA [*starts*]. After all then——? [*Resolutely.*] Well well; so be it.

[JOHANNES ROSMER *enters from the hall.*

ROSMER [*sees the hand-bag, etc., turns to REBECCA, and asks:*] What does this mean?

REBECCA. I am going.

ROSMER. At once?

REBECCA. Yes. [*To MADAM HELSETH.*] Eleven o'clock then.

MADAM HELSETH. Very well, Miss. [*Goes out to the right.*

ROSMER [*after a short pause*]. Where are you going to, Rebecca?

REBECCA. North, by the steamer.

ROSMER. North? What takes you to the North?

REBECCA. It was there I came from.

ROSMER. But you have no ties there now.

REBECCA. I have none here either.

ROSMER. What do you think of doing?

REBECCA. I don't know. I only want to have done with it all.

ROSMER. TO have done with it?

REBECCA. Rosmersholm has broken me.

ROSMER [*his attention aroused*]. Do you say that?

REBECCA. Broken me utterly and hopelessly.—I had a free and fearless will when I came here. Now I have bent *my* neck under a strange law.—From this day forth, I feel as if I had no courage for anything in the world.

ROSMER. Why not? What is the law that you say you have——?

REBECCA. Dear, don't let us talk of that just now.—What happened between you and the Rector?

ROSMER. We have made peace.

REBECCA. Ah yes; so that was the end.

ROSMER. He gathered all our old friends together at his house. They have made it clear to me that the work of ennobling the minds of men—is not for me.—And besides, it is hopeless in itself, Rebecca.—I shall let it alone.

REBECCA. Yes, yes—perhaps it is best so.

ROSMER. IS that what you say now? Do you think so now?

REBECCA. I have come to think so—in the last few days.

ROSMER. YOU are lying, Rebecca.

REBECCA. Lying——!

ROSMER. Yes, you are lying. You have never believed in me. You have never believed that I was man enough to carry the cause through to victory.

REBECCA. I believed that we two together could do it.

ROSMER. That is not true. You thought that you yourself could do something great in life; and that you could use me to further your ends. I was to be a serviceable instrument to you—t h a t is what you thought.

REBECCA. Listen to me, Rosmer——

ROSMER [*seats himself listlessly on the sofa*]. Oh, what is the use? I see through it all now—I have been like a glove in your hands.

REBECCA. Listen, Rosmer. Hear what I have to say. It will be for the last time. [*Sits in a chair close to the sofa*]. I intended to write you all about it—when I was back in the North. But I daresay it is best that you should hear it at once.

ROSMER. Have you more confessions to make?

REBECCA. The greatest of all is to come.

ROSMER. The greatest?

REBECCA. What you have never suspected. What gives light and shade to all the rest.

ROSMER [*shakes his head*], I don't understand you at all.

REBECCA. It is perfectly true that I once schemed to gain a footing at Rosmersholm. I thought I could not fail to turn things to good account here. In one way or the other—you understand.

ROSMER. Well, you accomplished your ends.

REBECCA. I believe I could have accomplished anything, anything in the world—at that time. For I had still my fearless, free-born will. I knew no scruples—I stood in awe of no human tie.—But then began what has broken my will—and cowed me so pitiably for all my days.

ROSMER. What began? Do not speak in riddles.

REBECCA. It came over me,—this wild, uncontrollable passion———Oh, Rosmer———!

ROSMER. Passion? You———! For what?

REBECCA. For you.

ROSMER [*tries to spring up*]. What is this?

REBECCA [*stops him*]. Sit still, dear; there is more to tell.

ROSMER. And you mean to say—that you have loved me—in that way!

REBECCA. I thought that it should be called love—then. Yes, I thought it was love. But it was not. It was what I said. It was a wild, uncontrollable passion.

ROSMER [*with difficulty*], Rebecca, is it really you—you yourself—that you are speaking of?

REBECCA. Yes, would you believe it, Rosmer?

ROSMER. Then it was because of this—under the influence of this—that you—that you "went to work," as you call it?

REBECCA. It came upon me like a storm on the sea. It was like one of the storms we sometimes have in the North in the winter-time. It seizes you—and whirls you along with it—wherever it will. There is no resisting it.

ROSMER. And so it swept the unhappy Beata into the mill-race.

REBECCA. Yes; for it was a life-and-death struggle between Beata and me at that time.

ROSMER. Assuredly you were the strongest at Rosmersholm. Stronger than Beata and I together.

REBECCA. I judged you rightly in so far that I was sure I could never reach you until you were a free man, both in circumstances—and in spirit.

ROSMER. But I don't understand you, Rebecca. You—yourself—your whole conduct is an insoluble riddle to me. I am free now—both in spirit and in circumstances. You have reached the very goal you aimed at from the first. And yet——

REBECCA. I have never stood farther from my goal than now.

ROSMER. And yet I say—when I asked you yesterday—begged you to be my wife—you cried out, as if in fear, that it could never be.

REBECCA. I cried out in despair, Rosmer.

ROSMER. Why?

REBECCA. Because Rosmersholm has sapped my strength. My old fearless will has had its wings clipped here. It is crippled! The time is past when I had courage for anything in the world. I have lost the power of action, Rosmer.

ROSMER. Tell me how this has come about.

REBECCA. It has come about through my life with you.

ROSMER. But how? How?

REBECCA. When I was left alone with you here—and when you had become yourself again——

ROSMER. Yes, yes?

REBECCA.——for you were never quite yourself so long as Beata lived——

ROSMER. I am afraid you are right there.

REBECCA. But when I found myself sharing your life here—in quiet—in solitude—when you showed me all your thoughts without reserve—every tender and delicate feeling, just as it came to you—then the great change came over me. Little by little, you understand. Almost imperceptibly—but at last with such overwhelming force that it reached the depths of my soul.

ROSMER. Oh, is this true, Rebecca?

REBECCA. All the rest—the horrible sense-intoxicated desire—passed far, far away from me. All the whirling passions settled down into quiet and silence. Rest descended on my soul—a stillness as on one of our northern bird-cliffs under the midnight sun.

ROSMER. Tell me more of this. Tell me all you can.

REBECCA. There is not much more, dear. Only this—it was love that was born in me. The great self-denying love that is content with life, as we two have lived it together.

ROSMER. Oh, if I had only had the faintest suspicion of all this!

REBECCA. It is best as it is. Yesterday—when you asked me if I would be your wife—I cried out with joy——

ROSMER. Yes, did you not, Rebecca! I thought that was the meaning of your cry.

REBECCA. For a moment, yes. I had forgotten myself. It was my old buoyant will that was struggling to be free. But it has no energy left now—no power of endurance.

ROSMER. How do you account for what has happened to you?

REBECCA. It is the Rosmer view of life—or your view of life, at any rate—that has infected my will.

ROSMER. Infected?

REBECCA. And made it sick. Enslaved it to laws that had no power over me before. You—life with you—has ennobled my mind——

ROSMER. Oh that I could believe it!

REBECCA. YOU may safely believe it! The Rosmer view of life ennobles. But———[*Shaking her head.*] But—but——

ROSMER. But——? Well?

REBECCA.———but it kills happiness.

ROSMER. Do you think so, Rebecca?

REBECCA. My happiness, at any rate.

ROSMER. Yes, but are you so certain of that? If I were to ask you again now——? If I were to beg and entreat you——?

REBECCA. Dear—never speak of this again! It is impossible——! For you must know, Rosmer, I have a—a past behind me.

ROSMER. More than what you have told me ?

REBECCA. Yes. Something different and something more.

ROSMER [*with a faint smile*']. Is it not strange, Rebecca? Some such idea has crossed my mind now and then.

REBECCA. It has? And yet——? Even so——?

ROSMER. I never believed it. I only played with it—in my thoughts, you understand.

REBECCA. If you wish it, I will tell you all, at once.

ROSMER [*turning it off*']. No, no! I will not hear a word. Whatever it may be—I can forget it.

REBECCA. But I cannot.

ROSMER. Oh, Rebecca——!

REBECCA. Yes, Rosmer—this is the terrible part of it: that now, when all life's happiness is within my grasp—my heart is changed, and my own past cuts me off from it.

ROSMER. Your past is dead, Rebecca. It has no hold on you any more—it is no part of you—as you are now.

REBECCA. Oh, you know that these are only phrases, dear. And innocence? Where am I to get that from?

ROSMER [*sadly*']. Ah—innocence.

REBECCA. Yes, innocence. That is the source of peace and happiness. That was the vital truth you were to implant in the coming generation of happy noble-men——

ROSMER. Oh, don't remind me of that. It was only an abortive dream, Rebecca—an immature idea, that I myself no longer believe in.—Ah no, we cannot be ennobled from without, Rebecca.

REBECCA [*softly*']. Not even by tranquil love, Rosmer?

ROSMER [*thoughtfully*']. Yes—that would be the great thing—the most glorious in life, almost—if it were so. [*Moves uneasily.*] But how can I be certain of that? How convince myself?

REBECCA. DO you not believe me, Rosmer ?

ROSMER. Oh, Rebecca—how can I believe in you, fully? You who have all this while been cloaking, concealing such a multitude of things!—Now you come forward with something new. If you have a secret purpose in all this, tell me plainly what it is. Is there anything you want to gain by it? You

know that I will gladly do everything I can for you.

REBECCA [*wringing her hands*]. Oh, this killing doubt——!
Rosmer—Rosmer——!

ROSMER. Yes, is it not terrible, Rebecca? But I cannot help it. I shall never be able to shake off the doubt. I can never be absolutely sure that you are mine in pure and perfect love.

REBECCA. IS there nothing in the depths of your own heart that bears witness to the transformation in me? And tells you that it is due to you—and you alone?

ROSMER. Oh, Rebecca—I no longer believe in my power of transforming any one. My faith in myself is utterly dead. I believe neither in myself nor in you.

REBECCA [*looks darkly at him*]. Then how will you be able to live your life?

ROSMER. That I don't know. I cannot imagine how. I don't think I can live it.—And I know of nothing in the world that is worth living for.

REBECCA. Oh, life—life will renew itself. Let us hold fast to it, Rosmer.—We shall leave it soon enough.

ROSMER [*springs up restlessly*]. Then give me my faith again! My faith in you, Rebecca! My faith in your love! Proof! I must have proof!

REBECCA. Proof? How can I give you proof——?

ROSMER. YOU must! [*Walks across the room.*] I cannot bear this desolation—this horrible emptiness—this—this——

[*A loud knock at the hall door.*]

REBECCA [*starts up from her chair*]. Ah—did you hear that?

[*The door opens. ULRIC BRENDEL enters. He has a white shirt on, a black coat and a good pair of boots, with his trousers tucked into them. Otherwise he is dressed as in the first act. He looks excited.*]

ROSMER. Ah, is it you, Mr. Brendel?

BRENDEL. Johannes, my boy—hail—and farewell!

ROSMER. Where are you going so late?

BRENDEL. Downhill.

ROSMER. How——?

BRENDEL. I am going homewards, my beloved pupil. I am home-sick for the mighty Nothingness.

ROSMER. Something has happened to you, Mr. Brendel! What is it?

BRENDEL. SO you observe the transformation? Yes—well you may. When I last set foot in these halls—I stood before you as a man of substance, and slapped my breast-pocket.

ROSMER. Indeed! I don't quite understand——

BRENDEL. But as you see me this night, I am a deposed monarch on the ash-heap that was my palace.

ROSMER. If there is anything I can do for you——

BRENDEL. YOU have preserved your child-like heart, Johannes. Can you grant me a loan?

ROSMER. Yes, yes, most willingly!

BRENDEL. Can you spare me an ideal or two?

ROSMER. What do you say?

BRENDEL. One or two cast-off ideals. It would be an act of charity. For I'm cleaned out, my boy. Ruined, beggared.

REBECCA. Have you not delivered your lecture?

BRENDEL. NO, seductive lady. What do you think? Just as I am standing ready to pour forth the horn of plenty, I make the painful discovery that I am bankrupt.

REBECCA. But all your unwritten works——?

BRENDEL. For five-and-twenty years I have sat like a miser on his double-locked treasure-chest. And then yesterday—when I open it and want to display the treasure—there's none there! The teeth of time had ground it into dust. There was nix and nothing in the whole concern.

ROSMER. But are you so sure of that?

BRENDEL. There's no room for doubt, my dear fellow. The President has convinced me of it.

ROSMER. The President?

BRENDEL. Well, well—His Excellency then. *Ganz nach Belieben.*

ROSMER. Whom do you mean?

BRENDEL. Peter Mortensgard, of course.

ROSMER. What?

BRENDEL [*mysteriously*']. Hush, hush, hush! Peter Mor-

tensgard is the lord and leader of the future. Never have I stood in a more august presence. Peter Mortensgard has the secret of omnipotence. He can do whatever he will.

ROSMER. Oh, don't believe that.

BRENDEL. Yes, my boy! For Peter Mortensgard never wills more than he can do. Peter Mortensgard is capable of living his life without ideals. And that, do you see—that is just the mighty secret of action and of victory. It is the sum of the whole world's wisdom. *Basta!*

ROSMER [*in a low voice*']. Now I understand—why you leave here poorer than you came.

BRENDEL. *Bienf* Then take a *Beispiel* by your ancient teacher. Rub out all that he once imprinted on your mind. Build not thy house on shifting sand. And look ahead—and feel your way—before you build on this exquisite creature, who here lends sweetness to your life.

REBECCA. IS it me you mean?

BRENDEL. Yes, my fascinating mermaid.

REBECCA. Why am I not to be built on?

BRENDEL [*comes a step nearer*']. I gather that my former pupil has a great cause to carry forward to victory.

REBECCA. What then——?

BRENDEL. Victory is assured. But—mark me well—on one indispensable condition.

REBECCA. Which is——?

BRENDEL [*takes her gently by the wrist*]. That the woman who loves him shall gladly go out into the kitchen and hack off her tender, rosy-white little finger—here—just here at the middle joint. Item, that the aforesaid loving woman—again gladly—shall slice off her incomparably-moulded left ear. [*Lets her go, and turns to ROSMER.*] Farewell, my conquering Johannes.

ROSMER. Are you going now? In the dark night?

BRENDEL. The dark night is best. Peace be with you.

[*He goes. There is a short silence in the room.*]

REBECCA [*breathes heavily*]. Oh, how close and sultry it is here!

[*Goes to the window, opens it, and remains standing by it.*]

ROSMER [*sits down in the armchair by the stove*]. There is nothing else for it after all, Rebecca. I see it. You must go away.

REBECCA. Yes, I see no choice.

ROSMER. Let us make the most of our last hour. Come here and sit by me.

REBECCA [*goes and sits on the sofa*]. What do you want to say to me, Rosmer?

ROSMER. First, I want to tell you that you need not feel any anxiety about your future.

REBECCA [*smiles*]. H'm, my future.

ROSMER. I have long ago arranged for everything. Whatever may happen, you are provided for.

REBECCA. That too, my dear one?

ROSMER. YOU might surely have known that.

REBECCA. It is many a long day since I have given a thought to such things.

ROSMER. Yes, yes—you thought things would always remain as they were between us.

REBECCA. Yes, I thought so.

ROSMER. SO did I. But if I were to go——

REBECCA. Oh, Rosmer—you will live longer than I.

ROSMER. Surely my worthless life lies in my own hands.

REBECCA. What is this? You are never thinking of——!

ROSMER. DO you think it would be so strange? After this pitiful, lamentable defeat! I, who was to have borne a great cause on to victory—have I not fled from the battle before it was well begun?

REBECCA. Take up the fight again, Rosmer! Only try—and you shall see, you will conquer. You will ennoble hundreds—thousands of minds. Only try!

ROSMER. Oh, Rebecca—I, who no longer believe in my own mission!

REBECCA. But your mission has stood the test already. You have ennobled one human being at least—me you have ennobled for the rest of my days.

ROSMER. Oh—if I dared believe you.

REBECCA [*pressing her hands together*]. Oh, Rosmer—do

you know of nothing—nothing that could make you believe it?

ROSMER [*starts as if in fear*]. Don't speak of that! Keep away from that, Rebecca! Not a word more.

REBECCA. Yes, this is precisely what we must speak about. Do you know of anything that would kill the doubt? For I know of nothing in the world.

ROSMER. It is well for you that you do not know.—It is well for both of us.

REBECCA. NO, no, no.—I will not be put off in this way! If you know of anything that would absolve me in your eyes, I claim as my right to be told of it.

ROSMER [*as if impelled against his will to speak*]. Then let us see. You say that a great love is in you; that through me your mind has been ennobled. Is it so? Is your reckoning just, Rebecca? Shall we try to prove the sum? Say?

REBECCA. I am ready.

ROSMER. At any time?

REBECCA. Whenever you please. The sooner the better.

ROSMER. Then let me see, Rebecca—if you for my sake—this very evening———[*Breaks off.*] Oh, no, no, no!

REBECCA. Yes, Rosmer! Yes! Tell me, and you shall see.

ROSMER. Have you the courage—have you the will—gladly, as Ulric Brendel said—for my sake, to-night—gladly—to go the same way that Beata went?

REBECCA [*rises slowly from the sofa; almost voiceless*]. Rosmer——!

ROSMER. Yes, Rebecca—that is the question that will for ever haunt me—when you are gone. Every hour in the day it will return upon me. Oh, I seem to see you before my very eyes. You are standing out on the foot-bridge—right in the middle. Now you are bending forward over the railing—drawn dizzily downwards, downwards towards the rushing water! No—you recoil. You have not the heart to do what she dared.

REBECCA. But if I had the heart to do it? And the will to do it gladly? What then?

ROSMER. I should have to believe you then. I should re-

cover my faith in my mission. Faith in my power to ennoble human souls. Faith in the human soul's power to attain nobility.

REBECCA [*takes up her shawl slowly, and puts it over her head; says with composure*]. You shall have your faith again.

ROSMER. Have you the will and the courage—for this, Rebecca?

REBECCA. That you shall see to-morrow—or afterwards—when they find my body.

ROSMER [*puts his hand to his forehead*]. There is a horrible fascination in this——!

REBECCA. For I don't want to remain down there. Not longer than necessary. You must see that they find me.

ROSMER [*springs up*]. But all this—is nothing but madness. Go—or stay! I will take your bare word this time too.

REBECCA. Phrases, Rosmer! Let us have no more cowardly subterfuges, dear! How can you believe me on my bare word after this day?

ROSMER. I shrink from seeing your defeat, Rebecca!

REBECCA. It will be no defeat.

ROSMER. Yes, it will. You will never bring yourself to go Beata's way.

REBECCA. DO you think not?

ROSMER. Never. You are not like Beata. You are not under the dominion of a distorted view of life.

REBECCA. But I am under the dominion of the Rosmersholm view of life—now. What I have sinned—it is fit that I should expiate.

ROSMER [*looks at her fixedly*]. Is that your point of view?

REBECCA. Yes.

ROSMER [*with resolution*]. Well then, I stand firm in our emancipated view of life, Rebecca. There is no judge over us; and therefore we must do justice upon ourselves.

REBECCA [*misunderstanding him*]. Yes, that is true—that too. My going away will save what is best in you.

ROSMER. Oh, there is nothing left to save in me.

REBECCA. Yes, there is. But I—after to-day, I should only be a sea-troll dragging down the ship that is to carry you for-

ward. I must go overboard. Why should I remain here in the world, trailing after me my own crippled life? Why brood and brood over the happiness that my past has forfeited for ever? I must give up the game, Rosmer.

ROSMER. If you go—I go with you.

REBECCA [*smiles almost imperceptibly, looks at him, and says more softly*]. Yes, come with me—and see——

ROSMER. I go with you, I say.

REBECCA. TO the foot-bridge, yes. You know you never dare go out upon it.

ROSMER. Have you noticed that?

REBECCA [*sadly and brokenly*]. Yes.—It was that that made my love hopeless.

ROSMER. Rebecca—now I lay my hand on your head—*[Does so]*—and I wed you as my true wife.

REBECCA [*takes both his hands, and bows her head towards his breast*]. Thanks, Rosmer. [*Lets him go,*] And now I will go—gladly.

ROSMER. Man and wife should go together.

REBECCA. Only to the bridge, Rosmer.

ROSMER. Out on to it too. As far as you go—so far shall I go with you. For now I dare.

REBECCA. Are you absolutely certain—that this way is the best for you?

ROSMER. I am certain that it is the only way.

REBECCA. If you were deceiving yourself? If it were only a delusion? One of those white horses of Rosmersholm.

ROSMER. It may be so. For we can never escape from them—we of this house.

REBECCA. Then stay, Rosmer!

ROSMER. The husband shall go with his wife, as the wife with her husband.

REBECCA. Yes, but first tell me this: Is it you who follow me? Or is it I who follow you?

ROSMER. We shall never think that question out.

REBECCA. But I should like to know.

ROSMER. We go with each other, Rebecca—I with you, and you with me.

REBECCA. I almost think that is the truth.

ROSMER. For now we two are one.

REBECCA. Yes. We are one. Come! We go gladly.

[They go out hand in hand through the hall, and are seen to turn to the left. The door remains open.]

[The room stands empty for a little while. Then the door to the right is opened by MADAM HELSETH.]

MADAM HELSETH. Miss West—the carriage is———*[Looks round.]* Not here? Out together at this time of night? Well—I must say——! H'm! *[Goes out into the hall, looks roundj and comes in again.]* Not on the garden seat. Ah, well well. *[Goes to the window and looks out.]* Oh good God! that white thing t h e r e——! My soul! They're both of them out on the bridge! God forgive the sinful creatures—if they're not in each other's arms! *[Shrieks aloud.]* Oh—down—both of them! Out into the mill-race! Help! Help! *[Her knees tremble; she holds on to the chair-back, shaking all over; she can scarcely get the words out.]* No. No help here.—The dead wife has taken them.

Curtain

HEDDA GABLER
(1890)

TRANSLATED BY
SIR EDMUND GOSSE AND WILLIAM ARCHER

CHARACTERS

GEORGE TESMAN.¹

HEDDA TESMAN, *his wife*.

Miss JULIANA TESMAN, *his aupt.*

MRS. ELVSTED.

JUDGE² BRACK.

EILERT LOVBORG.

BERTA, *servant at the Tesmans* .

*The scene of the action is TESMAN'S villa in the west end of
Ghristiania.*

¹ Tesman, whose Christian name in the original is "Jorgen," is described as "stipendiat i kulturt historie V—that is to say, the holder of a scholarship for purposes of research in the History of Civilisation.

² In the original "Assessor.

H E D D A G A B L E R

I N T R O D U C T I O N

After writing *Rosmersholm*, Ibsen had published *The Lady from the Sea* in 1888, and the summer of 1889 he spent in Gossensass. His winter had been full of business, and in March he had seen successful productions of *The Lady from the Sea* in Berlin and Weimar. Ibsen, now a man of sixty, had undergone a process of rejuvenation through his romantic affection for the Danish actress Engelcke Friis during the summer of 1887, and in Gossensass he found new objects for his affections. First was the young painter Helene Raff, to whom he wrote later: "If only I had a dear, loving daughter like you." But the girl who finally absorbed his attention was a young Viennese, Emilie Bardach, whom he singled out one day in the dining-room. He took her for walks, sat with her spooning on a bench in the Pferschtal, had tender conversations with her in a window-seat of the hotel veranda, and became carried away with the dazzling youth and cruel virility of her personality. "*An die Matsonne eines Septemberlebens*" (To the May sun of a September life), he wrote on a photograph he sent to her, and in recalling their conversations he said: "A new work is beginning to dawn in my mind. I will finish it this winter, and try to transfer the joyful summer atmosphere to it." But he added regretfully: "I feel, however, it is going to end sadly."

A week later he wrote: "I would like now to work, but I cannot. . . . I don't want to either. . . . For the time being it is impossible to reconstitute it all in poetic form." But later he explained (October 29th, 1889): "Do not be dejected because I am unable to write for the time being. In reality I am, however, always continuously composing, or anyhow I am dreaming of something which, when it has once ripened, will burst from its chrysalis into poetry." On November 19th he

wrote that he was eagerly occupied with his new play, and two weeks later he wrote to Emilie and spoke of her as Solness the Master Builder later did of Hilda: "I got to know you as a fair summer vision, my dear princess."

Then it seems that Ibsen became alarmed at the emotional sincerity of Emilie's affection. He began to damp it down by frequent allusions to his wife's affection for her and sent regards to her mother. In February 1890 he wrote: "I feel it as a matter of conscience to end my correspondence with you, and anyhow to restrict it." The final break came when she sent him a photograph of herself bedizened with jewels in a very extensive décolleté. He flew into a rage, hurled the photograph on the floor, and told his wife to tear it up and throw it in the waste-paper basket. He wrote again in September alluding to his work on the new play, and the end of his correspondence came on December 30th, 1890, when he wrote: "But I beg you not to write to me any more for the present. I will let you know if circumstances have altered. I will soon send you my new play. Accept it in kindness—but in silence." Eight years later he wrote to her once more to thank her for her good wishes on his seventieth birthday, and said: "The summer in Gossensass was the happiest and loveliest in all my life. I scarcely dare to think of it—and yet I always must—always." There is no doubt of the importance of Emilie Bardach's inspiration of *Hedda Gabler*, though the play reflects a bitterness which is not to be found in the figure of Hilda in *The Master Builder* in which Emilie is personified. After reading Brandes' essay on Goethe's love for Marianne von Willemer five years later, Ibsen wrote: "I have never been able to understand anyone falling in love with an unmarried man. One has not then the pleasure of winning him from somebody else." This side of Emilie's character is reflected in the early notes on *Hedda Gabler*, and memories of Gossensass were so close to him at the time that we find Hedda showing Lovborg a photograph of the village in her album, though this is changed in the play to a village "below the Brenner Pass."

Ibsen took a long time to settle down to writing the first draft of *Hedda Gabler*. The work to which he alluded in

November 1889 must have been the first stray jottings. The earliest date on the first draft is August 13th, 1890 (at the beginning of Act II), and the draft was not finished till October 7th. He began work on the final MS. the same month, the first act being finished on the 22nd, though the fourth was not begun till November 11th. The play was not finally published till December 16th.

A study of Ibsen's notes shows us how he carefully concentrated the action into the shortest possible space of time (he shortened it by one day), and situated it in one room by the elimination of a garden setting in the second act. With approaching old age, we find Ibsen now making much more use of notebooks to refresh his memory before writing. Ibsen was now beginning to write more for the reader than for the theatre audience, and the older he grew, the less he liked the interpolation of the actor and the stage between his plays and his public. The result was a much more detailed description of the physical characteristics of his personalities and of the stage settings. Not every actress can, for instance, conform to Hedda's "steel-grey eyes" nor to Thea's "pale-blue eyes, somewhat protruding." The dialogue is also trimmed with the greatest care, and considerable use is made of innuendoes to replace direct statements. By contrast to the draft, the finished play never mentions Hedda's pregnancy directly, though we are able to sense it long before Tesman's gleeful exclamation of pride when he realises what is in store and determines to confide it to Berta and Aunt Julia who knew of it already. In the notes and draft we can see the gradual formation of the characters, Brack reaching a certain stage of worldly refinement from having been originally a loud-mouthed free-thinker, and the growing contrast between the well-bred, intelligent, and prejudiced Hedda and the meek Thea, who is originally described as "a representative of" the conventional, sentimental, hysterical middle-class. In Tesman Ibsen portrayed a pedantic critic he had known in Munich, and with wry self-irony he gives him some of his own character, which with the contrast of the debauched Loyborg resolves itself into the conflict which Ibsen continually felt in himself between the claims of life and art, of the past and of the

present and future. For Lovborg Ibsen had numerous models. One was a young author from whom Ibsen one day received a packet of love letters and the portrait of a young lady. It transpired that in his absent-mindedness he had sent the young lady a manuscript intended for Ibsen, while the letters and portrait were to be returned to her. There was another Danish lady who burnt the manuscript of her husband's symphony because he came home late one night, and a talented young Norwegian who had just been cured of dipsomania when his wife rolled a barrel of brandy into his room on his birthday. Another living character was the Dane Julius Hoffory, who had been his great supporter in Germany, and whom Ibsen was trying at the time to help out of a mental and physical breakdown after an unhappy love affair. Lovborg, one of Ibsen's best debauched intellectuals, passes through several stages of development before reaching the play itself, beginning like E. L., the unsuccessful poet and photographer of the early notes on *The Wild Duck*, and as a successor to Brendel of *Rosmersholm*, acting as an evangelist of new values and ideals, till his didactic tendencies are eliminated and he becomes a creature of flesh, blood, and alcohol.

Hedda Gabler shook women's faith in Ibsen as their champion. She was the first woman egoist he had portrayed, frigid, conventional, intelligent, and sensitive, more male than female in many ways. "She as a personality is more to be conceived as her father's daughter than her husband's wife," Ibsen wrote later to his French translator, Count Prozor. In one of his notes Ibsen wrote: "Fundamentally there is great poetry in Hedda's soul. But those about her frighten her. Think of making oneself ridiculous." "Life is not tragic—it is ridiculous—and that is what cannot be borne." Tesman is ridiculous, Hedda's marriage and honeymoon are ridiculous, and her pregnancy becomes the height of ridicule. The influence of her father's severe upbringing paralyses her power of choice in life, she moves in society but is bored with it, and following the formula that two men are less than one, she marries Tesman, but "her imagination is with Eilert Lovborg" (Ibsen's note). Her failure to transgress convention and face ridicule renders

her incapable of making an adult choice iff life, and she finally avoids the issue altogether by suicid The play came as a dialectical contrast to *The Lady from the Sea*, where Eliida makes the choice between illusion and reality. Hedda, haunted by the ghosts of her father and her conventional upbringing, is the complete contrast to Hilda in *The Master Builder*, who has the same love of domination, but is young and vigorous and unhampered by the past.

p. F. D. T.

HEDDA GABLER

A PLAY IN FOUR ACTS

ACT I

A spacious, handsome, and tastefully furnished drawing-room, decorated in dark colours. In the back, a wide doorway with curtains drawn back, leading into a smaller room decorated in the same style as the drawing-room. In the right-hand wall of the front room, a folding door leading out to the hall. In the opposite wall, on the left, a glass door, also with curtains drawn back. Through the panes can be seen part of a veranda outside, and trees covered with autumn foliage. An oval table, with a cover on it, and surrounded by chairs, stands well forward. In front, by the wall on the right, a wide stove of dark porcelain, a high-backed armchair, a cushioned foot-rest, and two footstools. A settee, with a small round table in front of it, fills the upper right-hand corner. In front, on the left, a little way from the wall, a sofa. Farther back than the glass door, a piano. On either side of the doorway at the back a whatnot with terra-cotta and majolica ornaments.—Against the back wall of the inner room a sofa, with a table, and one or two chairs. Over the sofa hangs a portrait of a handsome elderly man in a General's uniform. Over the table a hanging lamp, with an opal glass shade.—A number of bouquets are arranged about the drawing-room, in

vases and glasses. Others lie upon the tables. The floors in both rooms are covered with thick carpets.—Morning light. The sun shines in through the glass door.

MISS JULIANA TESMAN, with her bonnet on and carrying a parasol, comes in from the hall, followed by **BERTA**, who carries a bouquet wrapped in paper. *Miss TESMAN is a comely and pleasant-looking lady of about sixty-five. She is nicely but simply dressed in a grey walking-costume. BERTA is a middle-aged woman of plain and rather countrified appearance.*

MISS TESMAN [*stops close to the door, listens, and says softly:*] Upon my word, I don't believe they are stirring yet!

BERTA [*also softly*]. I told you so, Miss. Remember how late the steamboat got in last night. And then, when they got home?—good Lord, what a lot the young mistress had to unpack before she could get to bed.

MISS TESMAN. Well, well—let them have their sleep out. But let us see that they get a good breath of the fresh morning air when they do appear.

[She goes to the glass door and throws it open.

BERTA [*beside the table, at a loss what to do with the bouquet in her hand*]. I declare there isn't a bit of room left. I think I'll put it down here, Miss. *[She places it on the piano.*

MISS TESMAN. So you've got a new mistress now, my dear Berta. Heaven knows it was a wrench to me to part with you.

BERTA [*on the point of weeping*]. And do you think it wasn't hard for me too, Miss? After all the blessed years I've been with you and Miss Rina.¹

MISS TESMAN. We must make the best of it, Berta. There was nothing else to be done. George can't do without you, you see—he absolutely can't. He has had you to look after him ever since he was a little boy.

BERTA. Ah but, Miss Julia, I can't help thinking of Miss Rina lying helpless at home there, poor thing. And with only that new girl too! She'll never learn to take proper care of an invalid.

¹ Pronounce *Reena*.

MISS TESMAN. Oh, I shall manage to train her. And of course, you know, I shall take most of it upon myself. You needn't be uneasy about my poor sister, my dear Berta.

BERTA. Well, but there's another thing, Miss. I'm so mortally afraid I shan't be able to suit the young mistress.

MISS TESMAN. Oh well—just at first there may be one or two things——

BERTA. Most like she'll be terrible grand in her ways.

MISS TESMAN. Well, you can't wonder at that—General Gabler's daughter! Think of the sort of life she was accustomed to in her father's time. Don't you remember how we used to see her riding down the road along with the General? In that long black habit—and with feathers in her hat?

BERTA. Yes indeed—I remember well enough!—But, good Lord, I should never have dreamt in those days that she and Master George would make a match of it.

MISS TESMAN. Nor I.—But by-the-by, Berta—while I think of it: in future you mustn't say Master George. You must say Dr. Tesman.

BERTA. Yes, the young mistress spoke of that too—last night—the moment they set foot in the house. Is it true then, Miss?

MISS TESMAN. Yes, indeed it is. Only think, Berta—some foreign university has made him a doctor—while he has been abroad, you understand. I hadn't heard a word about it, until he told me himself upon the pier.

BERTA. Well, well, he's clever enough for anything, he is. But I didn't think he'd have gone in for doctoring people too.

MISS TESMAN. No, no, it's not that sort of doctor he is. [*Nods significantly.*] But let me tell you, we may have to call him something still grander before long.

BERTA. You don't say so! What can that be, Miss?

MISS TESMAN [*smiling*], H'm—wouldn't you like to know I [*With emotion.*] Ah, dear dear—if my poor brother could only look up from his grave now, and see what his little boy has grown into! [*Looks around.*] But bless me, Berta—why have you done this? Taken the chintz covers off all the furniture?

BERTA. The mistress told me to. She can't abide covers on the chairs, she says.

Miss TESMAN. Are they going to make this their everyday sitting-room then?

BERTA. Yes, that's what I understood—from the mistress. Master George—the doctor—he said nothing.

[GEORGE TESMAN comes from the right into the inner room, humming to himself, and carrying an unstrapped empty portmanteau. He is a middle-sized, young-looking man of thirty-three, rather stout, with a round, open, cheerful face, fair hair, and beard. He wears spectacles, and is somewhat carelessly dressed in comfortable indoor clothes.]

MISS TESMAN. Good morning, good morning, George.

TESMAN [*in the doorway between the rooms*]. Aunt Julia! Dear Aunt Julia! [*Goes up to her and shakes hands warmly.*] Come all this way—so early! Eh?

Miss TESMAN. Why, of course I had to come and see how you were getting on.

TESMAN. In spite of your having had no proper night's rest?

Miss TESMAN. Oh, that makes no difference to me.

TESMAN. Well, I suppose you got home all right from the pier? Eh?

Miss TESMAN. Yes, quite safely, thank goodness. Judge Brack was good enough to see me right to my door.

TESMAN. We were so sorry we couldn't give you a seat in the carriage. But you saw what a pile of boxes Hedda had to bring with her.

Miss TESMAN. Yes, she had certainly plenty of boxes.

BERTA [*to TESMAN*]. Shall I go in and see if there's anything I can do for the mistress?

TESMAN. No thank you, Berta—you needn't. She said she would ring if she wanted anything.

BERTA [*going towards the right*]. Very well.

TESMAN. But look here—take this portmanteau with you.

BERTA [*taking it*]. I'll put it in the attic.

[*She goes out by the hall door.*]

TESMAN. Fancy, Auntie—I had the whole of that portmanteau chock full of copies of documents. You wouldn't

believe how much I have picked up from all the archives I have been examining—curious old details that no one has had any idea of——

Miss TESMAN. Yes, you don't seem to have wasted your time on your wedding trip, George.

TESMAN. NO, that I haven't. But do take off your bonnet, Auntie. Look here! Let me untie the strings—eh?

Miss TESMAN [*while he does so*]. Well, well—this is just as if you were still at home with us.

TESMAN [*with the bonnet in his hand, looks at it from all sides*]. Why, what a gorgeous bonnet you've been investing in!

Miss TESMAN. I bought it on Hedda's account.

TESMAN. On Hedda's account? Eh?

Miss TESMAN. Yes, so that Hedda needn't be ashamed of me if we happened to go out together.

TESMAN [*patting her cheek*]. You always think of everything, Aunt Julia. [*Lays the bonnet on a chair beside the table.*] And now, look here—suppose we sit comfortably on the sofa and have a little chat, till Hedda comes.

[They seat themselves. She places her parasol in the corner of the sofa.]

Miss TESMAN [*takes both his hands and looks at him*]. What a delight it is to have you again, as large as life, before my very eyes, George! My George—my poor brother's own boy!

TESMAN. And it's a delight for me, too, to see you again, Aunt Julia! You, who have been father and mother in one to me.

Miss TESMAN. Oh yes, I know you will always keep a place in your heart for your old aunts.

TESMAN. And what about Aunt Rina? No improvement—eh?

MISS TESMAN. Oh no—we can scarcely look for any improvement in her case, poor thing. There she lies, helpless, as she has lain for all these years. But heaven grant I may not lose her yet awhile. For if I did, I don't know what I should make of my life, George—especially now that I haven't you to look after any more.

TESMAN [*patting her back*]. There there there——!

Miss TESMAN [*suddenly changing her tone*]. And to think that here are you a married man, George!—And that you should be the one to carry off Hedda Gabler—the beautiful Hedda Gabler! Only think of it—she, that was so beset with admirers!

TESMAN [*hums a little and smiles complacently*]. Yes, I fancy I have several good friends about town who would like to stand in my shoes—eh?

Miss TESMAN. And then this fine long wedding-tour you have had! More than five—nearly six months——

TESMAN. Well, for me it has been a sort of tour of research as well. I have had to do so much grubbing among old records—and to read no end of books too, Auntie.

MISS TESMAN. Oh yes, I suppose so. [*More confidentially, and lowering her voice a little.*] But listen now, George—have you nothing—nothing special to tell me?

TESMAN. AS to our journey?

MISS TESMAN. Yes.

TESMAN. NO, I don't know of anything except what I have told you in my letters. I had a doctor's degree conferred on me—but that I told you yesterday.

MISS TESMAN. Yes, yes, you did. But what I mean is—haven't you any—any—expectations——?

TESMAN. Expectations?

Miss TESMAN. Why, you know, George—I'm your old auntie!

TESMAN. Why, of course I have expectations.

Miss TESMAN. Ah!

TESMAN. I have every expectation of being a professor one of these days.

MISS TESMAN. Oh yes, a professor——

TESMAN. Indeed, I may say I am certain of it. But my dear Auntie—you know all about that already!

MISS TESMAN [*laughing to herself*]. Yes, of course I do. You are quite right there. [*Changing the subject.*] But we were talking about your journey. It must have cost a great deal of money, George?

TESMAN. Well, you see—my handsome travelling-scholarship went a good way.

Miss TESMAN. But I can't understand how you can have made it go far enough for two.

TESMAN. NO, that's not so easy to understand—eh?

Miss TESMAN. And especially travelling with a lady—they tell me that makes it ever so much more expensive.

TESMAN. Yes, of course—it makes it a little more expensive. But Hedda had to have this trip, Auntie! She really had to. Nothing else would have done.

Miss TESMAN. NO, no, I suppose not. A wedding-tour seems to be quite indispensable nowadays.—But tell me now—have you gone thoroughly over the house yet?

TESMAN. Yes, you may be sure I have. I have been afoot ever since daylight.

Miss TESMAN. And what do you think of it all?

TESMAN. I'm delighted! Quite delighted! Only I can't think what we are to do with the two empty rooms between this inner parlour and Hedda's bedroom.

Miss TESMAN [*laughing*']. Oh, my dear George, I daresay you may find some use for them—in the course of time.

TESMAN. Why, of course you are quite right, Aunt Julia! You mean as my library increases—eh?

MISS TESMAN. Yes, quite so, my dear boy. It was your library I was thinking of.

TESMAN. I am specially pleased on Hedda's account. Often and often, before we were engaged, she said that she would never care to live anywhere but in Secretary Falk's villa.¹

Miss TESMAN. Yes, it was lucky that this very house should come into the market, just after you had started.

TESMAN. Yes, Aunt Julia, the luck was on our side, wasn't it—eh?

MISS TESMAN. But the expense, my dear George. You will find it very expensive, all this.

TESMAN [*looks at her, a little cast down*]. Yes, I suppose I shall, Aunt!

¹In the original, "Statsradinde Falks villa"—showing that it had belonged to the widow of a cabinet minister.

Miss TESMAN. Oh, frightfully!

TESMAN. HOW much do you think? In round numbers?—Eh?

Miss TESMAN. Oh, I can't even guess until all the accounts come in.

TESMAN. Well, fortunately, Judge Brack has secured the most favourable terms for me—so he said in a letter to Hedda.

Miss TESMAN. Yes, don't be uneasy, my dear boy.—Besides, I have given security for the furniture and all the carpets.

TESMAN. Security? You? My dear Aunt Julia—what sort of security could you give?

Miss TESMAN. I have given a mortgage on our annuity.

TESMAN [*jumps up*]. What! On your—and Aunt Rina's annuity!

Miss TESMAN. Yes, I knew of no other plan, you see.

TESMAN [*placing himself before her*]. Have you gone out of your senses, Auntie! Your annuity—it's all that you and Aunt Rina have to live upon.

Miss TESMAN. Well, well—don't get so excited about it. It's only a matter of form you know—Judge Brack assured me of that. It was he that was kind enough to arrange the whole affair for me. A mere matter of form, he said.

TESMAN. Yes, that may be all very well. But nevertheless——

Miss TESMAN. You will have your own salary to depend upon now. And, good heavens, even if we did have to pay up a little——! To eke things out a bit at the start——! Why, it would be nothing but a pleasure to us.

TESMAN. Oh, Auntie—will you never be tired of making sacrifices for me!

Miss TESMAN [*rises and lays her hand on his shoulders*]. Have I any other happiness in this world except to smooth your way for you, my dear boy? You, who have had neither father nor mother to depend on. And now we have reached the goal, George! Things have looked black enough for us, sometimes; but, thank heaven, now you have nothing to fear.

TESMAN. Yes, it is really marvellous how everything has turned out for the best.

Miss TESMAN. And the people who opposed you—who wanted to bar the way for you—now you have them at your feet. They have fallen, George. Your most dangerous rival—his fall was the worst.—And now he has to lie on the bed he has made for himself—poor misguided creature.

TESMAN. Have you heard anything of Eilert? Since I went away, I mean.

Miss TESMAN. Only that he is said to have published a new book.

TESMAN. What! Eilert Lovborg! Recently—eh?

MISS TESMAN. Yes, so they say. Heaven knows whether it can be worth anything! Ah, when your new book appears—that will be another story, George! What is it to be about?

TESMAN. It will deal with the domestic industries of Brabant during the Middle Ages.

MISS TESMAN. Fancy—to be able to write on such a subject as that!

TESMAN. However, it may be some time before the book is ready. I have all these collections to arrange first, you see.

MISS TESMAN. Yes, collecting and arranging—no one can beat you at that. There you are my poor brother's own son.

TESMAN. I am looking forward eagerly to setting to work at it; especially now that I have my own delightful home to work in.

MISS TESMAN. And, most of all, now that you have got the wife of your heart, my dear George.

TESMAN [*embracing her*]. Oh yes, yes, Aunt Julia! Hedda—she is the best part of it all! [*Looks towards the doorway*] I believe I hear her coming—eh?

[*HEDDA enters from the left through the inner room. She is a woman of nine-and-twenty. Her face and figure show refinement and distinction. Her complexion is pale and opaque. Her steel-grey eyes express a cold, unruffled repose. Her hair is of an agreeable medium brown, but not particularly abundant. She is dressed in a tasteful, somewhat loose-fitting morning gown.*]

MISS TESMAN [*going to meet HEDDA*]. Good morning, my dear Hedda! Good morning, and a hearty welcome!

HEDDA [*holds out her hand*]. Good morning, dear Miss Tesman! So early a call! That is kind of you.

MISS TESMAN [*with some embarrassment*]. Well—has the bride slept well in her new home?

HEDDA. Oh yes, thanks. Passably.

TESMAN [*laughing*]. Passably! Come, that's good, Hedda! You were sleeping like a stone when I got up.

HEDDA. Fortunately. Of course one has always to accustom one's self to new surroundings, Miss Tesman—little by little. [*Looking towards the left.*] Oh—there the servant has gone and opened the veranda door, and let in a whole flood of sunshine.

MISS TESMAN [*going towards the door*]. Well, then we will shut it.

HEDDA. No no, not that! Tesman, please draw the curtains. That will give a softer light.

TESMAN [*at the door*]. All right—all right.—There now, Hedda, now you have both shade and fresh air.

HEDDA. Yes, fresh air we certainly must have, with all these stacks of flowers—But—won't you sit down, Miss Tesman?

MISS TESMAN. NO, thank you. Now that I have seen that everything is all right here—thank heaven!—I must be getting home again. My sister is lying longing for me, poor thing.

TESMAN. Give her my very best love, Auntie; and say I shall look in and see her later in the day.

MISS TESMAN. Yes, yes, I'll be sure to tell her. But by-the-by, George—[*feeling in her dress pocket*]—I had almost forgotten—I have something for you here.

TESMAN. What is it, Auntie? Eh?

MISS TESMAN [*produces a fiat parcel wrapped in newspaper and hands it to him*]. Look here, my dear boy.

TESMAN [*opening the parcel*]. Well, I declare!—Have you really saved them for me, Aunt Julia! Hedda! isn't this touching—eh?

HEDDA [*beside the whatnot on the right*]. Well, what is it?

TESMAN. My old morning shoes I My slippers.

HEDDA. Indeed. I remember you often spoke of them while we were abroad.

TESMAN. Yes, I missed them terribly. [*Goes up to her.*] Now you shall see them, Hedda!

HEDDA [*going towards the stove*]. Thanks, I really don't care about it.

TESMAN [*following her*]. Only think—ill as she was, Aunt Rina embroidered these for me. Oh, you can't think how many associations cling to them.

HEDDA [*at the table*]. Scarcely for me.

MISS TESMAN. Of course not for Hedda, George.

TESMAN. Well, but now that she belongs to the family, I thought——

HEDDA [*interrupting*]. We shall never get on with this servant, Tesman,

MISS TESMAN. Not get on with Berta ?

TESMAN. Why, dear, what puts that in your head? Eh?

HEDDA [*pointing*]. Look there! She has left her old bonnet lying about on a chair.

TESMAN [*in consternation, drops the slippers on the floor*]. Why, Hedda——

HEDDA. Just fancy, if any one should come in and see it!

TESMAN. But, Hedda—that's Aunt Julia's bonnet.

HEDDA. IS it!

MISS TESMAN [*taking up the bonnet*]. Yes, indeed it's mine. And, what's more, it's not old, Madam Hedda.

HEDDA. I really did not look closely at it, Miss Tesman.

MISS TESMAN [*trying on the bonnet*]. Let me tell you it's the first time I have worn it—the very first time.

TESMAN. And a very nice bonnet it is too—quite a beauty!

MISS TESMAN. Oh, it's no such great thing, George. [*Looks around her,*] My parasol——? Ah, here. [*Takes it,*] For this is mine too—[*mutters*]—not Berta's.

TESMAN. A new bonnet and a new parasol! Only think, Hedda!

HEDDA. Very handsome indeed.

TESMAN. Yes, isn't it? Eh? But Auntie, take a good look at Hedda before you go! See how handsome she is!

Miss TESMAN. Oh, my dear boy, there's nothing new in that. Hedda was always lovely.

[She nods and goes towards the right.]

TESMAN *[following]*. Yes, but have you noticed what splendid condition she is in? How she has filled out on the journey?

HEDDA *[crossing the room]*. Oh, do be quiet——!

Miss TESMAN *[who has stopped and turned]*. Filled out?

TESMAN. Of course you don't notice it so much now that she has that dress on. But I, who can see——

HEDDA *[at the glass door, impatiently]*. Oh, you can't see anything.

TESMAN. It must be the mountain air in the Tyrol——

HEDDA *[curtly, interrupting]*, I am exactly as I was when I started.

TESMAN. SO you insist; but I'm quite certain you are not. Don't you agree with me, Auntie?

Miss TESMAN *[who has been gazing at her with folded hands]*, Hedda is lovely—lovely—lovely. *[Goes up to her, takes her head between both hands, draws it downwards, and kisses her hair,]* God bless and preserve Hedda Tesman—for George's sake.

HEDDA *[gently freeing herself]*. Oh——! Let me go.

Miss TESMAN *[in quiet emotion]*, I shall not let a day pass without coming to see you.

TESMAN. NO, you won't, will you, Auntie? Eh?

Miss TESMAN. Good-bye—good-bye!

[She goes out by the hall door. TESMAN accompanies her.]

The door remains half open. TESMAN can be heard repeating his message to Aunt Rina and his thanks for the slippers.

[In the meantime, HEDDA walks about the room, raising her arms and clenching her hands as if in desperation.]

Then she flings back the curtains from the glass door, and stands there looking out.

[Presently TESMAN returns and closes the door behind him.]

TESMAN [*picks up the slippers from the floor*]. What are you looking at, Hedda?

HEDDA [*once more calm and mistress of herself*]. I am only looking at the leaves. They are so yellow—so withered.

TESMAN [*wraps up the slippers and lays them on the table*]. Well, you see, we are well into September now.

HEDDA [*again restless*]. Yes, to think of it!—Already in—in September.

TESMAN. Don't you think Aunt Julia's manner was strange, dear? Almost solemn? Can you imagine what was the matter with her? Eh?

HEDDA. I scarcely know her, you see. Is she not often like that?

TESMAN. NO, not as she was to-day.

HEDDA [*leaving the glass door*]. Do you think she was annoyed about the bonnet?

TESMAN. Oh, scarcely at all. Perhaps a little, just at the moment——

HEDDA. But what an idea, to pitch her bonnet about in the drawing-room! No one does that sort of thing.

TESMAN. Well, you may be sure Aunt Julia won't do it again.

HEDDA. In any case, I shall manage to make my peace with her.

TESMAN. Yes, my dear, good Hedda, if you only would.

HEDDA. When you call this afternoon, you might invite her to spend the evening here.

TESMAN. Yes, that I will. And there's one thing more you could do that would delight her heart.

HEDDA. What is it?

TESMAN. If you could only prevail on yourself to say *du* to her. For my sake, Hedda? Eh?

HEDDA. No, no, Tesman—you really mustn't ask that of me. I have told you so already. I shall try to call her "Aunt"; and you must be satisfied with that.

^{1DU} = thou; Tesman means, "If you could persuade yourself to *tutoyer* her."

TESMAN. Well well. Only I think now that you belong to the family, you——

HEDDA. H'm—I can't in the least see why——

[She goes up towards the middle doorway.]

TESMAN *[after a pause]*. Is there anything the matter with you, Hedda? Eh?

HEDDA. I'm only looking at my old piano. It doesn't go at all well with all the other things.

TESMAN. The first time I draw my salary, we'll see about exchanging it.

HEDDA. NO, no—no exchanging. I don't want to part with it. Suppose we put it there in the inner room, and then get another here in its place. When it's convenient, I mean.

TESMAN *[a little taken aback]*. Yes—of course we could do that.

HEDDA *[takes up the bouquet from the piano]*. These flowers were not here last night when we arrived.

TESMAN. Aunt Julia must have brought them for you.

HEDDA *[examining the bouquet]*. A visiting-card. *[Takes it out and reads.]* " Shall return later in the day." Can you guess whose card it is?

TESMAN. NO. Whose? Eh?

HEDDA. The name is " Mrs. Elvsted."

TESMAN. Is it really? Sheriff Elvsted's wife, Miss Rysing that was.

HEDDA. Exactly. The girl with the irritating hair, that she was always showing off. An old flame of yours, I've been told.

TESMAN *[laughing]*. Oh, that didn't last long; and it was before I knew you, Hedda. But fancy her being in town!

HEDDA. It's odd that she should call upon us. I have scarcely seen her since we left school.

TESMAN. I haven't seen her either for—heaven knows how long. I wonder how she can endure to live in such an out-of-the-way hole—eh?

HEDDA *[after a moment's thought, says suddenly]*. Tell me, Tesman—isn't it somewhere near there that he—that—Eilert Lovborg is living?

TESMAN. Yes, he is somewhere in that part of the country.

[BERTA enters by the hall door.

BERTA. That lady, ma'am, that brought some flowers a little while ago, is here again. [Pointing,] The flowers you have in your hand, ma'am.

HEDDA. Ah, is she? Well, please show her in.

[BERTA opens the door for MRS. ELVSTED, and goes out herself,—MRS. ELVSTED is a woman of fragile figure, with pretty, soft features. Her eyes are light blue, large, round, and somewhat prominent, with a startled, inquiring expression. Her hair is remarkably light, almost flaxen, and unusually abundant and wavy. She is a couple of years younger than HEDDA. She wears a dark visiting dress, tasteful, but not quite in the latest fashion,

HEDDA [receives her warmly]. How do you do, my dear Mrs. Elvsted? It's delightful to see you again.

MRS. ELVSTED [nervously, struggling for self-control]. Yes, it's a very long time since we met.

TESMAN [gives her his hand]. And we too—eh?

HEDDA. Thanks for your lovely flowers——

MRS. ELVSTED. Oh, not at all——I would have come straight here yesterday afternoon; but I heard that you were away——

TESMAN. Have you just come to town? Eh?

MRS. ELVSTED. I arrived yesterday, about midday. Oh, I was quite in despair when I heard that you were not at home.

HEDDA. In despair! How so?

TESMAN. Why, my dear Mrs. Rysing—I mean Mrs. Elvsted——

HEDDA. I hope that you are not in any trouble?

MRS. ELVSTED. Yes, I am. And I don't know another living creature here that I can turn to.

HEDDA [laying the bouquet on the table]. Come—let us sit here on the sofa——

MRS. ELVSTED. Oh, I am too restless to sit down.

HEDDA. Oh no, you're not. Come here.

[She draws MRS. ELVSTED down upon the sofa and sits at her side.

TESMAN. Well? What is it, Mrs. Elvsted——?

HEDDA. Has anything particular happened to you at home?

MRS. ELVSTED. Yes—and no. Oh—I am so anxious you should not misunderstand me——

HEDDA. Then your best plan is to tell us the whole story, Mrs. Elvsted.

TESMAN. I suppose that's what you have come for—eh?

MRS. ELVSTED. Yes, yes—of course it is. Well, then, I must tell you—if you don't already know—that Eilert Lovborg[^] is in town, too.

HEDDA. Lovborg——!

TESMAN. What! Has Eilert Lovborg come back? Fancy that, Hedda!

HEDDA. Well, well—I hear it.

MRS. ELVSTED. He has been here a week already. Just fancy—a whole week! In this terrible town, alone! With so many temptations on all sides.

HEDDA. But, my dear Mrs. Elvsted—how does he concern you so much?

MRS. ELVSTED [*looks at her with a startled air, and says rapidly*]. He was the children's tutor.

HEDDA. Your children's?

MRS. ELVSTED. My husband's. I have none.

HEDDA. Your step-children's, then?

MRS. ELVSTED. Yes.

TESMAN [*somewhat hesitatingly*]. Then was he—I don't know how to express it—was he—regular enough in his habits to be fit for the post? Eh?

MRS. ELVSTED. For the last two years his conduct has been irreproachable.

TESMAN. Has it indeed? Fancy that, Hedda!

HEDDA. I hear it.

MRS. ELVSTED. Perfectly irreproachable, I assure you! In every respect. But all the same—now that I know he is here—in this great town—and with a large sum of money in his hands—I can't help being in mortal fear for him.

TESMAN. Why did he not remain where he was? With you and your husband? Eh?

MRS. ELVSTED. After his book was published he was too restless and unsettled to remain with us.

TESMAN. Yes, by-the-by, Aunt Julia told me he had published a new book.

MRS. ELVSTED. Yes, a big book, dealing with the march of civilisation—in broad outline, as it were. It came out about a fortnight ago. And since it has sold so well, and been so much read—and made such a sensation——

TESMAN. Has it indeed? It must be something he has had lying by since his better days.

MRS. ELVSTED. Long ago, you mean?

TESMAN. Yes.

MRS. ELVSTED. NO, he has written it all since he has been with us—within the last year.

TESMAN. Isn't that good news, Hedda? Think of that!

MRS. ELVSTED. Ah yes, if only it would last!

HEDDA. Have you seen him here in town?

MRS. ELVSTED. NO, not yet. I have had the greatest difficulty in finding out his address. But this morning I discovered it at last.

HEDDA [*looks searchingly at her*']. Do you know, it seems to me a little odd of your husband—h'm——

MRS. ELVSTED [*starting nervously*]. Of my husband! What?

HEDDA. That he should send you to town on such an errand—that he does not come himself and look after his friend.

MRS. ELVSTED. Oh no, no—my husband has no time. And besides, I — I had some shopping to do.

HEDDA [*with a slight smile*]. Ah, that is a different matter.

MRS. ELVSTED [*rising quickly and uneasily*]. And now I beg and implore you, Mr. Tesman—receive Eilert Lovborg kindly if he comes to you! And that he is sure to do. You see, you were such great friends *in* the old days. And then you are interested in the same studies—the same branch of science—so far as I can understand.

TESMAN. We used to be, at any rate.

MRS. ELVSTED. That is why I beg so earnestly that you—

you too—will keep a sharp eye upon him. Oh, you will promise me that, Mr. Tesman—won't you?

TESMAN. With the greatest of pleasure, Mrs. Rysing—

HEDDA. Elvsted.

TESMAN. I assure you I shall do all I possibly can for Eilert. You may rely upon me.

MRS. ELVSTED. Oh, how very, very kind of you! [*Presses his hands.*] Thanks, thanks, thanks! [*Frightened.*] You see, my husband is so very fond of him!

HEDDA [*rising*]. You ought to write to him, Tesman. Perhaps he may not care to come to you of his own accord.

TESMAN. Well, perhaps it would be the right thing to do, Hedda? Eh?

HEDDA. And the sooner the better. Why not at once?

MRS. ELVSTED [*imploringly*]. Oh, if you only would!

TESMAN. I'll write this moment. Have you his address, Mrs.—Mrs. Elvsted?

MRS. ELVSTED. Yes. [*Takes a slip of paper from her pocket, and hands it to him.*] Here it is.

TESMAN. Good, good. Then I'll go in———[*Looks about him.*] By-the-by,—my slippers? Oh, here.

[*Takes the packet, and is about to go.*]

HEDDA. Be sure you write him a cordial, friendly letter. And a good long one too.

TESMAN. Yes, I will.

MRS. ELVSTED. But please, please don't say a word to show that I have suggested it.

TESMAN. No, how could you think I would? Eh?

[*He goes out to the right, through the inner room.*]

HEDDA [*goes up to MRS. ELVSTED, smiles, and says in a low voice*]. There! We have killed two birds with one stone.

MRS. ELVSTED. What do you mean?

HEDDA. Could you not see that I wanted him to go?

MRS. ELVSTED. Yes, to write the letter——

HEDDA. And that I might speak to you alone.

MRS. ELVSTED [*confused*]. About the same thing?

HEDDA. Precisely.

MRS. ELVSTED [*apprehensively*]. But there is nothing more, Mrs. Tesman! Absolutely nothing!

HEDDA. Oh yes, but there is. There is a great deal more—I can see that. Sit here—and we'll have a cosy, confidential chat. [*She forces MRS. ELVSTED to sit in the easy-chair beside the stove, and seats herself on one of the footstools.*]

MRS. ELVSTED [*anxiously, looking at her watch*]. But, my dear Mrs. Tesman—I was really on the point of going.

HEDDA. Oh, you can't be in such a hurry.—Well? Now tell me something about your life at home.

MRS. ELVSTED. Oh, that is just what I care least to speak about.

HEDDA. But to me, dear——? Why, weren't we school-fellows?

MRS. ELVSTED. Yes, but you were in the class above me. Oh, how dreadfully afraid of you I was then!

HEDDA. Afraid of me?

MRS. ELVSTED. Yes, dreadfully. For when we met on the stairs you used always to pull my hair.

HEDDA. Did I, really?

MRS. ELVSTED. Yes, and once you said you would burn it off my head.

HEDDA. Oh, that was all nonsense, of course.

MRS. ELVSTED. Yes, but I was so silly in those days.—And since then, too—we have drifted so far—far apart from each other. Our circles have been so entirely different.

HEDDA. Well, then, we must try to drift together again. Now listen! At school we said *du*¹ to each other; and we called each other by our Christian names——

MRS. ELVSTED. NO, I am sure you must be mistaken.

HEDDA. NO, not at all! I can remember quite distinctly. So now we are going to renew our old friendship. [*Draws the footstool closer to MRS. ELVSTED.*] There now! [*Kisses her cheek.*] You must say *du* to me and call me Hedda.

MRS. ELVSTED [*presses and pats her hands*]. Oh, how good and kind you are! I am not used to such kindness.

¹ See footnote, p. 385.

HEDDA. There, there, there! And I shall say *du* to you, as in the old days, and call you my dear Thora.

MRS. ELVSTED. My name is Thea.¹

HEDDA. Why, of course! I meant Thea. [*Looks at her compassionately.*] So you are not accustomed to goodness and kindness, Thea? Not in your own home?

MRS. ELVSTED. Oh, if I only had a home! But I haven't any; I have never had a home.

HEDDA [*looks at her for a moment*], I almost suspected as much.

MRS. ELVSTED [*gazing helplessly before her*]. Yes—yes—yes.

HEDDA. I don't quite remember—was it not as housekeeper that you first went to Mr. Elvsted's?

MRS. ELVSTED. I really went as governess. But his wife—his late wife—was an invalid,—and rarely left her room. So I had to look after the housekeeping as well.

HEDDA. And then—at last—you became mistress of the house.

MRS. ELVSTED [*sadly*]. Yes, I did.

HEDDA. Let me see—about how long ago was that?

MRS. ELVSTED. My marriage?

HEDDA. Yes.

MRS. ELVSTED. Five years ago.

HEDDA. TO be sure; it must be that.

MRS. ELVSTED. Oh those five years——! Or at all events the last two or three of them! Oh, if you² could only imagine——

HEDDA [*giving her a little slap on the hand*], *Def Fie*, Thea!

MRS. ELVSTED. Yes, yes, I will try——Well, if—you could only imagine and understand——

HEDDA [*lightly*], Eilert Lovborg has been in your neighbourhood about three years, hasn't he?

¹ Pronounce *Tora* and *Taya*.

² Mrs. Elvsted here uses the formal pronoun *De*, whereupon Hedda rebukes her. In her next speech Mrs. Elvsted says *du*.

MRS. ELVSTED [*looks at her doubtfully*]. Eilert Lovborg? Yes—he has.

HEDDA. Had you known him before, in town here?

MRS. ELVSTED. Scarcely at all. I mean—I knew him by name, of course.

HEDDA. But you saw a good deal of him in the country?

MRS. ELVSTED. Yes, he came to us every day. You see, he gave the children lessons; for in the long run I couldn't manage it all myself.

HEDDA. NO, that's clear.—And your husband——? I suppose he is often away from home?

MRS. ELVSTED. Yes. Being sheriff, you know, he has to travel about a good deal in his district.

HEDDA [*leaning against the arm of the chair*], Thea—my poor, sweet Thea—now you must tell me everything—exactly as it stands.

MRS. ELVSTED. Well then, you must question me.

HEDDA. What sort of a man is your husband, Thea? I mean—you know—in everyday life. Is he kind to you?

MRS. ELVSTED [*evasively*]. I am sure he means well in everything.

HEDDA. I should think he must be altogether too old for you. There is at least twenty years' difference between you, is there not?

MRS. ELVSTED [*irritably*]. Yes, that is true, too. Everything about him is repellent to me! We have not a thought in common. We have no single point of sympathy—he and I.

HEDDA. But is he not fond of you all the same? In his own way?

MRS. ELVSTED. Oh, I really don't know. I think he regards me simply as a useful property. And then it doesn't cost much to keep me. I am not expensive.

HEDDA. That is stupid of you.

MRS. ELVSTED [*shakes her head*]. It cannot be otherwise—not with him. I don't think he really cares for any one but himself—and perhaps a little for the children.

HEDDA. And for Eilert Lovborg, Thea.

MRS. ELVSTED [*looking at her*]. For Eilert Lovborg? What puts that into your head?

HEDDA. Well, my dear—I should say, when he sends you after him all the way to town——[*Smiling almost imperceptibly.*] And besides, you said so yourself, to Tesman.

MRS. ELVSTED [*with a little nervous twitch*]. Did I? Yes, I suppose I did. [*Vehemently, but not loudly.*] No—I may just as well make a clean breast of it at once! For it must all come out in any case.

HEDDA. Why, my dear Thea——?

MRS. ELVSTED. Well, to make a long story short: My husband did not know that I was coming.

HEDDA. What! Your husband didn't know it!

MRS. ELVSTED. NO, of course not. For that matter, he was away from home himself—he was travelling. Oh, I could bear it no longer, Hedda! I couldn't indeed—so utterly alone as I should have been in future.

HEDDA. Well? And then?

MRS. ELVSTED. SO I put together some of my things—what I needed most—as quietly as possible. And then I left the house.

HEDDA. Without a word?

MRS. ELVSTED. Yes—and took the train straight to town.

HEDDA. Why, my dear, good Thea—to think of you daring to do it!

MRS. ELVSTED [*rises and moves about the room*]. What else could I possibly do?

HEDDA. But what do you think your husband will say when you go home again?

MRS. ELVSTED [*at the table, looks at her*]. Back to him?

HEDDA. Of course.

MRS. ELVSTED. I shall never go back to him again.

HEDDA [*rising and going towards her*]. Then you have left your home—for good and all?

MRS. ELVSTED. Yes. There was nothing else to be done.

HEDDA. But then—to take flight so openly.

MRS. ELVSTED. Oh, it's impossible to keep things of that sort secret.

HEDDA. But what do you think people will say of you, Thea?

MRS. ELVSTED. They may say what they like, for aught I care. [*Sits herself wearily and sadly on the sofa.*] I have done nothing but what I had to do.

HEDDA [*after a short silence*]. And what are your plans now? What do you think of doing?

MRS. ELVSTED. I don't know yet. I only know this, that I must live here, where Eilert Lovborg is—if I am to live at all.

HEDDA [*takes a chair from the table, seats herself beside her, and strokes her hands*]. My dear Thea—how did this—this friendship—between you and Eilert Lovborg come about?

MRS. ELVSTED. Oh, it grew up gradually. I gained a sort of influence over him.

HEDDA. Indeed?

MRS. ELVSTED. He gave up his old habits. Not because I asked him to, for I never dared do that. But of course he saw how repulsive they were to me; and so he dropped them.

HEDDA [*concealing an involuntary smile of scorn*]. Then you have reclaimed him—as the saying goes—my little Thea.

MRS. ELVSTED. SO he says himself, at any rate. And he, on his side, has made a real human being of me—taught me to think, and to understand so many things.

HEDDA. Did he give you lessons too, then?

MRS. ELVSTED. No, not exactly lessons. But he talked to me—talked about such an infinity of things. And then came the lovely, happy time when I began to share in his work—when he allowed me to help him!

HEDDA. Oh, he did, did he?

MRS. ELVSTED. Yes! He never wrote anything without my assistance.

HEDDA. YOU were two good comrades, in fact?

MRS. ELVSTED [*eagerly*]. Comrades! Yes, fancy, Hedda—that is the very word he used!—Oh, I ought to feel perfectly happy; and yet I cannot; for I don't know how long it will last.

HEDDA. Are you no surer of him than that?

MRS. ELVSTED [*gloomily*]. A woman's shadow stands between Eilert Lovborg and me.

HEDDA [*looks at her anxiously*]. Who can that be?

MRS. ELVSTED. I don't know. Some one he knew in his—
in his past. Some one he has never been able wholly to forget.

HEDDA. What has he told you—about this?

MRS. ELVSTED. He has only once—quite vaguely—alluded to it.

HEDDA. Well! And what did he say?

MRS. ELVSTED. He said that when they parted, she threatened to shoot him with a pistol.

HEDDA [*with cold composure*]. Oh, nonsense! No one does that sort of thing here.

MRS. ELVSTED. NO. And that is why I think it must have been that red-haired singing-woman whom he once——

HEDDA. Yes, very likely.

MRS. ELVSTED. For I remember they used to say of her that she carried loaded firearms.

HEDDA. Oh—then of course it must have been she.

MRS. ELVSTED [*wringing her hands*]. And now just fancy, Hedda—I hear that this singing-woman—that she is in town again! Oh, I don't know what to do——

HEDDA [*glancing towards the inner room*]. Hush! Here comes Tesman. [*Rises and whispers*,] Thea—all this must remain between you and me.

MRS. ELVSTED [*springing up*]. Oh yes—yes! For heaven's sake——!

[GEORGE TESMAN, *with a letter in his hand, comes from the right through the inner room,*

TESMAN. There now—the epistle is finished.

HEDDA. That's right. And now Mrs. Elvsted is just going. Wait a moment—I'll go with you to the garden gate.

TESMAN. Do you think Berta could post the letter, Hedda dear?

HEDDA [*takes it*], I will tell her to.

[BERTA *enters from the hall,*

BERTA. Judge Brack wishes to know if Mrs. Tesman will receive him.

HEDDA. Yes, ask Judge Brack to come in. And look here—put this letter in the post.

BERTA [*taking the letter*']. Yes, ma'am.

[*She opens the door for Judge BRACK and goes out herself.*

BRACK is a man of forty-five; thick-set, but well-built and elastic in his movements. His face is roundish with an aristocratic profile. His hair is short, still almost black, and carefully dressed. His eyes are lively and sparkling. His eyebrows thick. His moustaches are also thick, with short-cut ends. He wears a well-cut walking-suit, a little too youthful for his age. He uses an eye-glass, which he now and then lets drop.

JUDGE BRACK [*with his hat in his hand, bowing*]. May one venture to call so early in the day?

HEDDA. Of course one may.

TESMAN [*presses his hand*]. You are welcome at any time. [*Introducing him.*] Judge Brack—Miss Rysing——

HEDDA. Oh——!

BRACK [*bowing*]. Ah—delighted——

HEDDA [*looks at him and laughs*]. It's nice to have a look at you by daylight, Judge !

BRACK. DO you find me—altered ?

HEDDA. A little younger, I think.

BRACK. Thank you so much.

TESMAN. But what do you think of Hedda—eh? Doesn't she look flourishing ? She has actually——

HEDDA. Oh, do leave me alone. You haven't thanked Judge Brack for all the trouble he has taken——

BRACK. Oh, nonsense—it was a pleasure to me——

HEDDA. Yes, you are a friend indeed. But here stands Thea all impatience to be off—so *au revoir*, Judge. I shall be back again presently.

[*Mutual salutations.* MRS. ELVSTED and HEDDA go out by the hall door.

BRACK. Well,—is your wife tolerably satisfied——

TESMAN. Yes, we can't thank you sufficiently. Of course she talks of a little rearrangement here and there; and one or two things are still wanting. We shall have to buy some additional trifles.

BRACK. Indeed I

TESMAN. But we won't trouble you about these things. Hedda says she herself will look after what is wanting.—Shan't we sit down? Eh?

BRACK. Thanks, for a moment. [*Seats himself beside the table.*] There is something I wanted to speak to you about, my dear Tesman.

TESMAN. Indeed? Ah, I understand! [*Seating himself.*] I suppose it's the serious part of the frolic that is coming now. Eh?

BRACK. Oh, the money question is not so very pressing; though, for that matter, I wish we had *gone SL* little more economically to work.

TESMAN. But that would never have done, you know! Think of Hedda, my dear fellow! You, who know her so well——J couldn't possibly ask her to put up with a shabby style of living!

BRACK. NO, no—that is just the difficulty.

TESMAN. And then—fortunately—it can't be long before I receive my appointment.

BRACK. Well, you see—such things are often apt to hang fire for a time.

TESMAN. Have you heard anything definite? Eh?

BRACK. Nothing exactly definite———[*Interrupting hi?nself.*] But by-the-by—I have one piece of news for you.

TESMAN. Well?

BRACK. Your old friend, Eilert Lovborg, has returned to town.

TESMAN. I know that already.

BRACK. Indeed! How did you learn it?

TESMAN. From the lady who went out with Hedda.

BRACK. Really? What was her name? I didn't quite catch it.

TESMAN. Mrs. Elvsted.

BRACK. Aha—Sheriff Elvsted's wife? Of course—he has been living up in their regions.

TESMAN. And fancy—I'm delighted to hear that he is quite a reformed character!

BRACK. SO they say.

TESMAN. And then he has published a new **book—eh?**

BRACK. Yes, indeed he has.

TESMAN. And I hear it has made some sensation!

BRACK. Quite an unusual sensation.

TESMAN. Fancy—isn't that good news! A man of such extraordinary talents———I felt so grieved to think that he had gone irretrievably to ruin.

BRACK. That was what everybody thought.

TESMAN. But I cannot imagine what he will take to now! How in the world will he be able to make his living? Eh?

[During the last words, HEDDA has entered by the hall door.

HEDDA *[to BRACK, laughing with a touch of scorn]*, Tesman is for ever worrying about how people are to make their living.

TESMAN. Well, you see, dear—we were talking about poor Eilert Lovborg.

HEDDA *[glancing at him rapidly]*. Oh, indeed? *[Seats herself in the armchair beside the stove and asks indifferently,]* What is the matter with him?

TESMAN. Well—no doubt he has run through all his property long ago; and he can scarcely write a new book every year—eh? So I really can't see what is to become of him.

BRACK. Perhaps I can give you some information on that point.

TESMAN. Indeed!

BRACK. You must remember that his relations have a good deal of influence.

TESMAN. Oh, his relations, unfortunately, have entirely washed their hands of him.

BRACK. At one time they called him the hope of the family.

TESMAN. At one time, yes! But he has put an end to all that.

HEDDA. Who knows? *[With a slight smile.]* I hear they have reclaimed him up at Sheriff Elvsted's——

BRACK. And then this book that he has published——

TESMAN. Well, well, I hope to goodness they may find something for him to do. I have just written to him. I asked him to come and see us this evening, Hedda dear.

BRACK. But my dear fellow, you are booked for my bachelors' party this evening. You promised on the pier last night.

HEDDA. Had you forgotten, Tesman?

TESMAN. Yes, I had utterly forgotten.

BRACK. But it doesn't matter, for you may be sure he won't come.

TESMAN. What makes you think that? Eh?

BRACK [*with a little hesitation, rising and resting his hands on the back of his chair*]. My dear Tesman—and you too, Mrs. Tesman—I think I ought not to keep you in the dark about something that—that——

TESMAN. That concerns Eilert——?

BRACK. Both you and him.

TESMAN. Well, my dear Judge, out with it.

BRACK. You must be prepared to find your appointment deferred longer than you desired or expected.

TESMAN [*jumping up uneasily*]. Is there some hitch about it? Eh?

BRACK. The nomination may perhaps be made conditional on the result of a competition——

TESMAN. Competition! Think of that, Hedda!

HEDDA [*leans farther back in the chair*]. Aha—aha!

TESMAN. But who can my competitor be? Surely not——?

BRACK. Yes, precisely—Eilert Lovborg.

TESMAN [*clasping his hands*]. No, no—it's quite inconceivable! Quite impossible! Eh?

BRACK. H'm—that is what it may come to, all the same.

TESMAN. Well but, Judge Brack—it would show the most incredible lack of consideration for me. [*Gesticulates with his arms*]. For—just think—I'm a married man! We have married on the strength of these prospects, Hedda and I; and run deep into debt; and borrowed money from Aunt Julia too. Good heavens, they had as good as promised me the appointment. Eh?

BRACK. Well, well, well—no doubt you will get it in the end; only after a contest.

HEDDA [*immovable in her armchair*]. Fancy, Tesman, there will be a sort of sporting interest in that

TESMAN. Why, my dearest Hedda, how can you be so indifferent about it.

HEDDA [*as before*]. I am not at all indifferent. I am most eager to see who wins.

BRACK. In any case, Mrs. Tesman, it is best that you should know how matters stand. I mean—before you set about the little purchases I hear you are threatening.

HEDDA. This can make no difference.

BRACK. Indeed! Then I have no more to say. Good-bye! [*To TESMAN.*] I shall look in on my way back from my afternoon walk, and take you home with me.

TESMAN. Oh yes, yes—your news has quite upset me.

HEDDA [*reclining, holds out her hand*]. Good-bye, Judge; and be sure you call in the afternoon.

BRACK. Many thanks. Good-bye, good-bye!

TESMAN [*accompanying him to the door*]. Good-bye, my dear Judge! You must really excuse me——

[JUDGE BRACK *goes out by the hall door.*

TESMAN [*crosses the room*]. Oh, Hedda—one should never rush into adventures. Eh?

HEDDA [*looks at him, s?niling*]. Do you do that?

TESMAN. Yes, dear—there is no denying—it was adventurous to go and marry and set up house upon mere expectations.

HEDDA. Perhaps you are right there.

TESMAN. Well—at all events, we have our delightful home, Hedda! Fancy, the home we both dreamed of—the home we were in love with, I may almost say. Eh?

HEDDA [*rising slowly and wearily*]. It was part of our compact that we were to go into society—to keep open house.

TESMAN. Yes, if you only knew how I had been looking forward to it! Fancy—to see you as hostess—in a select circle! Eh? Well, well, well—for the present we shall have to get on without society, Hedda—only to invite Aunt Julia now and then.—Oh, I intended you to lead such an utterly different life, dear——!

HEDDA. Of course I cannot have my man in livery just yet.

TESMAN, **Oh no, unfortunately. It would be out of the question for us to keep a footman, you know.**

HEDDA. And the saddle-horse I was to have had——

TESMAN [*aghast*] The saddle-horse!

HEDDA.—I suppose I must not think of that now.

TESMAN. Good heavens, no!—that's as clear as daylight.

HEDDA [*goes up the room*"]. Well, I shall have one thing at least to kill time with in the meanwhile.

TESMAN [*beaming*]. Oh, thank heaven for that! What is it, Hedda? Eh?

HEDDA [*in the middle doorway, looks at him with covert scorn*]. My pistols, George.

TESMAN [*in alarm*]. Your pistols!

HEDDA [*with cold eyes*]. General Gabler's pistols.

[She goes out through the inner room, to the left.

TESMAN [*rushes up to the middle doorway and calls after her*]. No, for heaven's sake, Hedda darling—don't touch those dangerous things! For my sake, Hedda! Eh?

ACT II

The room at the TESMANS' as in the first act, except that the piano has been removed, and an elegant little writing-table with book-shelves put in its place. A smaller table stands near the sofa on the left. Most of the bouquets have been taken away. MRS. ELVSTED'S bouquet is upon the large table in front.—It is afternoon.

HEDDA, *dressed to receive callers, is alone in the room. She stands by the open glass door, loading a revolver. The fellow to it lies in an open pistol-case on the writing-table.*

HEDDA [*looks down the garden, and calls*] : So you are here again, Judge!

BRACK [*is heard calling from a distance*]. As you see, Mrs. Tesman I

HEDDA [*raises the pistol and points*]. Now 111 shoot you, Judge Brack!

BRACK [*calling unseen*]. No, no, no! Don't stand aiming at me!

HEDDA. This is what comes of sneaking in by the back way.¹
[*She fires.*]

BRACK [*nearer*]. Are you out of your senses——!

HEDDA. Dear me—did I happen to hit you?

BRACK [*still outside*]. I wish you would let these pranks alone!

HEDDA. Come in, then, Judge.

[JUDGE BRACK, *dressed as though for a mens party, enters by the glass door. He carries a light overcoat over his arm.*]

BRACK. What the deuce—haven't you tired of that sport, yet? What are you shooting at?

HEDDA. Oh, I am only firing in the air.

BRACK [*gently takes the pistol out of her hand*]. Allow me, madam! [*Looks at it.*] Ah—I know this pistol well! [*Looks around.*] Where is the case? Ah, here it is. [*Lays the pistol in it, and shuts it.*] Now we won't play at that game any more to-day.

HEDDA. Then what in heaven's name would you have me do with myself?

BRACK. Have you had no visitors?

HEDDA [*closing the glass door*]. Not one. I suppose all our set are still out of town.

BRACK. And is Tesman not at home either?

HEDDA [*at the writing-table, putting the pistol-case in a drawer which she shuts*]. No. He rushed off to his aunt's directly after lunch; he didn't expect you so early.

BRACK. H'm—how stupid of me not to have thought of that!

HEDDA [*turning her head to look at him*]. Why stupid?

BRACK. Because if I had thought of it I should have come a little—earlier.

HEDDA [*crossing the room*]. Then you would have found no one to receive you; for I have been in my room changing my dress ever since lunch.

¹"Bagveje" means both "back ways" and "underhand courses."

BRACK. And is there no sort of little chink that we could hold a parley through?

HEDDA. YOU have forgotten to arrange one.

BRACK. That was another piece of stupidity.

HEDDA. Well, we must just settle down here—and wait. Tesman is not likely to be back for some time yet.

BRACK. Never mind; I shall not be impatient.

[HEDDA *seats herself in the corner of the sofa.* BRACK *lays his overcoat over the back of the nearest chair, and sits down, but keeps his hat in his hand.* A short silence. They look at each other.

HEDDA. Well?

BRACK [*in the same tone*]. Well?

HEDDA. I spoke first.

BRACK [*bending a little forward*]. Come, let us have a cosy little chat, Mrs. Hedda.¹

HEDDA [*leaning farther back in the sofa*]. Does it not seem like a whole eternity since our last talk? Of course I don't count those few words yesterday evening and this morning.

BRACK. YOU mean since our last confidential talk? Our last *tete-a-tete*?

HEDDA. Well, yes—since you put it so.

BRACK. Not a day has passed but I have wished that you were home again.

HEDDA. And I have done nothing but wish the same thing.

BRACK. YOU? Really, Mrs. Hedda? And I thought you had been enjoying your tour so much!

HEDDA. Oh yes, you may be sure of that!

BRACK. But Tesman's letters spoke of nothing but happiness.

HEDDA. Oh, Tesman! You see, he thinks nothing so delightful as grubbing in libraries and making copies of old parchments, or whatever you call them.

BRACK [*with a spice of malice*]. Well, that is his vocation in life—or part of it at any rate.

¹ As this form of address is contrary to English usage, and as the note of familiarity would be lacking in "Mrs. Tesman," Brack may, in stage representation, say "Miss Hedda,"¹ thus ignoring her marriage and reverting to the form of address no doubt customary between them of old.

HEDDA. Yes, of course; and no doubt when it's your vocation——But !/ Oh, my dear Mr. Brack, how mortally bored I have been.

BRACK [*sympathetically*]. Do you really say so ? In downright earnest?

HEDDA. Yes, you can surely understand it——! To go for six whole months without meeting a soul that knew anything of our circle, or could talk about the things we are interested in.

BRACK. Yes, yes—I too should feel that a deprivation.

HEDDA. And then, what I found most intolerable of all——

BRACK. Well?

HEDDA.——was being everlastingly in the company of one and the same person——

BRACK [*with a nod of assent*"]. Morning, noon, and night, yes—at all possible times and seasons.

HEDDA. I said "everlastingly."

BRACK. Just so. But I should have thought, with our excellent Tesman, one could——

HEDDA. Tesman is—a specialist, my dear Judge.

BRACK. Undeniably.

HEDDA. And specialists are not at all amusing to travel with. Not in the long run at any rate.

BRACK. Not even—the specialist one happens to love ?

HEDDA. Faugh—don't use that sickening word!

BRACK [*taken aback*]. What do you say, Mrs. Hedda?

HEDDA [*half laughing, half irritated*]. You should just try it! To hear of nothing but the history of civilisation, morning, noon, and night——

BRACK. Everlastingly.

HEDDA. Yes, yes, yes! And then all this about the domestic industry of the middle ages——! That's the most disgusting part of it!

BRACK [*looks searchingly at her*]. But tell me—in that case, how am I to understand your——? H'm——

HEDDA. My accepting George Tesman, you mean ?

BRACK. Well, let us put it so.

HEDDA. Good heavens, do you see anything so wonderful in that?

BRACK. Yes and no—Mrs. Hedda,

HEDDA. I had positively danced myself tired, my dear Judge. My day was done———*[With a slight shudder,]* Oh no—I won't say that; nor think it either!

BRACK. You have assuredly no reason to.

HEDDA. Oh, reasons———*[Watching him closely,]* And George Tesman—after all, you must admit that he is correctness itself.

BRACK. His correctness and respectability are beyond ail question.

HEDDA. And I don't see anything absolutely ridiculous about him.—Do you ?

BRACK. Ridiculous? N—no—I shouldn't exactly say so—

HEDDA. Well—and his powers of research, at all events, are untiring.—I see no reason why he should not one day come to the front, after all.

BRACK *[looks at her hesitatingly]*. I thought that you, like every one else, expected him to attain the highest distinction.

HEDDA *[with an expression of fatigue]*. Yes, so I did.—And then, since he was bent, at all hazards, on being allowed to provide for me—I really don't know why I should not have accepted his offer?

BRACK. NO—if you look at it in t h a t light——

HEDDA. It was more than my other adorers were prepared to do for me, my dear Judge.

BRACK *[laughing']*. Well, I can't answer for all the rest; but as for myself, you know quite well that I have always entertained a—a certain respect for the marriage tie—for marriage as an institution, Mrs. Hedda,

HEDDA *[jestingly]*. Oh, I assure you I have never cherished any hopes with respect to y o u.

BRACK. All I require is a pleasant and intimate interior, where I can make myself useful in every way, and am free to come and go as—as a trusted friend——

HEDDA. Of the master of the house, do you mean ?

BRACK *[bowing]*. Frankly—of the mistress first of all; but of course of the master too, in the second place. Such a

triangular friendship—if I may Call it so—is really a great convenience for all parties, let me tell you.

HEDDA. Yes, I have many a time longed for some one to make a third on our travels. Oh—those railway-carriage *tete-a-tetes*——!

BRACK. Fortunately your wedding journey is over now.

HEDDA [*shaking her head*]. Not by a long—long way. I have only arrived at a station on the line.

BRACK. Well, then the passengers jump out and move about a little, Mrs. Hedda.

HEDDA. I never jump out.

BRACK. Really?

HEDDA. No—because there is always some one standing by to——

BRACK [*laughing*]. To look at your ankles, do you mean?

HEDDA. Precisely.

BRACK. Well but, dear me——

HEDDA [*with a gesture of repulsion*], I won't have it. I would rather keep my seat where I happen to be—and continue the *tete-a-tete*.

BRACK. But suppose a third person were to jump in and join the couple.

HEDDA. Ah—t h a t is quite another matter!

BRACK. A trusted, sympathetic friend——

HEDDA.——with a fund of conversation on all sorts of lively topics——

BRACK.——and not the least bit of a specialist!

HEDDA [*with an audible sigh*]. Yes, that would be a relief indeed.

BRACK [*hears the front door open, and glances in that direction*]. The triangle is completed.

HEDDA [*half aloud*]. And on goes the train.

[GEORGE TESMAN, in a grey walking-suit, with a soft felt hat, enters from the hall. He has a number of unbound books under his arm and in his pockets,

TESMAN [*goes up to the table beside the corner settee*], Ouf—what a load for a warm day—all these books. [*Lays them on the table,*] I'm positively perspiring, Hedda. Hallo—are

you there already, my dear Judge? Eh? Berta didn't tell me.

BRACK *[rising]*. I came in through the garden.

HEDDA. What books have you got there ?

TESMAN *[stands looking them through]*. Some new books on my special subjects—quite indispensable to me.

HEDDA. Your special subjects?

BRACK. Yes, books on his special subjects, Mrs. Tesman.

[BRACK and HEDDA exchange a confidential smile.]

HEDDA. DO you need still more books on your special subjects?

TESMAN. Yes, my dear Hedda, one can never have too many of them. Of course one must keep up with all that is written and published.

HEDDA. Yes, I suppose one must.

TESMAN *[searching among his books]*. And look here—I have got hold of Eilert Lovborg's new book too. *[Offering it to her.]* Perhaps you would like to glance through it, Hedda? Eh?

HEDDA. NO, thank you. Or rather—afterwards perhaps.

TESMAN. I looked into it a little on the way home.

BRACK. Well, what do you think of it—as a specialist?

TESMAN. I think it shows quite remarkable soundness of judgment. He never wrote like that before. *[Putting the books together.]* Now I shall take all these into my study. I'm longing to cut the leaves——! And then I must change my clothes. *[To BRACK.]* I suppose we needn't start just yet ? Eh?

BRACK. Oh dear no—there is not the slightest hurry.

TESMAN. Well then, I will take my time. *[Is going with his books, but stops in the doorway and turns.]* By-the-by, Hedda—Aunt Julia is not coming this evening.

HEDDA. Not coming? Is it that affair of the bonnet that keeps her away ?

TESMAN. Oh, not at all. How could you think such a thing of Aunt Julia ? Just fancy—! The fact is, Aunt Rina is very ill.

HEDDA. She always is.

TESMAN. Yes, but to-day she is much worse than usual, poor dear.

HEDDA. Oh, then it's only natural that her sister should remain with her. I must bear my disappointment.

TESMAN. And you can't imagine, dear, how delighted Aunt Julia seemed to be—because you had come home looking so flourishing!

HEDDA [*half aloud, rising*]. Oh, those everlasting aunts!

TESMAN. What?

HEDDA [*going to the glass door*]. Nothing.

TESMAN. Oh, all right.

[*He goes through the inner room, out to the right.*]

BRACK. What bonnet were you talking about?

HEDDA. Oh, it was a little episode with Miss Tesman this morning. She had laid down her bonnet on the chair there— [*Looks at him and smiles.*—and I pretended to think it was the servant's.

BRACK [*shaking his head*]. Now, my dear Mrs. Hedda, how could you do such a thing? To that excellent old lady, too!

HEDDA [*nervously crossing the room*]. Well, you see—these impulses come over me all of a sudden; and I cannot resist them. [*Throws herself down in the easy-chair by the stove.*] Oh, I don't know how to explain it.

BRACK [*behind the easy-chair*]. You are not really happy—that is at the bottom of it.

HEDDA [*looking straight before her*]. I know of no reason why I should be—happy. Perhaps you can give me one?

BRACK. Well—amongst other things, because you have got exactly the home you had set your heart on.

HEDDA [*looks up at him and laughs*]. Do you too believe in that legend?

BRACK. IS there nothing in it, then?

HEDDA. Oh yes, there is s o m e t h i n g in it.

BRACK. Well?

HEDDA. There is t h i s in it, that I made use of Tesman to see me home from evening parties last summer——

BRACK. I, unfortunately, had to go quite a different way.

HEDDA. That's true. I know you were going a different way last summer.

BRACK [*laughing*]. Oh fie, Mrs. Hedda! Well, then—you and Tesman——?

HEDDA. Well, we happened to pass here one evening; Tesman, poor fellow, was writhing in the agony of having to find conversation; so I took pity on the learned man——

BRACK [*smiles doubtfully*]. You took pity? H'm——

HEDDA. Yes, I really did. And so—to help him out of his torment—I happened to say, in pure thoughtlessness, that I should like to live in this villa.

BRACK. NO more than that?

HEDDA. Not that evening.

BRACK. But afterwards?

HEDDA. Yes, my thoughtlessness had consequences, my dear Judge.

BRACK. Unfortunately that too often happens, Mrs. Hedda.

HEDDA. Thanks! So you see it was this enthusiasm for Secretary Falk's villa that first constituted a bond of sympathy between George Tesman and me. From that came our engagement and our marriage, and our wedding journey, and all the rest of it. Well, well, my dear Judge—as you make your bed so you must lie, I could almost say.

BRACK. This is exquisite! And you really cared not a rap about it all the time?

HEDDA. NO, heaven knows I didn't.

BRACK. But now? Now that we have made it so homelike for you?

HEDDA. Uh—the rooms all seem to smell of lavender and dried rose-leaves.—But perhaps it's Aunt Julia that has brought that scent with her.

BRACK [*laughing*]. No, I think it must be a legacy from the late Mrs. Secretary Falk.

HEDDA. Yes, there is an odour of mortality about it. It reminds me of a bouquet—the day after the ball. [*Clasps her hands behind her head, leans back in her chair and looks at him**] Oh, my dear Judge—you cannot imagine how horribly I shall bore myself here.

BRACK. Why should not you, too, find some sort of vocation in life, Mrs. Hedda?

HEDDA. A vocation—that should attract me?

BRACK. If possible, of course.

HEDDA. Heaven knows what sort of a vocation that could be. I often wonder whether———*[Breaking off,]* But that would never do either.

BRACK. Who can tell? Let me hear what it is.

HEDDA. Whether I might not get Tesman to go into politics, I mean.

BRACK *[laughing]*, Tesman? No really now, political life is not the thing for him—not at all in his line.

HEDDA. NO, I daresay not.—But if I could get him into it all the same?

BRACK. Why—what satisfaction could you find in that? If he is not fitted for that sort of thing, why should you want to drive him into it?

HEDDA. Because I am bored, I tell you! *[After a pause,]* So you think it quite out of the question that Tesman should ever get into the ministry?

BRACK. H'm—you see, my dear Mrs. Hedda—to get into the ministry, he would have to be a tolerably rich man.

HEDDA *[rising impatiently]*. Yes, there we have it! It is this genteel poverty I have managed to drop into———! *[Crosses the room,]* T h a t is what makes life so pitiable! So utterly ludicrous!—For that's what it is.

BRACK. NOW / should say the fault lay elsewhere.

HEDDA. Where, then?

BRACK. YOU have never gone through any really stimulating experience.

HEDDA. Anything serious, you mean?

BRACK. Yes, you may call it so. But now you may perhaps have one in store.

HEDDA *[tossing her head]*. Oh, you're thinking of the annoyances about this wretched professorship! But that must be Tesman's own affair. I assure you I shall not waste a thought upon it.

BRACK. NO, no, I daresay not. But suppose now that what

people call—in elegant language—a solemn responsibility were to come upon you? [*Smiling.*] A new responsibility, Mrs. Hedda?

HEDDA [*angrily*]. Be quiet! Nothing of that sort will ever happen!

BRACK [*warily*]. We will speak of this again a year hence—at the very outside.

HEDDA [*curtly*]. I have no turn for anything of the sort, Judge Brack. No responsibilities for me!

BRACK. Are you so unlike the generality of women as to have no turn for duties which——?

HEDDA [*beside the glass door*]. Oh, be quiet, I tell you!—I often think there is only one thing in the world I have any turn for.

BRACK [*drawing near to her*]. And what is that, if I may ask?

HEDDA [*stands looking out*]. Boring myself to death. Now you know it. [*Turns, looks towards the inner room, and laughs.*] Yes, as I thought! Here comes the Professor.

BRACK [*softly, in a tone of warning*]. Come, come, come, Mrs. Hedda!

[GEORGE TESMAN, *dressed for the party, with his gloves and hat in his hand, enters from the right through the inner room.*

TESMAN. Hedda, has no message come from Eilert Lovborg? Eh?

HEDDA. NO.

TESMAN. Then you'll see he'll be here presently.

BRACK. DO you really think he will come?

TESMAN. Yes, I am almost sure of it. For what you were telling us this morning must have been a mere floating rumour.

BRACK. YOU think so?

TESMAN. At any rate, Aunt Julia said she did not believe for a moment that he would ever stand in my way again. Fancy that!

BRACK. Well then, that's all right.

TESMAN [*placing his hat and gloves on a chair on the right*]. Yes, but you must really let me wait for him as long as possible.

BRACK. We have plenty of time yet. None of my guests will arrive before seven or half-past.

TESMAN. Then meanwhile we can keep Hedda company, and see what happens. Eh?

HEDDA [*placing BRACK'S hat and overcoat upon the corner settee*]. And at the worst Mr. Lovborg can remain here with me.

BRACK [*offering to take his things*]. Oh, allow me, Mrs. Tesman!—What do you mean by "At the worst"?

HEDDA. If he won't go with you and Tesman.

TESMAN [*looks dubiously at her*]. But, Hedda dear—do you think it would quite do for him to remain with you? Eh? Remember, Aunt Julia can't come.

HEDDA. No, but Mrs. Elvsted is coming. We three can have a cup of tea together.

TESMAN. Oh yes, that will be all right.

BRACK [*smiling*]. And that would perhaps be the safest plan for him.

HEDDA. Why so?

BRACK. Well, you know, Mrs. Tesman, how you used to gird at my little bachelor parties. You declared they were adapted only for men of the strictest principles.

HEDDA. But no doubt Mr. Lovborg's principles are strict enough now. A converted sinner——

[BERTA *appears at the hall door.*

BERTA. There's a gentleman asking if you are at home, ma'am——

HEDDA. Well, show him in.

TESMAN [*softly*]. I'm sure it is he! Fancy that!

[EILERT LOVBORG *enters from the hall. He is slim and lean; of the same age as TESMAN, but looks older and somewhat worn-out. His hair and beard are of a blackish brown, his face long and pale, but with patches of colour on the cheek-bones. He is dressed in a well-cut black visiting suit, quite new. He has dark gloves and a silk hat. He stops near the door, and makes a rapid bow, seeming somewhat embarrassed,*

TESMAN [*goes up to him and shakes him warmly by the*

hand]. Well, my dear Eilert—so at last we meet again!

EILERT LOVBORG [*speaks in a subdued voice*]. Thanks for your letter, Tesman. [*Approaching HEDDA.*] Will you too shake hands with me, Mrs. Tesman?

HEDDA [*taking his hand*], I am glad to see you, Mr. Lovborg. [*With a motion of her hand,*] I don't know whether you two gentlemen——?

LOVBORG [*bowing slightly*]. Judge Brack, I think.

BRACK [*doing likewise*]. Oh yes—in the old days——

TESMAN [*to LOVBORG, with his hands on his shoulders*]. And now you must make yourself entirely at home, Eilert! Mustn't he, Hedda?—For I hear you are going to settle in town again? Eh?

LOVBORG. Yes, I am.

TESMAN. Quite right, quite right. Let me tell you, I have got hold of your new book; but I haven't had time to read it yet.

LOVBORG. You may spare yourself the trouble.

TESMAN. Why so?

LOVBORG. Because there is very little in it.

TESMAN. Just fancy—how can you say so?

BRACK. But it has been very much praised, I hear.

LOVBORG. That was what I wanted; so I put nothing into the book but what every one would agree with.

BRACK. Very wise of you.

TESMAN. Well, but, my dear Eilert——!

LOVBORG. For now I mean to win myself a position again—to make a fresh start.

TESMAN [*a little embarrassed*]. Ah, that is what you wish to do? Eh?

LOVBORG [*smiling, lays down his hat, and draws a packet, wrapped in paper, from his coat pocket*]. But when this one appears, George Tesman, you will have to read it. For this is the real book—the book I have put my true self into.

TESMAN. Indeed? And what is it?

LOVBORG. It is the continuation.

TESMAN. The continuation? Of what?

LOVBORG. Of the book.

TESMAN. Of the new book?

LOVBORG. Of course.

TESMAN, **Why**, my dear Eilert—does it not come down to our own days?

LOVBORG. Yes, it does; and this one deals with the future.

TESMAN. With the future! But, good heavens, we know nothing of the future I

LOVBORG. No; but there is a thing or two to be said about it all the same. [*Opens the packet .*] Look here——

TESMAN. Why, that's not your handwriting.

LOVBORG. I dictated it. [*Turning over the pages.*] It falls into two sections. The first deals with the civilising forces of the future. And here is the second—[*running through the pages towards the end*—forecasting the probable line of development.

TESMAN. How odd now! I should never have thought of writing anything of that sort.

HEDDA [*at the glass door, drumming on the pane*], H'm———I daresay not.

LOVBORG [*replacing the manuscript in its paper and laying the packet on the table*], I brought it, thinking I might read you a little of it this evening.

TESMAN. That was very good of you, Eilert. But this evening——? [*Looking at BRACK.*] I don't quite see how we can manage it——

LOVBORG. Well then, some other time. There is no hurry.

BRACK. I must tell you, Mr. Lovborg—there is a little gathering at my house this evening—mainly in honour of Tesman, you know——

LOVBORG [*looking for his hat*]. Oh—then I won't detain you——

BRACK. NO, but listen—will you not do me the favour of joining us?

LOVBORG [*curtly and decidedly*]. No, I can't—thank you very much.

BRACK. Oh, nonsense—do! We shall be quite a select little circle. And I assure you we shall have a "lively time," as Mrs. Hed—as Mrs. Tesman says.

LOVBORG. I have no doubt of it. But nevertheless——

BRACK. And then you might bring your manuscript with you, and read it to Tesman at my house. I could give you a room to yourselves.

TESMAN. Yes, think of that, Eilert—why shouldn't you? Eh?

HEDDA [*interposing*]. But, Tesman, if Mr. Lovborg would really rather not! I am sure Mr. Lovborg is much more inclined to remain here and have supper with me.

LOVBORG [*looking at fieri*]. With you, Mrs. Tesman?

HEDDA. And with Mrs. Elvsted.

LOVBORG. Ah———[*Lightly*]. I saw her for a moment this morning.

HEDDA. Did you? Well, she is coming this evening. So you see you are almost bound to remain, Mr. Lovborg, or she will have no one to see her home.

LOVBORG. That's true. Many thanks, Mrs. Tesman—in that case I will remain.

HEDDA. Then I have one or two orders to give the servant——

[*She goes to the hall door and rings. BERTA enters. HEDDA talks to her in a whisper, and points towards the inner room. BERTA nods and goes out again.*]

TESMAN [*at the same time, to LOVBORG*]. Tell me, Eilert—is it this new subject—the future—that you are going to lecture about?

LOVBORG. Yes.

TESMAN. They told me at the bookseller's that you are going to deliver a course of lectures this autumn.

LOVBORG. That is my intention. I hope you won't take it ill, Tesman.

TESMAN. Oh no, not in the least! But———?

LOVBORG. I can quite understand that it must be disagreeable to you.

TESMAN [*cast down*]. Oh, I can't expect you, out of consideration for me, too——

LOVBORG. But I shall wait till you have received your appointment.

TESMAN. Will you wait? Yes, Wt—yes, but—are you not going to compete with me? Eh?

LOVBORG. No; it is only the moical victory I care for.

TESMAN. Why, bless me—then Aunt Julia was right after all! Oh yes—I knew it! Hedda! Just fancy—Eilert Lovborg is not going to stand in our way!

HEDDA [*curtly*]. Our way? Pray leave me out of the question.

[She goes up towards the inner room, where BERTA is placing a tray with decanters and glasses on the table, HEDDA nods approval, and comes forward again. BERTA goes out.]

TESMAN [*at the same time*]. And you, Judge Brack—what do you say to this? Eh?

BRACK. Weil, I say that a moral victory—h'm—may be all very fine——

TESMAN. Yes, certainly. But all the same——

HEDDA [*looking at TESMAN with a cold smile*]. You stand there looking as if you were thunderstruck——

TESMAN. Yes—so I am—I almost think——

BRACK. Don't you see, Mrs. Tesman, a thunderstorm has just passed over?

HEDDA [*pointing towards the inner room*]. Will you not take a glass of cold punch, gentlemen?

BRACK [*looking at his watch*]. A stirrup-cup? Yes, it wouldn't come amiss.

TESMAN. A capital idea, Hedda! Just the thing! Now that the weight has been taken off my mind——

HEDDA. Will you not join them, Mr. Lovborg?

LOVBORG [*with a gesture of refusal*]. No, thank you. Nothing for me.

BRACK. Why, bless me—cold punch is surely not poison.

LOVBORG. Perhaps not for every one.

HEDDA. I will keep Mr. Lovborg company in the meantime.

TESMAN. Yes, yes, Hedda dear, do.

[He and BRACK go into the inner room, seat themselves, drink punch, smoke cigarettes, and carry on a lively conversation during what follows. EILERT LOVBORG remains standing beside the stove. HEDDA goes to the writing-table.]

HEDDA [*raising her voice a little*]. Do you care to look at some photographs, Mr. Lovborg? You know Tesman and I made a tour in the Tyrol on our way home?

[*She takes up an album, and places it on the table beside the sofa, in the farther corner of which she seats herself. EILERT LOVBORG approaches, stops, and looks at her. Then he takes a chair and seats himself to her left, with his back towards the inner room.*]

HEDDA [*opening the album*]. Do you see this range of mountains, Mr. Lovborg? It's the Ortler group. Tesman has written the name underneath. Here it is: *'The Ortler group near Meran.'"

LOVBORG [*who has never taken his eyes off her, says softly and slowly*:] Hedda—Gabler!

HEDDA [*glancing hastily at him*]. Ah! Hush!

LOVBORG [*repeats softly*]. Hedda Gabler!

HEDDA [*looking at the album*]. That was my name in the old days—when we two knew each other.

LOVBORG. And I must teach myself never to say Hedda Gabler again—never, as long as I live.

HEDDA [*still turning over the pages*]. Yes, you must. And I think you ought to practise in time. The sooner the better, I should say.

LOVBORG [*in a tone of indignation*]. Hedda Gabler married? And married to—George Tesman!

HEDDA. Yes—so the world goes.

LOVBORG. Oh, Hedda, Hedda—how could you throw yourself away!

HEDDA [*looks sharply at him*]. What? I can't allow this!

LOVBORG. What do you mean?

[*TESMAN comes into the room and goes towards the sofa.*]

HEDDA [*hears him coming and says in an indifferent tone*]. And this is a view from the Val d'Ampezzo, Mr. Lovborg. Just look at these peaks! [*Looks affectionately up at TESMAN.*] What's the name of these curious peaks, dear?

TESMAN. Let me see. Oh, those are the Dolomites.

¹ He uses the familiar *du*.

HEDDA. Yes, that's it!—Those are the Dolomites, Mr. Lovborg.

TESMAN. Hedda dear—I only wanted to ask whether I shouldn't bring you a little punch after all? For yourself at any rate—eh?

HEDDA. Yes, do, please; and perhaps a few biscuits.

TESMAN. NO cigarettes?

HEDDA. NO.

TESMAN. Very well.

[He goes into the inner room and out to the right. BRACK sits in the inner room, and keeps an eye from time to time on HEDDA and LOVBORG.]

LOVBORG *[softly, as before]*. Answer me, Hedda—how could you go and do this?

HEDDA *[apparently absorbed in the album]*. If you continue to say *du* to me I won't talk to you.

LOVBORG. May I not say *du* even when we are alone?

HEDDA. NO. You may think it; but you mustn't say it.

LOVBORG. Ah, I understand. It is an offence against George Tesman, whom you¹—love.

HEDDA *[glances at him and smiles]*. Love? What an idea I

LOVBORG. You don't love him then!

HEDDA. But I won't hear of any sort of unfaithfulness! Remember that.

LOVBORG. Hedda—answer me one thing——

HEDDA. Hush!

[TESMAN enters with a small tray from the inner room.]

TESMAN. Here you are! Isn't this tempting?

[He puts the tray on the table.]

HEDDA. Why do you bring it yourself?

TESMAN *[filling the glasses]*. Because I think it's such fun to wait upon you, Hedda.

HEDDA. But you have poured out two glasses. Mr. Lovborg said he wouldn't have any——

TESMAN. NO, but Mrs. Elvsted will soon be here, won't she?

HEDDA. Yes, by-the-by—Mrs. Elvsted——

¹ From this point onward Lovborg uses the formal *De*.

TESMAN. Had you forgotten her? Eh?

HEDDA. We were so absorbed in these photographs [*Shows him a picture.*] Do you remember this little village?

TESMAN. Oh, it's that one just below the Brenner Pass
It was there we passed the night——

HEDDA.——and met that lively party of tourists.

TESMAN. Yes, that was the place. Fancy—if we could only have had you with us, Eilert! Eh?

[He returns to the inner room and sits beside BRACK

LOVBORG. Answer me this one thing, Hedda——

HEDDA. Well?

LOVBORG. Was there no love in your friendship for me either? Not a spark—not a tinge of love in it?

HEDDA. I wonder if there was? To me it seems as though we were two good comrades—two thoroughly intimate friends [*Smilingly.*] You especially were frankness itself.

LOVBORG. It was you that made me so.

HEDDA. As I look back upon it all, I think there was really something beautiful, something fascinating—something daring—in—in that secret intimacy—that comradeship which no living creature so much as dreamed of.

LOVBORG. Yes, yes, Hedda! Was there not? When I used to come to your father's in the afternoon—and the General sat over at the window reading his papers—with his back towards us——

HEDDA. And we two on the corner sofa——

LOVBORG. Always with the same illustrated paper before us——

HEDDA. For want of an album, yes.

LOVBORG. Yes, Hedda, and when I made my confessions to you—told you about myself, things that at that time no one else knew! There I would sit and tell you of my escapades—my days and nights of devilment. Oh, Hedda—what was the power in you that forced me to confess these things?

HEDDA. Do you think it was any power in me?

LOVBORG. How else can I explain it? And all those—those roundabout questions you used to put to me——

HEDDA. Which you understood so particularly well——

LOVBORG. How could you sit and question me like that? Question me quite frankly——

HEDDA. In roundabout terms, please observe.

LOVBORG. Yes, but frankly nevertheless. Cross-question me about—all that sort of thing ?

HEDDA. And how could you answer, Mr. Lovborg?

LOVBORG. Yes, that is just what I can't understand—in looking back upon it. But tell me now, Hedda—was there not love at the bottom of our friendship ? On your side, did you not feel as though you might purge my stains away—if I made you my confessor ? Was it not so ?

HEDDA. No, not quite.

LOVBORG. What was your motive, then ?

HEDDA. DO you think it quite incomprehensible that a young girl—when it can be done—without any one knowing——

LOVBORG. Well ?

HEDDA.———should be glad to have a peep, now and then, into a world which——

LOVBORG. Which——?

HEDDA.———which she is forbidden to know anything about ?

LOVBORG. So t h a t was it ?

HEDDA. Partly. Partly—I almost think.

LOVBORG. Comradeship in the thirst for life. But why should not t h a t, at any rate, have continued ?

HEDDA. The fault was yours.

LOVBORG. It was you that broke with me.

HEDDA. Yes, when our friendship threatened to develop into something more serious. Shame upon you, Eilert Lovborg! How could you think of wronging your—your frank comrade ?

LOVBORG [*clenching his hands*]. Oh, why did you not carry out your threat ? Why did you not shoot me down ?

HEDDA. Because! have such a dread of scandal.

LOVBORG. "Yes, Hedda, you—are acbwardaTheart.

HEDDA. A terrible coward. [*Changing her tone.*] But it was a lucky thing for you. And now you have found ample consolation at the Elvsteds*.

LOVBORG. I know what Thea has confided to you.

HEDDA. And perhaps you have confided to her something about us?

LOVBORG. Not a word. She is too stupid to understand anything of that sort.

HEDDA. Stupid?

LOVBORG. She is stupid about matters of that sort.

HEDDA. And I am cowardly. [*Bends over towards him, without looking him in the face, and says more softly:*] But now I will confide something to you.

LOVBORG [*eagerly*]. Well?

HEDDA. The fact that I dared not shoot you down——

LOVBORG. Yes!

HEDDA.——I hat was not my most arrant cowardice——that evening.

LOVBORG [*looks at her a moment, understands, and whispers passionately*]. Oh, Hedda! Hedda Gabler! Now I begin to see a hidden reason beneath our comradeship! You I and I——f After all, then, it was your craving for life——

HEDDA [*softly, with a sharp glance*]. Take care! Believe nothing of the sort!

[*Twilight has begun to fall. The hall door is opened from without by BERTA.*]

HEDDA [*closes the album with a bang and calls smilingly*]. Ah, at last! My darling Thea,—come along!

[*MRS. ELVSTED enters from the hall. She is in evening dress. The door is closed behind her.*]

HEDDA [*on the sofa, stretches out her arms towards her*]. My sweet Thea—you can't think how I have been longing for you!

[*MRS. ELVSTED, in passing, exchanges slight salutations with the gentlemen in the inner room, then goes up to the table and gives HEDDA her hand. EILERT LOVBORG has risen.*]

He and MRS. ELVSTED greet each other with a silent nod.

MRS. ELVSTED. Ought I to go in and talk to your husband for a moment?

¹In this speech he once more says *du*. Hedda addresses him throughout as *De*.

HEDDA. Oh, not at all. Leave those two alone. They will soon be going.

MRS. ELVSTED. Are they going out?

HEDDA. Yes, to a supper-party.

MRS. ELVSTED [*quickly, to LOVBORG*]. Not you?

LOVBORG. No.

HEDDA. Mr. Lovborg remains with us.

MRS. ELVSTED [*takes a chair and is about to seat herself at his side*]. Oh, how nice it is here!

HEDDA. No, thank you, my little Thea! Not there! You'll be good enough to come over here to me. I will sit between you.

MRS. ELVSTED. Yes, just as you please.

[*She goes round the table and seats herself on the sofa on HEDDA's right. LOVBORG re-seats himself on his chair.*

LOVBORG [*after a short pause, to HEDDA*]. Is not she lovely to look at?

HEDDA [*lightly stroking her hair*]. Only to look at?

LOVBORG. Yes. For we two—she and I — we are two real comrades. We have absolute faith in each other; so we can sit and talk with perfect frankness——

HEDDA. Not round about, Mr. Lovborg?

LOVBORG. Well——

MRS. ELVSTED [*softly clinging close to HEDDA*]. Oh, how happy I am, Hedda! For, only think, he says I have inspired him too.

HEDPA [*looks at her with a smile*]. Ah! Does he say that, dear?

LOVBORG. And then she is so brave, Mrs. Tesman!

MRS. ELVSTED. Good heavens—am I brave?

LOVBORG. Exceedingly—where your comrade is concerned.

HEDDA. Ah yes—courage! If one only had that!

LOVBORG. What then? What do you mean?

HEDDA. Then life would perhaps be liveable, after all. [*With a sudden change of tone*]. But now, my dearest Thea, you really must have a glass of cold punch.

MRS. ELVSTED. No, thanks—I never take anything of that kind.

HEDDA. Well then, you, Mr. Lovborg.

LOVBORG. Nor I, thank you.

MRS. ELVSTED. NO, he doesn't either.

HEDDA [*looks fixedly at him*]. But if I say you shall?

LOVBORG. It would be no use.

HEDDA [*laughing*]. Then I, poor creature, have no sort of power over you?

LOVBORG. Not in that respect.

HEDDA. But seriously, I think you ought to—for your own sake.

MRS. ELVSTED. Why, Hedda——!

LOVBORG. HOW SO?

HEDDA. Or rather on account of other people.

LOVBORG. Indeed?

HEDDA. Otherwise people might be apt to suspect that—in your heart of hearts—you did not feel quite secure—quite confident in yourself.

MRS. ELVSTED [*softly*]. Oh, please, Hedda——

LOVBORG. People may suspect what they like—for the present.

MRS. ELVSTED [*joyfully*]. Yes, let them!

HEDDA. I saw it plainly in Judge Brack's face a moment ago.

LOVBORG. What did you see?

HEDDA. His contemptuous smile, when you dared not go with them into the inner room.

LOVBORG. Dared not? Of course I preferred to stop here and talk to you.

MRS. ELVSTED. What could be more natural, Hedda?

HEDDA. But the Judge could not guess that. And I saw, too, the way he smiled and glanced at Tesman when you dared not accept his invitation to this wretched little supper-party of his.

LOVBORG. Dared not! Do you say I dared not?

HEDDA. I don't say so. But that was how Judge Brack understood it.

LOVBORG. Well, let him.

HEDDA. Then you are not going with them?

LOVBORG. I will stay here with you and Thea.

MRS. ELVSTED. Yes, Hedda—how can you doubt that?

HEDDA [*smiles and nods approvingly to LOVBORG*]. Firm as a rock! Faithful to your principles, now and for ever! Ah, that is how a man should be! [*Turns to MRS. ELVSTED and caresses her*]. Well now, what did I tell you, when you came to us this morning in such a state of distraction——

LOVBORG [*surprised*]. Distraction!

MRS. ELVSTED [*terrified*], Hedda—oh, Hedda——!

HEDDA. YOU can see for yourself! You haven't the slightest reason to be in such mortal terror———[*Interrupting herself,*] There! Now we can all three enjoy ourselves.

LOVBORG [*who has given a start*]. Ah—what is all this, Mrs. Tesman?

MRS. ELVSTED. Oh my God, Hedda! What are you saying? What are you doing?

HEDDA. Don't get excited! That horrid Judge Brack is sitting watching you.

LOVBORG. SO she was in mortal terror! On my account!

MRS. ELVSTED [*softly and piteously*]. Oh, Hedda—now you have ruined everything!

LOVBORG [*looks fixedly at her for a moment. His face is distorted*]. So that was my comrade's frank confidence in me?

MRS. ELVSTED [*imploringly*]. Oh, my dearest friend—only let me tell you——

LOVBORG [*takes one of the glasses of punch, raises it to his lips, and says in a low, husky voice*]. Your health, Thea!

[*He empties the glass, puts it down, and takes the second,*

MRS. ELVSTED [*softly*]. Oh, Hedda, Hedda—how could you do this?

HEDDA. I do it? If Are you crazy?

LOVBORG. Here's to your health too, Mrs. Tesman. Thanks for the truth. Hurrah for the truth!

[*He empties the glass and is about to re-fill it,*

HEDDA [*lays her hand on his arm*]. Come, come—no more for the present. Remember you are going out to supper.

MRS. ELVSTED. NO, no, no!

HEDDA. Hush! They are sitting watching you.

LOVBORG [*putting down the glass*]. Now, Thea—tell me the truth——

MRS. ELVSTED. Yes.

LOVBORG. Did your husband know that you had come after me?

MRS. ELVSTED [*wringing her hands*]. Oh, Hedda—do you hear what he is asking?

LOVBORG. Was it arranged between you and him that you were to come to town and look after me? Perhaps it was the Sheriff himself that urged you to come? Aha, my dear—no doubt he wanted my help in his office! Or was it at the card-table that he missed me?

MRS. ELVSTED [*softly, in agony*]. Oh, Lovborg, Lovborg——!

LOVBORG [*seizes a glass and is on the point of filling it*]. Here's a glass for the old Sheriff too!

HEDDA [*preventing him*]. No more just now. Remember, you have to read your manuscript to Tesman.

LOVBORG [*calmly, putting down the glass*]. It was stupid of me all this, Thea—to take it in this way, I mean. Don't be angry with me, my dear, dear comrade. You shall see—both you and the others—that if I was fallen once—now I have risen again! Thanks to you, Thea.

MRS. ELVSTED [*radiant with joy*]. Oh, heaven be praised——!

[BRACK *has in the meantime looked at his watch. He and TESMAN rise and come into the drawing-room.*

BRACK [*takes his hat and overcoat*]. Well, Mrs. Tesman, our time has come.

HEDDA. I suppose it has.

LOVBORG [*rising*]. Mine too, Judge Brack.

MRS. ELVSTED [*softly and imploringly*]. Oh, Lovborg, don't do it!

HEDDA [*pinching her arm*]. They can hear you!

MRS. ELVSTED [*with a suppressed shriek*]. Ow!

LOVBORG [*to BRACK*]. YOU were good enough to invite me.

BRACK. Well, are you coming after all ?

LOVBORG. Yes, many thanks.

BRACK. I'm delighted——

LOVBORG [*to TESMAN, putting the parcel of MS. in his pocket*]. I should like to show you one or two things before I send it to the printers.

TESMAN. Fancy—that will be delightful. But, Hedda dear, how is Mrs. Elvsted to get home ? Eh ?

HEDDA. Oh, that can be managed somehow.

LOVBORG [*looking towards the ladies*]. Mrs. Elvsted ? Of course, I'll come again and fetch her. [*Approaching.*] At ten or thereabouts, Mrs. Tesman ? Will that do ?

HEDDA. Certainly. That will do capitally.

TESMAN. Well, then, that's all right. But you must not expect me so early, Hedda.

HEDDA. Oh, you may stop as long—as long as ever you please.

MRS. ELVSTED [*trying to conceal her anxiety*]. Well then, Mr. Lovborg—I shall remain here until you come.

LOVBORG [*with his hat in his hand*]. Pray do, Mrs. Elvsted.

BRACK. And now off goes the excursion train, gentlemen ! I hope we shall have a lively time, as a certain fair lady puts it.

HEDDA. Ah, if only the fair lady could be present unseen——

BRACK. Why unseen ?

HEDDA. In order to hear a little of your liveliness at first hand, Judge Brack.

BRACK [*laughing*]. I should not advise the fair lady to try it.

TESMAN [*also laughing*]. Come, you're a nice one, Hedda ! Fancy that !

BRACK. Well, good-bye, good-bye, ladies.

LOVBORG [*bowing*]. About ten o'clock, then.

[BRACK, LOVBORG, and TESMAN go out by the hall door.

At the same time, BERTA enters from the inner room with a lighted lamp, which she places on the drawing-room table ; she goes out by the way she came.

MRS. ELVSTED [*who has risen and is wandering restlessly*

about the room]. Hedda—Hedda—what will come of all this?

HEDDA. At ten o'clock—he will be here. I can see him already—with vine-leaves in his hair—flushed and fearless——

MRS. ELVSTED. Oh, I hope he may.

HEDDA. And then, you see—then he will have regained control over himself. Then he will be a free man for all his days.

MRS. ELVSTED. Oh God!—if he would only come as you see him now!

HEDDA. He will come as I see him—so, and not otherwise! [*Rises and approaches* THEA.] YOU may doubt him as long as you please; I believe in him. And now we will try——

MRS. ELVSTED. YOU have some hidden motive in this, Hedda!

HEDDA. Yes, I have. I want for once in my life to have power to mould a human destiny.

MRS. ELVSTED. Have you not the power?

HEDDA. I have not—and have never had it.

MRS. ELVSTED. Not your husband's ?

HEDDA. DO you think that is worth the trouble ? Oh, if you could only understand how poor I am. And fate has made you so rich! [*Clasps her passionately in her arms,*] I think I must burn your hair off, after all.

MRS. ELVSTED. Let me go! Let me go! I am afraid of you, Hedda!

BERTA [*in the middle doorway*]. Tea is laid in the dining-room, ma'am.

HEDDA. Very well. We are coming.

MRS. ELVSTED. NO, no, no! I would rather go home alone! At once!

HEDDA. Nonsense! First you shall have a cup of tea, you little stupid. And then—at ten o'clock—Eilert Lovborg will be here—with vine-leaves in his hair.

[*She drags* MRS. ELVSTED *almost by force towards the middle doorway.*]

ACT III

The room at the TESMANS'. The curtains are drawn over the middle doorway, and also over the glass door. The lamp, half turned down, and with a shade over it, is burning on the table. In the stove, the door of which stands open, there has been a fire, which is now nearly burnt out,

MRS. ELVSTED, *wrapped in a large shawl, and with her feet upon a foot-rest, sits close to the stove, sunk back in the arm-chair,* HEDDA, *fully dressed, lies sleeping upon the sofa, with a sofa-blanket over her,*

MRS. ELVSTED [*after a pause, suddenly sits up in her chair, and listens eagerly. Then she sinks back again wearily, moaning to herself*],. Not yet!—Oh God—oh God—not yet!

[BERTA *slips cautiously in by the hall door. She has a letter in her hand.*

MRS. ELVSTED [*turns and ivhispers eagerly*]. Well—has any one come ?

BERTA [*softly*]. Yes, a girl has just brought this letter.

MRS. ELVSTED [*quickly, holding out her hand*], A letter! Give it to me!

BERTA. NO, it's for Dr. Tesman, ma'am.

MRS. ELVSTED. Oh, indeed.

BERTA. It was Miss Tesman's servant that brought it. I'll lay it here on the table.

MRS. ELVSTED. Yes, do.

BERTA [*laying down the letter*], I think I had better put out the lamp. It's smoking.

MRS. ELVSTED. Yes, put it out. It must soon be daylight now.

BERTA [*putting out the lamp*]. It is daylight already, ma'am.

MRS. ELVSTED. Yes, broad day! And no one come back yet——!

BERTA. Lord bless you, ma'am—I guessed how it would be.

MRS. ELVSTED. You guessed?

BERTA. Yes, when I saw that a certain person had come back to town—and that he went off with them. For we've heard enough about that gentleman before now.

MRS. ELVSTED. Don't speak so loud. You will waken Mrs. Tesman.

BERTA [*looks towards the sofa and sighs*]. No, no—let her sleep, poor thing. Shan't I put some wood on the fire?

MRS. ELVSTED. Thanks, not for me.

BERTA. Oh, very well. [*She goes softly out by the hall door.*

HEDDA [*is wakened by the shutting of the door, and looks up*]. What's that——?

MRS. ELVSTED. It was only the servant——

HEDDA [*looking about her*]. Oh, we're here——! Yes, now I remember. [*Sits erect upon the sofa, stretches herself, and rubs her eyes*]. What o'clock is it, Thea?

MRS. ELVSTED [*looks at her watch*]. It's past seven.

HEDDA. When did Tesman come home?

MRS. ELVSTED. He has not come.

HEDDA. Not come home yet?

MRS. ELVSTED [*rising*]. No one has come.

HEDDA. Think of our watching and waiting here till four in the morning——

MRS. ELVSTED [*wringing her haUds*]. And how I watched and waited for him!

HEDDA [*yawns, and says with her hand before her mouth*]. Well, well—we might have spared ourselves the trouble.

MRS. ELVSTED. Did you get a little sleep?

HEDDA. Oh yes; I believe I have slept pretty well. Have you not?

MRS. ELVSTED. Not for a moment. I couldn't, Hedda!—not to save my life.

HEDDA [*rises and goes towards her*]. There, there, there! There's nothing to be so alarmed about. I understand quite well what has happened.

MRS. ELVSTED. Well, what do you think? Won't you tell me?

HEDDA. Why, of course it has been a very late affair at Judge Brack's——

MRS. ELVSTED. Yes, yes—that is clear enough. But all the same——

HEDDA. And then, you see, Tesman hasn't cared to come home and ring us up in the middle of the night. [*Laughing.*] Perhaps he wasn't inclined to show himself either—immediately after a jollification.

MRS. ELVSTED. But in that case—where can he have gone?

HEDDA. Of course he has gone to his Aunts' and slept there. They have his old room ready for him.

MRS. ELVSTED. NO, he can't be with them; for a letter has just come for him from Miss Tesman. There it lies.

HEDDA. Indeed? [*Looks at the address.*] Why yes, it's addressed in Aunt Julia's own hand. Well then, he has remained at Judge Brack's. And as for Eilert Lovborg—he is sitting, with vine-leaves in his hair, reading his manuscript.

MRS. ELVSTED. Oh, Hedda, you are just saying things you don't believe a bit.

HEDDA. You really are a little blockhead, Thea.

MRS. ELVSTED. Oh yes, I suppose I am.

HEDDA. And how mortally tired you look.

MRS. ELVSTED. Yes, I am mortally tired.

HEDDA. Well then, you must do as I tell you. You must go into my room and lie down for a little while.

MRS. ELVSTED. Oh no, no—I shouldn't be able to sleep.

HEDDA. I am sure you would.

MRS. ELVSTED. Well, but your husband is certain to come soon now; and then I want to know at once——

HEDDA. I shall take care to let you know when he comes.

MRS. ELVSTED. DO you promise me, Hedda?

HEDDA. Yes, rely upon me. Just you go in and have a sleep in the meantime.

MRS. ELVSTED. Thanks; then I'll try to.

[She goes off through the inner room.]

[HEDDA goes up to the glass door and draws back the curtains.

The broad daylight streams into the room. Then she takes a little hand-glass from the writing-table, looks at herself in it, and arranges her hair. Next she goes to the hall door and presses the bell-button.

[BERTA *presently appears at the hall door,*

BERTA. Did you want anything, ma'am?

HEDDA. Yes; you must put some more wood in the stove. I am shivering.

BERTA. Bless me—I'll make up the fire at once. [*She rakes the embers together and lays a piece of wood upon them; then stops and listens.*] That was a ring at the front door, ma'am.

HEDDA. Then go to the door. I will look after the fire.

BERTA. It'll soon burn up. [*She goes out by the hall door.*

[HEDDA *kneels on the foot-rest and lays some more pieces of wood in the stove.*

[*After a short pause, GEORGE TESMAN enters from the hall. He looks tired and rather serious. He steals on tiptoe towards the middle doorway and is about to slip through the curtains.*

HEDDA [*at the stove, without looking up*]. Good morning.

TESMAN [*turns*]. Hedda! [*Approaching her.*] Good heavens—are you up so early? Eh?

HEDDA. Yes, I am up very early this morning.

TESMAN. And I never doubted you were still sound asleep. Fancy that, Hedda!

HEDDA. Don't speak so loud. Mrs. Elvsted is resting in my room.

TESMAN. Has Mrs. Elvsted been here all night?

HEDDA. Yes, since no one came to fetch her.

TESMAN. Ah, to be sure.

HEDDA [*closes the door of the stove and rises*]. Well, did you enjoy yourselves at Judge Brack's?

TESMAN. Have you been anxious about me? Eh?

HEDDA. NO, I should never think of being anxious. But I asked if you had enjoyed yourself.

TESMAN. Oh yes,—for once in a way. Especially the beginning of the evening; for then Eilert read me part of his book. We arrived more than an hour too early—fancy that! And Brack had all sorts of arrangements to make—so Eilert read to me.

HEDDA [*seating herself by the table on the right*]. Well? Tell me, then——

TESMAN [*sitting on a footstool near the stove*]. Oh, Hedda, you can't conceive what a book that is going to be! I believe it is one of the most remarkable things that have ever been written. Fancy that!

HEDDA. Yes yes; I don't care about that——

TESMAN. I must make a confession to you, Hedda. When he had finished reading—a horrid feeling came over me.

HEDDA. A horrid feeling?

TESMAN. I felt jealous of Eilert for having had it in him to write such a book. Only think, Hedda!

HEDDA. Yes, yes, I am thinking!

TESMAN. And then how pitiful to think that he—with all his gifts—should be irreclaimable, after all.

HEDDA. I suppose you mean that he has more courage than the rest?

TESMAN. NO, not at all—I mean that he is incapable of taking his pleasures in moderation.

HEDDA. And what came of it all—in the end?

TESMAN. Well, to tell the truth, I think it might best be described as an orgy, Hedda.

HEDDA. Had he vine-leaves in his hair?

TESMAN. Vine-leaves? No, I saw nothing of the sort. But he made a long, rambling speech in honour of the woman who had inspired him in his work—that was the phrase he used.

HEDDA. Did he name her?

TESMAN. NO, he didn't; but I can't help thinking he meant Mrs. Elvsted. You may be sure he did.

HEDDA. Well—where did you part from him?

TESMAN. On the way to town. We broke up—the last of us at any rate—all together; and Brack came with us to get a breath of fresh air. And then, you see, we agreed to take Eilert home; for he had had far more than was good for him.

HEDDA. I daresay.

TESMAN. But now comes the strange part of it, Hedda; or, I should rather say, the melancholy part of it. I declare I am almost ashamed—on Eilert's account—to tell you——

HEDDA. Oh, go on——!

TESMAN. Well, as we were getting near town, you see, I

happened to drop a little behind the others. Only for a minute or two—fancy that!

HEDDA. Yes, yes, yes, but——?

TESMAN. And then, as I hurried after them—what do you think I found by the wayside? Eh?

HEDDA. Oh, how should I know!

TESMAN. YOU mustn't speak of it to a soul, Hedda! Do you hear! Promise me, for Eilert's sake. [*Draws a parcel, wrapped in paper, from his coat pocket.*] Fancy, dear—I found this.

HEDDA. Is not that the parcel he had with him yesterday?

TESMAN. Yes, it is the whole of his precious, irreplaceable manuscript! And he had gone and lost it, and knew nothing about it. Only fancy, Hedda! So deplorably——

HEDDA. But why did you not give him back the parcel at once?

TESMAN. I didn't dare to—in the state he was then in——

HEDDA. Did you not tell any of the others that you had found it?

TESMAN. Oh, far from it! You can surely understand that, for Eilert's sake, I wouldn't do that.

HEDDA. SO no one knows that Eilert Lovborg's manuscript is in your possession?

TESMAN. NO. And no one must know it.

HEDDA. Then what did you say to him afterwards?

TESMAN. I didn't talk to him again at all; for when we got in among the streets, he and two or three of the others gave us the slip and disappeared. Fancy that!

HEDDA. Indeed! They must have taken him home then.

TESMAN. Yes, so it would appear. And Brack, too, left us.

HEDDA. And what have you been doing with yourself since?

TESMAN. Well, I and some of the others went home with one of the party, a jolly fellow, and took our morning coffee with him; or perhaps I should rather call it our night coffee—eh? But now, when I have rested a little, and given Eilert, poor fellow, time to have his sleep out, I must take this back to him.

HEDDA [*holds out her hand for the packet*]. No—don't give

it to him! Not in such a hurry, I mean. Let me read it first.

TESMAN. No, my dearest Hedda, I mustn't, I really mustn't.

HEDDA. YOU must not?

TESMAN. No—for you can imagine what a state of despair he will be in when he awakens and misses the manuscript. He has no copy of it, you must know! He told me so.

HEDDA [*looking searchingly at him*]. Can such a thing not be reproduced? Written over again?

TESMAN. No, I don't think that would be possible. For the inspiration, you see——

HEDDA. Yes, yes—I suppose it depends on that—— [*Lightly.*] But, by-the-by—here is a letter for you.

TESMAN. Fancy——!

HEDDA [*handing it to him*]. It came early this morning.

TESMAN. It's from Aunt Julia! What can it be? [*He lays the packet on the other footstool, opens the letter, runs his eye through it, and jumps up.*] Oh, Hedda—she says that poor Aunt Rina is dying!

HEDDA. Well, we were prepared for that.

TESMAN. And that if I want to see her again, I must make haste. I'll run in to them at once.

HEDDA [*suppressing a smile*]. Will you run?

TESMAN. Oh, my dearest Hedda—if you could only make up your mind to come with me! Just think I

HEDDA [*rises and says wearily, repelling the idea*]. No, no, don't ask me. I will not look upon sickness and death. I loathe all sorts of ugliness.

TESMAN. Well, well, then——! [*Bustling around.*] My hat——? My overcoat——? Oh, in the hall——I do hope I mayn't come too late, Hedda! Eh?

HEDDA. Oh, if you run——

[*BERTA appears at the hall door.*]

BERTA. Judge Brack is at the door, and wishes to know if he may come in.

TESMAN. At this time! No, I can't possibly see him.

HEDDA. But I can. [*To BERTA.*] Ask Judge Brack to come in.

[*BERTA goes out.*]

HEDDA [*quickly, whispering*']. The parcel, Tesman!
 [*She snatches it up from the stool.*]

TESMAN. Yes, give it to me!

HEDDA. NO, no, I will keep it till you come back.

[*She goes to the writing-table and places it in the bookcase,*
 TESMAN stands in a flurry of haste, and cannot get his
 gloves on.

JUDGE BRACK enters from the hall.

HEDDA [*nodding to him*]. You are an early bird, I must say.

BRACK. Yes, don't you think so? [*To TESMAN.*] Are you on the move, too?

TESMAN. Yes, I must rush off to my aunts'. Fancy—the invalid one is lying at death's door, poor creature.

BRACK. Dear me, is she indeed? Then on no account let me detain you. At such a critical moment——

TESMAN. Yes, I must really rush——Good-bye! Good-bye!
 [*He hastens out by the hall door.*]

HEDDA [*approaching*]. You seem to have made a particularly lively night of it at your rooms, Judge Brack.

BRACK. I assure you I have not had my clothes off, Mrs. Hedda.

HEDDA. Not you, either?

BRACK. NO, as you may see. But what has Tesman been telling you of the night's adventures?

HEDDA. Oh, some tiresome story. Only that they went and had coffee somewhere or other.

BRACK. I have heard about that coffee-party already. Eilert Lovborg was not with them, I fancy?

HEDDA. No, they had taken him home before that.

BRACK. Tesman too?

HEDDA. No, but some of the others, he said.

BRACK [*smiling*]. George Tesman is really an ingenuous creature, Mrs. Hedda.

HEDDA. Yes, heaven knows he is. Then is there something behind all this?

BRACK. Yes, perhaps there may be.

HEDDA. Well then, sit down, my dear Judge, and tell your story in comfort.

[She seats herself to the left of the table. BRACK sits near her, at the long side of the table,

HEDDA. Now then?

BRACK. I had special reasons for keeping track of my guests—or rather of some of my guests—last night.

HEDDA. Of Eilert Lovborg among the rest, perhaps?

BRACK. Frankly—yes.

HEDDA. Now you make me really curious——

BRACK. DO you know where he and one or two of the others finished the night, Mrs. Hedda?

HEDDA. If it is not quite unmentionable, tell me.

BRACK. Oh no, it's not at all unmentionable. Well, they put in an appearance at a particularly animated soiree.

HEDDA. Of the lively kind ?

BRACK. Of the very liveliest——

HEDDA. Tell me more of this, Judge Brack——

BRACK. Lovborg, as well as the others, had been invited in advance. I knew all about it. But he had declined the invitation ; for now, as you know, he has become a new man.

HEDDA. Up at the Elvsteds', yes. But he went after all, then?

BRACK. Well, you see, Mrs. Hedda—unhappily the spirit moved him at my rooms last evening——

HEDDA. Yes, I hear he found inspiration.

BRACK. Pretty violent inspiration. Well, I fancy that altered his purpose; for we menfolk are unfortunately not always so firm in our principles as we ought to be.

HEDDA. Oh, I am sure y o u are an exception, Judge Brack. But as to Lovborg——?

BRACK. TO make a long story short—he landed at last in Mademoiselle Diana's rooms.

HEDDA. Mademoiselle Diana's?

BRACK. It was Mademoiselle Diana that was giving the soiree, to a select circle of her admirers and her lady friends.

HEDDA. Is she a red-haired woman ?

BRACK. Precisely.

HEDDA. A tort of a—singer ?

BRACK. Oh yes—in her leisure moments. And moreover a mighty huntress—of men—Mrs. Hedda. You have no doubt heard of her. Eilert Lovborg was one of her most enthusiastic protectors—in the days of his glory.

HEDDA. And how did all this end ?

BRACK. Far from amicably, it appears. After a most tender meeting, they seem to have come to blows——

HEDDA. Lovborg and she?

BRACK. Yes. He accused her or her friends of having robbed him. He declared that his pocket-book had disappeared—and other things as well. In short, he seems to have made a furious disturbance.

HEDDA. And what came of it all ?

BRACK. It came to a general scrimmage, in which the ladies as well as the gentlemen took part. Fortunately the police at last appeared on the scene.

HEDDA. The police too ?

BRACK. Yes. I fancy it will prove a costly frolic for Eilert Lovborg, crazy being that he is.

HEDDA. How so?

BRACK. He seems to have made a violent resistance—to have hit one of the constables on the head and torn the coat off his back. So they had to march him off to the police-station with the rest.

HEDDA. HOW have you learnt all this ?

BRACK. From the police themselves.

HEDDA [*gazing straight before her*]. So that is what happened. Then he had no vine-leaves in his hair.

BRACK. Vine-leaves, Mrs. Hedda?

HEDDA [*changing her tone*']. But tell me now, Judge—what is your real reason for tracking out Eilert Lovborg's movements so carefully?

BRACK. In the first place, it could not be entirely indifferent to me if it should appear in the police-court that he came straight from my house.

HEDDA. Will the matter come into court then ?

BRACK. Of course. However, I should scarcely have troubled so much about that. But I thought that, as a friend of

the family, it was my duty to supply you and Tesman with a full account of his nocturnal exploits.

HEDDA. Why so, Judge Brack?

BRACK. Why, because I have a shrewd suspicion that he intends to use you as a sort of blind.

HEDDA. Oh, how can you think such a thing!

BRACK. Good heavens, Mrs. Hedda—we have eyes in our head. Mark my words! This Mrs. Elvsted will be in no hurry to leave town again.

HEDDA. Well, even if there should be anything between them, I suppose there are plenty of other places where they could meet.

BRACK. Not a single home. Henceforth, as before, every respectable house will be closed against Eilert Lovborg.

HEDDA. And so ought mine to be, you mean?

BRACK. Yes. I confess it would be more than painful to me if this personage were to be made free of your house. How superfluous, how intrusive, he would be, if he were to force his way into——

HEDDA.———into the triangle?

BRACK. Precisely. It would simply mean that I should find myself homeless.

HEDDA [*looks at him with a smile*]. So you want to be the one cock in the basket¹—that is your aim.

BRACK [*nods slowly and lowers his voice*"]. Yes, that is my aim. And for that I will fight—with every weapon I can command.

HEDDA [*her smile vanishing*]. I see you are a dangerous person—when it comes to the point.

BRACK. DO you think so?

HEDDA. I am beginning to think so. And I am exceedingly glad to think—that you have no sort of hold over me.

BRACK [*laughing equivocally*]. Well, well, Mrs. Hedda—perhaps you are right there. If I had, who knows what I might be capable of?

HEDDA. Come, come, now, Judge Brack! That sounds almost like a threat.

¹ " Eneste hanc i kurven "—a proverbial saying.

BRACK *[rising]*. Oh, not at all! The triangle, you know, ought, if possible, to be spontaneously constructed.

HEDDA. There I agree with you.

BRACK. Well, now I have said all I had to say; and I had better be getting back to town. Good-bye, Mrs. Hedda.

[He goes towards the glass door.]

HEDDA *[rising]*. Are you going through the garden?

BRACK. Yes, it's a short cut for me.

HEDDA. And then it is a back way, too.

BRACK. Quite so. I have no objection to back ways. They may be piquant enough at times.

HEDDA. When there is ball practice going on, you mean?

BRACK *[in the doorway, laughing to her]*. Oh, people don't shoot their tame poultry, I fancy.

HEDDA *[also laughing]*. Oh no, when there is only one cock in the basket——

[They exchange laughing nods of farewell. He goes. She closes the door behind him.]

[HEDDA, who has become quite serious, stands for a moment looking out. Presently she goes and peeps through the curtain over the middle doorway. Then she goes to the writing-table, takes LOVBORG'S packet out of the bookcase, and is on the point of looking through its contents. BERTA is heard speaking loudly in the hall. HEDDA turns and listens. Then she hastily locks up the packet in the drawer, and lays the key on the inkstand.]

[EILERT LOVBORG, with his greatcoat on and his hat in his hand, tears open the hall door. He looks somewhat confused and irritated.]

LOVBORG *[looking towards the hall]*. And I tell you I must and will come in! There!

[He closes the door, turns, sees HEDDA, at once regains his self-control, and bows.]

HEDDA *[at the writing-table]*. Well, Mr. Lovborg, this is rather a late hour to call for Thea.

LOVBORG. You mean rather an early hour to call on you. Pray pardon me.

HEDDA. HOW do you know that she is still here?

LOVBORG. They told me at her lodgings that she had been out all night.

HEDDA [*going to the oval table*]. Did you notice anything about the people of the house when they said that ?

LOVBORG [*looks inquiringly at her*]. Notice anything about them?

HEDDA. I mean, did they seem to think it odd ?

LOVBORG [*suddenly understanding*]. Oh yes, of course! I am dragging her down with me! However, I didn't notice anything.—I suppose Tesman is not up yet ?

HEDDA. NO—I think not——

LOVBORG. When did he come home ?

HEDDA. Very late.

LOVBORG. Did he tell you anything?

HEDDA. Yes, I gathered that you had had an exceedingly jolly evening at Judge Brack's.

LOVBORG. Nothing more ?

HEDDA. I don't think so. However, I was so dreadfully sleepy——

[MRS. ELVSTED *enters through the curtains of the middle doorway*.]

MRS. ELVSTED [*going towards him*]. Ah, Lovborg! At last——!

LOVBORG. Yes, at last. And too late!

MRS. ELVSTED [*looks anxiously at him*]. What is too late?

LOVBORG. Everything is too late now. It is all over with me.

MRS. ELVSTED. Oh no, no—don't say that!

LOVBORG. YOU will say the same when you hear——

MRS. ELVSTED. I won't hear anything!

HEDDA. Perhaps you would prefer to talk to her alone? If so, I will leave you.

LOVBORG. No, stay—you too. I beg you to stay.

MRS. ELVSTED. Yes, but I won't hear anything, I tell you.

LOVBORG. It is not last night's adventures that I want to talk about.

MRS. ELVSTED. What is it then——?

IXSVBORG. I want to say that now our ways must part.

MRS. ELVSTED. Part!

HEDDA [*involuntarily*], I knew it!

LOVBORG. You can be of no more service to me, Thea.

MRS. ELVSTED. HOW can you stand there and say that! No more service to you! Am I not to help you now, as before? Are we not to go on working together?

LOVBORG. Henceforward I shall do no work.

MRS. ELVSTED [*despairingly*']. Then what am I to do with my life?

LOVBORG. You must try to live your life as if you had never known me.

MRS. ELVSTED. But you know I cannot do that!

LOVBORG. Try if you cannot, Thea. You must go home again——

MRS. ELVSTED [*in vehement protest*]. Never in this world! Where you are, there will I be also! I will not let myself be driven away like this! I will remain here! I will be with you when the book appears.

HEDDA [*half aloud, in suspense*]. Ah yes—the book!

LOVBORG [*looks at her*]. My book and Thea's; for that is what it is.

MRS. ELVSTED. Yes, I feel that it is. And that is why I have a right to be with you when it appears! I will see with my own eyes how respect and honour pour in upon you afresh. And the happiness—the happiness—oh, I must share it with you!

LOVBORG. Thea—our book will never appear.

HEDDA. Ah!

MRS. ELVSTED. Never appear!

LOVBORG. Can never appear.

MRS. ELVSTED [*in agonised foreboding*]. Lovborg—what have you done with the manuscript?

HEDDA [*looks anxiously at him*]. Yes, the manuscript——?

MRS. ELVSTED. Where is it?

LOVBORG. Oh, Thea—don't ask me about it!

MRS. ELVSTED. Yes, yes, I will know. I demand to be told at once.

L6VBORG. The manuscript——Well then—I have torn the manuscript into a thousand pieces.

MRS. ELVSTED [*shrieks*]. Oh no, no——!

HEDDA [*involuntarily*]. But that's not——

L5VBORG [*looks at her*]. Not true, you think?

HEDDA [*collecting herself*]. Oh well, of course——since you say so. But it sounded so improbable——

LOVBORG. It is true, all the same.

MRS. ELVSTED [*wringing her hands*]. Oh God——oh God, Hedda——torn his own work to pieces!

LOVBORG. I have torn my own life to pieces. So why should I not tear my life-work too——?

MRS. ELVSTED. And you did this last night?

LOVBORG. Yes, I tell you! Tore it into a thousand pieces——and scattered them on the fiord——far out. There there is cool sea-water at any rate——let them drift upon it——drift with the current and the wind. And then presently they will sink——deeper and deeper——as I shall, Thea.

MRS. ELVSTED. DO you know, Lovborg, that what you have done with the book——I shall think of it to my dying day as though you had killed a little child.

LOVBORG. Yes, you are right. It is a sort of child-murder.

MRS. ELVSTED. How could you, then——! Did not the child belong to me too?

HEDDA [*almost inaudibly*]. Ah, the child——'

MRS. ELVSTED [*breathing heavily*]. It is all over then. Weil, well, now I will go, Hedda.

HEDDA. But you are not going away from town?

MRS. ELVSTED. Oh, I don't know what I shall do. I see nothing but darkness before me. [*She goes out by the hall door.*]

HEDDA [*stands waiting for a moment*]. So you are not going to see her home, Mr. Lovborg?

LOVBORG. I? Through the streets? Would you have people see her walking with me?

HEDDA. Of course I don't know what else may have happened last night. But is it so utterly irretrievable?

L6VBORG. It will not end with last night——I know that perfectly well. And the thing is that now I have no taste for that

sort of life either. I won't begin it anew. She has broken my courage and my power of braving life out.

HEDDA [*looking straight before her*]. So that pretty little fool has had her fingers in a man's destiny. [*Looks at him.*] But all the same, how could you treat her so heartlessly?

LOVBORG. Oh, don't say that it was heartless!

HEDDA. TO go and destroy what has filled her whole soul for months and years! You do not call that heartless!

LOVBORG. TO you I can tell the truth, Hedda. .

HEDDA. The truth?

LOVBORG. First promise me—give me your word—that what I now confide to you Thea shall never know.

HEDDA. I give you my word.

LOVBORG. Good. Then let me tell you that what I said just now was untrue.

HEDDA. About the manuscript?

LOVBORG. Yes. I have not torn it to pieces—nor thrown it into the fiord.

HEDDA. NO, no——But—where is it then?

LOVBORG. I have destroyed it none the less—utterly destroyed it, Hedda!

HEDDA. I don't understand.

LOVBORG. Thea said that what I had done seemed to her like a child-murder.

HEDDA. Yes, so she said.

LOVBORG. But to kill his child—that is not the worst thing a father can do to it.

HEDDA. Not the worst?

LOVBORG. No. I wanted to spare Thea from hearing the worst.

HEDDA. Then what is the worst?

LOVBORG. Suppose now, Hedda, that a man—in the small hours of the morning—came home to his child's mother after a night of riot and debauchery, and said: "Listen—I have been here and there—in this place and in that. And I have taken our child with me—to this place and to that. And I have lost the child—utterly lost it. The devil knows into what hands it may have fallen—who may have had their clutches on it."

HEDDA. Well—but when all is said and done, you know—this was only a book——

LOVBORG. Thea's pure soul was in that book.

HEDDA. Yes, so I understand.

LOVBORG. And you can understand, too, that for her and me together no future is possible.

HEDDA. What path do you mean to take then?

LOVBORG. None. I will only try to make an end of it all—the sooner the better.

HEDDA [*a step nearer him*], Eilert Lovborg—listen to me.—Will you not try to—to do it beautifully?

LOVBORG. Beautifully? [*Smiling.*] With vine-leaves in my hair, as you used to dream in the old days——?

HEDDA. NO, no. I have lost my faith in the vine-leaves. But beautifully nevertheless! For once in a way!—Good-bye! You must go now—and do not come here any more.

LOVBORG. Good-bye, Mrs. Tesman. And give George Tesman my love. [*He is on the point of going.*]

HEDDA. NO, wait! I must give you a memento to take with you.

[She goes to the writing-table and opens the drawer and the pistol-case; then returns to LOVBORG with one of the pistols.

LOVBORG [*looks at her*]. This? Is this the memento?

HEDDA [*nodding slowly*]. Do you recognise it? It was aimed at you once.

LOVBORG. YOU should have used it then.

HEDDA. Take it—and do you use it now.

LOVBORG [*puts the pistol in his breast pocket*]. Thanks!

HEDDA. And beautifully, Eilert Lovborg. Promise me that!

LOVBORG. Good-bye, Hedda Gabler.

[He goes out by the hall door.

[HEDDA listens for a moment at the door. Then she goes up to the writing-table, takes out the packet of manuscript, peeps under the cover, draws a few of the sheets half out, and looks at them. Next she goes over and seats herself in the armchair beside the stove, with the packet in her lap Presently she opens the stove door, and then the packet*]*

HEDDA [*throws one of the quires into the fire and whispers to herself*]. Now I am burning your child, Thea!—Burning it, curly-locks. [*Throwing one or two more quires into the stove.*] Your child and Eilert Lovborg's. [*Throws the rest in.*] I am burning—I am burning your child.

A C T I V

The same rooms at the TESMANS\ It is evening. The drawing-room is in darkness. The back room is lighted by the hanging lamp over the table. The curtains over the glass door are drawn close.

HEDDA, *dressed in black, walks to and fro in the dark room. Then she goes into the back room and disappears for a moment to the left. She is heard to strike a few chords on the piano. Presently she comes in sight again, and returns to the drawing-room.*

BERTA *enters from the right, through the inner room, with a lighted lamp, which she places on the table in front of the corner settee in the drawing-room. Her eyes are red with weeping, and she has black ribbons in her cap. She goes quietly and circumspectly out to the right. HEDDA goes up to the glass door, lifts the curtain a little aside, and looks out into the darkness.*

Shortly afterwards, Miss TESMAN, in mourning, with a bonnet and veil on, comes in from the hall. HEDDA goes towards her and holds out her hand.

MISS TESMAN. Yes, Hedda, here I am, in mourning and forlorn; for now my poor sister has at last found peace.

HEDDA. I have heard the news already, as you see. Tesman sent me a card.

MISS TESMAN. Yes, he promised me he would. But nevertheless I thought that to Hedda—here in the house of life—I ought myself to bring the tidings of death.

HEDDA. That was very kind of you

MISS TESMAN. Ah, Rina ought not to have left us just now. This is not the time for Hedda's house to be a house of mourning.

HEDDA [*changing the subject*]. She died quite peacefully, did she not, Miss Tesman?

MISS TESMAN. Oh, her end was so calm, so beautiful. And then she had the unspeakable happiness of seeing George once more—and bidding him good-bye.—Has he not come home yet?

HEDDA. NO. He wrote that he might be detained. But won't you sit down?

MISS TESMAN. NO thank you, my dear, dear Hedda. I should like to, but I have so much to do. I must prepare my dear one for her rest as well as I can. She shall go to her grave looking her best.

HEDDA. Can I not help you in any way?

MISS TESMAN. Oh, you must not think of it! Hedda Tesman must have no hand in such mournful work. Nor let her thoughts dwell on it either—not at this time.

HEDDA. One is not always mistress of one's thoughts—

MISS TESMAN [*continuing*]. Ah yes, it is the way of the world. At home we shall be sewing a shroud; and here there will soon be sewing too, I suppose—but of another sort, thank God!

[GEORGE TESMAN *enters by the hall door.*]

HEDDA. Ah, you have come at last!

TESMAN. YOU here, Aunt Julia? With Hedda? Fancy that!

MISS TESMAN. I was just going, my dear boy. Well, have you done all you promised?

TESMAN. No; I'm really afraid I have forgotten half of it. I must come to you again to-morrow. To-day my brain is all in a whirl. I can't keep my thoughts together.

MISS TESMAN. Why, my dear George, you mustn't take it in this way.

TESMAN. Mustn't—? How do you mean?

MISS TESMAN. Even in your sorrow you must rejoice, as I do—rejoice that she is at rest.

TESMAN. Oh yes, yes—you are thinking of Aunt Rina.

HEDDA. You will feel lonely now, Miss Tesman.

Miss TESMAN. Just at first, yes. But that will not last very long, I hope. I daresay I shall soon find an occupant for poor Rina's little room.

TESMAN. Indeed ? Who do you think will take it ? Eh ?

MISS TESMAN. Oh, there's always some poor invalid or other in want of nursing, unfortunately.

HEDDA. Would you really take such a burden upon you again ?

MISS TESMAN. A burden! Heaven forgive you, child—it has been no burden to me.

HEDDA. But suppose you had a total stranger on your hands——

MISS TESMAN. Oh, one soon makes friends with sick folk; and it's such an absolute necessity for me to have some one to live for. Well, heaven be praised, there may soon be something in this house, too, to keep an old aunt busy.

HEDDA. Oh, don't trouble about anything here.

TESMAN. Yes, just fancy what a nice time we three might have together, if——?

HEDDA. If——?

TESMAN [*uneasily*]. Oh, nothing. It will all come right. Let us hope so—eh ?

Miss TESMAN. Well, well, I daresay you two want to talk to each other. [*Smiling.*] And perhaps Hedda may have something to tell you too, George. Good-bye! I must go home to Rina. [*Turning at the door.*] How strange it is to think that now Rina is with me and with my poor brother as well!

TESMAN. Yes, fancy that, Aunt Julia! Eh ?

[Miss TESMAN goes out by the hall door.

HEDDA [*follows TESMAN coldly and searchingly with her eyes*], I almost believe your Aunt Rina's death affects you more than it does Aunt Julia.

TESMAN. Oh, it's not that alone. It's Eilert I am so terribly uneasy about.

HEDDA [*quickly*]. Is there anything new about him?

TESMAN. . I looked in at his rooms this afternoon, intending to tell him the manuscript was in safe keeping.

HEDDA. Well, did you not find him?

TESMAN. No. He wasn't at home. But afterwards I met Mrs. Elvsted, and she told me that he had been here early this morning.

HEDDA. Yes, directly after you had gone.

TESMAN. And he said that he had torn his manuscript to pieces—eh?

HEDDA. Yes, so he declared.

TESMAN. Why, good heavens, he must have been completely out of his mind! And I suppose you thought it best not to give it back to him, Hedda?

HEDDA. NO, he did not get it.

TESMAN. But of course you told him that we had it?

HEDDA. NO. [*Quickly.*] Did you tell Mrs. Elvsted?

TESMAN. NO; I thought I had better not. But you ought to have told him. Fancy, if, in desperation, he should go and do himself some injury! Let me have the manuscript, Hedda! I will take it to him at once. Where is it?

HEDDA [*cold and immovable, leaning on the armchair*], I have not got it.

TESMAN. Have not got it? What in the world do you mean?

HEDDA. I have burnt it—every line of it.

TESMAN [*with a violent movement of terror*]. Burnt! Burnt Eilert's manuscript!

HEDDA. Don't scream so. The servant might hear you.

TESMAN. Burnt! Why, good God——! No, no, no! It's impossible.

HEDDA. It is so, nevertheless.

TESMAN. DO you know what you have done, Hedda? It's unlawful appropriation of lost property. Fancy that! Just ask Judge Brack, and he'll tell you what it is.

HEDDA. I advise you not to speak of it—either to Judge Brack, or to any one else.

TESMAN. But how could you do anything so unheard-of?

What put it into your head? What possessed you? Answer me that—eh?

HEDDA [*suppressing an almost imperceptible smile*] I did it for your sake, George.

TESMAN. For my sake!

HEDDA. This morning, when you told me about what he had read to you——

TESMAN. Yes, yes—what then?

HEDDA. YOU acknowledged that you envied him his work.

TESMAN. Oh, of course I didn't mean that literally.

HEDDA. NO matter—I could not bear the idea that any one should throw you into the shade.

TESMAN [*in an outburst of mingled doubt and joy*], Hedda! Oh, is this true? But—but—I never knew you show your love like that before. Fancy that!

HEDDA. Well, I may as well tell you that—just at this time——[*Impatiently, breaking off.*] No, no; you can ask Aunt Julia. She will tell you, fast enough.

TESMAN. Oh, I almost think I understand you, Hedda! [*Clasps his hands together.*] Great heavens! do you really mean it! Eh?

HEDDA. Don't shout so. The servant might hear.

TESMAN [*laughing in irrepressible glee*]. The servant! Why, how absurd you are, Hedda! It's only my old Berta! Why, I'll tell Berta myself.

HEDDA [*clenching her hands together in desperation*]. Oh, it is killing me,—it is killing me, all this!

TESMAN. What is, Hedda? Eh?

HEQDA [*coldly controlling herself*]. All this—absurdity—George.

TESMAN. Absurdity! Do you see anything absurd in my being overjoyed at the news! But after all—perhaps I had better not say anything to Berta.

HEDDA. Oh—why not that too?

TESMAN. No, no, not yet! But I must certainly tell Aunt Julia. And then that you have begun to call me George too! Fancy that! Oh, Aunt Julia will be so happy—so happy!

HEDDA. When she hears that I have burnt Eilert Lovborg's manuscript—for your sake?

TESMAN. NO, by-the-by—that affair of the manuscript—of course nobody must know about that. But that you love me so much,¹ Hedda—Aunt Julia must really share my joy in that! I wonder, now, whether this sort of thing is usual in young wives? Eh?

HEDDA. I think you had better ask Aunt Julia that question too.

TESMAN. I will indeed, some time or other. [*Looks uneasy and downcast again.*] And yet the manuscript—the manuscript! Good God! it is terrible to think what will become of poor Eilert now.

[MRS. ELVSTED, *dressed as in the first act, with hat and cloak, enters by the hall door.*

MRS. ELVSTED [*greets them hurriedly, and says in evident agitation*']. Oh, dear Hedda, forgive my coming again.

HEDDA. What is the matter with you, Thea?

TESMAN. Something about Eilert Lovborg again—eh?

MRS. ELVSTED. Yes! I am dreadfully afraid some misfortune has happened to him.

HEDDA [*seizes her arm*]. Ah—do you think so!

TESMAN. Why, good Lord—what makes you think that, Mrs. Elvsted?

MRS. ELVSTED. I heard them talking of him at my boarding-house—just as I came in. Oh, the most incredible rumours are afloat about him to-day.

TESMAN. Yes, fancy, so I heard too! And I can bear witness that he went straight home to bed last night. Fancy that!

HEDDA. Well, what did they say at the boarding-house?

MRS. ELVSTED. Oh, I couldn't make out anything clearly. Either they knew nothing definite, or else——They stopped talking when they saw me; and I did not dare to ask.

TESMAN [*moving about uneasily*]. We must hope—we must hope that you misunderstood them, Mrs. Elvsted.

MRS. ELVSTED. NO, no; I am sure it was of him they were talking. And I heard something about the hospital or——

¹ Literally, "That you burn for me."

TESMAN. The hospital ?

HEDDA. NO—surely that cannot be!

MRS. ELVSTED. Oh, I was in such mortal terror! I went to his lodgings and asked for him there.

HEDDA. Y o u could make up your mind to that, Thea!

MRS. ELVSTED. What else could I do? I really could bear the suspense no longer.

TESMAN. But you didn't find him either—eh ?

MRS. ELVSTED. No. And the people knew nothing about him. He hadn't been home since yesterday afternoon, they said.

TESMAN. Yesterday! Fancy, how could they say that?

MRS. ELVSTED. Oh, I am sure something terrible must have happened to him.

TESMAN. Hedda dear—how would it be if I were to go and make inquiries——?

HEDDA. NO, no—don't you mix yourself up in this affair.

[JUDGE BRACK, with his hat in his hand, enters by the hall door, which BERTA opens, and closes behind him. He looks grave and bows in silence.

TESMAN. Oh, is that you, my dear Judge ? Eh ?

BRACK. Yes. It was imperative I should see you this evening.

TESMAN. I can see you have heard the news about Aunt Rina?

BRACK. Yes, that among other things.

TESMAN. Isn't it sad—eh ?

BRACK. Well, my dear Tesman, that depends on how you look at it.

TESMAN [*looks doubtfully at him*]. Has anything else happened ?

BRACK. Yes.

HEDDA [*in suspense*]. Anything sad, Judge Brack?

BRACK. That, too, depends on how you look at it, Mrs. Tesman.

MRS. ELVSTED [*unable to restrain her anxiety*]. Oh! it is something about Eilert Lovborg!

BRACK [*with a glance at her*]. What makes you think that, madam ? Perhaps you have already heard something——?

MRS. ELVSTED [*in confusion*]. No, nothing at all, but——

TESMAN. Oh, for heaven's sake, tell us!

BRACK [*shrugging his shoulders*]. Well, I regret to say Eilert Lovborg has been taken to the hospital. He is lying at the point of death.

MRS. ELVSTED [*shrieks*]. Oh God! oh God——!

TESMAN. TO the hospital! And at the point of death!

HEDDA [*involuntarily*]. So soon then——

MRS. ELVSTED [*wailing*]. And we parted in anger, Hedda!

HEDDA [*whispers*], Thea—Thea—be careful!

MRS. ELVSTED [*not heeding her*], I must go to him! I must see him alive!

BRACK. It is useless, madam. No one will be admitted.

MRS. ELVSTED. Oh, at least tell me what has happened to him? What is it?

TESMAN. YOU don't mean to say that he has himself——
Eh?

HEDDA. Yes, I am sure he has.

TESMAN. Hedda, how can you——?

BRACK [*keeping his eyes fixed upon her*]. Unfortunately you have guessed quite correctly, Mrs. Tesman.

MRS. ELVSTED. Oh, how horrible!

TESMAN. Himself, then! Fancy that!

HEDDA. Shot himself!

BRACK. Rightly guessed again, Mrs. Tesman.

MRS. ELVSTED [*with an effort at self-control*]. When did it happen, Mr. Brack?

BRACK. This afternoon—between three and four.

TESMAN. But, good Lord, where did he do it? Eh?

BRACK [*with some hesitation*]. Where? Well—I suppose at his lodgings.

MRS. ELVSTED. No, that cannot be; for I was there between six and seven.

BRACK. Well then, somewhere else. I don't know exactly. I only know that he was found———He had shot himself—in the breast.

MRS. ELVSTED. Oh, how terrible! That he should die like that!

HEDDA [*to BRACK*]. Was it in the breast ?

BRACK. Yes—as I told you.

HEDDA. Not in the temple?

BRACK. In the breast, Mrs. Tesman.

HEDDA. Well, well—the breast is a good place, too.

BRACK. HOW do you mean, Mrs. Tesman ?

HEDDA [*evasively*]. Oh, nothing—nothing.

TESMAN. And the wound is dangerous, you say—eh?

BRACK. Absolutely mortal. The end has probably come by this time.

MRS. ELVSTED. Yes, yes, I feel it. The end ! The end !
Oh, Hedda——!

TESMAN. But tell me, how have you learnt all this?

BRACK [*curtly*]. Through one of the police. A man I had some business with.

HEDDA [*in a clear voice*]. At last a deed worth doing!

TESMAN [*terrified*]. Good heavens, Hedda! what are you saying ?

HEDDA. I say there is beauty is this.

BRACK. H'm, Mrs. Tesman——

TESMAN. Beauty! Fancy that!

MRS. ELVSTED. Oh, Hedda, how can you talk of beauty in such an act!

HEDDA. Eilert Lovborg has himself made up his account with life. He has had the courage to do—the one right thing.

MRS. ELVSTED. No, you must never think that was how it happened ! It must have been in delirium that he did it.

TESMAN. In despair!

HEDDA, That he did not. I am certain of that.

MRS. ELVSTED. Yes, yes! In delirium! Just as when he tore up our manuscript.

BRACK [*starting*]. The manuscript? Has he torn that up.

MRS. ELVSTED. Yes, last night.

TESMAN [*whispers softly*]. Oh, Hedda, we shall never get over this.

BRACK. H'm, very extraordinary.

TESMAN [*moving about the room*]. To think of Eilert going

out of the world in this way! And not leaving behind him the book that would have immortalised his name——

MRS. ELVSTED. Oh, if only it could be put together again!

TESMAN. Yes, if it only could! I don't know what I would not give——

MRS. ELVSTED. Perhaps it can, Mr. Tesman.

TESMAN. What do you mean?

MRS. ELVSTED [*searches in the pocket of her dress*]. Look here. I have kept all the loose notes he used to dictate from.

HEDDA [*a step forward*]. Ah——!

TESMAN. You have kept them, Mrs. Elvsted! Eh?

MRS. ELVSTED. Yes, I have them here. I put them in my pocket when I left home. Here they still are——

TESMAN. Oh, do let me see them!

MRS. ELVSTED [*hands him a bundle of papers*]. But they are in such disorder—all mixed up.

TESMAN. Fancy, if we could make something out of them, after all! Perhaps if we two put our heads together——

MRS. ELVSTED. Oh yes, at least let us try——

TESMAN. We will manage it I We must! I will dedicate my life to this task.

HEDDA. You, George? Your life?

TESMAN. Yes, or rather all the time I can spare. My own collections must wait in the meantime. Hedda—you understand, eh? I owe this to Eilert's memory.

HEDDA. Perhaps.

TESMAN. And so, my dear Mrs. Elvsted, we will give our whole minds to it. There is no use in brooding over what can't be undone—eh? We must try to control our grief as much as possible, and——

MRS. ELVSTED. Yes, yes, Mr. Tesman, I will do the best I can.

TESMAN. Well then, come here. I can't rest until we have looked through the notes. Where shall we sit? Here? No, in there, in the back room. Excuse me, my dear Judge. Come with me, Mrs. Elvsted.

MRS. ELVSTED. Oh, *if* only it were possible!

[TESMAN *and* MRS. ELVSTED *go into the back room. She*

takes off her hat and cloak. They both sit at the table under the hanging lamp, and are soon deep in an eager examination of the papers, HEDDA crosses to the stove and sits in the armchair. Presently BRACK goes up to her.

HEDDA [*in a low voice*]. Oh, what a sense of freedom it gives one, this act of Eilert Lovborg's.

BRACK. Freedom, Mrs. Hedda? Well, of course, it is a release for him——

HEDDA. I mean for me. It gives me a sense of freedom to know that a deed of deliberate courage is still possible in this world,—a deed of spontaneous beauty.

BRACK [*smiling*']. H'm—my dear Mrs. Hedda——

HEDDA. Oh, I know what you are going to say. For you are a kind of specialist too, like—you know!

BRACK [*looking hard at her*]. Eilert Lovborg was more to you than perhaps you are willing to admit to yourself. Am I wrong?

HEDDA. I don't answer such questions. I only know that Eilert Lovborg has had the courage to live his life after his own fashion. And then—the last great act, with its beauty! Ah! that he should have the will and the strength to turn away from the *jaarujuet* of life—so early.

BRACK. I am sorry, Mrs. Hedda,—but I fear I must dispel an amiable illusion.

HEDDA. Illusion?

BRACK. Which could not have lasted long in any case.

HEDDA. What do you mean?

BRACK. Eilert Lovborg did not shoot himself—voluntarily.

HEDDA. Not voluntarily?

BRACK. No. The thing did not happen exactly as I told it.

HEDDA [*in suspense*]. Have you concealed something? What is it?

BRACK. For poor Mrs. Elvsted's sake I idealised the facts a little.

HEDDA. What are the facts?

BRACK. First, that he is already dead.

HEDDA. At the hospital?

BRACK. Yes—without regaining consciousness.

HEDDA. What more have you concealed ?

BRACK. This—the event did not happen at his lodgings.

HEDDA. Oh, that can make no difference.

BRACK. Perhaps it may. For I must tell you—Eilert Lovborg was found shot in—in Mademoiselle Diana's boudoir.

HEDDA [*makes a motion as if to rise, but sinks back again*]*
That is impossible, Judge Brack! He cannot have been there again to-day.

BRACK. He was there this afternoon. He went there, he said, to demand the return of something which they had taken from him. Talked wildly about a lost child——

HEDDA. Ah—so that was why——

BRACK. I thought probably he meant his manuscript; but now I hear he destroyed that himself. So I suppose it must have been his pocket-book.

HEDDA. Yes, no doubt. And there—there he was found ?

BRACK. Yes, there. With a pistol in his breast-pocket, discharged. The ball had lodged in a vital part.

HEDDA. In the breast—yes.

BRACK. NO—in the bowels.

HEDDA [*looks up at him with an expression of loathing*].
That too! Oh, what curse is it that makes everything I touch turn ludicrous and mean ?

BRACK. There is one point more, Mrs. Hedda—another disagreeable feature in the affair.

HEDDA. And what is that ?

BRACK. The pistol he carried——

HEDDA [*breathless*]. Well ? What of it ?

BRACK. He must have stolen it.

HEDDA [*leaps up*]. Stolen it! That is not true! He did not steal it!

BRACK. NO other explanation is possible. He must have stolen it——Hush!

[TESMAN and MRS. ELVSTED *have risen from the table in the back room, and come into the drawing-room.*

TESMAN [*with the papers in both his hands*], Hedda dear, it is almost impossible to see under that lamp. Think of that!

HEDDA. Yes, I am thinking.

TESMAN. Would you mind our sitting at your writing-table—eh?

HEDDA. If you like. [*Quickly.*] No, wait! Let me clear it first!

TBSMAN. Oh, you needn't trouble, Hedda. There is plenty of room.

HEDDA. No no, let me clear it, I say! I will take these things in and put them on the piano. There!

[She has drawn out an object, covered with sheet music, from under the bookcase, places several other pieces of music upon it, and carries the whole into the inner room, to the left.

TESMAN *lays the scraps of paper on the writing-table, and moves the lamp there from the corner table.* He and MRS. ELVSTED *sit down and proceed with their work.* HEDDA *returns.*

HEDDA [*behind MRS. ELVSTED'S chair, gently ruffling her hair*]. Well, my sweet Thea,—how goes it with Eilert Lovborg's monument?

MRS. ELVSTED [*looks dispiritedly up at her*]. Oh, it will be terribly hard to put in order.

TESMAN. We must manage it. I am determined. And arranging other people's papers is just the work for me.

[*HEDDA goes over to the stove, and seats herself on one of the footstools.* BRACK *stands over her, leaning on the arm-chair.*

HEDDA [*whispers*]. What did you say about the pistol?

BRACK [*softly*]. That he must have stolen it.

HEDDA. Why stolen it?

BRACK. Because every other explanation ought to be impossible, Mrs. Hedda.

HEDDA. Indeed?

BRACK [*glances at her*]. Of course Eilert Lovborg was here this morning. Was he not?

HEDDA. Yes.

BRACK. Were you alone with him?

HEDDA. Part of the time.

BRACK. Did you not leave the room whilst he was here?

HEDDA. No.

BRACK. Try to recollect. Were you not out of the room a moment?

HEDDA. Yes, perhaps just a moment—out in the hall.

BRACK. And where was your pistol-case during that time?

HEDDA. I had it locked up in——

BRACK. Well, Mrs. Hedda?

HEDDA. The case stood there on the writing-table.

BRACK. Have you looked since, to see whether both the pistols are there?

HEDDA. No.

BRACK. Well, you need not. I saw the pistol found in Lovborg's pocket, and I knew it at once as the one I had seen yesterday—and before, too.

HEDDA. Have you it with you?

BRACK. No; the police have it.

HEDDA. What will the police do with it?

BRACK. Search till they find the owner.

HEDDA. Do you think they will succeed?

BRACK [*bends over her and whispers*']. No, Hedda Gabler—not so long as I say nothing.

HEDDA [*looks frightened at him*]. And if you do not say nothing,—what then?

BRACK [*shrugs his shoulders*]. There is always the possibility that the pistol was stolen.

HEDDA [*firmly*]. Death rather than that.

BRACK [*smiling*]. People say such things—but they don't do them.

HEDDA [*without replying*]. And supposing the pistol was not stolen, and the owner is discovered? What then?

BRACK. Well, Hedda—then comes the scandal.

HEDDA. The scandal!

BRACK. Yes, the scandal—of. which you are so mortally afraid. You will, of course, be brought before the court—both you and Mademoiselle Diana. She will have to explain how the thing happened—whether it was an accidental shot or murder. Did the pistol go off as he was trying to take it out of his pocket, to threaten her with? Or did she tear the pistol out of his hand, shoot him, and put it back into his pocket?

That would be quite like her; for she is an able-bodied young person, this same Mademoiselle Diana.

HEDDA. But I have nothing to do with all this repulsive business.

BRACK. NO. But you will have to answer the question: Why did you give Eilert Lovborg the pistol? And what conclusions will people draw from the fact that you did give it to him?

HEDDA [*lets her head sink*]. That is true. I did not think of that.

BRACK. Well, fortunately, there is no danger, so long as I say nothing.

HEDDA [*looks up at him*]. So I am in your power, Judge Brack. You have me at your beck and call, from this time forward.

BRACK [*whispers softly*]. Dearest Hedda—believe me—I shall not abuse my advantage.

HEDDA. I am in your power none the less. Subject to your will and your demands. A slave, a slave then! [*Rises impetuously.*] No, I cannot endure the thought of that! Never!

BRACK [*looks half-mockingly at her*]. People generally get used to the inevitable.

HEDDA [*returns his look*]. Yes, perhaps. [*She crosses to the writing-table. Suppressing an involuntary smile, she imitates TESMAN'S intonations.*] Well? Are you getting on, George? Eh?

TESMAN. Heaven knows, dear. In any case it will be the work of months.

HEDDA [*as before*]. Fancy that! [*Passes her hands softly through MRS. ELVSTED'S hair.*] Doesn't it seem strange to you, Thea? Here are you sitting with Tesman—just as you used to sit with Eilert Lovborg?

MRS. ELVSTED. Ah, if I could only inspire your husband in the same way!

HEDDA. Oh, that will come too—in time.

TESMAN. Yes, do you know, Hedda—I really think I begin to feel something of the sort. But won't you go and sit with Brack again?

HEDDA. IS there nothing I can do to help you two ?

TESMAN. NO, nothing in the world. [*Turning his head.*]
I trust to you to keep Hedda company, my dear Brack!

BRACK [*with a glance at HEDDA*]. With the very greatest of pleasure.

HEDDA. Thanks. But I am tired this evening. I will go in and lie down a little on the sofa.

TESMAN. Yes, do, dear—eh ?

[*HEDDA goes into the back room and draws the curtains. A short pause. Suddenly she is heard playing a wild dance on the piano.*]

MRS. ELVSTED [*starts from her chair*]. Oh—what is that?

TESMAN [*runs to the doorway*]. Why, my dearest Hedda, don't play dance-music to-night! Just think of Aunt Rina! And of Eilert too !

HEDDA [*puts her head out between the curtains*]. And of Aunt Julia. And of all the rest of them.—After this, I will be quiet. [*Closes the curtains again.*]

TESMAN [*at the writing-table*]. It's not good for her to see us at this distressing work. I'll tell you what, Mrs. Elvsted,—you shall take the empty room at Aunt Julia's, and then I will come over in the evenings, and we can sit and work t h e r e—eh?

HEDDA [*in the inner room*], I hear what you are saying, Tesman. But how am I to get through the evenings out here ?

TESMAN [*turning over the papers*]. Oh, I daresay Judge Brack will be so kind as to look in now and then, even though I am out.

BRACK [*in the armchair, calls out gaily*]. Every blessed evening, with all the pleasure in life, Mrs. Tesman ! We shall get on capitally together, we two !

HEDDA [*speaking loud and clear*]. Yes, don't you flatter yourself we will, Judge Brack? Now that you are the one cock in the basket——

[*A shot is heard within. TESMAN, MRS. ELVSTED, and BRACK leap to their feet.*]

TESMAN. Oh, now she is playing with those pistols again.
[*He throws back the curtains and runs in, followed by MRS.*]

ELVSTED. HEDDA *lies stretched on the sofa, lifeless. Confusion and cries.* BERTA *enters in alarm from the right.*

TESMAN [*shrieks to BRACK*]. Shot herself! Shot herself in the temple! Fancy that!

BRACK [*half-fainting in the armchair*]. Good God!—people don't do such things.

Curtain

THE MASTER BUILDER

(1892)

TRANSLATED BY

SIR EDMUND GOSSE AND WILLIAM ARCHER

CHARACTERS

HALVARD SOLNESS, *Master Builder.*

ALINE SOLNESS, *his wife.*

DR. HERDAL, *physician.*

KNUT BROVIK, *formerly an architect, now in SOLNESS'S
employment.*

RAGNAR BROVIK, *his son, draughtsman.*

KAIA FOSLI, *his niece, book-keeper.*

MISS HILDA WANGEL.

Some Ladies.

A Crowd in the street.

The action passes in and about SOLNESS'S house.

NOTE.—In Norway when a house is built there is always a celebration, rather like our christening of a ship, and a garland is hung at the top of the house.

Norwegian adults, as well as children, keep dolls dressed in native costume, and prize them highly.

Trolls are the hobgoblins which live in mountains and caves.

THE MASTER BUILDER

INTRODUCTION

After seeing various performances of his own plays in Munich, Berlin, Vienna, and Budapest early in 1891, Ibsen moved in July to Oslo. He took a trip to the North Cape, and finally decided to settle in Norway for the rest of his life and to have his few belongings brought from Munich. He moved into a flat in Victoria Terrasse 7B in Oslo, where he lived until, in 1895, he changed to Arbinsgate I, the house in which he died. He was extremely happy in his new surroundings, furnished himself a good study, and was undisturbed by his compatriots. "Since my return here last year," he wrote on July 5th, 1892, "I have been in the fortunate position of knowing myself and daily experiencing that I have both the conservatives and radicals on my side. In undisturbed peace of mind I am thus able to work on my new play, and I do so every day."

His life in Oslo followed the same fixed pattern as in Munich. He would work in the morning, and then at midday shuffle slowly down Karl Johan Street, past the University to the Grand Hotel, where there was a chair by one of the windows on the street set aside for him with a special notice: "Reserved for Dr. Henrik Ibsen."

"I hope," he wrote to Hegel (November 10th, 1892), "that you on reading through my manuscript have received the impression that Christiania has proved itself to be a good place for me to work in." So good seems to have been the effect of settling down in his native land that Ibsen appears to have written *The Master Builder* without any of the voluminous notes that went to the composition of *Hedda Gabler*. At least the only other papers prior to the finished manuscript consist of the draft, which differs only slightly from the play as it was printed.

With advancing years, the conflict of past and present, of youth and age, became stronger and stronger in Ibsen's soul. The thought of death began to obsess him, and Bang tells us of Ibsen's rapt attention at his analysis of the thought of death in a lecture he gave on Guy de Maupassant. A new literary school was now coming into its own, youth was knocking at the door, and Knut Hanssen, who had just made his debut, was launching out against Ibsen and his contemporaries. To Camilla Collett he wrote of her collected works: "A new generation is now ready to welcome and understand you."

The only known plan for *The Master Builder* is a poem written on March 15th, 1892, while we can also go back to his poem *Building Plans*, which he wrote in his youth about his joy at printing his first poem, and the disillusionment at the collapse of all his castles in the air after five years.

Ibsen once insisted on the resemblance between Solness and himself, and many details support this. Ibsen in his old age felt giddy at heights, and Bergsjie tells how in his youth in Italy Ibsen got a fit of panic climbing a mountain and lay flat on the ground, clasping a boulder. He had also heard the story of the architect of the Michaeliskirche in Munich, who had hurled himself from the tower for fear that the arch of his roof would not hold. He believed this story to be a Nordic legend, and explained: "People have the feeling that no one can build so high without being punished." Erik Werenskiold once saw Ibsen in the street looking carefully at some new houses and asked him if he was interested in architecture. "Yes," replied Ibsen, "that is my own job." Solness's belief in the "powers" is a reflection of Ibsen's own preoccupation with spiritualism and hypnotism at the time.

One curious little detail in the play leads us back to Ibsen and Emilie Bardach. Solness says to Hilda: "The day itself [when he had placed the wreath on the tower] I have, indeed, forgotten. I only know it was ten years ago. In the autumn sometime." Hilda answers: "It was ten years ago. On the nineteenth of September." It was on September 20th, 1889, that Ibsen had written in the hotel visitors' book at Gossensass: "The great, painful joy of striving for the unattainable." Is

this date in *The Master Builder* a memory of an evening before his departure? One can almost associate the long window on the right of the stage in the second act with the "window niche" he recalls in his letters to Emilie.

In Hilda's figure we have the love of youth awakened in Ibsen by Engelcke Friis in the summer of 1887, and though the object of his affections changed, his affections remained none the less constant, whether centred on Helene Raff, Emilie Bardach, Hilda Andersen, or on George Brandes' own little daughter Edith. Hilda was in Ibsen's mind in the first sketches for *Ros?nersholm*; she appears in *The Lady from the Sea*, and finally holds her own on the stage in *The Master Builder*.

As a self-confession *The Master Builder* ranks with his last play, *When We Dead Awaken*, but it is far better as a stage play, with its tenseness of suspense and its dialogue broken into by almost melodramatic action from Hilda's entrance in the first act to Solness's death at the end. It is not only a literary document, but one of the most effective stage plays Ibsen ever wrote.

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THE MASTER BUILDER

ACT I

A plainly furnished work-room in the house of HALVARD SOLNESS. Folding doors on the left lead out to the hall. On the right is the door leading to the inner rooms of the house. At the back is an open door into the draughtsmen's office. In front, on the left, a desk with hooks, papers, and writing materials. Farther back than the folding door, a stove. In the right-hand corner, a sofa, a table, and one or two chairs. On the table a water-bottle and glass. A smaller table, with a rocking-chair and armchair, in front on the right. Lighted lamps, with shades, on the table in the draughtsmen's office, on the table in the corner, and on the desk.

*In the draughtsmen's office sit KNUT BROVIK and his son RAGNAR, occupied with plans and calculations. At the desk in the outer office stands KAIA FOSLI, writing in the ledger. KNUT BROVIK is a spare old man with white hair and beard. He wears a rather threadbare but well-brushed black coat, spectacles, and a somewhat discoloured white neckcloth. RAGNAR BROVIK is a well-dressed, light-haired man in his thirties, with a slight stoop. KAIA FOSLI is a slightly built girl, a little over twenty, carefully dressed, and delicate-looking. She has a green shade over her eyes.—All three go on working for some time in silence**

KNUT BROVIK [*rises suddenly, as if in distress, from the table; breathes heavily and laboriously as he comes forward into the doorway*]. No, I can't bear it much longer!

KAIA [*going up to him*]. You are feeling very ill this evening, are you not, uncle?

BROVIK. Oh, I seem to get worse every day.

RAGNAR [*has risen and advances'*]. You ought to go home, father. Try to get a little sleep——

BROVIK [*impatently*]. Go to bed, I suppose? Would you have me stifled outright?

KAIA. Then take a little walk.

RAGNAR. Yes, do. I will come with you.

BROVIK [*with warmth*]. I will not go till he comes! I am determined to have it out this evening with—[*in a tone of suppressed bitterness*]—with him—with the chief.

KAIA [*anxiously*]. Oh no, uncle—do wait a while before doing t h a t !

RAGNAR. Yes, better wait, father!

BROVIK [*draws his breath laboriously*]. Ha—ha—! / haven't much time for waiting.

KAIA [*listening*]. Hush! I hear him on the stairs.

[*All three go back to their work. A short silence.*

[HALVARD SOLNESS *comes in through the hall door. He is a man no longer young, but healthy and vigorous, with close-cut curly hair, dark moustache, and dark thick eyebrows. He wears a greyish-green buttoned jacket with an*

upstanding collar and broad lapels. On his head he wears a soft grey felt hat, and he has one or two light portfolios under his arm,

SOLNESS [*near the door, points towards the draughtsmen's office, and asks in a whisper*]. Are they gone ?

KAIA [*softly, shaking her head*], No.

[*She takes the shade off her eyes, SoLNESS crosses the room, throws his hat on a chair, places the portfolios on the table by the sofa, and approaches the desk again, KAIA goes on writing without intermission, but seems nervous and uneasy,*

SOLNESS [*aloud*]. What is that you are entering, Miss Fosli ?

KAIA [*starts*]. Oh, it is only something that——

SOLNESS. Let me look at it, Miss Fosli. [*Bends over her, pretends to be looking into the ledger, and whispers,*] Kaia!

KAIA [*softly, still writing*]. Well ?

SOLNESS. Why do you always take that shade off when I come?

KAIA [*as before*], I look so ugly with it on.

SOLNESS [*smiling*]. Then you don't like to look ugly, Kaia?

KAIA [*half glancing up at him*]. Not for all the world.

Not in your eyes.

SOLNESS [*strokes her hair gently*]. Poor, poor little Kaia——

KAIA [*bending her head*]. Hush—they can hear you !

[*SOLNESS strolls across the room to the right, turns and pauses at the door of the draughtsmen's office,*

SOLNESS. Has any one been here for me ?

RAGNAR [*rising*']. Yes, the young couple who want a villa built, out at Lovstrand.

SOLNESS [*growling*]. Oh, those two! They must wait. I am not quite clear about the plans yet.

RAGNAR [*advancing, with some hesitation*]. They were very anxious to have the drawings at once.

SOLNESS [*as before*]. Yes, of course—so they all are.

BROVIK [*looks up*]. They say they are longing so to get into a house of their own.

SOLNESS.—Yes, yes—we know all that! And so they are content to take whatever is offered them. They get a—a roof over their heads—an address—but nothing to call a home. No, thank you! In that case, let them apply to somebody else. Tell them that, the next time they call.

BROVIK [*pushes his glasses up on to his forehead and looks in astonishment at him'*]. To somebody else? Are you prepared to give up the commission?

SOLNESS [*impatiently*]. Yes, yes, yes, devil take it I If that is to be the way of it——Rather that, than build away at random. [*Vehemently*]. Besides, I know very little about these people as yet.

BROVIK. The people are safe enough. Ragnar knows them. He is a friend of the family. Perfectly safe people.

SOLNESS. Oh, safe—safe enough! That is not at all what I mean. Good Lord—don't you understand me either? [*dngriily*]. I won't have anything to do with these strangers. They may apply to whom they please, so far as I am concerned.

BROVIK [*rising*]. Do you really mean that?

SOLNESS [*sulkily*]. Yes I do.—For once in a way.

[He comes forward.

[BROVIK *exchanges a glance with RAGNAR, who makes a warning gesture. Then BROVIK comes into the front room.*

BROVIK. May I have a few words with you?

SOLNESS. Certainly.

BROVIK [*to KAIA*]. Just go in there for a moment, Kaia.

KAIA [*uneasily*]. Oh, but, uncle——

BROVIK. DO as I say, child. And shut the door after you.

[KAIA *goes reluctantly into the draughtsmen's office, glances anxiously and imploringly at SOLNESS, and shuts the door.*

BROVIK [*lowering his voice a little*], I don't want the poor children to know how ill I am.

SOLNESS. Yes, you have been looking very poorly of late.

BROVIK. It will soon be all over with me. My strength is ebbing—from day to day.

SOLNESS. Won't you sit down?

BROVIK. Thanks—may I?

SOLNESS [*placing the armchair more conveniently*]. Mere—take this chair—And now?

BROVIK [*has seated himself with difficulty*]. Well, you see, it's about Ragnar. That is what weighs most upon me. What is to become of him?

SOLNESS. Of course your son will stay with me as long as ever he likes.

BROVIK. But that is just what he does not like. He feels that he cannot stay here any longer.

SOLNESS. Why, I should say he was very well off here. But if he wants more money, I should not mind——

BROVIK. No, no! It is not t h a t. [*Impatiently*]. But sooner or later he, too, must have a chance of doing something on his own account.

SOLNESS [*without looking at him*]. Do you think that Ragnar has quite talent enough to stand alone?

BROVIK. No, that is just the heart-breaking part of it—I have begun to have my doubts about the boy. For you have never said so much as—as one encouraging word about him. And yet I cannot but think there must be something in him—he can't be without talent.

SOLNESS. Well, but he has learnt nothing—nothing thoroughly, I mean. Except, of course, to draw.

BROVIK [*looks at him with covert hatred, and says hoarsely*]. You had learned little enough of the business when you were in my employment. But that did not prevent you from setting to work—[*breathing with difficulty*]—and pushing your way up, and taking the wind out of my sails—mine, and so many other people's.

SOLNESS. Yes, you see—circumstances favoured me.

BROVIK. YOU are right there. Everything favoured you. But then how can you have the heart to let me go to my grave—without having seen what Ragnar is fit for? And of course I am anxious to see them married, too—before I go.

SOLNESS [*sharply*]. Is it she who wishes it?

BROVIK. Not Kaia so much as Ragnar—he talks about it every day. [*Appealingly*]. You must—you must help him

to get some independent work now! I must see something that the lad has done. Do you hear?

SOLNESS [*peevisly*]. Hang it, man, you can't expect me to drag commissions down from the moon for him!

BROVIK. He has the chance of a capital commission at this very moment. A big bit of work.

SOLNESS [*uneasily* startled]. Has he?

BROVIK. If you would give your consent?

SOLNESS. What sort of work do you mean?

BROVIK [*with some hesitation*]. He can have the building of that villa out at Lovstrand.

SOLNESS. That! Why, I am going to build that myself.

BROVIK. Oh, you don't much care about doing it.

SOLNESS [*flaring up*]. Don't care! I! Who dares to say that?

BROVIK. YOU said so yourself just now.

SOLNESS. Oh, never mind what I say.—Would they give Ragnar the building of that villa?

BROVIK. Yes. You see, he knows the family. And then—just for the fun of the thing—he has made drawings and estimates and so forth——

SOLNESS. Are they pleased with the drawings? The people who will have to live in the house?

BROVIK. Yes. If you would only look through them and approve of them——

SOLNESS. Then they would let Ragnar build their home for them?

BROVIK. They were immensely pleased with his idea. They thought it exceedingly original, they said.

SOLNESS. Oho! Original! Not the old-fashioned stuff that I am in the habit of turning out!

BROVIK. It seemed to them different.

SOLNESS [*with suppressed irritation*]. So it was to see Ragnar that they came here—whilst I was out!

BROVIK. They came to call upon you—and at the same time to ask whether you would mind retiring——

SOLNESS [*angrily*]. Retire? I?

BROVIK. In case you thought that Ragnar's drawings——

SOLNESS. I! Retire in favour of your son!

BROVIK. Retire from the agreement, they meant.

SOLNESS. Oh, it comes to the same thing. [*Laughs angrily.*] So that is it, is it? Haivard Solness is to see about retiring now! To make room for younger men! For the very youngest, perhaps! He must make room! Room! Room!

BROVIK. Why, good heavens! there is surely room for more than one single man——

SOLNESS. Oh, there's not so very much room to spare either. But, be that as it may—I will never retire! I will never give way to anybody! Never of my own free will. Never in this world will I do t h a t!

BROVIK [*rises with difficulty*]. Then I am to pass out of life without any certainty? Without a gleam of happiness? Without any faith or trust in Ragnar? Without having seen a single piece of work of his doing? Is that to be the way of it?

SOLNESS [*turns half aside, and mutters*], H'm—don't ask more just now.

BROVIK;. I must have an answer to this one question. Am I to pass out of life in such utter poverty?

SOLNESS [*seems to struggle with himself; finally he says, in a low, but firm voice*]. You must pass out of life as best you can.

BROVIK. Then be it so. [*He goes up the room,*

SOLNESS [*following him, half in desperation*]. Don't you understand that I cannot help it? I am what I am, and I cannot change my nature!

BROVIK. NO, no; I suppose you can't. [*Reels and supports himself against the sofa-table,*] May I have a glass of water?

SOLNESS. By all means. [*Fills a glass and hands it to him.*

BROVIK. Thanks. [*Drinks and puts the glass down again,*

[*SOLNESS goes up and opens the door of the draughtsmen's office.*

SOLNESS. Ragnar—you must come and take your father home.

[*RAGNAR rises quickly. He and KAIA come into the work-room.*

RAGNAR. What is the matter, father?

BROVIK. Give me your arm. Now let us go.

RAGNAR. Very well You had better put your things on, too, Kaia.

SOLNESS. Miss Fosli must stay—just for a moment. There is a letter I want written.

BROVIK [*looks at SOLNESS*]. Good-night. Sleep well—if you can.

SOLNESS. Good-night.

[BROVIK and RAGNAR go out by the hall door, KAIA goes to the desk, SOLNESS stands with bent head, to the right, by the armchair,

KAIA [*dubiously*']. Is there any letter——?

SOLNESS [*curtly*]. No, of course not. [*Looks sternly at her,*] Kaia!

KAIA [*anxiously, in a low voice*], Yes!

SOLNESS [*points imperatively to a spot on the floor*]. Come here! At once!

KAIA [*hesitatingly*]. Yes.

SOLNESS [*as before*]. Nearer!

KAIA [*obeying*], What do you want with me?

SOLNESS [*looks at her for a while*]. Is it you I have to thank for all this?

KAIA. NO, no, don't think that!

SOLNESS. But confess now—you want to get married!

KAIA [*softly*], Ragnar and I have been engaged for four or five years, and so——

SOLNESS. And so you think it time there were an end of it. Is not that so?

KAIA. Ragnar and uncle say I m u s t. So I suppose I shall have to give in.

SOLNESS [*more gently*], Kaia, don't you really care a little bit for Ragnar, too?

KAIA. I cared very much for Ragnar once—before I came here to you.

SOLNESS. But you don't now? Not in the least?

KAIA [*passionately, clasping her hands and holding them out towards him*]. Oh, you know very well there is only one person I care for now! One, and one only, in all the world! I shall never care for any one else.

SOLNESS. Yes, you say that. And yet you go away from me—leave me alone here with everything on my hands.

KAIA. But could I not stay with you, even if Ragnar——?

SOLNESS [*repudiating the idea*]. No, no, that is quite impossible. If Ragnar leaves me and starts work on his own account, then of course he will need you himself.

KAIA [*wringing her hands*]. Oh, I feel as if I c o u l d not be separated from you ! It's quite, quite impossible !

SOLNESS. Then be sure you get those foolish notions out of Ragnar's head. Marry him as much as you please—— [*Alters his tone.*] I mean—don't let him throw up his good situation with me. For then I can keep you too, my dear Kaia.

KAIA. Oh yes, how lovely that would be, if it could only be managed!

SOLNESS [*clasps her head with his two hands and whispers*]. For I cannot get on without you, you see. I must have you with me every single day.

KAIA [*in nervous exaltation*]. My God ! My God !

SOLNESS [*kisses her hair*], Kaia—Kaia!

KAIA [*sinks down before him*]. Oh, how good you are to me ! How unspeakably good you are !

SOLNESS [*vehemently*]. Get up ! For goodness' sake get up ! I think I hear some one !

[*He helps her to rise. She staggers over to the desk,*

[MRS. SOLNESS *enters by the door on the right. She looks thin and wasted with grief, but shows traces of bygone beauty. Blonde ringlets. Dressed with good taste, wholly in black. Speaks somewhat sloivly and in a plaintive voice.*

MRS. SOLNESS [*in the doorway*], Halvard !

SOLNESS [*turns*]. Oh, are you there, my dear——?

MRS. SOLNESS [*with a glance at KAIA*]. I am afraid I am disturbing you.

SOLNESS. Not in the least. Miss Fosii has only a short letter to write.

MRS. SOLNESS. Yes, so I see.

SOLNESS. What do you want with me, Aline ?

MRS. SOLNESS. I merely wanted to tell you that Dr.

Herdal is in the drawing-room. Won't you come and see him, Halvard?

SOLNESS [*looks suspiciously at her*]. H'm—is the doctor so very anxious to talk to me?

MRS. SOLNESS. Well, not exactly anxious. He really came to see me; but he would like to say how-do-you-do to you at the same time.

SOLNESS [*laughs to himself*]. Yes, I daresay. Well, you must ask him to wait a little.

MRS. SOLNESS. Then you will come in presently?

SOLNESS. Perhaps I will. Presently, presently, dear. In a little while.

MRS. SOLNESS [*glancing again at Kaia*]. Well now, don't forget, Halvard. [*Withdraws and closes the door behind her.*]

KAIA [*softly*]. Oh dear, oh dear—I am sure Mrs. Solness thinks ill of me in some way!

SOLNESS. Oh, not in the least. Not more than usual at any rate. But all the same, you had better go now, Kaia.

KAIA. Yes, yes, now I m u s t go.

SOLNESS [*severely*]. And mind you get that matter settled for me. Do you hear?

KAIA. Oh, if it only depended on me——

SOLNESS. I will have it settled, I say! And to-morrow too—not a day later!

KAIA [*terrified*]. If there's nothing else for it, I am quite willing to break off the engagement.

SOLNESS [*angrily*]. Break it off! Are you mad? Would you think of breaking it off?

KAIA [*distracted*]. Yes, if necessary. For I must, I must stay here with you! I c a n ' t leave you! That is utterly—utterly impossible!

SOLNESS [*with a sudden outburst*]. But deuce take it—how about Ragnar then? It's Ragnar that I——

KAIA [*looks at him with terrified eyes*]. It is chiefly on Ragnar's account that—that you——?

SOLNESS [*collecting himself*]. No, no, of course not! You don't understand me either. [*Gently and softly,*] Of course it is you I want to keep—you above everything, Kaia. But

for that very reason, you must prevent Ragnar, too, from throwing up his situation. There, there—now go home.

KAIA. Yes, yes—good-night, then.

SOLNESS. Good-night. [*As she is going,*] Oh, stop a moment! Are Ragnar's drawings in there?

KAIA. I did not see him take them with him.

SOLNESS. Then just go and find them for me. I might perhaps glance over them, after all.

KAIA [*happily*]. Oh yes, please do!

SOLNESS. For your sake, Kaia dear. Now, let me have them at once, please.

[KAIA hurries into the draughtsmen's office, searches anxiously in the table-drawer, finds a portfolio and brings it with her,

KAIA. Here are all the drawings.

SOLNESS. Good. Put them down there on the table.

KAIA [*putting down the portfolio*]. Good-night, then. [*Beseechingly*]. And please, please think kindly of me.

SOLNESS. Oh, that I always do. Good-night, my dear little Kaia. [*Glances to the right*]. Go, go now!

[MRS. SOLNESS and DR. HERDAL enter by the door on the right. He is a stoutish, elderly man, with a round, good-humoured face, clean shaven, with thin, light hair, and gold spectacles.

MRS. SOLNESS [*still in the doorway*]. Harvard, I cannot keep the doctor any longer.

SOLNESS. Well then, come in here.

MRS. SOLNESS [*to KAIA, who is turning down the desk-lamp*]. Have you finished the letter already, Miss Fosli?

KAIA [*in confusion*]. The letter——?

SOLNESS. Yes, it was quite a short one.

MRS. SOLNESS. It must have been very short.

SOLNESS. You may go now, Miss Fosli. And please come in good time to-morrow morning.

KAIA. I will be sure to. Good-night, Mrs. Solness.

[*She goes out by the hall door.*

MRS. SOLNESS. She must be quite an acquisition to you, Harvard, this Miss Fosli.

SOLNESS. Yes, indeed. She is useful in all sorts of ways.

MRS. SOLNESS. SO it seems.

DR. HERDAL. Is she good at book-keeping too?

SOLNESS. Well—of course she has had a good deal of practice during these two years. And then she is so nice and willing to do whatever one asks of her.

MRS. SOLNESS. Yes, that must be very delightful——

SOLNESS. It is. Especially when one is not too much accustomed to that sort of thing.

MRS. SOLNESS [*in a tone of gentle remonstrance*]. Can you say that, Halvard?

SOLNESS. Oh, no, no, my dear Aline! I beg your pardon.

MRS. SOLNESS. There's no occasion.—Well, then, doctor, you will come back later on, and have a cup of tea with us?

DR. HERDAL. I have only that one patient to see, and then I'll come back.

MRS. SOLNESS. Thank you.

[She goes out by the door on the right.]

SOLNESS. Are you in a hurry, doctor?

DR. HERDAL. No, not at all.

SOLNESS. May I have a little chat with you?

DR. HERDAL. With the greatest of pleasure.

SOLNESS. Then let us sit down. [*He motions the doctor to take the rocking-chair, and sits down himself in the armchair. Looks searchingly at him.*] Tell me—did you notice anything odd about Aline?

DR. HERDAL. Do you mean just now, when she was here?

SOLNESS. Yes, in her manner to me. Did you notice anything?

DR. HERDAL [*smiling*]. Well, I admit—one couldn't well avoid noticing that your wife—h'm——

SOLNESS. Well?

DR. HERDAL. —that your wife is not particularly fond of this Miss Fosli.

SOLNESS. Is that all? I have noticed that myself.

DR. HERDAL. And I must say I am scarcely surprised at it.

SOLNESS. At what?

DR. HERDAL. That she should not exactly approve of your seeing so much of another woman, ail day and every day.

SOLNESS. NO, no, I suppose you are right there—and Aline too. But it's impossible to make any change.

DR. HERDAL. Could you not engage a clerk?

SOLNESS. The first man that came to hand? No, thank you—that would never do for me.

DR. HERDAL. But now, if your wife——? Suppose, with her delicate health, all this tries her too much?

SOLNESS. Even then—I might almost say—it can make no difference. I must keep Kaia Fosli. No one else could fill her place.

DR. HERDAL. No one else?

SOLNESS [*curtly*]. No, no one.

DR. HERDAL [*drawing his chair closer*]. Now listen to me, my dear Mr. Solness. May I ask you a question, quite between ourselves?

SOLNESS. By all means.

DR. HERDAL. Women, you see—in certain matters, they have a deucedly keen intuition——

SOLNESS. They have, indeed. There is not the least doubt of that. But——?

DR. HERDAL. Well, tell me now—if your wife can't endure this Kaia Fosli——?

SOLNESS. Well, what then?

DR. HERDAL.—may she not have just—just the least little bit of reason for this instinctive dislike?

SOLNESS [*looks at him and rises*]. Oho!

DR. HERDAL. Now don't be offended—but has n't she?

SOLNESS [*with curt decision*]. No.

DR. HERDAL. NO reason of any sort?

SOLNESS. NO other reason than her own suspicious nature.

DR. HERDAL. I know you have known a good many women in your time.

SOLNESS. Yes, I have.

DR. HERDAL. And have been a good deal taken with some of them, too.

SOLNESS. Oh yes, I don't deny it.

DR. HERDAL. But as regards Miss Fosli, then? There is nothing of that sort in the case?

SOLNESS. No; nothing at all—on my side.

DR. HERDAL. But on her side?

SOLNESS. I don't think you have any right to ask that question, doctor.

DR. HERDAL. Well, you know, we were discussing your wife's intuition.

SOLNESS. SO we were. And for that matter—[*lowers his voice*—Aline's intuition, as you call it—in a certain sense, it has not been so far astray.

DR. HERDAL. Aha! there we have it!

SOLNESS [*sits down*]. Doctor Herdal—I am going to tell you a strange story—if you care to listen to it.

DR. HERDAL. I like listening to strange stories.

SOLNESS. Very well then. I daresay you recollect that I took Knut Brovik and his son into my employment—after the old man's business had gone to the dogs.

DR. HERDAL. Yes, so I have understood.

SOLNESS. You see, they really are clever fellows, these two. Each of them has talent in his own way. But then the son took it into his head to get engaged; and the next thing, of course, was that he wanted to get married—and begin to build on his own account. That is the way with all these young people.

DR. HERDAL [*laughing*]. Yes, they have a bad habit of wanting to marry.

SOLNESS. Just so. But of course that did not suit my plans; for I needed Ragnar myself—and the old man too. He is exceedingly good at calculating bearing-strains and cubic contents—and all that sort of devilry, you know.

DR. HERDAL. Oh yes, no doubt that's indispensable.

SOLNESS. Yes, it is. But Ragnar was absolutely bent on setting to work for himself. He would hear of nothing else.

DR. HERDAL. But he has stayed with you all the same.

SOLNESS. Yes, I'll tell you how that came about. One day this girl, Kaia Fosli, came to see them on some errand or other. She had never been here before. And when I saw how utterly infatuated they were with each other, the thought occurred to me: if I could only get her into the office here, then perhaps Ragnar too would stay where he is.

DR. HERDAL. That was not at all a bad idea.

SOLNESS. Yes, but at the time I did not breathe a word of what was in my mind. I merely stood and looked at her—and kept on wishing intently that I could have her here. Then I talked to her a little, in a friendly way—about one thing and another. And then she went away.

DR. HERBAL. Well?

SOLNESS. Well then, next day, pretty late in the evening, when old Brovik and Ragnar had gone home, she came here again, and behaved as if I had made an arrangement with her.

DR. HERDAL. An arrangement? What about?

SOLNESS. About the very thing my mind had been fixed on. But I hadn't said one single word about it.

DR. HERDAL. That was most extraordinary.

SOLNESS. Yes, was it not? And now she wanted to know what she was to do here—whether she could begin the very next morning, and so forth.

DR. HERDAL. Don't you think she did it in order to be with her sweetheart?

SOLNESS. That was what occurred to me at first. But no, that was not it. She seemed to drift quite away from him—when once she had come here to me.

DR. HERDAL. She drifted over to you, then?

SOLNESS. Yes, entirely. If I happen to look at her when her back is turned, I can tell that she feels it. She quivers and trembles the moment I come near her. What do you think of that?

DR. HERDAL. H'm—that's not very hard to explain.

SOLNESS. Well, but what about the other thing? That she believed I had said to her what I had only wished and willed—silently—inwardly—to myself? What do you say to that? Can you explain that, Dr. Herdal?

DR. HERDAL. NO, I won't undertake to do that.

SOLNESS. I felt sure you would not; and so I have never cared to talk about it till now.—But it's a cursed nuisance to me in the long run, you understand. Here have I got to go on day after day pretending———And it's a shame to treat her so, too, poor girl. [*Vehemently.*] But I cannot do anything else.

For if she runs away from me—then Ragnar will be off too.

DR. HERDAL. And you have not told your wife the rights of the story?

SOLNESS. No.

DR. HERDAL. Then why on earth don't you?

SOLNESS [*looks fixedly at htm, and says in a low voice*]. Because I seem to find a sort of—of salutary self-torture in allowing Aline to do me an injustice.

DR. HERDAL [*shakes his head*], I don't in the least understand what you mean.

SOLNESS. Well, you see—it is like paying off a little bit of a huge, immeasurable debt——

DR. HERDAL. TO you wife?

SOLNESS. Yes; and that always helps to relieve one's mind a little. One can breathe more freely for a while, you understand.

DR. HERDAL. No, goodness knows, I don't understand at all——

SOLNESS [*breaking off, rises again*]. Well, well, well—then we won't talk any more about it. [*He saunters across the room, returns, and stops beside the table. Looks at the doctor with a sly smile.*] I suppose you think you have drawn me out nicely now, doctor?

DR. HERDAL [*with some irritation*]. Drawn you out? Again I have not the faintest notion what you mean, Mr. Solness.

SOLNESS. Oh, come, out with it; I have seen it quite clearly, you know.

DR. HERDAL. What have you seen?

SOLNESS [*in a low voice, slowly*]. That you have been quietly keeping an eye upon me.

DR. HERDAL. That J have! And why in all the world should I do that?

SOLNESS. Because you think that I———[*Passionately.*] Well, devil take it—you think the same of me as Aline does.

DR. HERDAL. And what does she think about you?

SOLNESS [*having recovered his self-control*]. She has begun to think that I am—that I am—ill.

DR. HERDAL. Ill! You! She has never hinted such a thing to me. Why, what can she think is the matter with you!

SOLNESS [*leans over the back of the chair and whispers*]. Aline has made up her mind that I am mad. That is what she thinks.

DR. HERDAL [*rising*]. Why, my dear good fellow——!

SOLNESS. Yes, on my soul she does! I tell you it is so. And she has got you to think the same! Oh, I can assure you, doctor, I see it in your face as clearly as possible. You don't take me in so easily, I can tell you.

DR. HERDAL [*looks at him in amazement*]. Never, Mr. Solness——never has such a thought entered my mind.

SOLNESS [*with an incredulous smile*]. Really? Has it not?

DR. HERDAL. NO, never! Nor your wife's mind either, I am convinced. I could almost swear to that.

SOLNESS. Well, I wouldn't advise you to. For, in a certain sense, you see, perhaps——perhaps she is not so far wrong in thinking something of the kind.

DR. HERDAL. Come now, I really must say——

SOLNESS [*interrupting with a sweep of his hand*]. Well, well, my dear doctor——don't let us discuss this any further. We had better agree to differ. [*Changes to a tone of quiet amusement.*] But look here now, doctor, h'm——

DR. HERDAL. Well?

SOLNESS. Since you don't believe that I am——ill——and——crazy——and mad, and so forth——

DR. HERDAL. What then?

SOLNESS. Then I daresay you fancy that I am an extremely happy man.

DR. HERDAL. IS THAT mere fancy?

SOLNESS [*laughs*]. No, no——of course not. Heaven forbid! Only think——to be Solness the master builder! Halvard Solness! What could be more delightful?

DR. HERDAL. Yes, I must say it seems to me you have had the luck on your side to an astounding degree.

SOLNESS [*suppresses a gloomy smile*]. So I have. I can't complain on that score.

DR. HERDAL. First of all that grim old robbers' castle was

burnt down for you. And that was certainly a great piece of luck.

SOLNESS [*seriously*]. It was the home of Aline's family. Remember that.

DR. HERDAL. Yes, it must have been a great grief to her.

SOLNESS. She has not got over it to this day—not in all these twelve or thirteen years.

DR. HERDAL. Ah, but what followed must have been the worst blow for her.

SOLNESS. The one thing with the other.

DR. HERDAL. But you—yourself—you rose upon the ruins. You began as a poor boy from a country village—and now you are at the head of your profession. Ah, yes, Mr. Solness, you have undoubtedly had the luck on your side.

SOLNESS [*looking at him with embarrassment*]. Yes, but that is just what makes me so horribly afraid.

DR. HERDAL. Afraid? Because you have the luck on your side?

SOLNESS. It terrifies me—terrifies me every hour of the day. For sooner or later the luck must turn, you see.

DR. HERDAL. Oh, nonsense! What should make the luck turn?

SOLNESS [*with firm assurance*]. The younger generation.

DR. HERDAL. Pooh! The younger generation! You are not laid on the shelf yet, I should hope. Oh no—your position here is probably firmer now than it has ever been.

SOLNESS. The luck will turn. I know it—I feel the day approaching. Some one or other will take it into his head to say: Give me a chance! And then all the rest will come clamouring after him, and shake their fists at me and shout: Make room—make room—make room! Yes, just you see, doctor—presently the younger generation will come knocking at my door—

DR. HERDAL [*laughing*]. Well, and what if they do?

SOLNESS. What if they do? Then there's an end of Halvard Solness. [*There is a knock at the door on the left,*

SOLNESS [*starts*]. What's that? Did you not hear something?

DR. HERDAL. Some one is knocking at the door.

SOLNESS [*loudly*]. Come in.

[HILDA WANGEL *enters by the hall door. She is of middle height, supple, and delicately built. Somewhat sunburnt. Dressed in a tourist costume with skirt caught up for walking, a sailor's collar open at the throat, and a small sailor hat on her head. Knapsack on back, plaid in strap, and alpenstock.*

HILDA [*goes straight up to SOLNESS, her eyes sparkling with happiness*]. Good-evening!

SOLNESS [*looks doubtfully at her*]. Good-evening——

HILDA [*laughs*]. I almost believe you don't recognise me!

SOLNESS. NO—I must admit that—just for the moment——

DR. HERDAL [*approaching*]. But I recognise you, my dear young lady——

HILDA [*pleased*]. Oh, is it you that——

DR. HERDAL. Of course it is. [*To SOLNESS.*] We met at one of the mountain stations this summer. [*To HILDA.*] What became of the other ladies?

HILDA. Oh, they went westward.

DR. HERDAL. They didn't much like all the fun we used to have in the evenings.

HILDA. NO, I believe they didn't.

DR. HERDAL [*holds up his finger at her*]. And I am afraid it can't be denied that you flirted a little with us.

HILDA. Well, that was better fun than to sit there knitting stockings with all those old women.

DR. HERDAL [*laughs*]. There I entirely agree with you!

SOLNESS. Have you come to town this evening?

HILDA. Yes, I have just arrived.

DR. HERDAL. Quite alone, Miss Wangel?

HILDA. Oh yes!

SOLNESS. Wangel? Is your name Wangel?

HILDA [*looks in amused surprise at him*]. Yes, of course it is.

SOLNESS. Then you must be a daughter of the district doctor up at Lysanger?

HILDA [*as before*]. Yes, who else's daughter should I be?

SOLNESS. Oh, then I suppose we met up there, that summer when I was building a tower on the old church.

HILDA [*more seriously*]. Yes, of course it was then we met.

SOLNESS. Well, that is a long time ago.

HILDA [*looks hard at him*]. It is exactly the ten years.

SOLNESS. You must have been a mere child then, I should think.

HILDA [*carelessly*]. Well, I was twelve or thirteen.

DR. HERDAL. IS this the first time you have ever been up to town, Miss Wangel?

HILDA. Yes, it is indeed.

SOLNESS. And don't you know any one here?

HILDA. Nobody but you. And, of course, your wife.

SOLNESS. SO you know her, too?

HILDA. Only a little. We spent a few days together at the sanatorium.

SOLNESS. Ah, up there?

HILDA. She said I might come and pay her a visit if ever I came up to town. [*Smiles.*] Not that that was necessary.

SOLNESS. Odd that she should never have mentioned it.

[HILDA *puts her stick down by the stove, takes off the knapsack and lays it and the plaid on the sofa.* DR. HERDAL *offers to help her,* SOLNESS *stands and gazes at her,*

HILDA [*going towards him*]. Well, now I must ask you to let me stay the night here.

SOLNESS. I am sure there will be no difficulty about that.

HILDA. For I have no other clothes than those I stand in, except a change of linen in my knapsack. And that has to go to the wash, for it's very dirty.

SOLNESS. Oh yes, that can be managed. Now I'll just let my wife know——

DR. HERDAL. Meanwhile I will go and see my patient.

SOLNESS. Yes, do; and come again later on.

DR. HERDAL [*playfully, with a glance at HILDA*]. Oh, that I will, you may be very certain! [*Laughs,*] So your prediction has come true, Mr. Solness!

SOLNESS. How so?

DR. HERDAL. The younger generation did come knocking at your door.

SOLNESS [*cheerfully*]. Yes, but in a very different way from what I meant.

DR. HERDAL. Very different, yes. That's undeniable.

[*He goes out by the hall door. SOLNESS opens the door on the right and speaks into the side room.*]

SOLNESS. Aline! Will you come in here, please. Here is a friend of yours—Miss Wangel.

MRS. SOLNESS [*appears in the doorway*]. Who do you say it is? [*Sees HILDA.*] Oh, it is you, Miss Wangel? [*Goes up to her and offers her hand.*] So you have come to town after all.

SOLNESS. Miss Wangel has this moment arrived; and she would like to stay the night here.

MRS. SOLNESS. Here with us? Oh yes, certainly.

SOLNESS. Till she can get her things a little in order, you know.

MRS. SOLNESS. I will do the best I can for you. It's no more than my duty. I suppose your trunk is coming on later?

HILDA. I h a v e no trunk.

MRS. SOLNESS. Well, it will be all right, I daresay. In the meantime, you must excuse my leaving you here with my husband, until I can get a room made a little comfortable for you.

SOLNESS. Can we not give her one of the nurseries? They are all ready as it is.

MRS. SOLNESS. Oh yes. There we have room and to spare. [*To HILDA.*] Sit down now, and rest a little.

[*She goes out to the right.*]

[*HILDA with her hands behind her back, strolls about the room and looks at various objects. SOLNESS stands in front, beside the table, also with his hands behind his back, and follows her with his eyes.*]

HILDA [*stops and looks at him*"]. Have you several nurseries?

SOLNESS. There are three nurseries in the house.

HILDA. That's a lot. Then I suppose you have a great many children?

SOLNESS. No. We have no child. But now you can be the child here, for the time being.

HILDA. For to-night, yes. I shall not cry. I mean to sleep as sound as a stone.

SOLNESS. Yes, you must be very tired, I should think.

HILDA. Oh no! But all the same——It's so delicious to lie and dream.

SOLNESS. Do you dream much at nights?

HILDA. Oh yes! Almost always.

SOLNESS. What do you dream about most?

HILDA. I shan't tell you to-night. Another time—perhaps. *[She again strolls about the room, stops at the desk and turns over the books and papers a little.]*

SOLNESS *[approaching]*. Are you searching for anything?

HILDA. No, I am merely looking at all these things. *[Turns.]* Perhaps I mustn't?

SOLNESS. Oh, by all means.

HILDA. Is it you that write in this great ledger?

SOLNESS. NO, it's my book-keeper.

HILDA. Is it a woman?

SOLNESS *[smiles]*. Yes.

HILDA. One you employ here, in your office?

SOLNESS. Yes.

HILDA. IS she married?

SOLNESS. NO, she is single.

HILDA. Oh, indeed!

SOLNESS. But I believe she is soon going to be married.

HILDA. That's a good thing for her.

SOLNESS. But not such a good thing for me. For then I shall have nobody to help me.

HILDA. Can't you get hold of some one else who will do just as well?

SOLNESS. Perhaps you would stay here and—and write in the ledger?

HILDA *[measures him with a glance]*. Yes, I daresay! No, thank you—nothing of that sort for me.

[She again strolls across the room, and sits down in the rocking-chair. SOLNESS too goes to the table.]

HILDA [*continuing*]. For there must surely be plenty of other things to be done here. [*Looks smilingly at him.*] Don't you think so, too?

SOLNESS. Of course. First of all, I suppose, you want to make a round of the shops, and get yourself up in the height of fashion.

HILDA [*amused*]. No, I think I shall let that alone!

SOLNESS. Indeed!

HILDA. For you must know I have run through all my money.

SOLNESS [*laughs*]. Neither trunk nor money, then?

HILDA. Neither one nor the other. But never mind—it doesn't matter now.

SOLNESS. Come now, I like you for that.

HILDA. Only for that?

SOLNESS. For that among other things. [*Sits in the arm-chair,*] Is your father alive still?

HILDA. Yes, father's alive.

SOLNESS. Perhaps you are thinking of studying here?

HILDA. No, that hadn't occurred to me.

SOLNESS. But I suppose you will be staying for some time?

HILDA. That must depend upon circumstances.

[*She sits a while rocking herself and looking at him, half seriously, half with a suppressed smile. Then she takes off her hat and puts it on the table in front of her,*

HILDA. Mr. Solness!

SOLNESS. Well?

HILDA. Have you a very bad memory?

SOLNESS. A bad memory? No, not that I am aware of.

HILDA. Then have you nothing to say to me about what happened up there?

SOLNESS [*in momentary surprise*]. Up at Lysanger? [*Indifferently.*] Why, it was nothing much to talk about, it seems to me.

HILDA [*looks reproachfully at him*]. How can you sit there and say such things?

SOLNESS. Well, then, you talk to me about it.

HILDA. When the tower was finished, we had grand doings in the town.

SOLNESS. Yes, I shall not easily forget that day.

HILDA [*smiles*]. Will you not? That comes well from you.

SOLNESS. Comes well?

HILDA. There was music in the churchyard—and many, many hundreds of people. We schoolgirls were dressed in white; and we all carried flags.

SOLNESS. Ah yes, those flags—I can tell you I remember them!

HILDA. Then you climbed right up the scaffolding, straight to the very top; and you had a great wreath with you; and you hung that wreath right away up on the weather-vane.

SOLNESS [*curtly interrupting*], I always did that in those days. It is an old custom.

HILDA. It was so wonderfully thrilling to stand below and look up at you. Fancy, if he should fall over! He—the master builder himself!

SOLNESS [*as if to divert her from the subject*]. Yes, yes, yes, that might very well have happened, too. For one of those white-frocked little devils—she went on in such a way, and screamed up at me so——

HILDA [*sparkling with pleasure*], " Hurrah for Master Builder Solness! " Yes!

SOLNESS.—and waved and flourished with her flag, so that I—so that it almost made me giddy to look at it.

HILDA [*in a lower voice, seriously*]. That little devil—that was/.

SOLNESS [*fixes his eyes steadily upon her*], I am sure of that now. It must have been you.

HILDA [*lively again*]. Oh, it was so gloriously thrilling! I could not have believed there was a builder in the whole world that could build such a tremendously high tower. And then, that you yourself should stand at the very top of it, as large as life! And that you should not be the least bit dizzy! It was that above everything that made one—made one dizzy to think of.

SOLNESS. How could you be so certain that I was not——?

HILDA [*scouting the idea*]. No, indeed! Oh no! I knew that instinctively. For if you had been, you could never have stood up there and sung.

SOLNESS [*looks at her in astonishment*]. Sung? Did I sing?

HILDA. Yes, I should think you did.

SOLNESS [*shakes his head*]. I have never sung a note in my life.

HILDA. Yes, indeed, you sang then. It sounded like harps in the air.

SOLNESS [*thoughtfully*]. This is very strange—all this.

HILDA [*is silent a while, looks at him and says in a low voice*]. But then—it was after that—that the real thing happened.

SOLNESS. The real thing?

HILDA [*sparkling with vivacity*]. Yes, I surely don't need to remind you of that?

SOLNESS. Oh yes, do remind me a little of that, too.

HILDA. Don't you remember that a great dinner was given in your honour at the Club?

SOLNESS. Yes, to be sure. It must have been the same afternoon, for I left the place next morning.

HILDA. And from the Club you were invited to come round to our house to supper.

SOLNESS. Quite right, Miss Wangel. It is wonderful how all these trifles have impressed themselves on your mind.

HILDA. Trifles! I like that! Perhaps it was a trifle, too, that I was a l o n e in the room when you came in?

SOLNESS. W e r e you alone?

HILDA [*without answering him*]. You didn't call me a little devil then?

SOLNESS. NO, I suppose I did not.

HILDA. YOU said I was lovely in my white dress, and that I looked like a little princess.

SOLNESS, I have no doubt you did, Miss Wangel.—And besides—I was feeling so buoyant and free that day——

HILDA. And then you said that when I grew up I should be your princess.

SOLNESS [*laughing a little*]. Dear, dear—did I say that too?

HILDA. Yes, you did. And when I asked how long I should have to wait, you said that you would come again in ten years—like a troll—and carry me off—to Spain or some such place. And you promised you would buy me a kingdom there.

SOLNESS [*as before*]. Yes, after a good dinner one doesn't haggle about the halfpence. But did I really say all that?

HILDA [*laughs to herself*]. Yes. And you told me, too, what the kingdom was to be called.

SOLNESS. Well, what was it?

HILDA. It was to be called the kingdom of Orangia,¹ you said.

SOLNESS. Well, that was an appetising name.

HILDA. NO, I didn't like it a bit; for it seemed as though you wanted to make game of me.

SOLNESS. I am sure that cannot have been my intention.

HILDA. No, I should hope not—considering what you did next——

SOLNESS. What in the world did I do next?

HILDA. Well, that's the finishing touch, if you have forgotten that too. I should have thought no one could help remembering such a thing as that.

SOLNESS. Yes, yes, just give me a hint, and then perhaps——Well?

HILDA [*looks fixedly at him*]. You came and kissed me, Mr. Solness.

SOLNESS [*open-mouthed, rising from his chair*]. I did!

HILDA. Yes, indeed you did. You took me in both your arms, and bent my head back, and kissed me—many times.

SOLNESS. NOW really, my dear Miss Wangel——!

HILDA [*rises*]. You surely cannot mean to deny it?

SOLNESS. Yes, I do. I deny it altogether!

HILDA [*looks scornfully at him*]. Oh, indeed!

[*She turns and goes slowly close up to the stove, where she remains standing motionless, her face averted from him, her hands behind her back. Short pause.*]

¹In the original "Appelsinia," *appelsin* meaning "orange."

SOLNESS [*goes cautiously up behind her*]. Miss Wangel——!
[HILDA is silent and does not move,

SOLNESS. Don't stand there like a statue. You must have dreamt all this. [*Lays his hand on her arm.*] Now, just listen——[HILDA makes an impatient movement with her arm,

SOLNESS [*as a thought flashes upon him*]. Or——! Wait a moment! There is something under all this, you may depend.
[HILDA does not move,

SOLNESS [*in a low voice, but with emphasis*], I must have thought all that. I must have wished it—have willed it—have longed to do it. And then——May not that be the explanation?
[HILDA is still silent,

SOLNESS [*impatiently*]. Oh, very well, deuce take it all—then I did do it, I suppose.

HILDA [*turns her head a little, but without looking at him*]. Then you admit it now?

SOLNESS. Yes—whatever you like.

HILDA. YOU came and put your arms round me?

SOLNESS. Oh yes!

HILDA. And bent my head back?

SOLNESS. Very far back.

HILDA. And kissed me?

SOLNESS. Yes, I did.

HILDA. Many times?

SOLNESS. As many as ever you like.

HILDA [*turns quickly towards him and has once more the sparkling expression of gladness in her eyes*]. Well, you see, I got it out of you at last!

SOLNESS [*with a slight smile*]. Yes—just think of my forgetting such a thing as that.

HILDA [*again a little sulky, retreats from him*]. Oh, you have kissed so many people in your time, I suppose.

SOLNESS. NO, you mustn't think that of me. [HILDA seats herself in the armchair, SOLNESS stands and leans against the rocking-chair. Looks observantly at her.] Miss Wangel!

HILDA. Yes!

SOLNESS, HOW was it now? What came of all this—between us two?

HILDA. Why, nothing more came of it. You know that quite well. For then the other guests came in, and then—bah!

SOLNESS. Quite so! The others came in. To think of my forgetting that too!

HILDA. Oh, you haven't really forgotten anything: you are only a little ashamed of it all. I am sure one doesn't forget things of that kind.

SOLNESS. No, one would suppose not.

HILDA [*lively again, looks at him*]. Perhaps you have even forgotten what day it was?

SOLNESS. What day——?

HILDA. Yes, on what day did you hang the wreath on the tower? Well? Tell me at once!

SOLNESS. H'm—I confess I have forgotten the particular day. I only know it was ten years ago. Some time in the autumn.

HILDA [*nods her head slowly several times*]. It was ten years ago—on the 19th of September.

SOLNESS. Yes, it must have been about that time. Fancy your remembering that too! [*Stops,*] But wait a moment——! Yes—it's the 19th of September to-day.

HILDA. Yes, it is; and the ten years are gone. And you didn't come—as you had promised me.

SOLNESS. Promised you? Threatened, I suppose you mean?

HILDA. I don't think there was any sort of threat in that.

SOLNESS. Well then, a little bit of fun.

HILDA. Was that all you wanted? To make fun of me?

SOLNESS. Well, or to have a little joke with you. Upon my soul, I don't recollect. But it must have been something of that kind; for you were a mere child then.

HILDA. Oh, perhaps I wasn't quite such a child either. Not such a mere chit as you imagine.

SOLNESS [*looks searchingly at her*]. Did you really and seriously expect me to come again?

HILDA [*conceals a half-teasing smile*]. Yes, indeed! I did expect that of you.

SOLNESS. That I should come back to your home, and take you away with me?

HILDA. Just like a troll—yes.

SOLNESS. And make a princess of you?

HILDA. That's what you promised.

SOLNESS. And give you a kingdom as well?

HILDA [*looks up at the ceiling*]. Why not? Of course, it need not have been an actual, every-day sort of a kingdom.

SOLNESS. But something else just as good?

HILDA. Yes, at least as good. [*Looks at him a moment,*] I thought, if you could build the highest church-towers in the world, you could surely manage to raise a kingdom of one sort or another as well.

SOLNESS [*shakes his head*], I can't quite make you out, Miss Wangel.

HILDA. Can you not? To me it seems all so simple.

SOLNESS. No, I can't make up my mind whether you mean all you say, or are simply having a joke with me.

HILDA [*smiles*]. Making fun of you, perhaps? I, too?

SOLNESS. Yes, exactly. Making fun—of both of us. [*Looks at her,*] It is long since you found out that I was married?

HILDA. I have known it all along. Why do you ask me that?

SOLNESS [*lightly*]. Oh, well, it just occurred to me. [*Looks earnestly at her, and says in a low voice,*] What have you come for?

HILDA. I want my kingdom. The time is up.

SOLNESS [*laughs involuntarily*]. What a girl you are!

HILDA [*gaily*]. Out with my kingdom, Mr. Solness! [*Raps with her fingers,*] The kingdom on the table!

SOLNESS [*pushing the rocking-chair nearer and sitting down*]. Now, seriously speaking—what have you come for? What do you really want to do here?

HILDA. Oh, first of all, I want to go round and look at all the things you have built.

SOLNESS. That will give you plenty of exercise.

HILDA. Yes, I know you have built a tremendous lot.

SOLNESS. I have indeed—especially of late years.

HILDA. Many church-towers among the rest? Immensely high ones?

SOLNESS. No. I build no more church-towers now. Nor churches either.

HILDA. What do you build, then?

SOLNESS. Homes for human beings.

HILDA [*reflectively*]. Couldn't you build a little—a little bit of a church-tower over these homes as well?

SOLNESS [*starting*]. What do you mean by that?

HILDA. I mean—something that points—points up into the free air. With the vane at a dizzy height.

SOLNESS [*pondering a little*]. Strange that you should say that—for that is just what I am most anxious to do.

HILDA [*impatiently*]. Why don't you do it, then?

SOLNESS [*shakes his head*]. No, the people will not have it.

HILDA. Fancy their not wanting it!

SOLNESS [*more lightly*]. But now I am building a new home for myself—just opposite here.

HILDA. For yourself?

SOLNESS. Yes. It is almost finished. And on that there is a tower.

HILDA. A high tower?

SOLNESS. Yes.

HILDA. Very high?

SOLNESS. NO doubt people will say it is too high—too high for a dwelling-house.

HILDA. I'll go out and look at that tower the first thing to-morrow morning.

SOLNESS [*sits resting his cheek on his hand, and gazes at her*]. Tell me, Miss Wangel—what is your name? Your Christian name, I mean?

HILDA. Why, Hilda, of course.

SOLNESS [*as before*]. Hilda? Indeed!

HILDA. Don't you remember that? You called me Hilda yourself—that day when you misbehaved.

SOLNESS. Did I really?

HILDA. But then you said "little Hilda"; and I didn't like that.

SOLNESS. Oh, you didn't like that, Miss Hilda?

HILDA. No, not at such a time as that. But—"Princess Hilda"—that will sound very well, I think.

SOLNESS. Very well, indeed. Princess Hilda of—of—what was to be the name of the kingdom?

HILDA. Pooh! I won't have anything to do with that stupid kingdom. I have set my heart upon quite a different one!

SOLNESS [*has leaned back in the chair, still gazing at her*]. Isn't it strange——? The more I think of it now, the more it seems to me as though I had gone about all these years torturing myself with—h'm——

HILDA. With what?

SOLNESS. With the effort to recover something—some experience, which I seemed to have forgotten. But I never had the least inkling of what it could be.

HILDA. You should have tied a knot in your pocket-handkerchief, Mr. Solness.

SOLNESS. In that case, I should simply have had to go racking my brains to discover what the knot could mean.

HILDA. Oh yes, I suppose there are trolls of that kind in the world, too.

SOLNESS [*rises slowly*]. What a good thing it is that you have come to me now.

HILDA [*looks deeply into his eyes*], Is it a good thing!

SOLNESS. For I have been so lonely here. I have been gazing so helplessly at it all. [*In a lower voice.*] I must tell you—I have begun to be so afraid—so terribly afraid of the younger generation.

HILDA [*with a little snort of contempt*]. Pooh—is the younger generation a thing to be afraid of?

SOLNESS. It is indeed. And that is why I have locked and barred myself in. [*Mysteriously.*] I tell you the younger generation will one day come and thunder at my door! They will break in upon me!

HILDA. Then I should say you ought to go out and open the door to the younger generation.

SOLNESS. Open the door?

HILDA. Yes. Let them come in to you on friendly terms, as it were.

SOLNESS. NO, no, no! The younger generation—it means retribution, you see. It comes, as if under a new banner, heralding the turn of fortune.

HILDA [*rises, looks at him, and says with a quivering twitch of her lips*]. Can I be of any use to you, Mr. Solness?

SOLNESS. Yes, you can indeed! For you, too, come—under a new banner, it seems to me. Youth marshalled against youth——! [DR. HERDAL *comes in by the hall door*].

DR. HERDAL. What—you and Miss Wangel here still?

SOLNESS. Yes. We have no end of things to talk about.

HILDA. Both old and new.

DR. HERDAL. Have you really?

HILDA. Oh, it has been the greatest fun. For Mr. Solness—he has such a miraculous memory. All the least little details he remembers instantly.

[MRS. SOLNESS *enters by the door on the right*].

MRS. SOLNESS. Well, Miss Wangel, your room is quite ready for you now.

HILDA. Oh, how kind you are to me!

SOLNESS [*to MRS. SOLNESS*]. The nursery?

MRS. SOLNESS. Yes, the middle one. But first let us go in to supper.

SOLNESS [*nods to Hilda*], Hilda shall sleep in the nursery, she shall.

MRS. SOLNESS [*looks at him*]. Hilda?

SOLNESS. Yes, Miss Wangel's name is Hilda. I knew her when she was a child.

MRS. SOLNESS. Did you really, Halvard? Well, shall we go? Supper is on the table.

[*She takes DR. HERDAL'S arm and goes out with him to the right. Hilda has meanwhile been collecting her travelling things*].

HILDA [*softly and rapidly to SOLNESS*]. Is it true, what you said? Can I be of use to you?

SOLNESS [*takes the things from her*]. You are the very being I have needed most.

HILDA [*looks at him with happy, wondering eyes and clasps her hands*]. But then, great heavens——!

SOLNESS [*eagerly*]. What——?

HILDA. Then I h a v e my kingdom!

SOLNESS [*involuntarily*], Hilda——!

HILDA [*again with the quivering twitch of her lips*].
A l m o s t — I was going to say.

[*She goes out to the right.* SOLNESS follows her.

ACT II

A prettily furnished small drawing-room in SOLNESS'S house. In the back, a glass door leading out to the veranda and garden. The right-hand corner is cut off transversely by a large bay-window, in which are flower-stands. The left-hand corner is similarly cut off by a transverse wall, in which is a small door papered like the wall. On each side, an ordinary door. In front, on the right, a console table with a large mirror over it. Well-filled stands of plants and flowers. In front, on the left, a sofa with a table and chairs. Farther back, a bookcase. Well forward in the room, before the bay-window, a small table and some chairs. It is early in the day.

SOLNESS sits by the little table with Ragnar Brovik's portfolio open in front of him. He is turning the drawings over and closely examining some of them. MRS. SOLNESS moves about noiselessly with a small watering-pot, attending to her flowers. She is dressed in black as before. Her hat, cloak, and parasol lie on a chair near the mirror. Unobserved by her, SOLNESS now and again follows her with his eyes. Neither of them speaks.

[KAIA FOSLI enters quietly by the door on the left.

SOLNESS [*turns his head, and says in an off-hand tone of indifference*]. Well, is that you ?

KAIA. I merely wished to let you know that I have come.

SOLNESS. Yes, yes, that's all right. Hasn't Ragnar come

KAIA. NO, not yet. He had to wait a little while to see the doctor. But he is coming presently to hear——

SOLNESS. How is the old man to-day ?

KAIA. Not well. He begs you to excuse him; he is obliged to keep his bed to-day.

SOLNESS. Why, of course; by all means let him rest. But now, get to your work.

KAIA. Yes. [*Pauses at the door.*] Do you wish to speak to Ragnar when he comes ?

SOLNESS. NO—I don't know that I have anything particular to say to him.

[*KAIA goes out again to the left. SOLNESS remains seated, turning over the drawings.*]

MRS. SOLNESS [*over beside the plants'*]. I wonder if he isn't going to die now, as well ?

SOLNESS [*looks up at her*]. As well as who ?

MRS. SOLNESS [*without answering*]. Yes, yes—depend upon it, Halvard, old Brovik is going to die too. You'll see that he will,

SOLNESS. My dear Aline, ought you not to go out for a little walk ?

MRS. SOLNESS. Yes, I suppose I ought to.

[*She continues to attend to the flowers.*]

SOLNESS [*bending over the drawings*]. Is she still asleep ?

MRS. SOLNESS [*looking at him*]. Is it Miss Wangel you are sitting there thinking about ?

SOLNESS [*indifferently*], I just happened to recollect her.

MRS. SOLNESS. Miss Wangel was up long ago.

SOLNESS. Oh, was she ?

MRS. SOLNESS. When I went in to see her, she was busy putting her things in order.

[*She goes in front of the mirror and slowly begins to put on her hat.*]

SOLNESS [*after a short pause*]. So we have found a use for one of our nurseries after all, Aline.

MRS. SOLNESS. Yes, we have.

SOLNESS. That seems to me better than to have them all standing empty.

MRS. SOLNESS. That emptiness is dreadful; you are right there.

SOLNESS [*closes the portfolio, rises and approaches her*]. You will find that we shall get on far better after this, Aline. Things will be more comfortable. Life will be easier—especially for you.

MRS. SOLNESS [*looks at him*]. After this?

SOLNESS. Yes, believe me, Aline——

MRS. SOLNESS. DO you mean—because she has come here?

SOLNESS [*checking himself*]. I mean, of course—when once we have moved into the new house.

MRS. SOLNESS [*takes her cloak*]. Ah, do you think so, Halvard? Will it be better then?

SOLNESS. I can't think otherwise. And surely you think so too?

MRS. SOLNESS. I think nothing at all about the new house.

SOLNESS [*cast down*]. It's hard for me to hear you say that; for you know it is mainly for your sake that I have built it. [*He offers to help her on with her cloak.*]

MRS. SOLNESS [*evades him*]. The fact is, you do far too much for my sake.

SOLNESS [*with a certain vehemence*]. No, no, you really mustn't say that, Aline! I cannot bear to hear you say such things!

MRS. SOLNESS. Very well, then I won't say it, Halvard.

SOLNESS. But I stick to what I said. You'll see that things will be easier for you in the new place.

MRS. SOLNESS. Oh heavens—easier for me——

SOLNESS [*eagerly*]. Yes, indeed they will! You may be quite sure of that! For, you see—there will be so very, very much there that will remind you of your own home——

MRS. SOLNESS. The home that used to be father's and mother's—and that was burnt to the ground——

SOLNESS [*in a low voice*]. Yes, yes, my poor Aline. That was a terrible blow for you.

MRS. SOLNESS [*breaking out in lamentation*]. You may build as much as ever you like, Halvard—you can never build up again a real home for me I

SOLNESS [*crosses the room*]. Well, in Heaven's name, let us talk no more about it, then.

MRS. SOLNESS. We are not in the habit of talking about it. For you always put the thought away from you——

SOLNESS [*stops suddenly and looks at her*]. Do I? And why should I do t h a t? Put the thought away from me?

MRS. SOLNESS. Oh yes, Halvard, I understand you very well. You are so anxious to spare me—and to find excuses for me too—as much as ever you can.

SOLNESS [*with astonishment in his eyes'*]. You! Is it y o u—yourself, that you are talking about, Aline?

MRS. SOLNESS. Yes, who else should it be but myself?

SOLNESS [*involuntarily to himself*]. T h a t too!

MRS. SOLNESS. As for the old house, I wouldn't mind so much about that. When once misfortune was in the air—why——

SOLNESS. Ah, you are right there. Misfortune will have its way—as the saying goes.

MRS. SOLNESS. But it's what came of the fire—the dreadful thing that followed——! T h a t is the thing! That, that, that!

SOLNESS [*vehemently*]. Don't think about that, Aline!

MRS. SOLNESS. Ah, that is exactly what I cannot help thinking about. And now, at last, I must speak about it, too; for I don't seem able to bear it any longer. And then never to be able to forgive myself——

SOLNESS [*exclaiming*]. Yourself——!

MRS. SOLNESS. Yes, for I had duties on both sides—both towards you and towards the little ones. I ought to have hardened myself—not to have let the horror take such hold upon me—nor the grief for the burning of my home. [*Wrings her hands,*] Oh, Halvard, if I had only had the strength!

SOLNESS [*softly, much moved, comes closer*]. Aline—you must promise me never to think these thoughts any more.—Promise me that, dear!

MRS. SOLNESS. Oh, promise, promise! One can promise anything.

SOLNESS [*clenches his hands and crosses the room*]. Oh, but

this is hopeless, hopeless! Never a ray of sunlight! Not so much as a gleam of brightness to light up our home!

MRS. SOLNESS. This is no home, Halvard.

SOLNESS. Oh no, you may well say that. [*Gloomily.*] And God knows whether you are not right in saying that it will be no better for us in the new house, either.

MRS. SOLNESS. It will never be any better. Just as empty—just as desolate—there as here.

SOLNESS [*vehemently*]. Why in all the world have we built it, then? Can you tell me that?

MRS. SOLNESS. No; you must answer that question for yourself.

SOLNESS [*glances suspiciously at her*]. What do you mean by that, Aline?

MRS. SOLNESS. What do I mean?

SOLNESS. Yes, in the devil's name! You said it so strangely—as if you had some hidden meaning in it.

MRS. SOLNESS. No, indeed, I assure you——

SOLNESS [*comes closer.*] Oh, come now—I know what I know. I have both my eyes and my ears about me, Aline—you may depend upon that!

MRS. SOLNESS. Why, what are you talking about? What is it?

SOLNESS [*places himself in front of her*]. Do you mean to say you don't find a kind of lurking, hidden meaning in the most innocent word I happen to say?

MRS. SOLNESS. /, do you say? I do that?

SOLNESS [*laughs*]. Ho-ho-ho! It's natural enough, Aline! When you have a sick man on your hands——

MRS. SOLNESS [*anxiously*]. Sick? Are you ill, Halvard?

SOLNESS [*violently*]. A half-mad man, then! A crazy man! Call me what you will.

MRS. SOLNESS [*feels blindly for a chair and sits down*], Halvard—for God's sake——

SOLNESS. But you are wrong, both you and the doctor. I am not in the state you imagine.

[*He walks up and down the room.* MRS. SOLNESS follows him anxiously with her eyes. Finally he goes up to her.

SOLNESS [*calmly*]. In reality there is nothing whatever the matter with me.

MRS. SOLNESS. No, there isn't, is there? But then what is it that troubles you so?

SOLNESS. Why, this, that I often feel ready to sink under this terrible burden of debt——

MRS. SOLNESS. Debt, do you say? But you owe no one anything, Halvard!

SOLNESS [*softly, with emotion*], I owe a boundless debt to you—to you—to you, Aline.

MRS. SOLNESS [*rises slowly*]. What is behind all this? You may just as well tell me at once.

SOLNESS. But there is nothing behind it! I have never done you any wrong—not wittingly and wilfully, at any rate. And yet—and yet it seems as though a crushing debt rested upon me and weighed me down.

MRS. SOLNESS. A debt to me?

SOLNESS. Chiefly to you.

MRS. SOLNESS. Then you are—ill after all, Halvard.

SOLNESS [*gloomily*], I suppose I must be—or not far from it. [*Looks towards the door to the right, which is opened at this moment.*] Ah! now it grows lighter.

[HILDA WANGEL comes in. She has made some alteration in her dress, and let down her skirt.

HILDA. Good-morning, Mr. Solness!

SOLNESS [*nods*]. Slept well?

HILDA. Quite deliriously! Like a child in a cradle. Oh—I lay and stretched myself like—like a princess!

SOLNESS [*smiles a little*]. You were thoroughly comfortable, then?

HILDA. I should think so.

SOLNESS. And no doubt you dreamed, too.

HILDA. Yes, I did. But t h a t was horrid.

SOLNESS. Was it?

HILDA. Yes, for I dreamed I was falling over a frightfully high, sheer precipice. Do you never have that kind of dream?

SOLNESS. Oh yes—now and then——

HILDA. It's tremendously thrilling—when you fall and fall——

SOLNESS. It seems to make one's blood run cold.

HILDA. Do you draw your legs up under you while you are falling?

SOLNESS. Yes, as high as ever I can.

HILDA. SO do I.

MRS. SOLNESS [*takes her parasol*], I must go into town now, Halvard. [*To HILDA.*] And I'll try to get one or two things that you may require.

HILDA [*making a motion to throw her arms round her neck*]. Oh, you dear, sweet Mrs. Solness! You are really much too kind to me! Frightfully kind——

MRS. SOLNESS [*deprecatingly, freeing herself*]. Oh, not at all. It's only my duty, so I am very glad to do it.

HILDA [*offended, pouts*]. But really, I think I am quite fit to be seen in the streets—now that I've put my dress to rights. Or do you think I am not?

MRS. SOLNESS. TO tell you the truth, I think people would stare at you a little.

HILDA [*contemptuously*]. Pooh! Is that all? That only amuses me.

SOLNESS [*with suppressed ill-humour*]. Yes, but people might take it into their heads that you were mad too, you see.

HILDA. Mad? Are there so many mad people here in town, then?

SOLNESS [*points to his own forehead*]. Here you see one at all events.

HILDA. YOU—Mr. Solness!

MRS. SOLNESS. Oh, don't talk like that, my dear Halvard!

SOLNESS. Have you not noticed that yet?

HILDA. NO, I certainly have not. [*Reflects and laughs a little.*] And yet—perhaps in one single thing.

SOLNESS. Ah, do you hear that, Aline?

MRS. SOLNESS. What is that one single thing, Miss Wangel?

HILDA. No, I won't say.

SOLNESS. Oh yes, do!

HILDA. NO, thank you—I am not so mad as that.

MRS. SOLNESS. When you and Miss Wangel are alone, I daresay she will tell you, Halvard.

SOLNESS. Ah—you think she will ?

MRS. SOLNESS. Oh yes, certainly. For you have known her so well in the past. Ever since she was a child—you tell me.

[She goes out by the door on the left.]

HILDA *[after a little while]*. Does your wife dislike me very much?

SOLNESS. Did you think you noticed anything of the kind?

HILDA. Did you not notice it yourself ?

SOLNESS *[evasively]*. Aline has become exceedingly shy with strangers of late years.

HILDA. Has she really?

SOLNESS. But if only you could get to know her thoroughly——! Ah, she is so good—so kind—so excellent a creature——

HILDA *[impatiently]*. But if she is all that—what made her say that about her duty?

SOLNESS. Her duty?

HILDA. She said that she would go out and buy something for me, because it was her duty. Oh, I can't bear that ugly, horrid word!

SOLNESS. Why not?

HILDA. It sounds so cold, and sharp, and stinging. Duty—duty—duty. Don't you think so, too? Doesn't it seem to sting you?

SOLNESS. H'm—haven't thought much about it.

HILDA. Yes, it does. And if she is so good—as you say she is—why should she talk in that way?

SOLNESS. But, good Lord, what would you have had her say, then ?

HILDA. She might have said she would do it because she had taken a tremendous fancy to me. She might have said something like that—something really warm and cordial, you understand.

SOLNESS *[looks at her]*. Is that how you would like to have it?

HILDA. Yes, precisely. [*She wanders about the room, stops at the bookcase and looks at the books.*] What a lot of books you have.

SOLNESS. Yes, I have got together a good many.

HILDA. DO you read them all, too?

SOLNESS. I used to try to. Do you read much?

HILDA. NO, never! I have given it up. For it all seems so irrelevant.

SOLNESS. That is just my feeling.

[*HILDA wanders about a little, stops at the small table, opens the portfolio and turns over the contents.*]

HILDA. Are all these drawings yours?

SOLNESS. No, they are drawn by a young man whom I employ to help me.

HILDA. Some one you have taught?

SOLNESS. Oh yes, no doubt he has learnt something from me, too.

HILDA [*sits down*]. Then I suppose he is very clever. [*Looks at a drawing.*] Isn't he?

SOLNESS. Oh, he might be worse. For my purpose——

HILDA. Oh yes—Fm sure he is frightfully clever.

SOLNESS. Do you think you can see that in the drawings?

HILDA. Pooh—these scrawlings! But if he has been learning from you——

SOLNESS. Oh, so far as that goes—there are plenty of people here that have learnt from me, and have come to little enough for all that.

HILDA [*looks at him and shakes her head*]. No, I can't for the life of me understand how you can be so stupid.

SOLNESS. Stupid? Do you think I am so very stupid?

HILDA. Yes, I do indeed. If you are content to go about here teaching all these people——

SOLNESS [*with a slight start*]. Well, and why not?

HILDA [*rises, half serious, half laughing*]. No indeed, Mr. Solness! What can be the good of that? No one but you should be allowed to build. You should stand quite alone—do it all yourself. Now you know it.

SOLNESS [*involuntarily*]. Hilda——!

HILDA. Well!

SOLNESS. How in the world did that come into your head?

HILDA. DO you think I am so very far wrong, then ?

SOLNESS. No, that's not what I mean. But now I'll tell you something.

HILDA. Well?

SOLNESS. I keep on—incessantly—in silence and alone—brooding on that very thought.

HILDA. Yes, that seems to me perfectly natural.

SOLNESS [*looks somewhat searchingly at her*]. Perhaps you have noticed it already ?

HILDA. NO, indeed I haven't.

SOLNESS. But just now—when you said you thought I was—off my balance ? In one thing, you said——

HILDA. Oh, I was thinking of something quite different.

SOLNESS. What was it ?

HILDA. I am not going to tell you.

SOLNESS [*crosses the room*]. Well, well—as you please. [*Stops at the bow-window.*] Come here, and I will show you something.

HILDA [*approaching*]. What is it?

SOLNESS. Do you see—over there in the garden——?

HILDA. Yes?

SOLNESS [*points*]. Right above the great quarry——?

HILDA. That new house, you mean ?

SOLNESS. The one that is being built, yes. Almost finished.

HILDA. It seems to have a very high tower.

SOLNESS. The scaffolding is still up.

HILDA. IS that your new house ?

SOLNESS. Yes.

HILDA. The house you are soon going to move into?

SOLNESS. Yes.

HILDA [*looks at him*]. Are there nurseries in th a t house, too?

SOLNESS. Three, as there are here.

HILDA. And no child.

SOLNESS. And there never will be one.

HILDA [*with a half-smile*]. Well, isn't it just as I said——?

SOLNESS. That——?

HILDA. That you are a little—a little mad after all.

SOLNESS. Was that what you were thinking of?

HILDA. Yes, of all the empty nurseries I slept in.

SOLNESS [*lowers his voice*]. We have had children—Aline and I.

HILDA [*looks eagerly at him*]. Have you——?

SOLNESS. Two little boys. They were of the same age.

HILDA. Twins, then!

SOLNESS. Yes, twins. It's eleven or twelve years ago now.

HILDA [*cautiously*]. And so both of them——? You have lost both the twins, then?

SOLNESS [*with quiet emotion*]* We kept them only about three weeks. Or scarcely so much. [*Bursts forth,*] Oh, Hilda, I can't tell you what a good thing it is for me that you have come! For now at last I have some one I can talk to!

HILDA. Can you not talk to—her, too?

SOLNESS. Not about this. Not as I want to talk and must talk. [*Gloomily,*] And not about so many other things, either.

HILDA [*in a subdued voice*]. Was that all you meant when you said you needed me?

SOLNESS. That was mainly what I meant—at all events, yesterday. For to-day I am not so sure—[*breaking off*]. Come here and let us sit down, Hilda. Sit there on the sofa—so that you can look into the garden. [HILDA *seats herself in the corner of the sofa*, SOLNESS *brings a chair closer,*] Should you like to hear about it?

HILDA. Yes, I shall love to sit and listen to you.

SOLNESS [*sits down*]. Then I will tell you all about it.

HILDA. Now I can see both the garden and you, Mr. Solness. So now, tell away! Begin!

SOLNESS [*points towards the bow-window*]. Out there on the rising ground—where you see the new house——

HILDA. Yes?

SOLNESS. Aline and I lived there in the first years of our married life. There was an old house up there that had

belonged to her mother; and we inherited it, and the whole of the great garden with it.

HILDA. Was there a tower on t h a t house, too ?

SOLNESS. No, nothing of the kind. From the outside it looked like a great, dark, ugly wooden box; but, all the same, it was snug and comfortable enough inside.

HILDA. Then did you pull down the ramshackle old place?

SOLNESS. NO, it was burnt down.

HILDA. The whole of it ?

SOLNESS. Yes.

HILDA. Was that a great misfortune for you ?

SOLNESS. That depends on how you look at it. As a builder, the fire was the making of me——

HILDA. Well, but——?

SOLNESS. It was just after the birth of the two little boys——

HILDA. The poor little twins, yes.

SOLNESS. They came healthy and bonny into the world. And they were growing too—you could see the difference from day to day.

HILDA. Little children do grow quickly at first.

SOLNESS. It was the prettiest sight in the world to see Aline lying with the two of them in her arms.—But then came the night of the fire——

HILDA [*excitedly*]. What happened? Do tell me! Was any one burnt ?

SOLNESS. No, not that. Every one got safe and sound out of the house——

HILDA. Well, and what then——?

SOLNESS. The fright had shaken Aline terribly. The alarm—the escape—the break-neck hurry—and then the ice-cold night air—for they had to be carried out just as they lay—both she and the little ones.

HILDA. Was it too much for them ?

SOLNESS. Oh, no, they stood it well enough. But Aline fell into a fever, and it affected her milk. She would insist on nursing them herself; because it was her duty, she said. And both our little boys, they— [*clenching his hands*].—they—oh I

HILDA. They did not get over that?

SOLNESS. No, that they did not get over. That was how we lost them.

HILDA. It must have been terribly hard for you.

SOLNESS. Hard enough for me; but ten times harier for Aline. [*Clenching his hands in suppressed fury.*] Oh, that such things should be allowed to happen here in the world! [*Shortly and firmly.*] From the day I lost them, I had no heart for building churches.

HILDA. Did you not like building the church-tower in our town?

SOLNESS. I didn't like it. I know how free and happy I felt when that tower was finished.

HILDA. I know that, too.

SOLNESS. And now I shall never—never build anything of that sort again! Neither churches nor church-towers.

HILDA [*nods slowly*]. Nothing but houses for people to live in.

SOLNESS. Homes for human beings, Hilda.

HILDA. But homes with high towers and pinnacles upon them.

SOLNESS. If possible. [*Adopts a lighter tone.*] But, as I said before, that fire was the making of me—as a builder, I mean.

HILDA. Why don't you call yourself an architect, like the others?

SOLNESS. I have not been systematically enough taught for that. Most of what I know I have found out for myself.

HILDA. But you succeeded all the same.

SOLNESS. Yes, thanks to the fire. I laid out almost the whole of the garden in villa lots; and there I was able to build after my own heart. So I came to the front with a rush.

HILDA [*looks keenly at him*]. You must surely be a very happy man, as matters stand with you.

SOLNESS [*gloomily*]. Happy? Do you say that, too—like all the rest of them?

HILDA. Yes, I should say you must be. If you could only cease thinking about the two little children——

SOLNESS [*slowly*]. The two little children—they are not so easy to forget, Hilda.

HILDA [*somewhat uncertainly*]. Do you still feel their loss so much—after all these years?

SOLNESS [*looks fixedly at her, without replying*]. A happy man, you said——

HILDA. Well, now, are you not happy—in other respects?

SOLNESS [*continues to look at her*]. When I told you all this about the fire—h'm——

HILDA. Well?

SOLNESS. Was there not one special thought that you—that you seized upon?

HILDA [*reflects in vain*]. No. What thought should that be?

SOLNESS [*with subdued emphasis*]. It was simply and solely by that fire that I was enabled to build homes for human beings. Cosy, comfortable, bright homes, where father and mother and the whole troop of children can live in safety and gladness, feeling what a happy thing it is to be alive in the world—and most of all to belong to each other—in great things and in small.

HILDA [*ardently*]. Well, and is it not a great happiness for you to be able to build such beautiful homes?

SOLNESS. The price, Hilda! The terrible price I had to pay for the opportunity!

HILDA. But can you never get over that?

SOLNESS. No. That I might build homes for others, I had to forgo—to forgo for all time—the home that might have been my own. I mean a home for a troop of children—and for father and mother, too.

HILDA [*cautiously*]. But need you have done that? For all time, you say?

SOLNESS [*nods slowly*]. That was the price of this happiness that people talk about. [*Breathes heavily,*] This happiness—h'm—this happiness was not to be bought any cheaper, Hilda.

HILDA [*as before*]. But may it not come right even yet?

SOLNESS. Never in this world—never. That is another consequence of the fire—and of Aline's illness afterwards.

HILDA [*looks at him with an indefinable expression*]. And yet you build all these nurseries ?

SOLNESS [*seriously*']. Have you never noticed, Hilda, how the impossible—how it seems to beckon and cry aloud to one ?

HILDA [*reflecting*]. The impossible? [*With animation*.] Yes, indeed I Is that how you feel too ?

SOLNESS. Yes, I do.

HILDA. Then there must be—a little of the troll in you too.

SOLNESS. Why of the troll ?

HILDA. What would you call it, then ?

SOLNESS [*rises*]. Well, well, perhaps you are right. [*Vehemently*.] But how can I help turning into a troll, when this is how it always goes with me in everything—in everything!

HILDA. How do you mean ?

SOLNESS [*speaking low, with inward emotion*], Mark what I say to you, Hilda. All that I have succeeded in doing, building, creating—all the beauty, security, cheerful comfort—ay, and magnificence too———[*Clenches his hands,*] Oh, is it not terrible even to think of——!

HILDA. What is so terrible ?

SOLNESS. That all this I have to make up for, to pay for—not in money, but in human happiness. And not with my own happiness only, but with other people's too. Yes, yes, do you see that, Hilda? That is the price which my position as an artist has cost me—and others. And every single day I have to look on while the price is paid for me anew. Over again, and over again—and over again for ever!

HILDA [*rises and looks steadily at him*]. Now I can see that you are thinking of—of her.

SOLNESS. Yes, mainly of Aline. For Aline—she, too, had her vocation in life, just as much as I had mine. [*His voice quivers,*] But her vocation has had to be stunted, and crushed, and shattered—in order that mine might force its way to—to a sort of great victory. For you must know that Aline—she, too, had a talent for building.

HILDA. She! For building ?

SOLNESS [*shakes his head*]. Not houses and towers, and spires—not such things as I work away at——

HILDA. Well, but w h a t, then ?

SOLNESS [*softly, with emotion*]. For building up the souls of little children, Hilda. For building up children's souls in perfect balance, and in noble and beautiful forms. For enabling them to soar up and erect and full-grown human souls. T h a t was Aline's talent. And there it all lies now—unused and unusable for ever—of no earthly service to any one—just like the ruins left by a fire.

HILDA. Yes, but even if this were so——?

SOLNESS. It i s so! It i s so! I know it!

HILDA. Well, but in any case it is not y o u r fault.

SOLNESS [*fixes his eyes on her, and nods slowly*]. Ah, t h a t is the great, the terrible question. T h a t is the doubt that is gnawing me—night and day.

HILDA. That?

SOLNESS. Yes. Suppose the fault was mine—in a certain sense.

HILDA. Your fault! The fire!

SOLNESS. All of it; the whole thing. And yet, perhaps—I may not have had anything to do with it.

HILDA [*looks at him with a troubled expression*]. Oh, Mr. Solness—if you can talk like that, I am afraid you must be—ill, after all.

SOLNESS. H'm—I don't think I shall ever be of quite sound mind on that point.

[RAGNAR BROVIK *cautiously opens the little door in the left-hand corner, HILDA comes forward,*

RAGNAR [*when he sees HILDA*]. Oh. I beg pardon, Mr. Solness———[*He makes a movement to withdraw,*

SOLNESS. No, no, don't go. Let us get it over.

RAGNAR. Oh yes—if only we could.

SOLNESS. I hear your father is no better ?

RAGNAR. Father is fast growing weaker—and therefore I beg and implore you to write a few kind words for me on one of the plans! Something for father to read before he——

SOLNESS [*vehemently*], I won't hear anything more about those drawings of yours I

RAGNAR. Have you looked at them ?

SOLNESS. Yes—I have.

RAGNAR. And they are good for nothing? And / am good for nothing, too ?

SOLNESS [*evasively*]. Stay here with me, Ragnar, You shall have everything your own way. And then you can marry Kaia, and live at your ease—and happily too, who knows? Only don't think of building on your own account.

RAGNAR. Well, well, then I must go home and tell father what you say—I promised I would.—Is this what I am to tell father—before he dies?

SOLNESS [*with a groan*]. Oh, tell him—tell him what you will, for me. Best to say nothing at all to him. [*With a sudden outburst,*] I c a n n o t do anything else, Ragnar!

RAGNAR. May I have the drawings to take with me ?

SOLNESS. Yes, take them—take them by all means! They are lying there on the table.

RAGNAR [*goes to the table*]. Thanks.

HILDA [*puts her hand on the portfolio*]. No, no; leave them here.

SOLNESS. Why?

HILDA. Because I want to look at them, too.

SOLNESS. But you have been———[*To RAGNAR.*] Well, leave them here, then.

RAGNAR. Very well.

SOLNESS. And go home at once to your father.

RAGNAR. Yes, I suppose I must.

SOLNESS [*as if in desperation*], Ragnar—you must not ask me to do what is beyond my power! Do you hear, Ragnar? You must not!

RAGNAR. NO, no. I beg your pardon——

[*He bows, and goes out by the corner door,* HILDA goes over and sits down on a chair near the mirror,

HILDA [*looks angrily at SOLNESS*]. That was a very ugly thing to do.

SOLNESS. Do you think so, too ?

HILDA. Yes, it was horribly ugly—and hard and bad and cruel as well.

SOLNESS. Oh, you don't understand my position.

HILDA. NO matter——I say you ought not to be like that.

SOLNESS. YOU said yourself, only just now, that no one but J ought to be allowed to build.

HILDA. / may say such things—but y o u must not.

SOLNESS. I most of all, surely, who have paid so dear for my position.

HILDA. Oh yes—with what you call domestic comfort—and that sort of thing.

SOLNESS. And with my peace of soul into the bargain.

HILDA [*rising*]. Peace of soul! [*With feeling.*] Yes, yes, you are right in that! Poor Mr. Solness—you fancy that——

SOLNESS [*with a quiet, chuckling laugh*]. Just sit down again, Hilda, and I'll tell you something funny.

HILDA [*sits down; with intent interest*]. Well ?

SOLNESS. It sounds such a ludicrous little thing; for, you see, the whole story turns upon nothing but a crack in a chimney.

HILDA. NO more than that ?

SOLNESS. NO, not to begin with.

[*He moves a chair nearer to HILDA and sits down.*]

HILDA [*impatently taps on her knee*]. Well, now for the crack in the chimney!

SOLNESS. I had noticed the split in the flue long, long before the fire. Every time I went up into the attic, I looked to see if it was still there.

HILDA. And it was ?

SOLNESS. Yes; for no one else knew about it.

HILDA. And you said nothing ?

SOLNESS. Nothing.

HILDA. And did not think of repairing the flue either ?

SOLNESS. Oh yes, I thought about it—but never got any further. Every time I intended to set to work, it seemed just as if a hand held me back. Not to-day, I thought—to-morrow; and nothing ever came of it.

HILDA. But why did you keep putting it off like that ?

SOLNESS. Because I was revolving something in my mind. [*Slowly, and in a low voice.*] Through that little **black crack**

in the chimney, I might, perhaps, force my way upwards—as a builder.

HILDA [*looking straight in front of her*]. That must have been thrilling.

SOLNESS. Almost irresistible—quite irresistible. For at that time it appeared to me a perfectly simple and straightforward matter. I would have had it happen in the winter-time—a little before midday. I was to be out driving Aline in the sleigh. The servants at home would have made huge fires in the stoves.

HILDA. For, of course, it was to be bitterly cold that day?

SOLNESS. Rather biting, yes—and they would want Aline to find it thoroughly snug and warm when she came home.

HILDA. I suppose she is very chilly by nature?

SOLNESS. She is. And as we drove home, we were to see the smoke.

HILDA. Only the smoke?

SOLNESS. The smoke first. But when we came up to the garden gate, the whole of the old timber-box was to be a rolling mass of flames.—That is how I wanted it to be, you see.

HILDA. Oh why, why could it not have happened so!

SOLNESS. YOU may well say that, Hilda.

HILDA. Well, but now listen, Mr. Solness. Are you perfectly certain that the fire was caused by that little crack in the chimney?

SOLNESS. NO, on the contrary—I am perfectly certain that the crack in the chimney had nothing whatever to do with the fire.

HILDA. What!

SOLNESS. It has been clearly ascertained that the fire broke out in a clothes-cupboard—in a totally different part of the house.

HILDA. Then what is all this nonsense you are talking about the crack in the chimney?

SOLNESS. May I go on talking to you a little, Hilda?

HILDA. Yes, if you'll only talk sensibly—

SOLNESS. I will try to. [*He moves his chair nearer.*]

HILDA. Out with it, then, Mr. Solness.

SOLNESS [*confidentially*']. Don't you agree with me, Hilda, that there exist special, chosen people who have been endowed with the power and faculty of desiring a thing, craving for a thing, willing a thing—so persistently and so—so inexorably—that at last it has to happen? Don't you believe that?

HILDA [*with an indefinable expression in her eyes*]. If that is so, we shall see, one of these days, whether I am one of the chosen.

SOLNESS. It is not one's self alone that can do such great things. Oh no—the helpers and the servers—they must do their part too, if it is to be of any good. But they never come of themselves. One has to call upon them very persistently—inwardly, you understand.

HILDA. What are these helpers and servers?

SOLNESS. Oh, we can talk about that some other time. For the present let us keep to this business of the fire.

HILDA. Don't you think that fire would have happened all the same—even without your wishing for it?

SOLNESS. If the house had been old Knut Brovik's, it would never have burnt down so conveniently for him. I am sure of that; for he does not know how to call for the helpers—no, nor for the servers, either. [*Rises in unrest,*] So you see, Hilda—it is my fault, after all, that the lives of the two little boys had to be sacrificed. And do you think it is not my fault, too, that Aline has never been the woman she should and might have been—and that she most longed to be?

HILDA. Yes, but if it is all the work of those helpers and servers——?

SOLNESS. Who called for the helpers and servers? It was I! And they came and obeyed my will. [*In increasing excitement.*] That is what people call having the luck on your side; but I must tell you what this sort of luck feels like! It feels like a great raw place here on my breast. And the helpers and servers keep on flaying pieces of skin off other people in order to close my sore!—But still the sore is not healed—never—never! Oh, if you knew how it can sometimes gnaw and burn.

HILDA [*looks attentively at him*]. You are ill, Mr. Solness. Very ill, I almost think.

SOLNESS. Say mad; for that is what you mean.

HILDA. No, I don't think there is much amiss with your intellect.

SOLNESS. With what, then? Out with it!

HILDA. I wonder whether you were not sent into the world with a sickly conscience.

SOLNESS. A sickly conscience? What devilry is that?

HILDA. I mean that your conscience is feeble—too delicately built, as it were—hasn't strength to take a grip of things—to lift and bear what is heavy.

SOLNESS [*growls*]. H'm! May I ask, then, what sort of a conscience one ought to have?

HILDA. I should like your conscience to be—to be thoroughly robust.

SOLNESS. Indeed! Robust, eh? Is your own conscience robust, may I ask?

HILDA. Yes, I think it is. I have never noticed that it wasn't.

SOLNESS. It has not been put very severely to the test, I should think.

HILDA [*with a quivering of the lips*]. Oh, it was no such simple matter to leave father—I am so awfully fond of him.

SOLNESS. Dear me! for a month or two——

HILDA. I think I shall never go home again.

SOLNESS. Never? Then why did you leave him?

HILDA [*half-seriously, half-banteringly*]. Have you forgotten again that the ten years are up?

SOLNESS. Oh, nonsense. Was anything wrong at home? Eh?

HILDA [*quite seriously*]. It was this impulse within me that urged and goaded me to come—and lured and drew me on, as well.

SOLNESS [*eagerly*]. There we have it! There we have it, Hilda! There is a troll in you too, as in me. For it's the troll in one, you see—it is that that calls to the powers outside us. And then you must give in—whether you will or no.

HILDA. I almost think you are right, Mr. Solness.

SOLNESS [*walks about the room*]. Oh, there are devils innumerable abroad in the world, Hilda, that one never sees!

HILDA. Devils, too?

SOLNESS [*stops*]. Good devils and bad devils; light-haired devils and black-haired devils. If only you could always tell whether it is the light or dark ones that have got hold of you! [*Paces about.*] Ho-ho! Then it would be simple enough!

HILDA [*follows him with her eyes*]. Or if one had a really vigorous, radiantly healthy conscience—so that one dared to do what one would.

SOLNESS [*stops beside the console table*]. I believe, now, that most people are just as puny creatures as I am in that respect.

HILDA. I shouldn't wonder.

SOLNESS [*leaning against the table*]. In the sagas—— Have you read any of the old sagas?

HILDA. Oh yes! When I used to read books, I——

SOLNESS. In the sagas you read about vikings, who sailed to foreign lands, and plundered and burned and killed men——

HILDA. And carried off women——

SOLNESS. —and kept them in captivity——

HILDA. —took them home in their ships——

SOLNESS. —and behaved to them like—like the very worst of trolls.

HILDA [*looks straight before her, with a half-veiled look*], I think that must have been thrilling.

SOLNESS [*with a short, deep laugh*]. To carry off women, eh?

HILDA. To be carried off.

SOLNESS [*looks at her a moment*]. Oh, indeed.

HILDA [*as if breaking the thread of the conversation*]. But what made you speak of these vikings, Mr. Solness?

SOLNESS. Why, those fellows must have had robust consciences, if you like! When they got home again, they could eat and drink, and be as happy as children. And the women, too! They often would not leave them on any account. Can you understand that, Hilda?

HILDA. Those women I can understand exceedingly well.

SOLNESS. Oho! Perhaps you could do the same yourself?

HILDA. Why not?

SOLNESS. Live—of your own free will—with a ruffian like that?

HILDA. If it was a ruffian I had come to love——

SOLNESS. Could you come to love a man like that?

HILDA. Good heavens, you know very well one can't choose whom one is going to love.

SOLNESS [*looks meditatively at her*]. Oh no, I suppose it is the troll within one that's responsible for that.

HILDA [*half-laughing*]. And all those blessed devils, that you know so well—both the light-haired and the dark-haired ones.

SOLNESS [*quietly and warmly*]* Then I hope with all my heart that the devils will choose carefully for you, Hilda.

HILDA. For me they have chosen already—once and for all.

SOLNESS [*looks earnestly at her*], Hilda—you are like a wild bird of the woods.

HILDA. Far from it. I don't hide myself away under the bushes.

SOLNESS. NO, no. There is rather something of the bird of prey in you.

HILDA. That is nearer it—perhaps. [*Very vehemently.*] And why not a bird of prey? Why should not I go a-hunting — I, as well as the rest? Carry off the prey I want—if only I can get my claws into it, and do with it as I will.

SOLNESS. Hilda—do you know what you are?

HILDA. Yes, I suppose I am a strange sort of bird.

SOLNESS. NO. You are like a dawning day. When I look at you—I seem to be looking towards the sunrise.

HILDA. Tell me, Mr. Solness—are you certain that you have never called me to you? Inwardly, you know?

SOLNESS [*softly and slowly*]. I almost think I must have.

HILDA. What did you want with me?

SOLNESS. YOU are the younger generation, Hilda.

HILDA [*smiles*']. That younger generation that you are so afraid of ?

SOLNESS [*nods slowly*]. And which, in my heart, I yearn towards so deeply.

[HILDA *rises, goes to the little table, and fetches RAGNAR BROVIK'S portfolio*.

HILDA [*holds out the portfolio to him*]. We were talking of these drawings——

SOLNESS [*shortly, waving them away*]. Put those things away! I have seen enough of them.

HILDA. Yes, but you have to write your approval on them.

SOLNESS. Write my approval on them? Never!

HILDA. But the poor man is lying at death's door I Can't you give him and his son this pleasure before they are parted? And perhaps he might get the commission to carry them out, too.

SOLNESS. Yes, that is just what he would get. He has made sure of that—has my fine gentleman!

HILDA. Then, good heavens—if that is so—can't you tell the least little bit of a lie for once in a way ?

SOLNESS. A lie! [*Raging*.] Hilda—take those devil's drawings out of my sight!

HILDA [*draws the portfolio a little nearer to herself*]. Well, well, well—don't bite me. You talk of trolls—but I think you go on like a troll yourself. [*Looks round*.] Where do you keep your pen and ink ?

SOLNESS. There is nothing of the sort in here.

HILDA [*goes towards the door*]. But in the office where that young lady is——

SOLNESS. Stay where you are, Hilda!—I ought to tell a lie, you say. Oh yes, for the sake of his old father I might well do that—for in my time I have crushed him, trodden him under foot——

HILDA. Him, too?

SOLNESS. I needed room for myself. But this Ragnar—he must on no account be allowed to come to the front.

HILDA. Poor fellow, there is surely no fear of that. If he has nothing in him——

SOLNESS [*comes closer, hois at her, and whispers*]. If

Ragnar Brovik gets his chance, he will strike me to the earth. Crush me—as I crushed his father.

HILDA. Crush you? Has he the ability for that?

SOLNESS. Yes, you may depend upon it he has the ability! He is the younger generation that stands ready to knock at my door—to make an end of Halvard Solness.

HILDA [*looks at him with quiet reproach*]. And yet you would bar him out. Fie, Mr. Solness!

SOLNESS. The fight I have been fighting has cost heart's blood enough.—And I am afraid, too, that the helpers and servers will not obey me any longer.

HILDA. Then you must go ahead without them. There is nothing else for it.

SOLNESS. It is hopeless, Hilda. The luck is bound to turn. A little sooner or a little later. Retribution is inexorable.

HILDA [*in distress, putting her hands over her ears*]. Don't talk like that! Do you want to kill me? To take from me what is more than my life?

SOLNESS. And what is that?

HILDA. The longing to see you great. To see you, with a wreath in your hand, high, high up upon a church-tower. [*Calm again.*] Come, out with your pencil now. You must have a pencil about you?

SOLNESS [*takes out his pocket-book*]. I have one here.

HILDA [*lays the portfolio on the sofa table*]. Very well. Now let us two sit down here, Mr. Solness. [SOLNESS *seats himself at the table*. HILDA *stands behind him, leaning over the back of the chair*.] And now we will write on the drawings. We must write very, very nicely and cordially—for this horrid Ruar—or whatever his name is.

SOLNESS [*writes a few words, turns his head and looks at her*]. Tell me one thing, Hilda.

HILDA. Yes!

SOLNESS. If you have been waiting for me all these ten years——

HILDA. What then?

SOLNESS. Why have you never written to me? Then I could have answered you.

HILDA [*hastily*]. No, no, no! That was just what I did not want.

SOLNESS. Why not?

HILDA. I was afraid the whole thing might fall to pieces.— But we were going to write on the drawings, Mr. Solness.

SOLNESS. So we were.

HILDA [*bends forward and looks over his shoulder while he writes*]. Mind now, kindly and cordially! Oh, how I hate— how I hate this Ruald——

SOLNESS [*writing*]. Have you never really cared for any one, Hilda?

HILDA [*harshly*]. What do you say?

SOLNESS. Have you never cared for any one?

HILDA. For any one else, I suppose you mean?

SOLNESS [*looks up at her*]. For any one else, yes. Have you never? In all these ten years? Never?

HILDA. Oh yes, now and then. When I was perfectly furious with you for not coming.

SOLNESS. Then you did take an interest in other people, too?

HILDA. A little bit—for a week or so. Good heavens, Mr. Solness, you surely know how such things come about.

SOLNESS. Hilda—what is it you have come for?

HILDA. Don't waste time talking. The poor old man might go and die in the meantime.

SOLNESS. Answer me, Hilda. What do you want of me?

HILDA. I want my kingdom.

SOLNESS. H'm——

[He gives a rapid glance towards the door on the left, and then goes on writing on the drawings. At the same moment MRS. SOLNESS enters; she has some packages in her hand.]

MRS. SOLNESS. Here are a few things I have got for you, Miss Wangel. The large parcels will be sent later on.

HILDA. Oh, how very, very kind of you!

MRS. SOLNESS. Only my simple duty. Nothing more than that.

SOLNESS [*reading over what he has written*]. Aline 1

MRS. SOLNESS. Yes?

SOLNESS. Did you notice whether the—the book-keeper was out there?

MRS. SOLNESS. Yes, of course, she was there.

SOLNESS [*puts the drawings in the portfolio*], H'm——

MRS. SOLNESS. She was standing at the desk, as she always is—when I go through the room.

SOLNESS [*rises*]. Then I'll give this to her, and tell her that——

HILDA [*takes the portfolio from him*]. Oh no, let me have the pleasure of doing that! [*Goes to the door, but turns.*] What is her name?

SOLNESS. Her name is Miss Fosli.

HILDA. Pooh, that sounds so cold! Her Christian name, I mean?

SOLNESS. Kaia—I believe.

HILDA [*opens the door and calls out*]. Kaia, come in here! Make haste! Mr. Solness wants to speak to you.

[KAIA FOSLI *appears at the door.*]

KAIA [*looking at him in alarm*]. Here I am——!

HILDA [*handing her the portfolio*]. See here, Kaia! You can take this home; Mr. Solness has written on them now.

KAIA. Oh, at last!

SOLNESS. Give them to the old man as soon as you can.

KAIA. I will go straight home with them.

SOLNESS. Yes, do. Now Ragnar will have a chance of building for himself.

KAIA. Oh, may he come and thank you for all——?

SOLNESS [*harshly*]. I won't have any thanks. Tell him that from me.

KAIA. Yes, I will——

SOLNESS. And tell him at the same time that henceforward I do not require his services—nor yours either.

KAIA [*softly and quiveringly*]. Not mine either?

SOLNESS. YOU will have other things to think of now, and to attend to; and that is a very good thing for you. Well, go home with the drawings now, Miss Fosli. At once! Do you hear?

KAIA [*as before*]. Yes, Mr. Solness. [*She goes out.*]

MRS. SOLNESS. Heavens! what deceitful eyes she has.

SOLNESS. She? That poor little creature?

MRS. SOLNESS. Oh—I can see what I can see, Halvard.—
Are you really dismissing them?

SOLNESS. Yes.

MRS. SOLNESS. Her as well?

SOLNESS. Was not that what you wished?

MRS. SOLNESS. But how can you get on without her——?
Oh well, no doubt you have some one else in reserve, Halvard.

HILDA [*playfully*]. Well, / for one am not the person to
stand at that desk.

SOLNESS. Never mind, never mind—it will be all right,
Aline. Now all you have to do is to think about moving into
our new home—as quickly as you can. This evening we will
hang up the wreath—[*turns to HILDA*]—right on the very
pinnacle of the tower. What do you say to that, Miss Hilda?

HILDA [*looks at him with sparkling eyes*]. It will be splen-
did to see you so high up once more.

SOLNESS. Me!

MRS. SOLNESS. For Heaven's sake, Miss Wangel, don't
imagine such a thing! My husband!—when he always gets so
dizzy!

HILDA. He get dizzy! No, I know quite well he does
not!

MRS. SOLNESS. Oh yes, indeed he does.

HILDA. But I have seen him with my own eyes right up at
the top of a high church-tower!

MRS. SOLNESS. Yes, I hear people talk of that; but it is
utterly impossible——

SOLNESS [*vehemently*]. Impossible—impossible, yes! But
there I stood all the same!

MRS. SOLNESS. Oh, how can you say so, Halvard? Why,
you can't even bear to go out on the second-story balcony here.
You have always been like that.

SOLNESS. You may perhaps see something different this
evening.

MRS. SOLNESS [*in alarm*]. No, no, no! Please God I

shall never see that. I will write at once to the doctor—and I am sure he won't let you do it.

SOLNESS. Why, Aline——!

MRS. SOLNESS. Oh, you know you're ill, Halvard. This proves it! O God—O God!

[She goes hastily out to the right.]

HILDA *[looks intently at him]*. Is it so, or is it not?

SOLNESS. That I turn dizzy?

HILDA. That my master builder dares not—c a n n o t—climb as high as he builds?

SOLNESS. Is that the way you look at it?

HILDA. Yes.

SOLNESS. I believe there is scarcely a corner in me that is safe from you.

HILDA *[looks towards the boiv-window]*. Up there, then. Right up there——

SOLNESS *[approaches her]*. You might have the topmost room in the tower, Hilda—there you might live like a princess.

HILDA *[indefinably, between earnest and jest]*. Yes, that is what you promised me.

SOLNESS. Did I really?

HILDA. Fie, Mr, Solness! You said I should be a princess, and that you would give me a kingdom. And then you went and——Well!

SOLNESS *[cautiously']*. Are you quite certain that this is not a dream—a fancy, that has fixed itself in your mind?

HILDA *[sharply]*. Do you mean that you did not do it?

SOLNESS. I scarcely know myself. *[More softly.]* But now I know so m u c h for certain, that I——

HILDA. That you——? Say it at once!

SOLNESS. —that I o u g h t to have done it.

HILDA *[exclaims with animation]*. Don't tell me you can ever be dizzy!

SOLNESS. This evening, then, we will hang up the wreath—Princess Hilda.

HILDA *[with a bitter curve of the lips]*. Over your new home, yes.

SOLNESS. Over the new house, which will never be a home for me. *[He goes out through the garden door.]*

HILDA *[looks straight in front of her with a far-away expression, and whispers to herself. The only words audible are] frightfully thrilling—*

ACT III

The large, broad veranda of SOLNESS'S dwelling-house. Part of the house, with outer door leading to the veranda, is seen to the left. A railing along the veranda to the right. At the back, from the end of the veranda, a flight of steps leads down to the garden below. Tall old trees in the garden spread their branches over the veranda and towards the house. Far to the right, in among the trees, a glimpse is caught of the lower part of the new villa, with scaffolding round so much as is seen of the tower. In the background the garden is bounded by an old wooden fence. Outside the fence, a street with low, tumble-down cottages.

Evening sky with sunlit clouds.

On the veranda, a garden bench stands along the wall of the house, and in front of the bench a long table. On the other side of the table, an armchair and some stools. All the furniture is of wicker-work.

MRS. SOLNESS, *wrapped in a large white crape shawl, sits resting in the armchair and gazes over to the right. Shortly after, HILDA WANGEL comes up the flight of steps from the garden. She is dressed as in the last act, and wears her hat. She has in her bodice a little nosegay of small common flowers.*

MRS. SOLNESS *[turning her head a little].* Have you been round the garden, Miss Wangel?

HILDA. Yes, I have been taking a look at it.

MRS. SOLNESS. And found some flowers too, I see.

HILDA. Yes, indeed! There are such heaps of them in among the bushes.

MRS. SOLNESS. Are there really? Still? You see I scarcely ever go there.

HILDA [*closer*]. What! Don't you take a run down into the garden every day, then?

MRS. SOLNESS [*with a faint smile*]. I don't "run" anywhere, nowadays.

HILDA. Well, but do you not go down now and then to look at all the lovely things there?

MRS. SOLNESS. It has all become so strange to me. I am almost afraid to see it again.

HILDA. Your own garden!

MRS. SOLNESS. I don't feel that it is mine any longer.

HILDA. What do you mean——?

MRS. SOLNESS. NO, no, it is not—not as it was in my mother's and father's time. They have taken away so much—so much of the garden, Miss Wangel. Fancy—they have parcelled it out—and built houses for strangers—people that I don't know. And they can sit and look in upon me from their windows.

HILDA [*with a bright expression*]. Mrs. Solness!

MRS. SOLNESS. Yes?

HILDA. May I stay here with you a little?

MRS. SOLNESS. Yes, by all means, if you care to.

[HILDA *moves a stool close to the armchair and sits down*,

HILDA. Ah—here one can sit and sun oneself like a cat.

MRS. SOLNESS [*lays her hand softly on HILDA'S neck*]. It is nice of you to be willing to sit with me. I thought you wanted to go in to my husband.

HILDA. What should I want with him?

MRS. SOLNESS. TO help him, I thought.

HILDA. NO, thank you. And besides, he is not in. He is over there with his workmen. But he looked so fierce that I did not dare to talk to him.

MRS. SOLNESS. He is kind and gentle in reality.

HILDA. He!

MRS. SOLNESS. YOU do not really know him yet, Miss Wangel.

HILDA [*looks affectionately at her*']. Are you pleased at the thought of moving over to the new house ?

MRS. SOLNESS. I ought to be pleased; for it is what Halvard wants——

HILDA. Oh, not just on that account, surely ?

MRS. SOLNESS. Yes, yes, Miss Wangel; for it is only my duty to submit myself to h i m. But very often it is dreadfully difficult to force one's mind to obedience.

HILDA. Yes, that must be difficult indeed.

MRS. SOLNESS. I can tell you it is—when one has so many faults as I have——

HILDA. When one has gone through so much trouble as you have——

MRS. SOLNESS. HOW do you know about that ?

HILDA. Your husband told me.

MRS. SOLNESS. TO me he very seldom mentions these things.—Yes, I can tell you I have gone through more than enough trouble in my life, Miss Wangel.

HILDA [*looks sympathetically at her and nods slowly*]. Poor Mrs. Solness. First of all there was the fire——

MRS. SOLNESS [*with a sigh*]. Yes, everything that was mine was burnt.

HILDA. And then came what was worse.

MRS. SOLNESS [*looking inquiringly at her*]. Worse?

HILDA. The worst of all.

MRS. SOLNESS. What do you mean ?

HILDA [*softly*]. You lost the two little boys.

MRS. SOLNESS. Oh yes, the boys. But, you see, t h a t was a thing apart. That was a dispensation of Providence; and in such things one can only bow in submission—yes, and be thankful, too.

HILDA. Then you are so ?

MRS. SOLNESS. Not always, I am sorry to say. I know well enough that it is my duty—but all the same I c a n n o t.

HILDA. NO, no, I think that is only natural.

MRS. SOLNESS. And often and often I have to remind myself that it was a righteous punishment for me——

HILDA. Why?

MRS. SOLNESS. Because I had not fortitude enough in misfortune.

HILDA. But I don't see that——

MRS. SOLNESS. Oh, no, no, Miss Wangel—do not talk to me any more about the two little boys. We ought to feel nothing but joy in thinking of them; for they are so happy—so happy now. No, it is the small losses in life that cut one to the heart—the loss of all that other people look upon as almost nothing.

HILDA [*lays her arms on MRS. SOLNESS'S knees, and looks up at her affectionately*]. Dear Mrs. Solness—tell me what things you mean!

MRS. SOLNESS. As I say, only little things. All the old portraits were burnt on the walls. And all the old silk dresses were burnt, that had belonged to the family for generations and generations. And all mother's and grandmother's lace—that was burnt, too. And only think—the jewels, too! [*Sadly.*] And then all the dolls.

HILDA. The dolls?

MRS. SOLNESS [*choking with tears*]. I had nine lovely dolls.

HILDA. And they were burnt too ?

MRS. SOLNESS. All of them. Oh, it was hard—so hard for me.

HILDA. Had you put by all these dolls, then? Ever since you were little?

MRS. SOLNESS. I had not put them by. The dolls and I have gone on living together.

HILDA. After you were grown up ?

MRS. SOLNESS. Yes, long after that.

HILDA. After you were married, too ?

MRS. SOLNESS. Oh yes, indeed. So long as he did not see it——But they were all burnt up, poor things. No one thought of saving them. Oh, it is so miserable to think of. You mustn't laugh at me, Miss Wangel.

HILDA. I am not laughing in the least.

MRS. SOLNESS. For, you see, in a certain sense, there was

life in them, too. I carried them under my heart—like little unborn children.

[DR. HERDAL, *with his hat in his hand, comes out through the door, and observes* MRS. SOLNESS *and* HILDA.]

DR. HERDAL. Well, Mrs. Solness, so you are sitting out here catching cold ?

MRS. SOLNESS. I find it so pleasant and warm here to-day.

DR. HERDAL. Yes, yes. But is there anything going on here ? I got a note from you.

MRS. SOLNESS [*rises*]. Yes, there is something I must talk to you about.

DR. HERDAL. Very well; then perhaps we had better go in. [*To* HILDA.] Still in your mountaineering dress, Miss Wangel ?

HILDA [*gaily rising*]. Yes—in full uniform! But to-day I am not going climbing and breaking my neck. We two will stop quietly below and look on, doctor.

DR. HERDAL. What are we to look on at ?

MRS. SOLNESS [*softly, in alarm, to* HILDA]. Hush, hush—for God's sake! He is coming! Try to get that idea out of his head. And let us be friends, Miss Wangel. Don't you think we can ?

HILDA [*throws her arms impetuously round* MRS. SOLNESS'S *neck*]. Oh, if we only could !

MRS. SOLNESS [*gently disengages herself*]. There, there, there! There he comes, doctor. Let me have a word with you.

DR. HERDAL. IS it about him ?

MRS. SOLNESS. Yes, to be sure it's about him. Do come in.

[*She and the doctor enter the house. Next moment* SOLNESS *comes up from the garden by the flight of steps. A serious look comes over* HILDA'S *face.*

SOLNESS [*glances at the house door, which is closed cautiously from within*]. Have you noticed, Hilda, that as soon as I come, she goes ?

HILDA. I have noticed that as soon as you come, you make her go.

SOLNESS. Perhaps so. But I cannot help it. [*Looks observantly at her.*] Are you cold, Hilda? I think you look cold.

HILDA. I have just come up out of a tomb.

SOLNESS. What do you mean by that?

HILDA. That I have got chilled through and through, Mr. Solness.

SOLNESS [*slowly*], I believe I understand——

HILDA. What brings you up here just now?

SOLNESS. I caught sight of you from over there.

HILDA. But then you must have seen her too?

SOLNESS. I knew she would go at once if I came.

HILDA. IS it very painful for you that she should avoid you in this way?

SOLNESS. In one sense, it's a relief as well.

HILDA. Not to have her before your eyes?

SOLNESS. Yes.

HILDA. Not to be always seeing how heavily the loss of the little boys weighs upon her?

SOLNESS. Yes. Chiefly that.

[*HILDA drifts across the veranda with her hands behind her back, stops at the railing and looks out over the garden.*]

SOLNESS [*after a short pause*]. Did you have a long talk with her? [*HILDA stands motionless and does not answer.*]

SOLNESS. Had you a long talk, I asked?

[*HILDA is silent as before.*]

SOLNESS. What was she talking about, Hilda?

[*HILDA continues silent.*]

SOLNESS. Poor Aline! I suppose it was about the little boys.

HILDA [*a nervous shudder runs through her; then she nods hurriedly once or twice*].

SOLNESS. She will never get over it—never in this world. [*Approaches her.*] Now you are standing there again like a statue; just as you stood last night.

HILDA [*turns and looks at him, with great, serious eyes*]. I am going away.

SOLNESS [*sharply*]. Going away I

HILDA. Yes.

SOLNESS. But I won't allow you to I

HILDA. What am I to do here now?

SOLNESS. Simply to be here, Hilda!

HILDA [*measures him with a look*]. Oh, thank you. You know it wouldn't end there.

SOLNESS [*heedlessly*]. So much the better!

HILDA [*vehemently*]. I cannot do any harm to one whom I know! I can't take away anything that belongs to her.

SOLNESS. Who wants you to do that?

HILDA [*continuing*]. A stranger, yes! for that is quite a different thing! A person I have never set eyes on. But one that I have come into close contact with——! Oh no! Oh no! Ugh!

SOLNESS. Yes, but I never proposed you should.

HILDA. Oh, Mr. Solness, you know quite well what the end of it would be. And that is why I am going away.

SOLNESS. And what is to become of me when you are gone? What shall I have to live for then?—After that?

HILDA [*with the indefinable look in her eyes*]. It is surely not so hard for you. You have your duties to her. Live for those duties.

SOLNESS. Too late. These powers—these—these——

HILDA. —devils——

SOLNESS. Yes, these devils! And the troll within me as well—they have drawn all the life-blood out of her. [*Laughs in desperation.*] They did it for my happiness! Yes, yes! [*Sadly.*] And now she is dead—for my sake. And I am chained alive to a dead woman. [*In wild anguish.*] I—I, who cannot live without joy in life!

[*HILDA moves round the table and seats herself on the bench, with her elbows on the table, and her head supported by her hands.*]

HILDA [*sits and looks at him a while*]. What will you build next?

SOLNESS [*shakes his head*]. I don't believe I shall build much more.

HILDA. Not those cosy, happy homes for mother and father, and for the troop of children?

SOLNESS. I wonder whether there will be any use for such homes in the coming time.

HILDA. Poor Mr. Solness! And you have gone all these ten years—and staked your whole life—on that alone.

SOLNESS. Yes, you may well say so, Hilda.

HILDA [*with an outburst*]. Oh, it all seems to me so foolish—so foolish!

SOLNESS. All what?

HILDA. Not to be able to grasp at your own happiness—at your own life! Merely because some one you know happens to stand in the way!

SOLNESS. One whom you have no right to set aside.

HILDA. I wonder whether one really has not the right! And yet, and yet——Oh! if one could only sleep the whole thing away!

[She lays her arms flat down on the table, rests the left side of her head on her hands, and shuts her eyes,

SOLNESS [*turns the armchair and sits down at the table*]. Had you a cosy, happy home—up there with your father, Hilda?

HILDA [*without stirring, answers as if half asleep*]. I had only a cage.

SOLNESS. And you are determined not to go back to it?

HILDA [*as before*]. The wild bird never wants to go into the cage.

SOLNESS. Rather range through the free air——

HILDA [*still as before*]. The bird of prey loves to range——

SOLNESS [*lets his eyes rest on her*]. If only one had the viking-spirit in life——

HILDA [*in her usual voice; opens her eyes, but does not move*]. And the other thing? Say what that was!

SOLNESS. A robust conscience.

[HILDA *sits erect on the bench, with animation. Her eyes have once more the sparkling expression of gladness.*

HILDA [*nods to him*]. I know what you are going to build next!

SOLNESS. Then you know more than I do, Hilda.

HILDA. Yes, builders are such stupid people.

SOLNESS. What is it to be, then?

HILDA [*nods again*]. The castle.

SOLNESS. What castle ?

HILDA. My castle, of course.

SOLNESS. DO you want a castle now?

HILDA. Don't you owe me a kingdom, I should like to know?

SOLNESS. You say I do.

HILDA. Well—you admit you owe me this kingdom. And you can't have a kingdom without a royal castle, I should think!

SOLNESS [*more and more animated*]. Yes, they usually go together.

HILDA. Good ! Then build it for me! This moment!

SOLNESS [*laughing*]. Must you have that on the instant, too?

HILDA. Yes, to be sure! For the ten years are up now, and I am not going to wait any longer. So—out with the castle, Mr. Solness!

SOLNESS. It's no light matter to owe you anything, Hilda.

HILDA. YOU should have thought of that before. It is too late now. So—[*tapping the table*]—the castle on the table! It is my castle! I will have it at o n c e!

SOLNESS [*more seriously, leans over towards her, with his arms on the table*]. What sort of castle have you imagined, Hilda?

[*Her expression becomes more and more veiled. She seems gazing inwards at herself.*]

HILDA [*slowly*]. My castle shall stand on a height—on a very great height—with a clear outlook on all sides, so that I can see far—far around.

SOLNESS. And no doubt it is to have a high tower!

HILDA. A tremendously high tower. And at the very top of the tower there shall be a balcony. And I will stand out upon it——

SOLNESS [*involuntarily clutches at his forehead*]. How can you like to stand at such a dizzy height——?

HILDA. Yes, I will! Right up there will I stand and look down on the other people—on those that are building churches,

and homes for mother and father and the troop of children. And you may come up and look on at it, too.

SOLNESS [*in a low tone*]. Is the builder to be allowed to come up beside the princess?

HILDA. If the builder will.

SOLNESS [*more softly*]. Then I think the builder will come.

HILDA [*nods*]. The builder—he will come.

SOLNESS. But he will never be able to build any more. Poor builder!

HILDA [*animated*]. Oh yes, he will! We two will set to work together. And then we will build the loveliest—the very loveliest—thing in all the world.

SOLNESS [*intently*]. Hilda—tell me what that is!

HILDA [*looks smilingly at him, shakes her head a little, pouts, and speaks as if to a child*]. Builders—they are such very—very stupid people.

SOLNESS. Yes, no doubt they are stupid. But now tell me what it is—the loveliest thing in the world—that we two are to build together?

HILDA [*is silent a little while, then says with an indefinable expression in her eyes*]. Castles in the air.

SOLNESS. Castles in the air?

HILDA [*nods*]. Castles in the air, yes! Do you know what sort of thing a castle in the air is?

SOLNESS. It is the loveliest thing in the world, you say.

HILDA [*rises with vehemence, and makes a gesture of repulsion with her hand*]. Yes, to be sure it is! Castles in the air—they are so easy to take refuge in. And so easy to build, too—[*looks scornfully at him*]—especially for the builders who have a—a dizzy conscience.

SOLNESS [*rises*]. After this day we two will build together, Hilda.

HILDA [*with a half-dubious smile*]. A real castle in the air?

SOLNESS. Yes. One with a firm foundation under it.

[RAGNAR BROVIK *comes out from the house. He is carrying a large green wreath with flowers and silk ribbons.*

HILDA [*with an outburst of pleasure*]. The wreath. Oh, that will be glorious!

SOLNESS [*in surprise*]. Have you brought the wreath, Ragnar?

RAGNAR. I promised the foreman I would.

SOLNESS [*relieved*]. Ah, then I suppose your father is better?

RAGNAR. No.

SOLNESS. Was he not cheered by what I wrote?

RAGNAR. It came too late.

SOLNESS. Too late!

RAGNAR. When she came with it he was unconscious. He had had a stroke.

SOLNESS. Why, then, you must go home to him! You must attend to your father!

RAGNAR. He does not need me any more.

SOLNESS. But surely you ought to be with him.

RAGNAR. S h e is sitting by his bed.

SOLNESS [*rather uncertainly*], Kaia?

RAGNAR [*looking darkly at him*]. Yes—Kaia.

SOLNESS. GO home, Ragnar—both to him and to her. Give me the wreath.

RAGNAR [*suppresses a mocking smile*]. You don't mean that you yourself——?

SOLNESS. I will take it down to them myself. [*Takes the wreath from him,*] And now you go home; we don't require you to-day.

RAGNAR. I know you do not require me any more; but to-day I shall remain.

SOLNESS. Well, remain then, since you are bent upon it.

HILDA [*at the railing*], Mr. Solness, I will stand here and look on at you.

SOLNESS. At me!

HILDA. It will be fearfully thrilling.

SOLNESS [*in a low tone*]. We will talk about that presently, Hilda.

[*He goes down the flight of steps with the wreath, and away through the garden.*]

HILDA [*looks after him, then turns to RAGNAR*]. I think you might at least have thanked him.

RAGNAR. Thanked him? Ought I to have thanked him?

HILDA. Yes, of course you ought!

RAGNAR. I think it is rather y o u I ought to thank.

HILDA. How can you say such a thing?

RAGNAR [*without answering her*]. But I advise you to take care, Miss Wangel! For you don't know him rightly yet.

HILDA [*ardently*]. Oh, no one knows him as I do!

RAGNAR [*laughs in exasperation*]. Thank him, when he has held me down year after year! When he made father disbelieve in me—made me disbelieve in myself! And all merely that he might——!

HILDA [*as if divining something*]. That he might——? Tell me at once!

RAGNAR. That he might keep her with him.

HILDA [*with a start towards him*]. The girl at the desk?

RAGNAR. Yes.

HILDA [*threateningly, clenching her hands*]. That is not true! You are telling falsehoods about him!

RAGNAR. I would not believe it either until to-day—when she said so herself.

HILDA [*as if beside herself*]. W h a t did she say? I w i l l know! At once! at once!

RAGNAR. She said that he had taken possession of her mind—her whole mind—centred all her thoughts upon himself alone. She says that she can never leave him—that she will remain here, where h e is——

HILDA [*with flashing eyes*]. She will not be allowed to!

RAGNAR [*as if feeling his way*]. Who will not allow her?

HILDA [*rapidly*]. H e will not either!

RAGNAR. Oh no—I understand the whole thing now. After this, she would merely be—in the way.

HILDA. YOU understand nothing—since you can talk like that! No, / will tell you why he kept hold of her.

RAGNAR. Well then, why?

HILDA. In order to keep hold of you.

RAGNAR. Has he told you so ?

HILDA. No, but it i s so. It m u s t be so! [*Wildly.*] I will—I will have it so!

RAGNAR. And at the very moment when y o u came—he let her go.

HILDA. It was y o u—y o u that he let go! What do you suppose he cares about strange women like her ?

RAGNAR [*reflects*]. Is it possible that all this time he has been afraid of me ?

HILDA. H e afraid! I would not be so conceited if I were you.

RAGNAR. Oh, he must have seen long ago that I had something in me, too. Besides—cowardly—that is just what he is, you see.

HILDA. He! Oh yes, I am likely to believe t h a t !

RAGNAR. In a certain sense he is cowardly—he, the great master builder. He is not afraid of robbing others of their life's happiness—as he has done both for my father and for me. But when it comes to climbing up a paltry bit of scaffolding—he will do anything rather than t h a t .

HILDA. Oh, you should just have seen him high, high up—at the dizzy height where I once saw him.

RAGNAR. Did you see that ?

HILDA. Yes, indeed I did. How free and great he looked as he stood and fastened the wreath to the church vane!

RAGNAR. I know that he ventured that, once in his life—one solitary time. It is a legend among us younger men. But no power on earth would induce him to do it again.

HILDA. To-day he will do it again !

RAGNAR [*scornfully*]. Yes, I daresay!

HILDA. We shall see it!

RAGNAR. That neither you nor I will see.

HILDA [*with uncontrollable vehemence*]. I w i l l see it! I will and I m u s t see it!

RAGNAR. But he will not do it. He simply dare not do it. For you see he cannot get over this infirmity—master builder though he be.

[MRS. SOLNESS *comes from the house on to the veranda.*

MRS. SOLNESS [*looks around*]. Is he not here? Where has he gone to?

RAGNAR. Mr. Solness is down with the men.

HILDA. He took the wreath with him.

MRS. SOLNESS [*terrified*]. Took the wreath with him! O God! O God! Brovik—you must go down to him! Get him to come back here!

RAGNAR. Shall I say you want to speak to him, Mrs. Solness?

MRS. SOLNESS. Oh yes, do! No, no—don't say that I want anything! You can say that somebody is here, and that he must come at once.

RAGNAR. Good. I will do so, Mrs. Solness.

[*He goes down the flight of steps and away through the garden.*]

MRS. SOLNESS. Oh, Miss Wangel, you can't think how anxious I feel about him.

HILDA. IS there anything in this to be so terribly frightened about?

MRS. SOLNESS. Oh yes; surely you can understand. Just think, if he were really to do it! If he should take it into his head to climb up the scaffolding!

HILDA [*eagerly*]. Do you think he will?

MRS. SOLNESS. Oh, one can never tell what he might take into his head. I am afraid there is nothing he mightn't think of doing.

HILDA. Aha! Perhaps you too think that he is—well——?

MRS. SOLNESS. Oh, I don't know what to think about him now. The doctor has been telling me all sorts of things; and putting it all together with several things I have heard him say———[DR. HERDAL *looks out at the door.*]

DR. HERDAL. Is he not coming soon?

MRS. SOLNESS. Yes, I think so. I have sent for him at any rate.

DR. HERDAL [*advancing*], I am afraid you will have to go in, my dear lady——

MRS. SOLNESS. Oh no! Oh no! I shall stay out here and wait for Halvard.

DR. HERDAL. But some ladies have just come to call on you——

MRS. SOLNESS. Good heavens, that too! And just at this moment!

DR. HERDAL. They say they positively must see the ceremony.

MRS. SOLNESS. Well, well, I suppose I must go to them after all. It is my duty.

HILDA. Can't you ask the ladies to go away?

MRS. SOLNESS. NO, that would never do. Now that they are here, it is my duty to see them. But do you stay out here in the meantime—and receive him when he comes.

DR. HERDAL. And try to occupy his attention as long as possible——

MRS. SOLNESS. Yes, do, dear Miss Wangel. Keep as firm hold of him as ever you can.

HILDA. Would it not be best for you to do that?

MRS. SOLNESS. Yes; God knows that is my duty. But when one has duties in so many directions——

DR. HERDAL [*looks towards the garden*]. There he is coming.

MRS. SOLNESS. And I have to go in!

DR. HERDAL [*to HILDA*]. Don't say anything about my being here.

HILDA. Oh no! I daresay I shall find something else to talk to Mr. Solness about.

MRS. SOLNESS. And be sure you keep firm hold of him. I believe you can do it best.

[MRS. SOLNESS and DR. HERDAL go into the house. HILDA remains standing on the veranda. SOLNESS comes from the garden, up the flight of steps.]

SOLNESS. Somebody wants me, I hear.

HILDA. Yes; it is I, Mr. Solness.

SOLNESS. Oh, is it you, Hilda? I was afraid it might be Aline or the doctor:

HILDA. You are very easily frightened, it seems!

SOLNESS. DO you think so?

HILDA. Yes; people say that you are afraid to climb about—on the scaffoldings, you know.

SOLNESS. Well, that is quite a special thing.

HILDA. Then it is true that you are afraid to do it ?

SOLNESS. Yes, I am.

HILDA. Afraid of falling down and killing yourself?

SOLNESS. NO, not of that.

HILDA. Of what, then ?

SOLNESS. I am afraid of retribution, Hilda.

HILDA. Of retribution? [*Shakes her head.*] I don't understand that.

SOLNESS. Sit down, and I will tell you something.

HILDA. Yes, do! At once!

[*She sits on a stool by the railing, and looks expectantly at him.*]

SOLNESS [*throws his hat on the table*]. You know that I began by building churches.

HILDA [*nods*]. I know that well.

SOLNESS. For, you see, I came as a boy from a pious home in the country; and so it seemed to me that this church-building was the noblest task I could set myself.

HILDA. Yes, yes.

SOLNESS. And I venture to say that I built those poor little churches with such honest and warm and heartfelt devotion that—that——

HILDA. That——? Well?

SOLNESS. Well, that I think that he ought to have been pleased with me.

HILDA. He? What he?

SOLNESS. He who was to have the churches, of course! He to whose honour and glory they were dedicated.

HILDA. Oh, indeed! But are you certain, then, that—that he was not—pleased with you ?

SOLNESS [*scornfully*]. He pleased with me! How can you talk so, Hilda ? He who gave the troll in me leave to lord it just as it pleased ! He who bade them be at hand to serve me, both day and night—all these—all these——

HILDA. Devils——

SOLNESS. Yes, of both kinds. Oh no, he made me feel clearly enough that he was not pleased with me. [*Mysteriously.*] You see, that was really the reason why he made the old house burn down.

HILDA. Was that why ?

SOLNESS. Yes, don't you understand? He wanted to give me the chance of becoming an accomplished master in my own sphere—so that I might build all the more glorious churches for him. At first I did not understand what he was driving at; but all of a sudden it flashed upon me.

HILDA. When was that ?

SOLNESS. It was when I was building the church-tower up at Lysanger.

HILDA. I thought so.

SOLNESS. For you see, Hilda—up there, amidst those new surroundings, I used to go about musing and pondering within myself. Then I saw plainly why he had taken my little children from me. It was that I should have nothing else to attach myself to. No such thing as love and happiness, you understand. I was to be only a master builder—nothing else. And all my life long I was to go on building for him. [*Laughs.*] But I can tell you nothing came of that!

HILDA. What did you do, then ?

SOLNESS. First of all, I searched and tried my own heart——

HILDA. And then ?

SOLNESS. Then I did the impossible—I no less than he.

HILDA. The impossible?

SOLNESS. I had never before been able to climb up to a great, free height. But that day I did it.

HILDA [*leaping up*]. Yes, yes, you did!

SOLNESS. And when I stood there, high over everything, and was hanging the wreath over the vane, I said to him: Hear me now, thou Mighty One! From this day forward I will be a free builder—I, too, in my sphere—just as thou in thine. I will never more build churches for thee—only homes for human beings.

HILDA [*with great, sparkling eyes*']. That was the song that I heard through the air!

SOLNESS. But afterwards his turn came.

HILDA. What do you mean by that?

SOLNESS [*looks despondently at her*]. Building homes for human beings—is not worth a rap, Hilda.

HILDA. Do you say that now?

SOLNESS. Yes, for now I see it. Men have no use for these homes of theirs—to be happy in. And I should not have had any use for such a home, if I had had one. [*With a quiet, bitter laugh.*] See, that is the upshot of the whole affair, however far back I look. Nothing really built; nor anything sacrificed for the chance of building. Nothing, nothing! the whole is nothing!

HILDA. Then you will never build anything more?

SOLNESS [*with animation*]. On the contrary, I am just going to begin!

HILDA. What, then? What will you build? Tell me at once!

SOLNESS. I believe there is only one possible dwelling-place for human happiness—and that is what I am going to build now.

HILDA [*looks fixedly at him*]. Mr. Solness—you mean our castles in the air.

SOLNESS. The castles in the air—yes.

HILDA. I am afraid you would turn dizzy before we got half-way up.

SOLNESS. Not if I can mount hand in hand with you, Hilda.

HILDA [*with an expression of suppressed resentment*]. Only with me? Will there be no others of the party?

SOLNESS. Who else should there be?

HILDA. Oh—that girl—that Kaia at the desk. Poor thing—don't you want to take her with you too?

SOLNESS. Oho! Was it about her that Aline was talking to you?

HILDA. IS it so—or is it not?

SOLNESS [*vehemently*]. I will not answer such a question. You must believe in me, wholly and entirely!

HILDA. All these ten years I have believed in you so utterly—so utterly.

SOLNESS. YOU must go on believing in me!

HILDA. Then let me see you stand free and high up!

SOLNESS [*sadly*]. Oh, Hilda—it is not every day that I can do that.

HILDA [*passionately*]. I will have you do it! I will have it! [*Imploringly*]. Just once more, Mr. Solness! Do the impossible once again!

SOLNESS [*stands and looks deep into her eyes*]. If I try it, Hilda, I will stand up there and talk to him as I did that time before.

HILDA [*in rising excitement*]. What will you say to him?

SOLNESS. I will say to him: Hear me, Mighty Lord—thou may'st judge me as seems best to thee. But hereafter I will build nothing but the loveliest thing in the world——

HILDA [*carried away*]. Yes—yes—yes!

SOLNESS. —build it together with a princess, whom I love——

HILDA. Yes, tell him that! Tell him that!

SOLNESS. Yes. And then I will say to him: Now I shall go down and throw my arms round her and kiss her——

HILDA. —many times! Say that!

SOLNESS. —many, many times, I will say.

HILDA. And then——?

SOLNESS. Then I will wave my hat—and come down to the earth—and do as I said to him.

HILDA [*with outstretched arms*]. Now I see you again as I did when there was song in the air!

SOLNESS [*looks at her with his head bowed*]. How have you become what you are, Hilda?

HILDA. HOW have you made me what I am?

SOLNESS [*shortly and firmly*]. The princess shall have her castle.

HILDA [*jubilant, clapping her hands*]. Oh, Mr. Solness——! My lovely, lovely castle. Our castle in the air!

SOLNESS. On a firm foundation.

[*In the street a crowd of people has assembled, vaguely seen*

through the trees. Music of wind instruments is heard far away behind the new house.

[MRS. SOLNESS, *with a fur collar round her neck*, DR. HERDAL *with her white shawl on his arm, and some ladies, come out on the veranda. RAGNAR BROVIK comes at the same time up from the garden.*

MRS. SOLNESS [*to RAGNAR*]. Are we to have music, too?

RAGNAR. Yes. It's the band of the Masons' Union. [*To SOLNESS.*] The foreman asked me to tell you that he is ready now to go up with the wreath.

SOLNESS [*takes his hat*]. Good, I will go down to him myself.

MRS. SOLNESS [*anxiously*]. What have you to do down there, Halvard?

SOLNESS [*curtly*]. I must be down below with the men.

MRS. SOLNESS. Yes, down below—only down below.

SOLNESS. That is where I always stand—on everyday occasions.

[He goes down the flight of steps and away through the garden.

MRS. SOLNESS [*calls after him over the railing*]. But do beg the man to be careful when he goes up! Promise me that, Halvard!

DR. HERDAL [*to MRS. SOLNESS*]. Don't you see that I was right? He has given up all thought of that folly.

MRS. SOLNESS. Oh, what a relief! Twice workmen have fallen, and each time they were killed on the spot. [*Turns to HILDA.*] Thank you, Miss Wangel, for having kept such a firm hold upon him. I should never have been able to manage him.

DR. HERDAL [*playfully*]. Yes, yes, Miss Wangel, you know how to keep firm hold on a man, when you give your mind to it.

[MRS. SOLNESS *and* DR. HERDAL *go up to the ladies, who are standing nearer to the steps and looking over the garden.*

HILDA *remains standing beside the railing in the foreground. RAGNAR goes up to her.*

RAGNAR [*with suppressed laughter, half whispering*]. Miss Wangel—do you see all those young fellows down in the street?

HILDA. Yes.

RAGNAR. They are my fellow-students, come to look at the master.

HILDA. What do they want to look at h i m for?

RAGNAR. They want to see how he daren't climb to the top of his own house.

HILDA. Oh, t h a t is what those boys want, is it ?

RAGNAR [*spitefully and scornfully*]. He has kept us down so long—now we are going to see h i m keep quietly down below himself.

HILDA. YOU will not see that—not this time.

RAGNAR [*smiles*]. Indeed! Then where shall we see him?

HILDA. High—high up by the vane! That is where you will see him.

RAGNAR [*laughs'*]. Him! Oh yes, I daresay!

HILDA. His will is to reach the top—so at the top you shall see him.

RAGNAR. His will, yes; that I can easily believe. But he simply c a n n o t do it. His head would swim round long, long before he got half-way. Hef would have to crawl down again on his hands and knees.

DR. HERDAL [*points across*]. Look! There goes the foreman up the ladders.

MRS. SOLNESS. And of course he has the wreath to carry too. Oh, I do hope he will be careful!

RAGNAR [*stares incredulously and shouts*]. Why, but it's—

HILDA [*breaking out in jubilation*]. It is the master builder himself!

MRS. SOLNESS [*screams with terror*]. Yes, it is Halvard! O my great God——! Halvard! Halvard!

DR. HERDAL. Hush! Don't shout to him!

MRS. SOLNESS [*half beside herself*]. I must go to him! I must get him to come down again!

DR. HERDAL [*holds her*]. Don't move, any of you! Not a sound!

HILDA [*immovable, follows SOLNESS with her eyes*]* He

climbs and climbs. Higher and higher! Higher and higher!
Look! Just look!

RAGNAR [*breathless*]. He m u s t turn now. He can't possibly help it.

HILDA. He climbs and climbs. He will soon be at the top now.

MRS. SOLNESS. Oh, I shall die of terror. I cannot bear to see it.

DR. HERDAL. Then don't look up at him.

HILDA. There he is standing on the topmost planks. Right at the top!

DR. HERDAL. Nobody must move! Do you hear?

HILDA [*exulting, with quiet intensity*]. At last! At last! Now I see him great and free again!

RAGNAR [*almost voiceless*]. But this is im——

HILDA. SO I have seen him all through these ten years. How secure he stands! Frightfully thrilling all the same. Look at him! Now he is hanging the wreath round the vane!

RAGNAR. I feel as if I were looking at something utterly impossible.

HILDA. Yes, it is the i m p o s s i b l e that he is doing now. [*With the indefinable expression in her eyes.*] Can you see any one else up there with him?

RAGNAR. There is no one else.

HILDA. Yes, there is one he is striving with.

RAGNAR. YOU are mistaken.

HILDA. Then do you hear no song in the air, either?

RAGNAR. It must be the wind in the tree-tops.

HILDA. J hear a song—a mighty song! [*Shouts in wild jubilation and glee.*] Look, look! Now he is waving his hat! He is waving it to us down here! Oh, wave, wave back to him! For now it is finished! [*Snatches the white shawl from the DOCTOR, waves it, and shouts up to SOLNESS.*] Hurrah for Master Builder Solness!

DR. HERDAL. Stop! Stop! For God's sake——!

[*The ladies on the veranda wave their pocket-handkerchiefs, and the shouts of "Hurrah" are taken up in the street below. Then they are suddenly silenced, and the crowd*

bursts out into a shriek of horror. A human body, with planks and fragments of wood, is vaguely perceived crashing down behind the trees.

MRS. SOLNESS *and the LADIES [at the same time].* He is falling! He is falling!

[MRS. SOLNESS *totters, falls backwards, swooning, and is caught, amid cries and confusion, by the ladies. The crowd in the street break down the fence and storm into the garden. At the same time DR. HERDAL, too, rushes down thither. A short pause.*

HILDA *[stares fixedly upwards and says, as if petrified],* My Master Builder.

RAGNAR *[supports himself, trembling, against the railing].* He must be dashed to pieces—killed on the spot.

ONE OF THE LADIES *[whilst MRS. SOLNESS is carried into the house].* Run down for the doctor——

RAGNAR. I can't stir a foot——

ANOTHER LADY. Then call to some one!

RAGNAR *[tries to call out].* How is it? Is he alive?

A VOICE *[below, in the garden].* Mr. Solness is dead!

OTHER VOICES *[nearer].* The head is all crushed.—He fell right into the quarry.

HILDA *[turns to RAGNAR, and says quietly].* I can't see him up there now.

RAGNAR. This is terrible. So, after all, he could not do it.

HILDA *[as if in quiet spell-bound triumph].* But he mounted right to the top. And I heard harps in the air. *[Waves her shawl in the air, and shrieks with wild intensity.]* My—my Master Builder!

Curtain

JOHN GABRIEL BORKMAN
(1896)

TRANSLATED BY
WILLIAM ARCHER

CHARACTERS

JOHN GABRIEL BORKMAN, *formerly Managing Director of a Bank.*

MRS. GUNHILD BORKMAN, *his wife.*

ERHART BORKMAN, *their son, a student.*

MISS ELLA RENTHEIM, *Mrs. Borkmans twin sister.*

MRS. FANNY WILTON.

VILHELM FOLDAL, *subordinate clerk in a Government office.*

FRIDA FOLDAL, *his daughter.*

MRS. BORKMAN'S MAID.

The action passes one winter evening, at the Manorhouse of the Rentheim family, in the neighbourhood of Christiania.

JOHN GABRIEL BORKMAN

INTRODUCTION

In a letter to William Archer of June 27th, 1895, Ibsen wrote: "I hope I shall set to work writing a new play next year; but I do not yet know definitely." Already, a year before there is any trace of Ibsen's work, he is concentrated on the new play. In the autumn of the same year he moved to Arbinsgate I, where he acquired a light and airy study, larger than his former one at Victoria Terrasse. The room was vilely furnished with heavy ornate carved chairs and cupboards, the walls being hung with the collection of fake Italian masterpieces of which Ibsen was so proud; but it was the only airy and habitable retreat in a flat which was otherwise dark, evil-smelling, and ill-ventilated, bearing everywhere the stamp of the lady of the house, who revelled in dust, sealed windows, and stifling stoves. King Oscar gave Ibsen a private key to the Queen's park on the other side of Drammensveien, and gradually as his health declined he began to restrict his walks to this part of the town.

On April 24th, 1896, he wrote to Brandes: ". . . , I am busy with preparations for a large new work, and I do not wish to let it be delayed longer than necessary. You see a tile could so easily drop on my head before I had time to write the last verse of my song." The first draft of Act I of *John Gabriel Borkman* is dated July nth. On July 27th he wrote: "The work on my new play progresses exceptionally fast and easily. The heat here this summer, in spite of being greater than that of more southerly climes, does not prevent me working continuously." On August 26th the draft was finished, and the following day he began to revise the play. On October 3rd he wrote to Georg Brandes that he was "sitting and writing an extensive new play which would be ready as soon as possible." On October 18th he put the final touches to the revision of the last

act, and on December 18th the play was published.

Many of Ibsen's old refrains are resung in this play—the CEDipus complex, J. S. Mill's appeal for happiness as the basis for morality, man's calling and mission in life, destiny and the need for independent choice, and the newer ingredient of the supernatural. Borkman himself has a certain affinity with Bernick of *Pillars of Society* and with old Ekdal of *The Wild Duck*. In the second act Borkman involuntarily recalls the figure of the wild duck itself when he says : " And so I have to sit here like a great wounded bird and watch others stealing a march on me." Mrs. Borkman has imposed a mission on her son for the rehabilitation of the family name, just as Hialmar had done so before himself, and Borkman's endless waiting for the moment when he will receive a humble deputation begging him to take over the directorship of the bank has its parallel in Hialmar's hope for the inspiration which will restore his father's honour. Werle's marriage with Mrs. S[^]rby again has its counterpart in the relationship between Erhart and Mrs. Wilton. And finally Relling's philosophy of illusion as the stimulating principle in life is re-echoed when Borkman and Foldal reveal to one another that they have lied for their mutual encouragement, and Foldal remarks: " But isn't that really friendship, John Gabriel ?"

Borkman is a character drawn from the period of wild speculation in Norway in the eighties, and his tragic fate is probably based on that of a provincial bank manager who was imprisoned for fraud. In 1851 Ibsen had also heard of an army officer who had been cashiered and imprisoned for embezzlement, and who after his release remained isolated in one part of his house for the rest of his life. We must also turn to Ibsen's early poem *The Miner*, inspired by Novalis, himself in later years employed in the offices of a mine. The fascination of the mines for Borkman, the singing ore which glitters in the darkness, the unlimited power which the imprisoned spirits of the rocks offer to the miner who will release them—this is all a revival of the mystery of romantic poetry.

Foldal also has his roots in reality and in Ibsen's earlier work. Ibsen had known in his youth an old clerk, W. Foss, who had

once published a collection of poems, and it is this character who appears as far back as the draft of *Pillars of Society* as Teacher Evensen, later appearing first as "coach," "tutor," and then as clerk in the drafts of *The Lady from the Sea*, where he is already fitted out with his misunderstanding family and his unpublished tragedy.

This play is the first in which one can trace any direct influence from Nietzsche, so many of Nietzsche's more obvious themes in earlier plays being, in fact, Ibsen's own stock in trade. Ibsen launched his superman, his blond beast and his life-giving lie, independently of Nietzsche. But in *Borkman* we find a great affinity with Zarathustra in his lonely fastnesses, setting about a transvaluation of values, a morality beyond good and evil, acquitting himself of his crime against society and finding himself only guilty of a crime against himself. Like Nietzsche, Borkman believes in the eternal recurrence, and like Nietzsche he is a sick man who longs for the strength and freedom of the amoral superman of Burckhardt's Renaissance.

The technical virtuosity displayed in the structure of the play excels that of any other work of Ibsen's. As he grew older, he felt in himself most acutely the conflict of past and present, and in consequence his technique of retrospective revelation increases in suggestive power. Wave after wave breaks on the shore and casts up the flotsam of the past lives of Gunhild Borkman, of Ella, of Borkman, Foldal and Frida, of Erhart and Mrs. Wilton. As the tide recedes, more wreckage is laid bare upon the beach until Borkman bursts out with the words, "It is by his present and his future that a man can atone for the past," turns his back upon what has gone before, and, deserted by his son, goes out into the winter night alone to face life and live in the present once more. Ibsen's whole arsenal of technical devices is employed to lead the revelations up to this central point where the drama suddenly takes another turn and he begins to write the play forwards instead of backwards, the moving scenery of the fourth act representing this new development.

A strict continuity is preserved between the acts, and not only are they connected by the unities of time and place, but the beginning of each is presupposed by the conclusion of the one

before. The first two are held together by the strains of the "danse macabre," the second and third by Ella's insistence on Borkman coming downstairs with her to pacify his wife, and the third and fourth by Borkman's exit into the snow and foul weather of life outside.

The symbolism of the play is the only feature which may offend the spectator. One is inclined to weary of words charged with literal and figurative meanings and of the stucco ornament of symbolical situations plastered on to a firm structure, such as the scene where Foldal is run over by Mrs. Wilton's sleigh. But apart from these weaknesses, the play is a powerful drama only equalled by *The Master Builder* in Ibsen's later works, and the figure of Borkman stands out as one of the great characters of tragedy. For its technical excellence and craftsmanship, and for the force of Borkman's personality, it will probably live as a stage play when many of Ibsen's works are relegated to the library shelf.

p. F. D. T.

JOHN GABRIEL BORKMAN

ACT I

MRS. BORKMAN'S *drawing-room, furnished with old-fashioned, faded splendour. At the back, an open sliding-door leads into a garden-room, with windows and a glass door. Through it a view over the garden; twilight with driving snow. On the right, a door leading from the hall. Farther forward, a large old-fashioned iron stove, with the fire lighted. On the left, towards the hack, a single smaller door. In front, on the same side, a window, covered with thick curtains. Between the window and the door a horsehair sofa, with a table in front of it covered with a cloth. On the table, a lighted lamp with a shade. Beside the stove a high-backed armchair.*

MRS. GUNHILD BORKMAN *sits on the sofa, crocheting. She is an elderly lady, of cold, distinguished appearance, with stiff carriage and immobile features. Her abundant hair is very*

grey* *Delicate transparent hands. Dressed in a gown of heavy dark silk, which has originally been handsome, but is now somewhat worn and shabby. A woollen shawl over her shoulders.*

She sits for a time erect and immovable at her crochet. Then the bells of a passing sledge are heard.

MRS. BORKMAN [*listens; her eyes sparkle with gladness and she involuntarily whispers*]. Erhart! At last!

[*She rises and draws the curtain a little aside to look out. Appears disappointed, and sits down to her work again, on the sofa. Presently THE MAID enters from the hall with a visiting-card on a small tray,*

MRS. BORKMAN [*quickly*]. Has Mr. Erhart come after all?

THE MAID. NO, ma'am. But there's a lady——

MRS. BORKMAN [*laying aside her crochet*]. Oh, Mrs. Wilton, I suppose——

THE MAID [*approaching*]. No, it's a strange lady——

MRS. BORKMAN [*taking the card*]. Let me see——
[*Reads it; rises hastily and looks intently at the girl.*] Are you sure this is for me?

THE MAID. Yes, I understood it was for you, ma'am.

MRS. BORKMAN. Did she say she wanted to see Mrs. Borkman?

THE MAID. Yes, she did.

MRS. BORKMAN [*shortly, resolutely*]. Good. Then say I am at home.

[*THE MAID opens the door for the strange lady and goes out.*

MISS ELLA RENTHEIM enters. *She resembles her sister; but her face has rather a suffering than a hard expression. It still shows signs of great beauty, combined with strong character. She has a great deal of hair, which is drawn back from the forehead in natural ripples, and is snow-white. She is dressed in black velvet, with a hat and a fur-lined cloak of the same material.*

[*The two sisters stand silent for a time, and look searchingly at each other. Each is evidently waiting for the other to speak first.*

ELLA RENTHEIM [*who has remained near the door*]. You are surprised to see me, Gunhild.

MRS. BORKMAN [*standing erect and immovable between the sofa and the table, resting her finger-tips upon the cloth*]. Have you not made a mistake? The bailiff lives in the side wing, you know.

ELLA RENTHEIM. It is not the bailiff I want to see to-day.

MRS. BORKMAN. Is it me you want, then?

ELLA RENTHEIM. Yes. I have a few words to say to you.

MRS. BORKMAN [*coming forward into the middle of the room*]. Well—then sit down.

ELLA RENTHEIM. Thank you. I can quite well stand for the present.

MRS. BORKMAN. Just as you please. But at least loosen your cloak.

ELLA RENTHEIM [*unbuttoning her cloak*]. Yes, it is very warm here.

MRS. BORKMAN. I am always cold.

ELLA RENTHEIM [*stands looking at her for a time with her arms resting on the back of the armchair*]. Well, Gunhild, it is nearly eight years now since we saw each other last.

MRS. BORKMAN [*coldly*]. Since last we spoke to each other at any rate.

ELLA RENTHEIM. True, since we spoke to each other. I daresay you have seen me now and again—when I came on my yearly visit to the bailiff.

MRS. BORKMAN. Once or twice, I have.

ELLA RENTHEIM. I have caught one or two glimpses of you, too—there, at the window.

MRS. BORKMAN. You must have seen me through the curtains then. You have good eyes. [*Harshly and cuttingly,*] But the last time we spoke to each other—it was here in this room——

ELLA RENTHEIM [*trying to stop her*]. Yes, yes; I know, Gunhild!

MRS. BORKMAN. —the week before he—before he was let out.

ELLA RENTHEIM [*moving towards the back*], Oh, don't speak about that.

MRS. BORKMAN [*firmly, but in a low voice*]. It was the week before he—was set at liberty.

ELLA RENTHEIM [*coming down*]. Oh yes, yes, yes! I shall never forget that time! But it is too terrible to think of! Only to recall it for a moment—oh!

MRS. BORKMAN [*gloomily*]. And yet one's thoughts can never get away from it! [*Vehemently; clenching her hands together.*] No, I can't understand it; I never shall! I can't understand how such a thing—how anything so horrible can come upon one single family! And then—that it should be our family! So old a family as ours! Think of its choosing us out!

ELLA RENTHEIM. Oh, Gunhild—there were many, many families besides ours that that blow fell upon.

MRS. BORKMAN. Oh yes; but those others don't trouble me very much. For in their case it was only a matter of a little money—or some papers. But for us——! For me! And then for Erhart! My little boy—as he then was! [*In rising excitement.*] The shame that fell upon us two innocent ones! The dishonour! That hateful terrible dishonour! And then the utter ruin too!

ELLA RENTHEIM [*cautiously*]. Tell me, Gunhild, how does he bear it?

MRS. BORKMAN. Erhart, do you mean?

ELLA RENTHEIM. NO—he himself. How does he bear it?

MRS. BORKMAN [*scornfully*]. Do you think I ever ask about that?

ELLA RENTHEIM. Ask? Surely you do not require to ask——

MRS. BORKMAN [*looks at her in surprise*]. You don't suppose I ever have anything to do with him? That I ever meet him? That I see anything of him?

ELLA RENTHEIM. Not even that!

MRS. BORKMAN [*as before*]. The man who was in gaol, in gaol for five years! [*Covers her face with her hands.*] Oh, the crushing shame of it! [*With increased vehemence.*] And

then to think of all that the name of John Gabriel Borkman used to mean! No, no, no—I can never see him again! Never!

ELLA RENTHEIM [*looks at her for a while*]. You have a hard heart, Gunhild.

MRS. BORKMAN. Towards h i m, yes.

ELLA RENTHEIM. After all, he is your husband.

MRS. BORKMAN. Did he not say in court that it was I who began his ruin ? That I spent money so recklessly ?

ELLA RENTHEIM [*tentatively*]. But is there not some truth in that?

MRS. BORKMAN. Why, it was he himself that made me do it! He insisted on our living in such an absurdly lavish style——

ELLA RENTHEIM. Yes, I know. But that is just where you should have restrained him; and apparently you didn't.

MRS. BORKMAN. How was I to know that it was not his own money he gave me to squander ? And that he himself used to squander, too—ten times more than I did !

ELLA RENTHEIM [*quietly*]. Well, I daresay his position forced him to do that—to some extent at any rate.

MRS. BORKMAN [*scornfully*]. Yes, it was always the same story—we were to " cut a figure." And he did " cut a figure " to some purpose! He used to drive about with a four-in-hand as if he were a king. And he had people bowing and scraping to him just as to a king. [*With a laugh.*] And they always called him by his Christian names—all the country over—as if he had been the king himself. " John Gabriel," " John Gabriel." Every one knew what a great man " John Gabriel " was!

ELLA RENTHEIM [*warmly and emphatically*]. He was a great man then.

MRS. BORKMAN. Yes, to all appearance. But he never breathed a single word to me as to his real position—never gave a hint as to where he got his means from.

ELLA RENTHEIM. NO, no; and other people did not dream of it either.

MRS. BORKMAN. I don't care about the other people. But

it was his duty to tell me the truth. And that he never did! He kept on lying to me—lying abominably——

ELLA RENTHEIM [*interrupting*]. Surely not, Gunhild. He kept things back perhaps, but I am sure he did not lie.

MRS. BORKMAN. Well, well; call it what you please; it makes no difference. And then it all fell to pieces—the whole thing.

ELLA RENTHEIM [*to herself*]. Yes, everything fell to pieces—for him—and for others.

MRS. BORKMAN [*drawing herself up menacingly*]. But I tell you this, Ella, I do not give in yet! I shall redeem myself yet—you may make up your mind to that!

ELLA RENTHEIM [*eagerly*]. Redeem yourself! What do you mean by that?

MRS. BORKMAN. Redeem my name, and honour, and fortune! Redeem my ruined life—that is what I mean! I have some one in reserve, let me tell you—one who will wash away every stain that he has left.

ELLA RENTHEIM. Gunhild! Gunhild!

MRS. BORKMAN [*with rising excitement*]. There is an avenger living, I tell you! One who will make up to me for all his father's sins!

ELLA RENTHEIM. Erhart, you mean.

MRS. BORKMAN. Yes, Erhart, my own boy! He will redeem the family, the house, the name. All that can be redeemed.—And perhaps more besides.

ELLA RENTHEIM. And how do you think that is to be done?

MRS. BORKMAN. It must be done as best it can; I don't know how. But I know that it must and shall be done. [*Looks searchingly at her.*] Come now, Ella; isn't that really what you have had in mind too, ever since he was a child?

ELLA RENTHEIM. NO, I can't exactly say that.

MRS. BORKMAN. NO? Then why did you take charge of him when the storm broke upon—upon this house?

ELLA RENTHEIM. YOU could not look after him yourself at that time, Gunhild.

MRS. BORKMAN. NO, no, I could not. And his father—he

had a valid enough excuse—while he was there—in safe keeping—

ELLA RENTHEIM [*indignant*]. Oh, how can you say such things!—You!

MRS. BORKMAN [*with a venomous expression*]. And how could you make up your mind to take charge of the child of a—a John Gabriel! Just as if he had been your own? To take the child away from me—home with you—and keep him there year after year, until the boy was nearly grown up. [*Looking suspiciously at her.*] What was your real reason, Ella? Why did you keep him with you?

ELLA RENTHEIM. I came to love him so dearly—

MRS. BORKMAN. More than I—his mother?

ELLA RENTHEIM [*evasively*]. I don't know about that. And then, you know, Erhart was rather delicate as a child—

MRS. BORKMAN. Erhart—delicate!

ELLA RENTHEIM. Yes, I thought so—at that time at any rate. And you know the air of the west coast is so much milder than here.

MRS. BORKMAN [*smiling bitterly*]. H'm—is it indeed? [*Breaking off.*] Yes, it is true you have done a great deal for Erhart. [*With a change of tone.*] Well, of course, you could afford it. [*Smiling.*] You were so lucky, Ella; you managed to save all your money.

ELLA RENTHEIM [*hurt*]. I did not manage anything about it, I assure you. I had no idea—until long, long afterwards—that the securities belonging to me—that they had been left untouched.

MRS. BORKMAN. Well, well; I don't understand anything about these things! I only say you were lucky. [*Looking inquiringly at her.*] But when you, of your own accord, undertook to educate Erhart for me—what was your motive in that?

ELLA RENTHEIM [*looking at her*]. My motive?

MRS. BORKMAN. Yes, some motive you must have had. What did you want to do with him? To make of him, I mean?

ELLA RENTHEIM [*slowly*]. I wanted to smooth the way for Erhart to happiness in life.

MRS. BORKMAN [*contemptuously*]. Pooh—people situated

as we are have something else than happiness to think of.

ELLA RENTHEIM. What, then ?

MRS. BORKMAN [*looking steadily and earnestly at her*]. Erhart has jta the first place to make so brilliant a position for himself, that no trace shall be left of the shadow his father has cast upon my name—and my son's.

ELLA RENTHEIM [*searchingly*]. Tell me, Gunhild, is t h i s what Erhart himself demands of his life ?

MRS. BORKMAN [*slightly taken aback*]. Yes, I should hope so!

ELLA RENTHEIM. IS it not rather what you demand of him?

MRS. BORKMAN [*curtly*]. Erhart and I always make the same demands upon ourselves.

ELLA RENTHEIM [*sadly and slowly*]. You are so very certain of your boy, then, Gunhild ?

MRS. BORKMAN [*with veiled triumph*]. Yes, that I am—thank Heaven. You may be sure of that!

ELLA RENTHEIM. Then I should think in reality you must be happy after all; in spite of all the rest.

MRS. BORKMAN. SO I am—so far as that goes. But then, every moment, all the rest comes rushing in upon me like a storm.

ELLA RENTHEIM [*with a change of tone*]. Tell me—you may as well tell me at once—for that is really what I have come for——

MRS. BORKMAN. What?

ELLA RENTHEIM. Something I felt I must talk to you about.—Tell me—Erhart does not live out here with—with you others ?

MRS. BORKMAN [*harshly*]. Erhart cannot live out here with me. He has to live in town——

ELLA RENTHEIM. SO he wrote to me.

MRS. BORKMAN. He must, for the sake of his studies. But he comes out to me for a little while every evening.

ELLA RENTHEIM. Well, may I see him then ? May I speak to him at once ?

MRS. BORKMAN. He has not come yet; but I expect him every moment.

ELLA RENTHEIM. Why, Gunhild, surely he must have come. I can hear his footsteps overhead.

MRS. BORKMAN [*with a rapid upward glance*]. Up in the long gallery?

ELLA RENTHEIM. Yes. I have heard him walking up and down there ever since I came.

MRS. BORKMAN [*looking away from her*]. That is not Erhart, Ella.

ELLA RENTHEIM [*surprised*]. Not Erhart? [*Divining,*] Who is it then?

MRS. BORKMAN. It is h e.

ELLA RENTHEIM [*softly, with suppressed pain*], Borkman? John Gabriel Borkman?

MRS. BORKMAN. He walks up and down like that—backwards and forwards—from morning to night—day out and day in.

ELLA RENTHEIM. I have heard something of this——

MRS. BORKMAN. I daresay. People find plenty to say about us, no doubt.

ELLA RENTHEIM. Erhart has spoken of it in his letters. He said that his father generally remained by himself—up there—and you alone down here.

MRS. BORKMAN. Yes; that is how it has been, Ella, ever since they let him out, and sent him home to me. All these long eight years.

ELLA RENTHEIM. I never believed it could really be so. It seemed impossible!

MRS. BORKMAN [*nods*]. It is so; and it can never be otherwise.

ELLA RENTHEIM [*looking at her*]. This must be a terrible life, Gunhild.

MRS. BORKMAN. Worse than terrible—almost unendurable.

ELLA RENTHEIM. Yes, it must be.

MRS. BORKMAN. Always to hear his footsteps up there—from early morning till far into the night. And everything sounds so clear in this house 1

ELLA RENTHEIM. Yes, it is strange how clear the sound is.

MRS. BORKMAN. I often feel as if I had a sick wolf pacing his cage up there in the gallery, right over my head. [*Listens and whispers,*] Hark! Do you hear! Backwards and forwards, up and down, goes the wolf.

ELLA RENTHEIM [*tentatively*]. Is no change possible, Gunhild?

MRS. BORKMAN [*with a gesture of repulsion*]. He has never made any movement towards a change.

ELLA RENTHEIM. Could you not make the first movement, then?

MRS. BORKMAN [*indignantly*], I! After all the wrong he has done me! No, thank you! Rather let the wolf go on prowling up there.

ELLA RENTHEIM. This room is too hot for me. You must let me take off my things after all.

MRS. BORKMAN. Yes, I asked you to.

[ELLA RENTHEIM *takes off her hat and cloak and lays them on a chair beside the door leading to the hall,*

ELLA RENTHEIM. DO you never happen to meet him, away from home?

MRS. BORKMAN [*with a bitter laugh*]. In society, do you mean?

ELLA RENTHEIM. I mean, when he goes out walking. In the woods, or——

MRS. BORKMAN. He never goes out.

ELLA RENTHEIM. Not even in the twilight?

MRS. BORKMAN. Never.

ELLA RENTHEIM [*with emotion*]. He cannot bring himself to go out?

MRS. BORKMAN. I suppose not. He has his great cloak and his hat hanging in the cupboard—the cupboard in the hall, you know——

ELLA RENTHEIM [*to herself*]. The cupboard we used to hide in when we were little——

MRS. BORKMAN [*nods*]. And now and then—late *in* the evening—I can hear him come down as though to go out. But

he always stops when he is half-way downstairs, and turns back—straight back to the gallery.

ELLA RENTHEIM [*quietly*]* Do none of his old friends ever come up to see him ?

MRS. BORKMAN. He h a s no old friends.

ELLA RENTHEIM. He had so many—once.

MRS. BORKMAN. H'm! He took the best possible way to get rid of them. He was a d e a r friend to his friends, was John Gabriel.

ELLA RENTHEIM. Oh yes, that is true, Gunhild.

MRS. BORKMAN [*vehemently*]. All the same, I call it mean, petty, base, contemptible of them, to think so much of the paltry losses they may have suffered through him. They were only money losses, nothing more.

ELLA RENTHEIM [*not answering her*]. So he lives up there quite alone. Absolutely by himself.

MRS. BORKMAN. Yes, practically so. They tell me an old clerk or copyist or something comes out to see him now and then.

ELLA RENTHEIM. Ah, indeed; no doubt it is a man called Foldal. I know they were friends as young men.

MRS. BORKMAN. Yes, I believe they were. But I know nothing about him. He was quite outside our circle—when we h a d a circle——

ELLA RENTHEIM. So h e comes out to see Borkman now ?

MRS. BORKMAN. Yes, he condescends to. But of course, he only comes when it is dark.

ELLA RENTHEIM. This Foldal—he was one of those that suffered when the bank failed.

MRS. BORKMAN [*carelessly*]. Yes, I believe I heard he had lost some money. But no doubt it was something quite trifling.

ELLA RENTHEIM [*with slight emphasis*]. It was all he possessed.

MRS. BORKMAN [*smiling*]. Oh, well; what he possessed must have been little enough—nothing to speak of,

ELLA RENTHEIM. And he d i d not speak of it—Foldal I mean—during the investigation.

MRS. BORKMAN. At all events, I can assure you Erhart has made ample amends for any little loss he may have suffered.

ELLA RENTHEIM [*with surprise*"]. Erhart! How can Erhart have done that?

MRS. BORKMAN. He has taken an interest in Foldal's youngest daughter. He has taught her things, and put her in the way of getting employment, and some day providing for herself. I am sure that is a great deal more than her father could ever have done for her.

ELLA RENTHEIM. Yes, I daresay her father can't afford to do much.

MRS. BORKMAN. And then Erhart has arranged for her to have lessons in music. She has made such progress already that she can come up to—to him in the gallery, and play to him.

ELLA RENTHEIM. SO he is still fond of music?

MRS. BORKMAN. Oh yes, I suppose he is. Of course he has the piano you sent out here—when he was expected back——

ELLA RENTHEIM. And she plays to him on it?

MRS. BORKMAN. Yes, now and then—in the evenings. That is Erhart's doing, too.

ELLA RENTHEIM. Has the poor girl to come all the long way out here, and then back to town again?

MRS. BORKMAN. NO, she doesn't need to. Erhart has arranged for her to stay with a lady who lives near us—a Mrs. Wilton——

ELLA RENTHEIM [*with interest*]. Mrs. Wilton?

MRS. BORKMAN. A very rich woman. You don't know her.

ELLA RENTHEIM. I have heard her name. Mrs. Fanny Wilton, is it not——?

MRS. BORKMAN. Yes, quite right.

ELLA RENTHEIM. Erhart has mentioned her several times. Does she live out here now?

MRS. BORKMAN. Yes, she has taken a villa here; she moved out from town some time ago.

ELLA RENTHEIM [*with a slight hesitation*]. They say she is divorced from her husband.

MRS. BORKMAN. Her husband has been dead for several years.

ELLA RENTHEIM. Yes, but they were divorced. He got a divorce.

MRS. BORKMAN. He deserted her, that is what he did. I am sure the fault wasn't hers.

ELLA RENTHEIM. DO you know her at all intimately, Gunhild? |

MRS. BORKMAN. Oh yes, pretty well. She lives close by here; and she looks in every now and then.

ELLA RENTHEIM. And do you like her?

MRS. BORKMAN. She is unusually intelligent; remarkably clear in her judgments.

ELLA RENTHEIM. In her judgments of people, do you mean? \

MRS. BORKMAN. Yes, principally of people. She has made quite a study of Erhart; looked deep into his character—into his soul. And the result is she idolises him, as she could not help doing.

ELLA RENTHEIM [*with a touch of finesse*']. Then perhaps she knows Erhart still better than she knows you?

MRS. BORKMAN. Yes, Erhart saw a good deal of her in town, before she came out here.

ELLA RENTHEIM [*withotH thinking*]. And in spite of that she moved out of town?

MRS. BORKMAN [*taken aback, looking keenly at her*]. In spite of that! What do you mean?

ELLA RENTHEIM [*evasively*]. Oh, nothing particular.

MRS. BORKMAN. YOU said it so strangely—you did mean something by it, Ella!

ELLA RENTHEIM [*looking her straight in the eyes*]. Yes, that is true, Gunhild! I did mean something by it.

MRS. BORKMAN. Well, then, say it right out.

ELLA RENTHEIM. First let me tell you, I think I too have a certain claim upon Erhart. Do you think I haven't?

MRS. BORKMAN [*glancing round the room*]. No doubt—after all the money you have spent upon him.

ELLA RENTHEIM. Oh, not on that account, Gunhild. But because I love him.

MRS. BORKMAN [*smiling scornfully*]. Love my son? Is it possible? You? In spite of everything?

ELLA RENTHEIM. Yes, it is possible—in spite of everything.

And it is true. I love Erhart—as much as I can love any one—now—at my time of life.

MRS. BORKMAN. Well, well, suppose you do: what then?

ELLA RENTHEIM. Why, then, I am troubled as soon as I see anything threatening him.

MRS. BORKMAN. Threatening Erhart! Why, what should threaten him? Or who?

ELLA RENTHEIM. You in the first place—in your way.

MRS. BORKMAN [*vehemently*]. I!

ELLA RENTHEIM. And then this Mrs. Wilton, too, I am afraid.

MRS. BORKMAN [*looks at her for a moment in speechless surprise*]. And you can think such things of Erhart! Of my own boy! He, who has his great mission to fulfil!

ELLA RENTHEIM [*lightly*]. Oh, his mission!

MRS. BORKMAN [*indignantly*]. How dare you say that so scornfully?

ELLA RENTHEIM. DO you think a young man of Erhart's age, full of health and spirits—do you think he is going to sacrifice himself for—for such a thing as a "mission"?

MRS. BORKMAN [*finally and emphatically*]. Erhart will! I know he will.

ELLA RENTHEIM [*shaking her head*]. You neither know it nor believe it, Gunhild.

MRS. BORKMAN. I don't believe it!

ELLA RENTHEIM. It is only a dream that you cherish. For if you hadn't that to cling to, you feel that you would utterly despair.

MRS. BORKMAN. Yes, indeed I should despair. [*Vehemently,*] And I daresay that is what you would like to see, Ella!

ELLA RENTHEIM [*with head erect*]. Yes, I would rather see that than see you "redeem" yourself at Erhart's expense.

MRS. BORKMAN [*threateningly*]. You want to come between us? Between mother and son? You?

ELLA RENTHEIM. I want to free him from your power—your will—your despotism.

MRS. BORKMAN [*triumphantly*]. You are too late! You

had him in your nets all those years—until he was fifteen. But now I have won him again, you see!

ELLA RENTHEIM. Then I will win him back from you! [*Hoarsely, half whispering.*] We two have fought a life-and-death battle before, Gunhild—for a man's soul!

MRS. BORKMAN [*looking at her in triumph*]. Yes, and I won the victory.

ELLA RENTHEIM [*with a smile of scorn*]. Do you still think that victory was worth the winning?

MRS. BORKMAN [*darkly*]. No; Heaven knows you are right there.

ELLA RENTHEIM. You need look for no victory worth the winning this time either.

MRS. BORKMAN. Not when I am fighting to preserve a mother's power over my son!

ELLA RENTHEIM. NO; for it is only power over him that you want.

MRS. BORKMAN. And you?

ELLA RENTHEIM [*warmly*]. I want his affection—his soul—his whole heart!

MRS. BORKMAN [*with an outburst*]. That you shall never have in this world!

ELLA RENTHEIM [*looking at her*]. You have seen to that?

MRS. BORKMAN [*smiling*]. Yes, I have taken that liberty. Could you not see that in his letters?

ELLA RENTHEIM [*nods slowly*]. Yes. I could see you—the whole of you—in his letters of late.

MRS. BORKMAN [*gallingly*]. I have made the best use of these eight years. I have had him under my own eye, you see.

ELLA RENTHEIM [*controlling herself*]. What have you said to Erhart about me? Is it the sort of thing you can tell me?

MRS. BORKMAN. Oh yes, I can tell you well enough.

ELLA RENTHEIM. Then please do.

MRS. BORKMAN. I have only told him the truth.

ELLA RENTHEIM. Well?

MRS. BORKMAN. I have impressed upon him, every day of his life, that he must never forget that it is you we have to thank

for being able to live as we do—for being able to live at all.

ELLA RENTHEIM. IS that all ?

MRS. BORKMAN. Oh, that is the sort of thing that rankles; I feel that in my own heart.

ELLA RENTHEIM. But that is very much what Erhart knew already.

MRS. BORKMAN. When he came home to me, he imagined that you did it all out of goodness of heart. [*Looks malignly at her.*] Now he does not believe that any longer, Ella.

ELLA RENTHEIM. Then what does he believe now ?

MRS. BORKMAN. He believes what is the truth. I asked him how he accounted for the fact that Aunt Ella never came here to visit us——

ELLA RENTHEIM [*interrupting*]. He knew my reasons already!

MRS. BORKMAN. He knows them better now. You had got him to believe that it was to spare me and—and him up there in the gallery——

ELLA RENTHEIM. And so it was.

MRS. BORKMAN. Erhart does not believe that for a moment, now.

ELLA RENTHEIM. What have you put in his head ?

MRS. BORKMAN. He thinks, what is the truth, that you are ashamed of us—that you despise us. And do you pretend that you don't ? Were you not once planning to take him quite away from me ? Think, Ella; you cannot have forgotten.

ELLA RENTHEIM [*with a gesture of negation*]. That was at the height of the scandal—when the case Was before the courts. I have no such designs now.

MRS. BORKMAN. And it would not matter if you had. For in that case what would become of his mission ? No, thank you. It is me that Erhart needs—not you. And therefore he is as good as dead to you—and you to him.

ELLA RENTHEIM [*coldly, with resolution*]. We shall see. For now I shall remain out here.

MRS. BORKMAN [*stares at her*]. Here? In this house?

ELLA RENTHEIM. Yes, here.

MRS. BORKMAN. Here—with us? Remain all night?

ELLA RENTHEIM. I shall remain here all the rest of my days if need be.

MRS. BORKMAN *[collecting herself]*. Very well, Ella; the house is yours——

ELLA RENTHEIM. Oh, nonsense——

MRS. BORKMAN. Everything is yours. The chair I am sitting in is yours. The bed I lie and toss in at night belongs to you. The food we eat comes to us from you.

ELLA RENTHEIM. It can't be arranged otherwise, you know. Borkman can hold no property of his own; for some one would at once come and take it from him.

MRS. BORKMAN. Yes, I know. We must be content to live upon your pity and charity.

ELLA RENTHEIM *[coldly]*, I cannot prevent you from looking at it in that light, Gunhild.

MRS. BORKMAN. No, you cannot. When do you want us to move out ?

ELLA RENTHEIM *[looking at her]*. Move out ?

MRS. BORKMAN *[in great excitement]*. Yes; you don't imagine that I will go on living under the same roof with you! I tell you, I would rather go to the workhouse or tramp the roads!

ELLA RENTHEIM. Good. Then let me take Erhart with me——

MRS. BORKMAN. Erhart? My own son? My child?

ELLA RENTHEIM. Yes; for then I would go straight home again.

MRS. BORKMAN *[after reflecting a moment, firmly]*, Erhart himself shall choose between us.

ELLA RENTHEIM *[looking doubtfully and hesitatingly at her]*. He choose ? Dare you risk that, Gunhild ?

MRS. BORKMAN *[with a hard laugh]*. Dare I? Let my boy choose between his mother and you ? Yes, indeed I dare!

ELLA RENTHEIM *[listening]*. Is there some one coming? I thought I heard——

MRS. BORKMAN. Then it must be Erhart.

[There is a sharp knock at the door leading in from the hall, which is immediately opened, MRS. WILTON enters, in

evening dress, and with outer wraps. She is followed by THE MAID, who has not had time to announce her, and looks bewildered. The door remains half open. MRS. WILTON is a strikingly handsome, well-developed woman in the thirties. Broad, red, smiling lips, sparkling eyes. Luxuriant dark hair.

MRS. WILTON. Good evening, my dearest Mrs. Borkman!

MRS. BORKMAN [*rather drily*]. Good evening, Mrs. Wilton. [*To THE MAID, pointing toward the garden-room.*] Take out the lamp that is in there and light it.

[*THE MAID takes the lamp and goes out with it.*

MRS. WILTON [*observing ELLA RENTHEIM*]. Oh, I beg your pardon—you have a visitor.

MRS. BORKMAN. Only my sister, who has just arrived from——

[*ERHART BORKMAN flings the half-open door wide open and rushes in. He is a young man with bright cheerful eyes. He is well dressed; his moustache is beginning to grow.*

ERHART [*radiant with joy; on the threshold*]. What is this! Is Aunt Ella here? [*Rushing up to her, and seizing her hands.*] Aunt, aunt! Is it possible? Are you here?

ELLA RENTHEIM [*throws her arms round his neck*]. Erhart! My dear, dear boy! Why, how big you have grown! Oh, how good it is to see you again!

MRS. BORKMAN [*sharply*]. What does this mean, Erhart? Were you hiding out in the hall?

MRS. WILTON [*quickly*]. Erhart—Mr. Borkman came in with me.

MRS. BORKMAN [*looking hard at him*]. Indeed, Erhart! You don't come to your mother first.

ERHART. I had just to look in at Mrs. Wilton's for a moment—to call for little Frida.

MRS. BORKMAN. IS that Miss Foldal with you too?

MRS. WILTON. Yes, we have left her in the hall.

ERHART [*addressing some one through the open door*]. You can go right upstairs, Frida.

[*Pause. ELLA RENTHEIM observes ERHART. He seems em-*

barrassed and a little impatient; his face has assumed a nervous and colder expression.

[THE MAID *brings the lighted lamp into the garden-room, goes out again and closes the door behind her**

MRS. BORKMAN [*with forced politeness*']. Well, Mrs. Wilton, if you will give us the pleasure of your company this evening, won't you—

MRS. WILTON. Many thanks, my dear lady, but I really can't. We have another invitation. We're going down to the Hinkels'.

MRS. BORKMAN [*looking at her*]. We? Whom do you mean by we?

MRS. WILTON [*laughing*]. Oh, I ought really to have said I. But I was commissioned by the ladies of the house to bring Mr. Borkman with me—if I happened to see him.

MRS. BORKMAN. And you did happen to see him, it appears.

MRS. WILTON. Yes, fortunately. He was good enough to look in at my house—to call for Frida.

MRS. BORKMAN [*drily*]. But, Erhart, I did not know that you knew that family—those Hinkels?

ERHART [*irritated*]. No, I don't exactly know them, [*Adds rather impatiently.*] You know better than anybody, mother, what people I know and don't know.

MRS. WILTON. Oh, it doesn't matter! They soon put you at your ease in that house! They are such cheerful, hospitable people—the house swarms with young ladies.

MRS. BORKMAN [*with emphasis*]. If I know my son rightly, Mrs. Wilton, they are no fit company for him.

MRS. WILTON. Why, good gracious, dear lady, he is young, too, you know!

MRS. BORKMAN. Yes, fortunately he's young. He would need to be young.

ERHART [*concealing his impatience*]. Well, well, well, mother, it's quite clear I can't go to the Hinkels' this evening. Of course I shall remain here with you and Aunt Ella.

MRS. BORKMAN. I knew you would, my dear Erhart*

ELLA RENTHBIM. No, Erhart, you must not stop at home on my account——

ERHART. Yes, indeed, my dear aunt; I can't think of going. [*Looking doubtfully at MRS. WILTON.*] But how shall we manage? Can I get out of it? You have said "Yes" for me, haven't you?

MRS. WILTON [*gaily*]. What nonsense! Not get out of it! When I make my entrance into the festive halls—just imagine it!—deserted and forlorn—then I must simply say "No" for you.

ERHART [*hesitatingly*]. Well, if you really think I can get out of it——

MRS. WILTON [*putting the matter lightly aside*]. I am quite used to saying both yes and no—on my own account. And you can't possibly think of leaving your aunt the moment she has arrived! For shame, Monsieur Erhart! Would that be behaving like a good son?

MRS. BORKMAN [*annoyed*]. Son?

MRS. WILTON. Well, adopted son then, Mrs. Borkman.

MRS. BORKMAN. Yes, you may well add that.

MRS. WILTON. Oh, it seems to me we have often more cause to be grateful to a foster-mother than to our own mother.

MRS. BORKMAN. Has that been your experience?

MRS. WILTON. I knew very little of my own mother, I am sorry to say. But if I had had a good foster-mother, perhaps I shouldn't have been so—so naughty, as people say I am. [*Turning towards ERHART.*] Well, then, we stop peaceably at home like a good boy, and drink tea with mamma and auntie! [*To the ladies*]. Good-bye, good-bye, Mrs. Borkman! Good-bye Miss Rentheim.

[The ladies bow silently. She goes toward the door.]

ERHART [*following her*]. Shan't I go a little bit of the way with you?

MRS. WILTON [*in the doorway, motioning him back*]. You shan't go a step with me. I am quite accustomed to taking my walk alone. [*Stops on the threshold, looks at him and nods,*] But now beware, Mr. Borkman—I warn you!

ERHART. What am I to beware of?

MRS. WILTON [*gaily*]. Why, as I go down the road—deserted and forlorn, as I said before—I shall try if I can't cast a spell upon you.

ERHART [*laughing*]. Oh, indeed! Are you going to try that again?

MRS. WILTON [*half seriously*]. Yes, just you beware! As I go down the road, I will say in my own mind—right from the very centre of my will—I will say: "Mr. Erhart Borkman, take your hat at once!"

MRS. BORKMAN. And you think he will take it?

MRS. WILTON [*laughing*]. Good heavens, yes, he'll snatch up his hat instantly. And then I will say: "Now put on your overcoat, like a good boy, Erhart Borkman! And your goloshes! Be sure you don't forget the goloshes! And then follow me! Do as I bid you, as I bid you, as I bid you!"

ERHART [*with forced gaiety*]. Oh, you may rely on that.

MRS. WILTON [*raising her forefinger*]. As I bid you! As I bid you! Good-night!

[She laughs and nods to the ladies, and closes the door behind her.]

MRS. BORKMAN. Does she really play tricks of that sort?

ERHART. Oh, not at all. How can you think so! She only says it in fun. [*Breaking off.*] But don't let us talk about Mrs. Wilton. [*He forces ELLA RENTHEIM to seat herself in the armchair beside the stove, then stands and looks at her.*] To think of your having taken all this long journey, Aunt Ella! And in winter too!

ELLA RENTHEIM. I found I had to, Erhart.

ERHART. Indeed? Why so?

ELLA RENTHEIM. I had to come to town after all, to consult the doctors.

ERHART. Oh, I'm glad of that!

ELLA RENTHEIM [*smiling*]. Are you glad of that?

ERHART. I mean I am glad you made up your mind to it at last.

MRS. BORKMAN [*on the sofa, coldly*]. Are you ill, Ella?

ELLA RENTHEIM [*looking hardly at her*]. You know quite well that I am ill.

MRS. BORKMAN. I knew you were not strong, and hadn't been for years.

ERHART. I told you before I left you that you ought to consult a doctor.

ELLA RENTHEIM. There is no one in my neighbourhood that I have any real confidence in. And, besides, I did not feel it so much at that time.

ERHART. Are you worse, then, aunt ?

ELLA RENTHEIM. Yes, my dear boy; I am worse now.

ERHART. But there's nothing dangerous ?

ELLA RENTHEIM. Oh, that depends how you look at it.

ERHART [*emphatically*]. Well, then, I tell you what it is, Aunt Ella; you mustn't think of going home again for the present.

ELLA RENTHEIM. No, I am not thinking of it.

ERHART. YOU must remain in town; for here you can have your choice of all the best doctors.

ELLA RENTHEIM. That was what I thought when I left home.

ERHART. And then you must be sure and find a really nice place to live—quiet, comfortable rooms.

ELLA RENTHEIM. I went this morning to the old ones, where I used to stay before.

ERHART. Oh, well, you were comfortable enough there.

ELLA RENTHEIM. Yes, but I shall not be staying there after all.

ERHART. Indeed ? Why not ?

ELLA RENTHEIM. I changed my mind after coming out here.

ERHART [*surprised*]. Really? Changed your mind?

MRS. BORKMAN [*crocheting; without looking up*]. Your aunt will live here, in her own house, Erhart.

ERHART [*looking from one to the other alternately*]. Here, with us? With us? Is this true, Aunt ?

ELLA RENTHEIM. Yes, that is what I have made up my mind to do.

MRS. BORKMAN [*as before*]. Everything here belongs to your aunt, you know.

ELLA RENTHEIM. I intend to remain here, Erhart—just

now—for the present. I shall set up a little establishment of my own, over in the bailiff's wing.

ERHART. Ah, that's a good idea. There are plenty of rooms there. [*With sudden vivacity.*] But, by-the-by, aunt—aren't you very tired after your journey?

ELLA RENTHEIM. Oh yes, rather tired.

ERHART. Well, then, I think you ought to go quite early to bed.

ELLA RENTHEIM [*looks at him smilingly*], I mean to.

ERHART [*eagerly*]. And then we could have a good long talk to-morrow—or some other day, of course—about this and that—about things in general—you and mother and I. Wouldn't that be much the best plan, Aunt Ella?

MRS. BORKMAN [*with an outburst, rising from the sofa*], Erhart, I can see you are going to leave me!

ERHART [*starts*]. What do you mean by that ?

MRS. BORKMAN. You are going down to—to the Hinkels'?

ERHART [*involuntarily*]. Oh, that! [*Collecting himself.*] Well, you wouldn't have me sit here and keep Aunt Ella up half the night? Remember, she's an invalid, mother.

MRS. BORKMAN. You are going to the Hinkels', Erhart!

ERHART [*impatiently*]. Well, really, mother, I don't think I can well get out of it. What do you say, Aunt ?

ELLA RENTHEIM. I should like you to feel quite free, Erhart.

MRS. BORKMAN [*goes up to her menacingly*]. You want to take him away from me!

ELLA RENTHEIM [*rising*]. Yes, if only I could, Gunhild!

[*Music is heard from above.*]

ERHART [*writhing as if in pain*]. Oh, I can't endure this! [*Looking round.*] What have I done with my hat? [*To ELLA RENTHEIM.*] DO you know the air that she is playing up there ?

ELLA RENTHEIM. NO. What is it ?

ERHART. It's the *Danse Macabre*—the Dance of Death! Don't you know the Dance of Death, aunt ?

ELLA RENTHEIM [*smiling sadly*]. Not yet, Erhart.

ERHART [*to MRS. BORKMAN*]. Mother—I beg and implore you—let me go!

MRS. BORKMAN [*looks hardly at him*]. Away from your mother? So that is what you want to do?

ERHART. Of course I'll come out again—to-morrow perhaps.

MRS. BORKMAN [*with passionate emotion*]. You want to go away from me! To be with those strange people! With—with—no, I will not even think of it!

ERHART. There are bright lights down there, and young, happy faces; and there's music there, mother!

MRS. BORKMAN [*pointing upwards*]. There is music here, too, Erhart.

ERHART. Yes, it's just that music that drives me out of the house.

ELLA RENTHEIM. Do you grudge your father a moment of self-forgetfulness?

ERHART. No, I don't. I'm very, very glad that he should have it—if only / don't have to listen.

MRS. BORKMAN [*looking solemnly at him*]. Be strong, Erhart! Be strong, my son! Do not forget that you have your great mission.

ERHART. Oh, mother—do spare me these phrases! I wasn't born to be a "missionary."—Good-night, aunt dear! Good-night, mother! [*He goes hastily out through the hall*]

MRS. BORKMAN [*after a short silence*]. It has not taken you long to recapture him, Ella, after all.

ELLA RENTHEIM. I wish I could believe it.

MRS. BORKMAN. But you shall see you won't be allowed to keep him long.

ELLA RENTHEIM. Allowed? By you, do you mean?

MRS. BORKMAN. By me or—by her, the other one——

ELLA RENTHEIM. Then rather she than you.

MRS. BORKMAN [*nodding slowly*]. That I understand. I say the same. Rather she than you.

ELLA RENTHEIM. Whatever should become of him in the end——

MRS. BORKMAN. It wouldn't greatly matter, I should say.

ELLA RENTHEIM [*taking her outdoor things upon her arm*]. For the first time in our lives, we twin sisters are of one mind. Good-night, Gunhild.

[She goes out by the hall. The music sounds louder from above.]

MRS. BORKMAN *[stands still for a moment, starts, shrinks together, and whispers involuntarily].* **The** wolf is whining again—the sick wolf. *[She stands still for a moment, then flings herself down on the floor, writhing in agony and whispering:]* Erhart! Erhart—be true to me! Oh, come home and help your mother! For I can bear this life no longer!

A C T I I

The great gallery on the first floor of the Rentheim House. The walls are covered with old tapestries, representing hunting-scenes, shepherds and shepherdesses, all in faded colours. A folding-door to the left, and farther forward a piano. In the left-hand corner, at the back, a door, cut in the tapestry, and covered with tapestry, without any frame. Against the middle of the right wall, a large writing-table of carved oak, with many books and papers. Farther forward on the same side, a sofa with a table and chairs in front of it. The furniture is all of a stiff Empire style. Lighted lamps on both tables.

JOHN GABRIEL BORKMAN *stands with his hands behind his back, beside the piano, listening to FRIDA FOLDAL, who is playing the last bars of the "Danse Macabre.*"*

BORKMAN *is of middle height, a well-knit, powerfully-built man, well on in the sixties. His appearance is distinguished, his profile finely cut, his eyes piercing, his hair and beard curly and greyish-white. He is dressed in a slightly old-fashioned black coat, and wears a white necktie. FRIDA FOLDAL is a pretty, pale girl of fifteen, with a somewhat weary and overstrained expression. She is cheaply dressed in light colours.*

The music ceases. A pause.

BORKMAN. Can you guess where I first heard tones like these?

FRIDA *[looking up at him].* No, Mr. Borkman.

BORKMAN. It was down in the mines.

FRIDA [*not understanding*]. Indeed? Down in the mines?

BORKMAN. I am a miner's son, you know. Or perhaps you did not know?

FRIDA. NO, Mr. Borkman.

BORKMAN. A miner's son. And my father used sometimes to take me with him into the mines. The metal sings down there.

FRIDA. Really? Sings?

BORKMAN [*nodding*]. When it is loosened. The hammer-strokes that loosen it are the midnight bell clanging to set it free; and that is why the metal sings—in its own way—for gladness.

FRIDA. Why does it do that, Mr. Borkman?

BORKMAN. It wants to come up into the light of day and serve mankind.

[He paces up and down the gallery, always with his hands behind his back,

FRIDA [*sits waiting a little, then looks at her watch and rises*], I beg your pardon, Mr. Borkman; but I am afraid I must go.

BORKMAN [*stopping before her*]. Are you going already?

FRIDA [*putting her music in its case*], I really must. [*Visibly embarrassed.*] I have an engagement this evening.

BORKMAN. For a party?

FRIDA. Yes.

BORKMAN. And you are to play before the company?

FRIDA [*biting her lip*]. No; at least I am only to play for dancing.

BORKMAN. Only for dancing?

FRIDA. Yes; there is to be a dance after supper.

BORKMAN [*stands and looks at her*]. Do you like playing dance music? At parties, I mean?

FRIDA [*putting on her outdoor things*]. Yes, when I can get an engagement. I can always earn a little in that way.

BORKMAN [*with interest*]. Is that the principal thing in your mind as you sit playing for the dancers?

FRIDA. NO; I'm generally thinking how hard it is that I mayn't join in the dance myself.

BORKMAN [*nodding*]. That is just what I wanted to know.

[Moving restlessly about the room,] Yes, yes, yes. That you must not join in the dance, that is the hardest thing of all. *[Stopping,]* But there is one thing that should make up to you for that, Frida.

FRIDA *[looking inquiringly at him].* What is that, Mr. Borkman?

BORKMAN. The knowledge that you have ten times more music in you than all the dancers together.

FRIDA *[smiling evasively].* Oh, that's not at all so certain.

BORKMAN *[holding up his fore-finger warningly].* You must never be so mad as to have doubts of yourself!

FRIDA. But since no one knows it——

BORKMAN. So long as you know it yourself, that is enough. Where is it you are going to play this evening?

FRIDA. Over at Mr. Hinkel's.

BORKMAN *[with a swift, keen glance at her].* Hinkel's, you say!

FRIDA. Yes.

BORKMAN *[with a cutting smile].* Does that man give parties? Can he get people to visit him?

FRIDA. Yes, they have a great many people about them, Mrs. Wilton says.

BORKMAN *[vehemently].* But what sort of people? Can you tell me that?

FRIDA *[a little nervously].* No, I really don't know. Yes, by-the-by, I know that young Mr. Borkman is to be there this evening.

BORKMAN *[taken aback].* Erhart? My son?

FRIDA. Yes, he is going there.

BORKMAN. How do you know that?

FRIDA. He said so himself—an hour ago.

BORKMAN. Is he out here to-day?

FRIDA. Yes, he has been at Mrs. Wilton's all the afternoon.

BORKMAN *[inquiringly].* Do you know if he called here too? I mean, did he see any one downstairs?

FRIDA. Yes, he looked in to see Mrs. Borkman.

BORKMAN *[bitterly].* Aha—I might have known it.

FRIDA. There was a strange lady calling upon her, I think.

BORKMAN. Indeed? Was there? Oh yes, I suppose people do come now and then to see Mrs. Borkman.

FRIDA. If I meet young Mr. Borkman this evening, shall I ask him to come up and see you too?

BORKMAN [*harshly*]. You shall do nothing of the sort! I won't have it on any account. The people who want to see me can come of their own accord. I ask no one.

FRIDA. Oh, very well; I shan't say anything then. Good-night, Mr. Borkman.

BORKMAN [*pacing up and down and growling*]. **Good-night.**

FRIDA. DO you mind if I run down by the winding stair? It's the shortest way.

BORKMAN. Oh, by all means; take whatever stair you please, so far as I am concerned. Good-night to you!

FRIDA. Good-night, Mr. Borkman.

[She goes out by the little tapestry door in the back on the left.

[BORKMAN, lost in thought, goes up to the piano, and is about to close it, but changes his mind. Looks round the great empty room, and sets to pacing up and down it from the corner beside the piano to the corner at the back on the right—pacing backward and forward uneasily and incessantly. At last he goes up to the writing-table, listens in the direction of the folding door, hastily snatches up a hand-glass, looks at himself in it, and straightens his necktie.

[A knock at the folding door. BORKMAN hears it, looks rapidly towards the door, but says nothing.

[In a little there comes another knock, this time louder.

BORKMAN [*standing beside the writing-table with his left hand resting upon it, and his right thrust in the breast of his coat*]. Come in!

[VILHELM FoLDAL comes softly into the room. He is a bent and worn man with mild blue eyes and long, thin grey hair straggling down over his coat collar. He has a portfolio under his arm, a soft felt hat, and large horn spectacles, which he pushes up over his forehead.

BORKMAN [*changes his attitude and looks at FoLDAL with a half-disappointed, half-pleased expression*]. Oh, is it only you?

FoLDAL. Good evening, John Gabriel. Yes, you see it is me.

BORKMAN [*with a stern glance*]. I must say you are rather a late visitor.

FOLDAL. Well, you know, it's a good bit of a way, especially when you hav^e to trudge it on foot.

BORKMAN. I But why do you always walk, Vilhelm? The tramway passes your door.

FOLDAL. iV's better for you to walk—and then you always save twopence. \ Well, has Frida been playing to you lately?

BORKMAN. S^he has just this moment gone. Did you not meet her outside ?

FOLDAL. NO, I have seen nothing of her for a long time ; not since she went to live with this Mrs. Wilton.

BORKIMAN [*seatingshirnself on the sofa and waving his hand toward a cftair*]. You inay sit down, Vilhelm.

FOLDAL [*seating himself on_x the edge of a chair'*]. Many thanks. [*LOOKS mournfully at "him,"*] You can't think how lonely I feel since Frida left home.

BORKMAN. Oh, come—you have plen[^] left.

FOLDAL. Yek God knows I hWe—five of them. But Frida was the only oneNvho at all understood me. [*Shaking his head sadly.*] The others don't understano\me a bit.

BORKMAN [*gloomily, gazing straight before him, and drumming on the table with his fingers*], Nb, that's just it. T h a t is the curse we exceptional chosen people have to bear. The common herd—the average man and woman—they do not understand us, Vilhelm.

FOLDAL [*with resignation*]. If it were only the lack of understanding—with a little patience, one could manage to wait for that a while yet. [*His voice choked with tears.*] But there is something still bitterer.

BORKMAN [*vehemently*]. There is nothing bitterer than that.

FOLDAL. Yes, there is, John Gabriel. I have gone through a domestic scene to-night—just before I started.

BORKMAN. Indeed ? What about ?

FOLDAL [*with an outburst*]. My people at home—they despise me,

BORKMAN [*indignantly*]. Despise——!

FOLDAL [*wiping his eyes*]. I have long known it; but to-day it came out unmistakably.

BORKMAN [*after a short silence*"]. You made an unwise choice, I fear, when you married.

FOLDAL, I had practically no choice in the matter. And, you see, one feels a need for companionship as one begins to get on in years. And so crushed as I then was—so utterly broken down——

BORKMAN [*jumping up in anger*]. Is this meant for me? A reproach——!

FOLDAL [*alarmed*]. No, no, for Heaven's sake, John Gabriel——!

BORKMAN. Yes, you are thinking of the disaster to the bank, I can see you are !

FOLDAL [*soothingly*]. But I don't blame you for that! Heaven forbid!

BORKMAN [*growling, resumes his seat*]. Well, that is a good thing, at any rate.

FOLDAL. Besides, you mustn't think it is my wife that I complain of. It is true she has not much polish, poor thing; but she is a good sort of woman all the same. No, it's the children.

BORKMAN. I thought as much.

FOLDAL. For the children—well, they have more culture, and therefore they expect more of life.

BORKMAN [*looking at him sympathetically*]. And so your children despise you, Vilhelm ?

FOLDAL [*shrugging his shoulders*], I haven't made much of a career, you see—there is no denying that.

BORKMAN [*moving nearer to him, and laying his hand upon his arm*]. Do they not know, then, that *in* your young days you wrote a tragedy ?

FOLDAL. Yes, of course they know that. But it doesn't seem to make much impression on them.

BORKMAN. Then they don't understand these things. For your tragedy is good. I am firmly convinced of that.

FOLDAL [*brightening up*]. Yes, don't you think there are some good things *in* it, John Gabriel? Good God, if I could

only manage to get it placed——! [*Opens his portfolio, and begins eagerly turning over the contents.*"] Look here! Just let me show you one or two alterations I have made.

BORKMAN. Have you it with you?

FOLDAL. Yes, I thought I would bring it. It's so long now since I have read it to you. And I thought perhaps it might amuse you to hear an act or two.

BORKMAN [*rising, with a negative gesture*]. No, no, we will keep that for another time.

FOLDAL. Well, well, as you please.

[BORKMAN *paces up and down the room*. FOLDAL *puts the manuscript up again*.]

BORKMAN [*stopping in front of him*]. You are quite right in what you said just now—you have not made any career. But I promise you this, Vilhelm, that when once the hour of my restoration strikes——

FOLDAL [*making a movement to rise*]. Oh, thanks, thanks!

BORKMAN [*waving his hand*]. No, please be seated. [*With rising excitement*.] When the hour of my restoration strikes—when they see that they cannot get on without me—when they come to me, here in the gallery, and crawl to my feet, and beseech me to take the reins of the bank again——! The new bank, that they have founded and can't carry on——[*Placing himself beside the writing-table in the same attitude as before, and striking his breast*.] Here I shall stand, and receive them I And it shall be known far and wide, all the country over; what conditions John Gabriel Borkman imposes before he will——[*Stopping suddenly and staring at FOLDAL*.] You're looking so doubtfully at me! Perhaps you do not believe that they will come? That they must, must, must come to me some day? Do you not believe it?

FOLDAL. Yes, Heaven knows I do, John Gabriel.

BORKMAN [*seating himself again on the sofa*]. I firmly believe it. I am immovably convinced—I know that they will come. If I had not been certain of that I would have put a bullet through my head long ago.

FOLDAL [*anxiously*]. Oh no, for Heaven's sake——!

BORKMAN [*exultantly*]. But they will come! They will come sure enough! You shall see! I expect them any day, any moment. And you see, I hold myself in readiness to receive them.

FOLDAL [*with a sigh*~]. If only they would come quickly.

BORKMAN [*restlessly*]. Yes, time flies : the years slip away; life——Ah, no—I dare not think of it! [*Looking at kirn.*] Do you know what I sometimes feel like ?

FOLDAL. What ?

BORKMAN. I feel like a Napoleon who has been maimed in his first battle.

FOLDAL [*placing his hand upon his portfolio*], I have that feeling too.

BORKMAN. Oh, well, that is on a smaller scale, of course.

FOLDAL [*quietly*]. My little world of poetry is very precious to me, John Gabriel.

BORKMAN [*vehemently*]. Yes, but think of me, who could have created millions! All the mines I should have controlled! New veins innumerable! And the water-falls! And the quarries! And the trade routes, and steamship-lines all the wide world over! I would have organised it all—I alone!

FOLDAL. Yes, I know, I know. There was nothing in the world you would have shrunk from.

BORKMAN [*clenching his hands together*]. And now I have to sit here, like a wounded eagle, and look on while others pass me in the race, and take everything away from me, piece by piece! •

FOLDAL. That is my fate too.

BORKMAN [*not noticing him*]. Only to think of it; so near to the goal as I was! If I had only had another week to look about me! All the deposits would have been covered. All the securities I had dealt with so daringly should have been in their places again as before. Vast companies were within a hair's-breadth of being floated. Not a soul should have lost a half-penny.

FOLDAL. Yes, yes; you were on the very verge of success.

BORKMAN [*with suppressed fury*]. And then treachery overtook me! Just at the critical moment! [*Looking at him.*]

Do you know what I hold to be the most infamous crime a man can be guilty of ?

FOLDAL. No, tell me.

BORKMAN. It is not murder. It is not robbery or house-breaking. It is not even perjury. For all these things people do to those they hate, or who are indifferent to them, and do not matter.

FOLDAL. What is the worst of all then, John Gabriel ?

BORKMAN [*with emphasis*]. The most infamous of crimes is a friend's betrayal of his friend's confidence.

FOLDAL [*somewhat doubtfully*]. Yes, but you know——

BORKMAN [*firing up*]. What are you going to say? I see it in your face. But it is of no use. The people who had their securities in the bank should have got them all back again——every farthing. No; I tell you the most infamous crime a man can commit is to misuse a friend's letters; to publish to all the world what has been confided to him alone, in the closest secrecy, like a whisper in an empty, dark, double-locked room. The man who can do such things is infected and poisoned in every fibre with the morals of the higher rascality. And such a friend was mine——and it was he who crushed me.

FOLDAL. I can guess whom you mean.

BORKMAN. There was not a nook or cranny of my life that I hesitated to lay open to him. And then, when the moment came, he turned against me the weapons I myself had placed in his hands.

FOLDAL. I have never been able to understand why he——Of course, there were whispers of all sorts at the time.

BORKMAN. What were the whispers ? Tell me. You see I know nothing. For I had to go straight into——into isolation. What did people whisper, Vilhelm ?

FOLDAL. YOU were to have gone into the Cabinet, they said.

BORKMAN. I was offered a portfolio, but I refused it.

FOLDAL. Then it wasn't there you stood in his way ?

BORKMAN. Oh, no; that was not the reason he betrayed me.

FOLDAL. Then I really can't understand——

BORKMAN. I may as well tell you, Vilhelm——

FOLDAL. Well?

BORKMAN. There was—in fact, there was a woman in the case.

FOLDAL. A woman in the case? Well, but, John Gabriel—:—

BORKMAN [*interrupting*]. Well, well—let us say no more of these stupid old stories. After all, neither of us got into the Cabinet, neither he nor I.

FOLDAL. But he rose high in the world.

BORKMAN. And I fell into the abyss.

FOLDAL. Oh, it's a terrible tragedy——

BORKMAN [*nodding to him*]. Almost as terrible as yours, I fancy, when I come to think of it.

FOLDAL [*naively*]. Yes, at least as terrible.

BORKMAN [*laughing quietly*]. But looked at from another point of view, it is really a sort of comedy as well.

FOLDAL. A comedy? The story of your life?

BORKMAN. Yes, it seems to be taking a turn in that direction. For let me tell you——

FOLDAL. What?

BORKMAN. You say you did not meet Frida as you came in?

FOLDAL. No.

BORKMAN. At this moment, as we sit here, she is playing waltzes for the guests of the man who betrayed and ruined me.

FOLDAL. I hadn't the least idea of that.

BORKMAN. Yes, she took her music, and went straight from me to—to the great house.

FOLDAL [*apologetically*]. Well, you see, poor child——

BORKMAN. And can you guess for whom she is playing—among the rest?

FOLDAL. No.

BORKMAN. For my son.

FOLDAL. What?

BORKMAN. What do you think of that, Vilhelm? My son is down there in the whirl of the dance this evening. Am I not right in calling it a comedy?

FOLDAL. But in that case you may be sure he knows nothing about it.

BORKMAN. What does he not know?

FOLDAL. You may be sure he doesn't know how he—that man——

BORKMAN. Do not shrink from his name. I can quite well bear it now.

FOLDAL. I'm certain your son doesn't know the circumstances, John Gabriel.

BORKMAN [*gloomily, sitting and beating the table*]. Yes, he knows, as surely as I am sitting here.

FOLDAL. Then how can he possibly be a guest in that house?

BORKMAN [*shaking his head*]. My son probably does not see things with my eyes. I'll take my oath he is on my enemies' side! No doubt he thinks, as they do, that Hinkel only did his confounded duty when he went and betrayed me.

FOLDAL. But, my dear friend, who can have got him to see things in that light?

BORKMAN. Who? Do you forget who has brought him up? First his aunt, from the time he was six or seven years old; and now, of late years, his mother!

FOLDAL. I believe you are doing them an injustice.

BORKMAN [*firing up*]. I never do any one injustice! Both of them have gone and poisoned his mind against me, I tell you!

FOLDAL [*soothingly*]* Well, well, well, I suppose they have.

BORKMAN [*indignantly*]. Oh these women! They wreck and ruin life for us! Play the devil with our whole destiny—our triumphal progress.

FOLDAL. Not all of them!

BORKMAN. Indeed? Can you tell me of a single one that is good for anything?

FOLDAL. No, that is the trouble. The few that I know are good for nothing.

BORKMAN [*with a snort of scorn*]. Well then, what is the good of it? What is the good of such women existing—if you never know them?

FOLDAL [*warmly*]. Yes, John Gabriel, there is good in it, I assure you. It is such a blessed, beneficent thought that here or there in the world, somewhere, far away—the true woman exists after all.

BORKMAN [*moving impatiently on the sofa*]. Oh, do spare me that poetical nonsense.

FOLDAL [*looks at him, deeply wounded*]. Do you call my holiest faith poetical nonsense?

BORKMAN [*harshly*]. Yes, I do! That is what has always prevented you from getting on in the world. If you would get all that out of your head, I could still help you on in life—help you to rise.

FOLDAL [*boiling inwardly*]. Oh, you can't do that.

BORKMAN. I can, when once I come into power again.

FOLDAL. That won't be for many a day.

BORKMAN [*vehemently*]. Perhaps you think that day will never come? Answer me!

FOLDAL. I don't know what to answer.

BORKMAN [*rising, cold and dignified, and waving his hand towards the door*]. Then I no longer have any use for you.

FOLDAL [*starting up*]. No use——!

BORKMAN. Since you do not believe that the tide will turn for me——

FOLDAL. HOW can I believe in the teeth of all reason? You would have to be legally rehabilitated——

BORKMAN. GO on! go on!

FOLDAL. It's true I never passed my examination; but I have read enough law to know that——

BORKMAN [*quickly*]. It is impossible, you mean?

FOLDAL. There is no precedent for such a thing.

BORKMAN. Exceptional men are above precedents.

FOLDAL. The law knows nothing of such distinctions.

BORKMAN [*harshly and decisively*]. You are no poet, Vilhelm.

FOLDAL [*unconsciously folding his hands*]. Do you say that in sober earnest?

BORKMAN [*dismissing the subject, without answering*]. We are only wasting each other's time. You had better not come here again.

FOLDAL. Then you really want me to leave you?

BORKMAN [*without looking at him*]. I have no longer any use for you.

FOLDAL [*softly, taking his portfolio*]. No, no, no; I daresay not.

BORKMAN. Here you have been lying to me all the time.

FOLDAL [*shaking his head*]. Never lying, John Gabriel.

BORKMAN. Have you not sat here feeding me with hope, and trust, and confidence—that was all a lie?

FOLDAL. It wasn't a lie so long as you believed in my vocation. So long as you believed in me, I believed in you.

BORKMAN. Then we have been all the time deceiving each other. And perhaps deceiving ourselves—both of us.

FOLDAL. But isn't that just the essence of friendship, John Gabriel?

BORKMAN [*smiling bitterly*]. Yes, you are right there. Friendship means—deception. I have learnt that once before.

FOLDAL [*looking at him*], I have no poetic vocation! And you could actually say it to me so bluntly.

BORKMAN [*in a gentler tone*]. Well, you know, I don't pretend to know much about these matters.

FOLDAL. Perhaps you know more than you think.

BORKMAN. I?

FOLDAL [*softly*]. Yes, you. For I myself have had my doubts, now and then, I may tell you. The horrible doubt that I may have bungled my life for the sake of a delusion.

BORKMAN. If you have no faith in yourself, you are on the downward path indeed.

FOLDAL. That was why I found such comfort in coming here to lean upon your faith in me. [*Taking his hat.*] But now you have become a stranger to me.

BORKMAN. And you to me.

FOLDAL* Good-night, John Gabriel.

BORKMAN. Good-night, Vilhelm.

[FOLDAL goes out to the left.

[BORKMAN stands for a moment gazing at the closed door; makes a movement as though to call FOLDAL back, but changes his mind, and begins to pace the floor with his hands behind his back. Then he stops at the table beside the sofa and puts out the lamp. The room becomes half

dark. After a short pause, there comes a knock at the tapestry door.

BORKMAN [*at the table, starts, turns, and asks in a loud voice:*] .Who is that knocking? [*No answer; another knock.*

BOVLKMAN [*without moving*]. Who is it? Come in!

[*ELLA RENTHEIM, with a lighted candle in her hand, appears in the doorway. She wears her black dress, as before, with her cloak thrown loosely round her shoulders.*

BORKMAN [*staring at her*]. Who are you? What do you want with me?

ELLA RENTHEIM [*closes the door and advances'*]. It is I, Borkman.

[*She puts down the candle on the piano and remains standing beside it.*

BORKMAN [*stands as though thunderstruck, stares fixedly at her, and says in a half-whisper*]. Is it—is it Ella? Is it Ella Rentheim?

ELLA RENTHEIM. Yes, it's " your " Ella, as you used to call me in the old days; many, many years ago.

BORKMAN [*as before*]. Yes, it is you, Ella, I can see you now.

ELLA RENTHEIM. Can you recognise me?

BORKMAN. Yes, now I begin to——

ELLA RENTHEIM. The years have told on me, and brought winter with them, Borkman. Do you not think so?

BORKMAN [*in a forced voice*]. You are a good deal changed—just at the first glance.

ELLA RENTHEIM. There are no dark curls on my neck now—the curls you once loved so to twist round your fingers.

BORKMAN [*quickly*]. True! I can see now, Ella, you have done your hair differently.

ELLA RENTHEIM [*with a sad smile*]. Precisely; it is the way I do my hair that makes the difference.

BORKMAN [*changing the subject*]. I had no idea that you were in this part of the world.

ELLA RENTHEIM. I have only just arrived.

BORKMAN. Why have you come all this way now, in winter?

ELLA RENTHEIM. That you shall hear.

BORKMAN. Is it me you have come to see ?

ELLA RENTHEIM. YOU among others. But if I am to tell you my errand, I must begin far back.

BORKMAN. You look tired.

ELLA RENTHEIM. Yes, I am tired.

BORKMAN. Won't you sit down? There, on the sofa.

ELLA RENTHEIM. Yes, thank you; I need rest.

[She crosses to the right and seats herself in the farthest forward corner of the sofa, BORKMAN stands beside the table with his hands behind his back looking at her. A short silence.]

ELLA RENTHEIM. It seems an endless time since we two met, Borkman, face to face.

BORKMAN *[gloomily]*. It is a long, long time. And terrible things have passed since then.

ELLA RENTHEIM. A whole lifetime has passed—a wasted lifetime.

BORKMAN *[looking keenly at her]*. Wasted !

ELLA RENTHEIM. Yes, I say wasted—for both of us.

BORKMAN *[in a cold, business tone]*, I cannot regard my life as wasted, yet.

ELLA RENTHEIM. And what about mine ?

BORKMAN. There you have yourself to blame, Ella.

ELLA RENTHEIM *[with a start]*. And you can say t h a t ?

BORKMAN. You could quite well have been happy without me.

ELLA RENTHEIM. Do you believe that?

BORKMAN. If you had made up your mind to.

ELLA RENTHEIM *[bitterly]*. Oh yes, I know well enough there was some one else ready to marry me.

BORKMAN. But you rejected him.

ELLA RENTHEIM. Yes, I did.

BORKMAN. Time after time you rejected him. Year after year——

ELLA RENTHEIM *[scornfully]*. Year after year I rejected happiness, I suppose you think?

BORKMAN. YOU might perfectly well have been happy with h i m. And then I should have been saved.

ELLA RENTHEIM. You?

BORKMAN. Yes, you would have saved me, Ella.

ELLA RENTHEIM. HOW do you mean ?

BORKMAN. He thought I was at the bottom of your obstinacy—of your perpetual refusals. And then he took his revenge. It was so easy for him; he had all my frank, confiding letters in his keeping. He made his own use of them; and then it was all over with me—for the time, that is to say. So you see it is all your doing, Ella!

ELLA RENTHEIM. Oh indeed, Borkman. If we look into the matter, it appears that it is I who owe you reparation.

BORKMAN. It depends how you look at it. I know quite well all that you have done for us. You bought in this house, and the whole property, at the auction. You placed the house entirely at my disposal—and your sister's. You took charge of Erhart, and cared for him in every way——

ELLA RENTHEIM. AS long as I was allowed to——

BORKMAN. By your sister, you mean. I have never mixed myself up in these domestic affairs. As I was saying, I know all the sacrifices you have made for me and for your sister. But you were in a position to do so, Ella; and you must not forget that it was I who placed you in that position.

ELLA RENTHEIM [*indignantly*]. There you make a great mistake, Borkman! It was the love of my inmost heart for Erhart—and for you too—that made me do it!

BORKMAN [*interrupting*]. My dear Ella, do not let us get upon questions of sentiment and that sort of thing. I mean, of course, that if you acted generously, it was I that put it in your power to do so.

ELLA RENTHEIM [*smiling*]. H'm. In my power——

BORKMAN [*warmly*]. Yes, put it in your power, I say! On the eve of the great decisive battle—when I could not afford to spare either kith or kin—when I had to grasp at—when I did grasp at the millions that were entrusted to me—then I spared all that was yours, every farthing, although I could have taken it, and made use of it, as I did of all the rest!

ELLA RENTHEIM [*coldly and quietly*]. That is quite true, Borkman.

BORKMAN. Yes it is. And that was why, when they came and took me, they found all your securities untouched in the strong-room of the bank.

ELLA RENTHEIM [*looking at him*], I have often and often wondered what was your real reason for sparing all my property? That, and that alone?

BORKMAN. My reason?

ELLA RENTHEIM. Yes, your reason. Tell me.

BORKMAN [*harshly and scornfully*]. Perhaps you think it was that I might have something to fall back upon, if things went wrong?

ELLA RENTHEIM. Oh no, I am sure you did not think of that in those days.

BORKMAN. Never! I was so absolutely certain of victory.

ELLA RENTHEIM. Well then, why was it that——?

BORKMAN [*shrugging his shoulders*]. Upon my soul, Ella, it is not so easy to remember one's motives of twenty years ago. I only know that when I used to grapple, silently and alone, with all the great projects I had in my mind, I had something like the feeling of a man who is starting on a balloon-voyage. All through my sleepless nights I was inflating my giant balloon, and preparing to soar away into perilous, unknown regions.

ELLA RENTHEIM [*smiling*]. You, who never had the least doubt of victory?

BORKMAN [*impatiently*]. Men are made so, Ella. They both doubt and believe at the same time. [*Looking straight before him,*] And I suppose that was why I would not take you and yours with me in the balloon.

ELLA RENTHEIM [*eagerly*]. Why, I ask you? Tell me why!

BORKMAN [*without looking at her*]. One shrinks from risking what one holds dearest on such a voyage.

ELLA RENTHEIM. YOU had risked what was dearest to you on that voyage. Your whole future life——

BORKMAN. Life is not always what one holds dearest.

ELLA RENTHEIM [*breathlessly*]. Was that how you felt at that time?

BORKMAN. I fancy it was.

ELLA RENTHEIM. I was the dearest thing in the world to you?

BORKMAN. I seem to remember something of the sort.

ELLA RENTHEIM. And yet years and years had passed since you had deserted me—and married—married another!

BORKMAN. Deserted you, you say? You must know very well that it was higher motives—well then, other motives that compelled me. Without his support I could not have done anything.

ELLA RENTHEIM [*controlling herself*]. So you deserted me from—higher motives.

BORKMAN. I could not get on without his help. And he made you the price of helping me.

ELLA RENTHEIM. And you paid the price. Paid it in full—without haggling.

BORKMAN. I had no choice. I had to conquer or fall.

ELLA RENTHEIM [*in a trembling voice, looking at him*]. Can what you tell me be true—that I was then the dearest thing in the world to you?

BORKMAN. Both then and afterwards—long, long after.

ELLA RENTHEIM. But you bartered me away none the less; drove a bargain with another man for your love. Sold my love for a—for a directorship.

BORKMAN [*gloomily and bowed down*], I was driven by inexorable necessity, Ella.

ELLA RENTHEIM [*rises from the sofa, quivering with passion*]. Criminal!

BORKMAN [*starts, but controls himself*]. I have heard that word before.

ELLA RENTHEIM. Oh, don't imagine I'm thinking of anything you may have done against the law of the land! The use you made of all those vouchers and securities, or whatever you call them—do you think I care a straw about that! If I could have stood at your side when the crash came——

BORKMAN [*eagerly*]. What then, Ella?

ELLA RENTHEIM. Trust me, I should have borne it ail so gladly along with you. The shame, the ruin—I would have helped you to bear it all—all!

BORKMAN. Would you have had the will—the strength?

ELLA RENTHEIM. Both the will and the strength. For then I did not know of your great, your terrible crime.

BORKMAN. What crime? What are you speaking of?

ELLA RENTHEIM. I am speaking of that crime for which there is no forgiveness.

BORKMAN [*staring at her*]. You must be out of your mind.

ELLA RENTHEIM [*approaching him*]. You are a murderer! You have committed the one mortal sin!

BORKMAN [*falling back towards the piano*]. You are raving, Ella!

ELLA RENTHEIM. YOU have killed the love-life in me. [*Still nearer him.*] Do you understand what that means? The Bible speaks of a mysterious sin for which there is no forgiveness. I have never understood what it could be; but now I understand. The great, unpardonable sin is to murder the love-life in a human soul.

BORKMAN. And you say I have done that?

ELLA RENTHEIM. YOU have done that. I have never rightly understood until this evening what had really happened to me. That you deserted me and turned to Gunhild instead—I took that to be mere common fickleness on your part, and the result of heartless scheming on hers. I almost think I despised you a little, in spite of everything. But now I see it! You deserted the woman you loved! Me, me, me! What you held dearest in the world you were ready to bargain away for gain. That is the double murder you have committed! The murder of your own soul and of mine!

BORKMAN [*with cold self-control*]. How well I recognise your passionate, ungovernable spirit, Ella. No doubt it is natural enough that you should look at the thing in this light. Of course, you are a woman, and therefore it would seem that your own heart is the one thing you know or care about in the world.

ELLA RENTHEIM. Yes, yes, it is.

BORKMAN. Your own heart is the only thing that exists for you.

ELLA RENTHEIM. The only thing! The only thing! You are right there.

BORKMAN. But you must remember that I am a man. As a woman, you were the dearest thing in the world to me. But if the worst comes to the worst, one woman can always take the place of another.

ELLA RENTHEIM [*looks at him with a smile*]. Was that your experience when you had made Gunhild your wife?

BORKMAN. No. But the great aims I had in life helped me to bear even that. I wanted to have at my command all the sources of power in this country. All the wealth that lay hidden in the soil, and the rocks, and the forests, and the sea—I wanted to gather it all into my hands, to make myself master of it all, and so to promote the well-being of many, many thousands.

ELLA RENTHEIM [*lost in recollection*], I know it. Think of all the evenings we spent in talking over your projects.

BORKMAN. Yes, I could talk to you, Ella.

ELLA RENTHEIM. I jested with your plans, and asked whether you wanted to awaken all the sleeping spirits of the mine.

BORKMAN [*nodding*], I remember that phrase. [*Slowly*], All the sleeping spirits of the mine.

ELLA RENTHEIM. But you did not take it as a jest. You said: "Yes, yes, Ella, that is just what I want to do."

BORKMAN. And so it was. If only I could get my foot into the stirrup—And that depended on that one man. He could and would secure me the control of the bank—if I on my side—

ELLA RENTHEIM. Yes, just so! If you on your side would renounce the woman you loved—and who loved you beyond words in return.

BORKMAN. I knew his consuming passion for you. I knew that on no other condition would he—

ELLA RENTHEIM. And so you struck the bargain.

BORKMAN [*vehemently*]. Yes, I did, Ella! For the love of power is uncontrollable in me, you see! So I struck the bargain; I had to. And he helped me half-way up towards the

beckoning heights that I was bent on reaching. And I mounted and mounted; year by year I mounted——

ELLA RENTHEIM. And I was as though wiped out of your life.

BORKMAN. And after all he hurled me into the abyss again. On account of you, Ella.

ELLA RENTHEIM [*after a short thoughtful silence*]. Borkman, does it not seem to you as if there had been a sort of curse on our whole relation?

BORKMAN [*looking at her*]. A curse?

ELLA RENTHEIM. Yes. Don't you think so?

BORKMAN [*uneasily*]. Yes. But why is it? [*With an outburst.*] Oh, Ella, I begin to wonder which is in the right—you or I!

ELLA RENTHEIM. It is you who have sinned. You have done to death all the gladness of life in me.

BORKMAN [*anxiously*]. Do not say that, Ella!

ELLA RENTHEIM. All a woman's gladness at any rate. From the day when your image began to dwindle in my mind, I have lived my life as though under an eclipse. During all these years it has grown harder and harder for me—and at last utterly impossible—to love any living creature. Human beings, animals, plants: I shrank from all—from all but one——

BORKMAN. What one?

ELLA RENTHEIM. Erhart, of course.

BORKMAN. Erhart?

ELLA RENTHEIM. Erhart—your son, Borkman.

BORKMAN. Has he really been so close to your heart?

ELLA RENTHEIM. Why else should I have taken him to me, and kept him as long as ever I could? Why?

BORKMAN. I thought it was out of pity, like all the rest that you did.

ELLA RENTHEIM [*in strong inward emotion*]. Pity! Ha, ha! I have never known pity, since you deserted me. I was incapable of feeling it. If a poor starved child came into my kitchen, shivering, and crying, and begging for a morsel of food, I let the servants look to it. I never felt any desire to take the child to myself, to warm it at my own hearth, to have the

pleasure of seeing it eat and be satisfied. And yet I was not like that when I was young; that I remember clearly! It is you that have created an empty, barren desert within me—and without me too!

BORKMAN. Except only for Erhart.

ELLA RENTHEIM. Yes, except for your son. But I am hardened to every other living thing. You have cheated me of a mother's joy and happiness in life—and of a mother's sorrows and tears as well. And perhaps that is the heaviest part of the loss to me.

BORKMAN. Do you say that, Ella ?

ELLA RENTHEIM. Who knows? It may be that a mother's sorrows and tears were what I needed most. [*With still deeper emotion.*] But at that time I could not resign myself to my loss; and that was why I took Erhart to me. I won him entirely. Won his whole warm, trustful childish heart—until———Oh!

BORKMAN. Until what ?

ELLA RENTHEIM. Until his mother—his mother in the flesh, I mean—took him from me again.

BORKMAN. He had to leave you in any case; he had to come to town.

ELLA RENTHEIM [*wringing her hands*']. Yes, but I cannot bear the solitude—the emptiness! I cannot bear the loss of your son's heart.

BORKMAN [*with an evil expression in his eyes*], H'm—I doubt whether you have lost it, Ella. Hearts are not so easily lost to a certain person—in the room below.

ELLA RENTHEIM. I have lost Erhart here, and she has won him back again. Or if not she, some one else. That is plain enough in the letters he writes me from time to time.

BORKMAN. Then it is to take him back with you that you have come here ?

ELLA RENTHEIM. Yes, if only it were possible——!

BORKMAN. It is possible enough, if you have set your heart upon it. For you have the first and strongest claims upon him.

ELLA RENTHEIM. Oh, claims, claims! What is the use of claims ? If he is not mine of his own free will, he is not mine at

all. And have him I must! I must have my boy's heart, whole and undivided—now!

BORKMAN. You must remember that Erhart is well into his twenties. You could scarcely reckon on keeping his heart very long undivided, as you express it.

ELLA RENTHEIM [*with a melancholy smile*]. It would not need to be for so very long.

BORKMAN. Indeed? I should have thought that when you want a thing, you want it to the end of your days.

ELLA RENTHEIM. SO I do. But that need not mean for very long.

BORKMAN [*taken aback*]. What do you mean by that?

ELLA RENTHEIM. I suppose you know I have been in bad health for many years past?

BORKMAN. Have you?

ELLA RENTHEIM. DO you not know that?

BORKMAN. NO, I cannot say I did——

ELLA RENTHEIM [*looking at him in surprise*]. Has Erhart not told you so?

BORKMAN. I really don't remember at the moment.

ELLA RENTHEIM. Perhaps he has not spoken of me at all?

BORKMAN. Oh, yes, I believe he has spoken of you. But the fact is, I so seldom see anything of him—scarcely ever. There is a certain person below that keeps him away from me. Keeps him away, you understand?

ELLA RENTHEIM. Are you quite sure of that, Borkman?

BORKMAN. Yes, absolutely sure. [*Changing his tone,*] And so you have been in bad health, Ella?

ELLA RENTHEIM. Yes, I have. And this autumn I grew so much worse that I had to come to town and take better medical advice.

BORKMAN. And you have seen the doctors already?

ELLA RENTHEIM. Yes, this morning.

BORKMAN. And what did they say to you?

ELLA RENTHEIM. They gave me full assurance of what I had long suspected.

BORKMAN. Well?

ELLA RENTHEIM [*calmly and quietly*]. My illness will never be cured, Borkman.

, BORKMAN. Oh, you must not believe that, Ella.

ELLA RENTHEIM. It is a disease that there is no help or cure for. The doctors can do nothing with it. They must just let it take its course. They cannot possibly check it; at most, they can allay the suffering. And that is always something.

BORKMAN. Oh, but it will take a long time to run its course. I am sure it will.

ELLA RENTHEIM. I may perhaps last out the winter, they told me.

BORKMAN [*without thinking*]. Oh, well, the winter is long.

ELLA RENTHEIM [*quietly*]. Long enough for me, at any rate.

BORKMAN [*eagerly, changing the subject*]. But what in all the world can have brought on this illness? You, who have always lived such a healthy and regular life? What can have brought it on?

ELLA RENTHEIM [*looking at him*]. The doctors thought that perhaps at one time in my life I had had to go through some great stress of emotion.

BORKMAN [*firing up*]. Emotion! Aha, I understand! You mean that it is my fault?

ELLA RENTHEIM [*with increasing inward agitation*]. It is too late to go into that matter now! But I must have my heart's own child again before I go! It is so unspeakably sad for me to think that I must go away from all that is called life—away from sun, and light, and air—and not leave behind me one single human being who will think of me—who will remember me lovingly and mournfully—as a son remembers and thinks of the mother he has lost.

BORKMAN [*after a short pause*]. Take him, Ella, if you can win him.

ELLA RENTHEIM [*with animation*]. Do you give your consent? C a n you?

BORKMAN [*gloomily*]. Yes. And it is no great sacrifice either. For in any case he is not mine.

ELLA RENTHEIM. Thank you, thank you all the same for

the sacrifice! But I have one thing more to beg of you—a great thing for me, Borkman.

BORKMAN. Well, what is it ?

ELLA RENTHEIM. I daresay you will think it childish of me—you will not understand——

BORKMAN. GO on—tell me what it is.

ELLA RENTHEIM. When I die—as I must soon—I shall have a fair amount to leave behind me.

BORKMAN. Yes, I suppose so.

ELLA RENTHEIM. And I intend to leave it all to Erhart.

BORKMAN. Well, you have really no one nearer to you than he.

ELLA RENTHEIM [*warmly*]. No indeed, I have no one nearer me than he.

BORKMAN. NO one of your own family. You are the last.

ELLA RENTHEIM [*nodding slowly*]. Yes, that is just it. When I die, the name of Rentheim dies with me. And that is such a torturing thought to me. To be wiped out of existence—even to your very name——

BORKMAN [*firing up*]. Ah, I see what you are driving at!

ELLA RENTHEIM [*passionately*]. Do not let this be my fate! Let Erhart bear my name after me!

BORKMAN [*looking harshly at her*]. I understand you well enough. You want to save my son from having to bear his father's name. That is your meaning.

ELLA RENTHEIM. NO, no, not that! I myself would have borne it proudly and gladly along with you! But a mother who is at the point of death——There is more binding force in a name than you think or believe, Borkman.

BORKMAN [*coldly and proudly*]. Well and good, Ella. I am man enough to bear my own name alone.

ELLA RENTHEIM [*seizing and pressing his hand*]. Thank you, thank you! Now there has been a full settlement between us! Yes, yes, let it be so! You have made all the atonement in your power. For when I have gone from the world, I shall leave Erhart Rentheim behind me!

[*The tapestry door is thrown open.* MRS. BORKMAN, with the large shawl over her head, stands in the doorway.

MRS. BORKMAN [*in violent agitation*]. Never to his dying day shall Erhart be called by that name!

ELLA RENTHEIM [*shrinking back*], Gunhild!

BORKMAN [*harshly and threateningly*]. I allow no one to come up to my room!

MRS. BORKMAN [*advancing a step*], I do not ask your permission.

BORKMAN [*going towards her*]. What do you want with me?

MRS. BORKMAN. I will fight with all my might for you. I will protect you from the powers of evil.

ELLA RENTHEIM. The worst "powers of evil" are in yourself, Gunhild!

MRS. BORKMAN [*harshly*]. So be it then. [*Menacingly, with upstretched arm.*] But this I tell you—he shall bear his father's name! And bear it aloft in honour again. And I will be his mother! I alone! My son's heart shall be mine—mine, and no other's.

[*She goes out by the tapestry door and shuts it behind her.*]

ELLA RENTHEIM [*shaken and shattered*]. Borkman, Erhart's life will be wrecked in this storm. There must be an understanding between you and Gunhild. We must go down to her at once.

BORKMAN [*looking at her*]. We? I too, do you mean?

ELLA RENTHEIM. Both you and I.

BORKMAN [*shaking his head*]. She is hard, I tell you. Hard as the metal I once dreamed of hewing out of the rocks.

ELLA RENTHEIM. Then try it now!

[BORKMAN *does not answer, but stands looking doubtfully at her.*]

ACT III

MRS. BORKMAN'S drawing-room. *The lamp is still burning on the table beside the sofa in front. The garden-room at the back is quite dark.*

MRS. BORKMAN, *with the shawl still over her head, enters, in violent agitation, by the hall door, goes up to the window,*

draws the curtain a little aside, and looks out; then she seats herself beside the stove, but immediately springs up again, goes to the bell-pull and rings. Stands beside the sofa, and waits a moment. No one comes. Then she rings again/ this time more violently.

THE MAID *presently enters from the hall. She looks sleepy and out of temper, and appears to have dressed in great haste,*

MRS. BORKMAN [*impatiently*]. What has become of you, Malena? I have rung for you twice!

THE MAID. Yes, ma'am, I heard you.

MRS. BORKMAN. And yet you didn't come?

THE MAID [*sulkily*]. I had to put some clothes on first, I suppose.

MRS. BORKMAN. Yes, you must dress yourself properly, and then you must run at once and fetch my son.

THE MAID [*looking at her in astonishment*]. You want me to fetch Mr. Erhart?

MRS. BORKMAN. Yes; tell him he must come home to me at once; I want to speak to him.

THE MAID [*grumbling*]. Then I'd better go to the bailiff's and call up the coachman.

MRS. BORKMAN. Why?

THE MAID. TO get him to harness the sledge. The snow's dreadful to-night.

MRS. BORKMAN. Oh, that doesn't matter; only make haste and go. It's just round the corner.

THE MAID. Why, ma'am, you can't call that just round the corner!

MRS. BORKMAN. Of course it is. Don't you know Mr. Hinkel's villa?

THE MAID [*with malice*]. Oh, indeed! It's there Mr. Erhart is this evening?

MRS. BORKMAN [*taken aback*]. Why, where else should he be?

THE MAID [*with a slight smile*]. Well, I only thought he might be where he usually is.

MRS. BORKMAN. Where do you mean?

THE MAID. At that Mrs. Wilton's, as they call her.

MRS. BORKMAN. Mrs. Wilton's? My son isn't so often there.

THE MAID [*half muttering*], I've heard say as he's there every day of his life.

MRS. BORKMAN. That's all nonsense, Malena. Go straight to Mr. Hinkel's and try to get hold of him.

THE MAID [*with a toss of her head*]. Oh, very well; I'm going.

[She is on the point of going out by the hall, but just at that moment the hall door is opened, and ELLA RENTHEIM and BORKMAN appear on the threshold.]

MRS. BORKMAN [*staggers a step backwards*]. What does this mean?

THE MAID [*terrified, instinctively folding her hands*]. Lord save us!

MRS. BORKMAN [*whispers to THE MAID*]. Tell him he must come this instant.

THE MAID [*softly*]. Yes, ma'am.

[ELLA RENTHEIM and, after her, BORKMAN enter the room.]

THE MAID *sidles behind them to the door, goes out, and closes it after her,*

A short silence,

MRS. BORKMAN [*having recovered her self-control, turns to ELLA*]. What does he want down here in my room?

ELLA RENTHEIM. He wants to come to an understanding with you, Gunhild.

MRS. BORKMAN. He has never tried that before.

ELLA RENTHEIM. He is going to, this evening.

MRS. BORKMAN. The last time we stood face to face—it was in the Court, when I was summoned to give an account—

BORKMAN [*approaching*]. And this evening it is / who will give an account of myself.

MRS. BORKMAN [*looking at him*]. You?

BORKMAN. Not of what I have done amiss. All the world knows that.

MRS. BORKMAN [*with a bitter sigh*]. Yes, that is true; all the world knows that.

BORKMAN. But it does not know why I did it; why I had to do it. People do not understand that I had to, because I was myself—because I was John Gabriel Borkman—myself, and not another. And that is what I will try to explain to you.

MRS. BORKMAN [*shaking her head*]. It is of no use. Temptations and promptings acquit no one.

BORKMAN. They may acquit one in one's own eyes.

MRS. BORKMAN [*with a gesture of repulsion*]. Oh, let all that alone! I have thought over that black business of yours enough and to spare.

BORKMAN. I too. During those five endless years in my cell—and elsewhere—I had time to think it over. And during the eight years up there in the gallery I have had still more ample time. I have re-tried the whole case—by myself. Time after time I have re-tried it. I have been my own accuser, my own defender, and my own judge. I have been more impartial than any one else could be—that I venture to say. I have paced up and down the gallery there, turning every one of my actions upside down and inside out. I have examined them from all sides as unsparingly, as pitilessly, as any lawyer of them all. And the final judgment I have always come to is this: the one person I have sinned against is—myself.

MRS. BORKMAN. And what about me? What about your son?

BORKMAN. YOU and he are included in what I mean when I say myself.

MRS. BORKMAN. And what about the hundreds of others, then—the people you are said to have ruined?

BORKMAN [*more vehemently*]. I had power in my hands! And then I felt the irresistible vocation within me! The prisoned millions lay all over the country, deep in the bowels of the earth, calling aloud to me! They shrieked to me to free them! But no one else heard their cry—I alone had ears for it.

MRS. BORKMAN. Yes, to the branding of the name of Borkman.

BORKMAN. If the others had had the power, do you think they would not have acted exactly as I did?

MRS. BORKMAN. No one, no one but you would have done it!

BORKMAN. Perhaps not. But that would have been because they had not my brains. And if they had done it, it would not have been with my aims in view. The act would have been a different act. In short, I have acquitted myself.

ELLA RENTHEIM [*softly and appealingly*]. Oh, can you say that so confidently, Borkman?

BORKMAN [*nodding*]. Acquitted myself on that score. But then comes the great, crushing self-accusation.

MRS. BORKMAN. What is that?

BORKMAN. I have skulked up there and wasted eight precious years of my life! The very day I was set free, I should have gone forth into the world—out into the steel-hard, dreamless world of reality! I should have begun at the bottom and swung myself up to the heights anew—higher than ever before—in spite of all that lay between.

MRS. BORKMAN. Oh, it would only have been the same thing over again; take my word for that.

BORKMAN [*shakes his head, and looks at her with a sententious air*]. It is true that nothing new happens; but what has happened does not repeat itself either. It is the eye that transforms the action. The eye, born anew transforms the old action. [*Breaking off.*] But you do not understand this.

MRS. BORKMAN [*curtly*]. No, I do not understand it.

BORKMAN. Ah, that is just the curse—I have never found one single soul to understand me.

ELLA RENTHEIM [*looking at him*]. Never, Borkman?

BORKMAN. Except one—perhaps. Long, long ago. In the days when I did not think I needed understanding. Since then, at any rate, no one has understood me! There has been no one alive enough to my needs to be afoot and rouse me—to ring the morning bell for me—to call me up to manful work anew. And to impress upon me that I had done nothing inexpiable.

MRS. BORKMAN [*with a scornful laugh*]. So, after all, you require to have that impressed on you from without?

BORKMAN [*with increasing indignation*]. Yes, when the whole world hisses in chorus that I have sunk never to rise again,

there come moments when I almost believe it myself. [*Raising his head.*] But then my inmost assurance rises again triumphant; and that acquits me.

MRS. BORKMAN [*looking harshly at him*]. Why have you never come and asked me for what you call understanding ?

BORKMAN. What use would it have been to come to you ?

MRS. BORKMAN* [*with a gesture of repulsion*]. You have never loved anything outside yourself; that is the secret of the whole matter.

BORKMAN [*proudly*]. I have loved power.

MRS. BORKMAN. Yes, power!

BORKMAN. The power to create human happiness in wide, wide circles around me!

MRS. BORKMAN. YOU had once the power to make me happy. Have you used it to that end ?

BORKMAN [*without looking at her*]. Some one must generally go down in a shipwreck.

MRS. BORKMAN. And your own son! Have you used your power—have you lived and laboured—to make him happy?

BORKMAN. I do not know him.

MRS. BORKMAN. No, that is true. You do not even know

BORKMAN [*harshly*]. You, his mother, have taken care of that!

MRS. BORKMAN [*looking at him with a lofty air*]. Oh, you do not know what I have taken care of!

BORKMAN. You?

MRS. BORKMAN. Yes, I. I alone.

BORKMAN. Then tell me.

MRS. BORKMAN. I Have taken care of your memory.

BORKMAN [*with a short dry laugh*]. My memory? Oh, indeed ! It sounds almost as if I were dead already.

MRS. BORKMAN [*with emphasis*]. And so you are.

BORKMAN' [*slowly*]. Yes, perhaps you are right. [*Firing up.*] But no, no! Not yet! I have been close to the verge of death. But now I have awakened. I have come to myself. A whole life lies before me yet. I can see it awaiting me, radiant and quickening. And you—you shall see it too.

MRS. BORKMAN [*raising her hand*]. Never dream of life again! Lie quiet where you are.

ELLA RENTHEIM [*shocked*], Gunhild! Gunhild, how can you——!

MRS. BORKMAN [*not listening to her*], I will raise the monument over your grave.

BORKMAN. The pillar of shame, I suppose you mean?

MRS. BORKMAN [*with increasing excitement*]. Oh, no, it shall be no pillar of metal or stone. And no one shall be suffered to carve any scornful legend on the monument I shall raise. There shall be, as it were, a quickset hedge of trees and bushes, close, close around your tomb. They shall hide away all the darkness that has been. The eyes of men and the thoughts of men shall no longer dwell on John Gabriel Borkman!

BORKMAN [*hoarsely and cuttingly*]. And this labour of love you will perform?

MRS. BORKMAN. Not by my own strength. I cannot think of that. But I have brought up one to help me, who shall live for this alone. His life shall be so pure and high and bright, that your burrowing in the dark shall be as though it had never been!

BORKMAN [*darkly and threateningly*]. If it is Erhart you mean, say so at once!

MRS. BORKMAN [*looking him straight in the eyes*]. Yes, it is Erhart; my son; he whom you are ready to renounce in atonement for your own acts.

BORKMAN [*with a look towards ELLA*], In atonement for my blackest sin.

MRS. BORKMAN [*repelling the idea*], A sin towards a stranger only. Remember the sin towards me! [*Looking triumphantly at them both.*] But he will not obey you! When I cry out to him in my need, he will come to me! It is with me that he will remain! With me, and never with any one else. [*Suddenly listens, and cries.*] I hear him! He is here, he is here! Erhart!

[ERHART BORKMAN *hastily tears open the hall door, and enters the room. He is wearing an overcoat and has his hat on.*

ERHART [*pale and anxious*]. Mother! What in Heaven's name——! [*Seeing BORKMAN, who is standing beside the doorway leading into the garden-room, he starts and takes off his hat. After a moment's silence, he asks:*] What do you want with me, mother? What has happened?

MRS. BORKMAN [*stretching out her arms towards him*], I want to see you, Erhart! I want to have you with me, always!

ERHART [*stammering*]. Have me——? Always? What do you mean by that?

MRS. BORKMAN. I will have you, I say! There is some one who wants to take you from me!

ERHART [*recoiling a step*]. Ah—so you know?

MRS. BORKMAN. Yes. Do you know it, too?

ERHART [*surprised, looking at her*]. Do I know it? Yes, of course.

MRS. BORKMAN. Aha, so you have planned it all out! Behind my back! Erhart! Erhart!

ERHART [*quickly*]. Mother, tell me what it is you know!

MRS. BORKMAN. I know everything. I know that your aunt has come here to take you from me.

ERHART. Aunt Ella!

ELLA RENTHEIM. Oh, listen to me a moment, Erhart!

MRS. BORKMAN [*continuing*]. She wants me to give you up to her. She wants to stand in your mother's place to you, Erhart! She wants you to be her son, and not mine, from this time forward. She wants you to inherit everything from her; to renounce your own name and take hers instead!

ERHART. Aunt Ella, is this true?

ELLA RENTHEIM. Yes, it is true.

ERHART. I knew nothing of this. Why do you want to have me with you again?

ELLA RENTHEIM. Because I feel that I am losing you here.

MRS. BORKMAN [*hardly*]. You are losing him to me—yes. And that is just as it should be.

ELLA RENTHEIM [*looking beseechingly at him*], Erhart, I cannot afford to lose you. For, I must tell you, I am a lonely—dying woman.

ERHART. Dying——?

ELLA RENTHEIM. Yes, dying. Will you come and be with me to the end? Attach yourself wholly to me? Be to me as though you were my own child——?

MRS. BORKMAN [*interrupting*]. And forsake your mother, and perhaps your mission in life as well? Will you, Erhart?

ELLA RENTHEIM. I am condemned to death. Answer me, Erhart.

ERHART [*warmly, with emotion*]. Aunt Ella, you have been unspeakably good to me. With you I grew up in as perfect happiness as any boy can ever have known——

MRS. BORKMAN. Erhart, Erhart!

ELLA RENTHEIM. Oh, how glad I am that you can still say that!

ERHART. But I cannot sacrifice myself to you now. It is not possible for me to devote myself wholly to taking a son's place towards you.

MRS. BORKMAN [*triumphing*]. Ah, I knew it! You shall not have him! You shall not have him, Ella!

ELLA RENTHEIM [*sadly*], I see it. You have won him back.

MRS. BORKMAN. Yes, yes! Mine he is, and mine he shall remain! Erhart, say it is so, dear; we two have still a long way to go together, have we not?

ERHART [*struggling with himself*]. Mother, I may as well tell you plainly——

MRS. BORKMAN [*eagerly*]. What?

ERHART. I am afraid it is only a very little way you and I can go together.

MRS. BORKMAN [*stands as though thunderstruck*]. What do you mean by that?

ERHART [*plucking up spirit*]. Good heavens, mother, I am young, after all! I feel as if the close air of this room must stifle me in the end.

MRS. BORKMAN. Close air? Here—with me?

ERHART. Yes, here with you, mother.

ELLA RENTHEIM. Then come with me, Erhart.

ERHART. Oh, Aunt Ella, it's not a whit better with you. It's different, but no better—no better for me. It smells of

rose-leaves and lavender there too; it is as airless there as here.

MRS. BORKMAN [*shaken, but having recovered her composure with an effort*]. Airless in your mother's room, you say!

ERHART [*in growing impatience*]. Yes, I don't know how else to express it. All this morbid watchfulness and—and idolisation, or whatever you like to call it—I can't endure it any longer!

MRS. BORKMAN [*looking at him with deep solemnity*]. Have you forgotten what you have consecrated your life to, Erhart?

ERHART [*with an outburst*]. Oh, say rather what you have consecrated my life to. You, you have been my will. You have never given me leave to have any of my own. But now I cannot bear this yoke any longer. I am young; remember that, mother. [*With a polite, considerate glance towards BORKMAN.*] I cannot consecrate my life to making atonement for another—whoever that other may be.

MRS. BORKMAN [*seized with a groiving anxiety*]. Who is it that has transformed you, Erhart?

ERHART [*struck*]. Who? Can you not conceive that it is I myself?

MRS. BORKMAN. NO, no, no! You have come under some strange power. You are not in your mother's power any longer; nor in your—your foster-mother's either.

ERHART [*with laboured defiance*], I am in my own power, mother! And working my own will!

BORKMAN [*advancing towards ERHART*]. Then perhaps my hour has come at last.

ERHART [*distantly and with measured politeness*]. How so? How do you mean, sir?

MRS. BORKMAN [*scornfully*]. Yes, you may well ask that.

BORKMAN [*continuing undisturbed*]. Listen, Erhart—will you not cast in your lot with your father? It is not through any other man's life that a man who has fallen can be raised up again. These are only empty fables that have been told to you down here in the airless room. If you were to set yourself to live your life like all the saints together, it would be of no use whatever to me.

ERHART [*with measured respectfulness*]. That is very true indeed.

BORKMAN. Yes, it is. And it would be of no use either if I should resign myself to wither away in abject penitence. I have tried to feed myself upon hopes and dreams, all through these years. But I am not the man to be content with that; and now I mean to have done with dreaming.

ERHART [*with a slight bow*]. And what will—what will you do, sir?

BORKMAN. I will work out my own redemption, that is what I will do. I will begin at the bottom again. It is only through his present and his future that a man can atone for his past. Through work, indefatigable work, for all that, in my youth, seemed to give life its meaning—and that now seems a thousand times greater than it did then. Erhart, will you join with me and help me in this new life?

MRS. BORKMAN [*raising her hand warningly*]. Do not do it, Erhart!

ELLA RENTHEIM [*warmly*]. Yes, yes, do it! Oh, help him, Erhart!

MRS. BORKMAN. And you advise him to do that? You, the lonely, dying woman.

ELLA RENTHEIM. I don't care about myself.

MRS. BORKMAN. NO, so long as it is not I that take him from you.

ELLA RENTHEIM. Precisely so, Gunhild.

BORKMAN. Will you, Erhart?

ERHART [*wrung with pain*]. Father, I cannot now. It is utterly impossible!

BORKMAN. What do you want to do then?

ERHART [*with a sudden glow*], I am young! I want to live, for once in a way, as well as other people! I want to live my own life!

ELLA RENTHEIM. YOU cannot give up two or three little months to brighten the close of a poor waning life?

ERHART. I cannot, aunt, however much I may wish to.

ELLA RENTHEIM. Not for the sake of one who loves you so dearly?

ERHART. I solemnly assure you, Aunt Ella, I cannot.

MRS. BORKMAN [*looking sharply at him*]. And your mother has no power over you either, any more?

ERHART. I will always love you, mother; but I cannot go on living for you alone. This is no life for me.

BORKMAN. Then come and join with me, after all! For life, life means work, Erhart. Come, we two will go forth into life and work together!

ERHART [*passionately*]. Yes, but I don't want to work now! For I am young! That's what I never realised before; but now the knowledge is tingling through every vein in my body. I will not work! I will only live, live, live!

MRS. BORKMAN [*with a cry of divination*]. Erhart, what will you live for?

ERHART [*with sparkling eyes*]. For happiness, mother!

MRS. BORKMAN. And where do you think you can find that?

ERHART. I have found it, already!

MRS. BORKMAN [*shrieks*], Erhart!

[ERHART goes quickly to the hall door and throws it open.

ERHART [*calls out*]. Fanny, you can come in now!

[MRS. WILTON, in outdoor wraps, appears on the threshold.

MRS. BORKMAN [*with uplifted hands*]. Mrs. Wilton!

MRS. WILTON [*hesitating a little, with an inquiring glance at ERHART*], DO you want me to——?

ERHART. Yes, now you can come in. I have told them everything.

[MRS. WILTON comes forward into the room. ERHART closes the door behind her. She bows formally to BORKMAN, who returns her bow in silence. A short pause.

MRS. WILTON [*in a subdued but firm voice*]. So the word has been spoken—and I suppose you all think I have brought a great calamity upon this house?

MRS. BORKMAN [*slowly, looking hard at her*]. You have crushed the last remnant of interest in life for me. [*With an outburst.*] But all this—all this is utterly impossible!

MRS. WILTON. I can quite understand that it must appear impossible to you, Mrs. Borkman.

MRS. BORKMAN. Yes, you can surely see for yourself that it is impossible. Or what——?

MRS. WILTON. I should rather say that it seems highly improbable. But it's so, none the less.

MRS. BORKMAN [*turning*]. Are you really in earnest about this, Erhart?

ERHART. This means happiness for me, mother—all the beauty and happiness of life. That is all I can say to you.

MRS. BORKMAN [*clenching her hands together; to MRS. WILTON*]. Oh, how you have cajoled and deluded my unhappy son!

MRS. WILTON [*raising her head proudly*]. I have done nothing of the sort.

MRS. BORKMAN. You have not, you say!

MRS. WILTON. NO. I have neither cajoled nor deluded him. Erhart came to me of his own free will. And of my own free will I went out half-way to meet him.

MRS. BORKMAN [*measuring her scornfully with her eye*]. Yes, indeed! That I can easily believe.

MRS. WILTON [*with self-control*], Mrs. Borkman, there are forces in human life that you seem to know very little about.

MRS. BORKMAN. What forces, may I ask?

MRS. WILTON. The forces which ordain that two people shall join their lives together, indissolubly—and fearlessly.

MRS. BORKMAN [*with a smile*], I thought you were already indissolubly bound—to another.

MRS. WILTON [*shortly*]. That other has deserted me.

MRS. BORKMAN. But he is still living, they say.

MRS. WILTON. He's dead to me.

ERHART [*insistently*]. Yes, mother, he is dead to Fanny. And besides, this other makes no difference to me!

MRS. BORKMAN [*looking sternly at him*]. So you **know** all this—about the other.

ERHART. Yes, mother, I know quite well—all about it!

MRS. BORKMAN. And yet you can say that it makes no difference to you?

ERHART [*with defiant petulance*]. I can only tell you that it is happiness I must have! I am young! I want to live, live, live!

MRS. BORKMAN. Yes, you are young, Erhart. Top young for this.

MRS. WILTON [*firmly and earnestly*]. You must not think, Mrs. Borkman, that I haven't said the same to him. I have laid my whole life before him. Again and again I have reminded him that I am seven years older than he——

ERHART [*interrupting*]. Oh, nonsense, Fanny—I knew that **all** the time.

MRS. WILTON. But nothing—nothing was of any use.

MRS. BORKMAN. Indeed? Nothing? Then why did you not dismiss him without more ado? Close your door to him? You should have done that, and done it in time!

MRS. WILTON [*looks at her, and says in a low voice*], I could not do that, Mrs. Borkman.

MRS. BORKMAN. Why could you not?

MRS. WILTON. Because for me too this meant happiness.

MRS. BORKMAN [*scornfully*]. H'm, happiness, happiness——

MRS. WILTON. I have never before known happiness in life. And I cannot possibly drive happiness away from me, merely because it comes so late.

MRS. BORKMAN. And how long do you think this happiness will last?

ERHART [*interrupting*]. Whether it lasts or does not last, mother, it doesn't matter now!

MRS. BORKMAN [*in anger*]. Blind boy that you are! Do you not see where all this is leading you?

ERHART. I don't want to look into the future. I don't want to look around in any direction; I am only determined to live my own life—at last!

Mrs. BORKMAN [*with deep pain*]. And you call this life, Erhart!

ERHART. Don't you see how lovely she is!

MRS. BORKMAN [*wringing her hands*]. And I have to bear this load of shame as well!

BORKMAN [*at the back harshly and cuttingly*]. Ho—you are used to bearing things of that sort, Gunhild!

ELLA RENTHEIM [*imploringly*], Borkman I

ERHART [*similarly*]. Father!

MRS. BORKMAN. Day after day I shall have to see my own son linked to a—a——

ERHART [*interrupting her harshly*]. You shall see nothing of the kind, mother! You may make your mind easy on that point. I shall not remain here.

MRS. WILTON [*quickly and with decision*]. We are going away, Mrs. Borkman.

MRS. BORKMAN [*turning pale*]. Are you going away, too? Together, no doubt?

MRS. WILTON [*nodding*]. Yes, I am going abroad, to the South. I am taking a young girl with me. And Erhart is going along with us.

MRS. BORKMAN. With you—and a young girl?

MRS. WILTON. Yes. It is little Frida Foldal, whom I have had living with me. I want her to go abroad and get more instruction in music.

MRS. BORKMAN. So you are taking her with you?

MRS. WILTON. Yes; I can't well send her out into the world alone.

MRS. BORKMAN [*suppressing a smile*]. What do you say to this, Erhart?

ERHART [*with some embarrassment, shrugging his shoulders*]. Well} mother, since Fanny will have it so——

MRS. BORKMAN [*coldly*]. And when does this distinguished party set out, if one may ask?

MRS. WILTON. We are going at once—to-night. My covered sledge is waiting on the road, outside the Hinkels'.

MRS. BORKMAN [*looking her from head to foot*]. Aha! so t h a t was what the party meant?

MRS. WILTON [*smiling*]. Yes, Erhart and I were the whole party. And little Frida, of course.

MRS. BORKMAN. And where is she now?

MRS. WILTON. She is sitting in the sledge waiting for us.

ERHART [*in painful embarrassment*]. Mother, surely you

can understand? I would have spared you all this—you and every one.

MRS. BORKMAN [*looks at him, deeply pained*]. You would have gone away from me without saying good-bye?

ERHART. Yes, I thought that would be best; best for all of us. Our boxes were packed and everything settled. But of course when you sent for me, I———[*Holding out his hands to her*] Good-bye, mother.

MRS. BORKMAN [*with a gesture of repulsion*]. Don't touch me!

ERHART [*gently*]. Is t h a t your last word?

MRS. BORKMAN [*sternly*]. Yes.

ERHART [*turning*]. Good-bye to you, then, Aunt Ella.

ELLA RENTHEIM [*pressing his hands*]. Good-bye, Erhart! And live your life—and be as happy—as happy as ever you can.

ERHART. Thanks, aunt. [*Bowing to BORKMAN.*] Good-bye, father, [*Whispers to MRS. WILTON.*] Let us get away, the sooner the better.

MRS. WILTON [*in a low voice*]. Yet, let us.

MRS. BORKMAN [*with a malignant smile*]. Mrs. Wilton, do you think you are acting quite wisely in taking that girl with you?

MRS. WILTON [*returning the smile, half ironically half seriously*]. Men are so unstable, Mrs. Borkman. And women too. When Erhart is done with me—and I with him—then it will be well for us both that he, poor fellow, should have some one to fall back upon.

MRS. BORKMAN. But you yourself?

MRS. WILTON. Oh, I shall know what to do, I assure you. Good-bye to you all!

[*She bows and goes out by the hall door. ERHART stands for a moment as though wavering; then he turns and follows her.*]

MRS. BORKMAN [*dropping her folded hands*]. Childless.

BORKMAN [*as though awakening to a resolution*]. Then out into the storm alone! My hat! My cloak!

[*He goes hastily towards the door*]

ELLA RENTHEIM [*in terror, stopping him*]. John Gabriel, where are you going?

BORKMAN. Out into the storm of life, I tell you. Let me go, Ella!

ELLA RENTHEIM [*holding him back*]. No, no, I won't let you out! You are ill. I can see it in your face!

BORKMAN. Let me go, I tell you!

[*He tears himself away from her, and goes out by the hall.*]

ELLA RENTHEIM [*in the doorway*]. Help me to hold him, Gunhild!

MRS. BORKMAN [*coldly and sharply, standing in the middle of the room*]. I will not try to hold any one in all the world. Let them go away from me—both the one and the other! As far—as far as ever they please. [*Suddenly, with a piercing shriek.*] Erhart, don't leave me!

[*She rushes with outstretched arms towards the door.* ELLA RENTHEIM stops her.

A C T I V

An open space outside the main building, which lies to the right. A projecting corner of it is visible, with a door approached by a flight of low stone steps. The background consists of steep fir-clad slopes, quite close at hand. On the left are small scattered trees, forming the margin of a wood. The snowstorm has ceased; but the newly fallen snow lies deep around. The fir-branches droop under heavy loads of snow. The night is dark, with drifting clouds. Now and then the moon gleams out faintly. Only a dim light is reflected from the snow.

BORKMAN, MRS. BORKMAN, and ELLA RENTHEIM are standing upon the steps, BORKMAN leaning wearily against the wall of the house. He has an old-fashioned cape thrown over his shoulders, holds a soft grey felt hat in one hand and a thick knotted stick in the other. ELLA RENTHEIM carries her cloak over her arm. MRS. BORKMAN'S great shawl has slipped down over her shoulders, so that her hair is uncovered.

ELLA RENTHEIM [*barring the way for* MRS. BORKMAN]. Don't go after him, Gunhild!

MRS. BORKMAN [*in fear and agitation*]. Let me pass, I say! He must not go away from me!

ELLA RENTHEIM. It is utterly useless, I tell you! You will never overtake him.

MRS. BORKMAN. Let me go, Ella! I will cry aloud after him all down the road. And he must hear his mother's cry!

ELLA RENTHEIM. He cannot hear you. You may be sure he is in the sledge already.

MRS. BORKMAN. NO, no; he can't be in the sledge yet!

ELLA RENTHEIM. The doors are closed upon him long ago, believe me.

MRS. BORKMAN [*in despair*]. If he is in the sledge, then he is there with her, with her—her!

BORKMAN [*laughing gloomily*]. Then he probably won't hear his mother's cry.

MRS. BORKMAN. No, he will not hear it. [*Listening.*] Hark! what is that?

ELLA RENTHEIM [*also listening*]. It sounds like sledge-bells.

MRS. BORKMAN [*with a suppressed scream*]. It is her sledge!

ELLA RENTHEIM. Perhaps it's another.

MRS. BORKMAN. NO, no, it is Mrs. Wilton's covered sledge! I know the silver bells! Hark! Now they are driving right past here, at the foot of the hill!

ELLA RENTHEIM [*quickly*], Gunhild, if you want to cry out to him, now is the time! Perhaps after all——! [*The tinkle of the bells sounds close at hand, in the wood.*] Make haste, Gunhild! Now they are right under us!

MRS. BORKMAN [*stands for a moment undecided, then she stiffens and says sternly and coldly*]. No. I will not cry out to him. Let Erhart Borkman pass away from me—far, far away—to what he calls life and happiness.

[*The sound dies away in the distance.*]

ELLA RENTHEIM [*after a moment*]. Now the bells are out of hearing.

MRS. BORKMAN. They sounded like funeral bells.

BORKMAN [*with a dry suppressed laugh*]. Oho—it is not for me they are ringing to-night!

MRS. BORKMAN. NO, but for me—and for him who has gone from me.

ELLA RENTHEIM [*nodding thoughtfully*]. Who knows if, after all, they may not be ringing in life and happiness for him, Gunhild.

MRS. BORKMAN [*with sudden animation, looking hard at her*]. Life and happiness, you say!

ELLA RENTHEIM. For a little while at any rate.

MRS. BORKMAN. Could you endure to let him know life and happiness, with her?

ELLA RENTHEIM [*with warmth and feeling*]. Indeed I could, with all my heart and soul!

MRS. BORKMAN [*coldly*]. Then you must be richer than I am in the power of love.

ELLA RENTHEIM [*looking far away*]. Perhaps it is the lack of love that keeps that power alive.

MRS. BORKMAN [*fixing her eyes on her*]. If that is so, then I shall soon be as rich as you, Ella.

[She turns and goes into the house.

ELLA RENTHEIM [*stands for a time looking with a troubled expression at BORKMAN; then lays her hand cautiously upon his shoulder*]. Come, John—you must come in, too.

BORKMAN [*as if awakening*]. I?

ELLA RENTHEIM. Yes, this winter air is too keen for you; I can see that, John. So come—come in with me—into the house, into the warmth.

BORKMAN [*angrily*]. Up to the gallery again, I suppose.

ELLA RENTHEIM. No, rather into the room below.

BORKMAN [*his anger flaming forth*]. Never will I set foot under that roof again!

ELLA RENTHEIM. Where will you go then? So late, and in the dark, John?

BORKMAN [*putting on his hat*]. First of all, I will go out and see to all my buried treasures.

ELLA RENTHEIM [*looking anxiously at him*]. John—I don't understand you.

BORKMAN [*with laughter, interrupted by coughing*]. Oh, it is not hidden plunder I mean; don't be afraid of that, Ella. [*Stopping, and pointing outwards.*] Do you see that man there? Who is it?

[VILHELM FOLDAL, *in an old cape, covered with snow, with his hat-brim turned down, and a large umbrella in his hand, advances towards the corner of the house, laboriously stumbling through the snow. He is noticeably lame in his left foot.*

BORKMAN. Vilhelm! What do you want with me again?

FOLDAL [*looking up*]. Good heavens, are you out on the steps, John Gabriel? [*Bowing.*] And Mrs. Borkman, too, I see.

BORKMAN [*shortly*]. This is not Mrs. Borkman.

FOLDAL. Oh, I beg pardon. You see, I have lost my spectacles in the snow. But how is it that you, who never put your foot out of doors——?

BORKMAN [*carelessly and gaily*]. It is high time I should come out into the open air again, don't you see? Nearly three years in detention—five years in prison—eight years in the gallery up there——

ELLA RENTHEIM [*distressed*]. Borkman, I beg you——

FOLDAL. Ah yes, yes, yes!

BORKMAN. But I want to know what has brought you here.

FOLDAL [*still standing at the foot of the steps*]. I wanted to come up to you, John Gabriel. I felt I must come to you, in the gallery. Ah me, that gallery——!

BORKMAN. Did you want to come up to me after I had shown you the door?

FOLDAL. Oh, I couldn't let that stand in the way.

BORKMAN. What have you done to your foot? I see you are limping?

FOLDAL. Yes, what do you think—I have been run over.

ELLA RENTHEIM. Run over!

FOLDAL. Yes, by a covered sledge.

BORKMAN. Oho I

FOLDAL. With two horses. They came down the hill at a

tearing gallop. I couldn't get out of the way quick enough; and so——

ELLA RENTHEIM. And so they ran over you ?

FOLDAL. They came right down upon me, madam—or miss. They came right upon me and sent me rolling over and over in the snow—so that I lost my spectacles and got my umbrella broken. [*Rubbing his leg.*] And my ankle a little hurt too.

BORKMAN [*laughing inwardly*]. Do you know who were in that sledge, Vilhelm ?

FOLDAL. NO, how could I see? It was a covered sledge, and the curtains were down. And the driver didn't stop a moment after he had sent me spinning. But it doesn't matter a bit, for——[*With an outburst.*] Oh, I am so happy, so happy!

BORKMAN. Happy?

FOLDAL. Well, I don't exactly know what to call it. But I think happy is the nearest word. For something so wonderful has happened! And that is why I couldn't help—I had to come out and share my happiness with you, John Gabriel.

BORKMAN [*harshly*]. Well, share away then!

ELLA RENTHEIM. Oh, but first take your friend indoors with you, Borkman.

BORKMAN [*sternly*]. I have told you I will not go into the house.

ELLA RENTHEIM. But don't you hear, he has been run over!

BORKMAN. Oh, we are all of us run over, sometime or other in life. The thing is to jump up again, and let no one see you are hurt.

FOLDAL. That is a profound saying, John Gabriel. But I can easily tell you my story out here, in a few words.

BORKMAN [*more mildly*]. Yes, please do, Vilhelm.

FOLDAL. Well, now you shall hear! Only think, when I got home this evening after I had been with you, what did I find but a letter. Can you guess who it was from ?

BORKMAN. Possibly from your little Frida ?

FOLDAL. Precisely! Think of your hitting on it at once! Yes, it was a long—a pretty long letter from Frida. A foot-

man had brought it. And can you imagine what was in it?

BORKMAN. Perhaps it was to say good-bye to her mother and you?

FOLDAL. Exactly! How good you are at guessing, John Gabriel! Yes, she tells me that Mrs. Wilton has taken such a fancy to her, and she is to go abroad with her and study music. And Mrs. Wilton has engaged a first-rate teacher who is to accompany them on the journey—and to read with Frida too. For unfortunately she has been a good deal neglected *in some branches*, you see.

BORKMAN [*shaken with inward laughter*]. Of course, of course—I see it all quite clearly, Vilhelm.

FOLDAL [*eagerly continuing*]. And only think, she knew nothing about the arrangement until this evening; at that party, you know, h'm! And yet she found time to write to me. And the letter is such a beautiful one—so warm and affectionate, I assure you. There is not a trace of contempt for her father in it. And then what a delicate thought it was to say good-bye to us by letter—before she started. [*Laughing.*] But of course I can't let her go like that.

BORKMAN [*looks inquiringly at him*]. How so?

FOLDAL. She tells me that they start early to-morrow morning; quite early.

BORKMAN. Oh, indeed—to-morrow? Does she tell you that?

FOLDAL [*laughing and rubbing his hands*]. Yes; but I know a trick worth two of that, you see! I am going straight up to Mrs. Wilton's—

BORKMAN. This evening?

FOLDAL. Oh, it's not so very late yet. And even if the house is shut up, I shall ring; without hesitation. For I must and will see Frida before she starts. Good-night, good-night!

[*Makes a movement to go.*]

BORKMAN. Stop a moment, my poor Vilhelm; you may spare yourself that heavy bit of road.

FOLDAL. Oh, you are thinking of my ankle—

BORKMAN. Yes, and in any case you won't get in at Mrs. Wilton's.

FOLDAL. Yes, indeed I will. I'll go on ringing and knocking till some one comes and lets me in. For I must and will see Frida.

ELLA, RENTHEIM. Your daughter has gone already, Mr. Foldal.

FOLDAL [*stands as though thunderstruck*]. Has Frida gone already! Are you quite sure? Who told you?

BORKMAN. We had it from her future teacher.

FOLDAL. Indeed? And who is he?

BORKMAN. A certain Mr. Erhart Borkman.

FOLDAL [*beaming with joy*]. Your son, John Gabriel! Is he going with them?

BORKMAN. Yes; it is he that is to help Mrs. Wilton with little Frida's education.

FOLDAL. Oh, Heaven be praised! Then the child is in the best of hands. But is it quite certain that they have started with her already?

BORKMAN. They took her away in that sledge which ran over you on the road.

FOLDAL [*clasping his hands*]. To think that my little Frida was in that magnificent sledge!

BORKMAN [*nodding*]. Yes, yes, Vilhelm, your daughter has come to drive in her carriage. And Master Erhart, too. Tell me, did you notice the silver bells?

FOLDAL. Yes, indeed. Silver bells did you say? Were they silver? Real, genuine silver bells?

BORKMAN. YOU may be quite sure of that. Everything was genuine—both outside and in.

FOLDAL [*in quiet emotion*]. Isn't it strange how fortune can sometimes befriend one? It is my—my little gift of song that has transmuted itself into music in Frida. So after all, it is not for nothing that I was born a poet. For now she is going forth into the great wide world, that I once yearned so passionately to see. Little Frida sets out in a splendid covered sledge with silver bells on the harness——

BORKMAN. And runs over her father.

FOLDAL [*happily*]. Oh, pooh! What does it matter about me, if only the child——! Well, so I am too late, then, after

all. I must just go home again and comfort her mother. I left her crying in the kitchen.

BORKMAN. Crying ?

FOLDAL [*smiling*]. Yes, would you believe it, she was crying her eyes out when I came away.

BORKMAN. And you are laughing, Vilhelm ?

FOLDAL. Yes, / am, of course. But she, poor thing, she doesn't know any better, you see. Well, good-bye! It's a good thing I have the tramway so handy. Good-bye, good-bye, John Gabriel. Good-bye, madam.

[*He bows and limps laboriously out by the way he came.*

BORKMAN [*stands silent for a moment, gazing before him*]. Good-bye, Vilhelm. It is not the first time in your life that you've been run over, old friend.

ELLA RENTHEIM [*looking at him with suppressed anxiety*]. You are so pale, John, so very pale.

BORKMAN. That is the effect of the prison air up yonder.

ELLA RENTHEIM. I have never seen you like this before.

BORKMAN. NO, for I suppose you have never seen an escaped convict before.

ELLA RENTHEIM. Oh, do come into rhe house with me, John!

BORKMAN. It is no use trying to lure me in. I have told you——

ELLA RENTHEIM. But when I beg and implore you——? For your own sake——

[*THE MAID opens the door, and stands in the doorway.*

THE MAID. I beg pardon. Mrs. Borkman told me to lock the front door now.

BORKMAN [*in a low voice, to ELLA*]. You see, they want to lock me up again!

ELLA RENTHEIM [*to the MAID*]. Mr. Borkman is not quite well. He wants to have a little fresh air before coming in.

THE MAID. But Mrs. Borkman told me to——

ELLA RENTHEIM. I shall lock the door. Just leave the key in the lock.

THE MAID. Oh, very well; I'll leave it.

[*She goes into the house again.*

BORKMAN [*stands silent for a moment, and listens; then goes hastily down the steps and out into the open space*]. Now I am outside the walls, Ella! Now they will never get hold of me again! .

ELLA RENTHEIM [*who has gone down to him*]. But you are a free man in there, too, John. You can come and go just as you please.

BORKMAN [*softly, as though in terror'*]* Never under a roof again! It is so good to be out here in the night. If I went up into the gallery now, ceiling and walls would shrink together and crush me—crush me flat as a fly.

ELLA RENTHEIM. But where will you go, then?

BORKMAN. I will simply go on, and on, and on. I will try if I cannot make my way to freedom, and life, and human beings again. Will you go with me, Ella?

ELLA RENTHEIM. I? Now?

BORKMAN. Yes, at once!

ELLA RENTHEIM. But how far?

BORKMAN. AS far as ever I can.

ELLA RENTHEIM. Oh, but think what you are doing! Out in this raw, cold winter night——

BORKMAN [*speaking very hoarsely*]. Oho—my lady is concerned about her health? Yes, yes—I know it is delicate.

ELLA RENTHEIM. It is your health I am concerned about.

BORKMAN. Hohoho! A dead man's health! I can't help laughipg at you, Ella! [*He moves onwards.*]

ELLA RENTHEIM [*following him: holding him back*]. What did you call yourself?

BORKMAN. A dead man, I said. Don't you remember, Gunhild told me to lie quiet where I was?

ELLA RENTHEIM [*with resolution, throwing her cloak around her*], I will go with you, John.

BORKMAN. Yes, we two belong to each other, Ella. [*Advancing.*] So come!

[They have gradually passed into the low wood on the left. It conceals them little by little, until they are quite lost to sight. The house and the open space disappear. The

landscape, consisting of wooded slopes and ridges, slowly changes and grows wilder and wilder.

ELLA RENTHIM'S VOICE [*is heard in the wood to the right*].

Where are we going, John ? I don't recognise this place.

BORKMAN'S VOICE [*higher up*]. Just follow my footprints in the snow!

ELLA RENTHEIM'S VOICE. But why need we climb so high?

BORKMAN'S VOICE [*nearer at hand*]. We must go up the winding path.

ELLA RENTHEIM [*still hidden*]. Oh, but I can't go much farther.

BORKMAN [*on the verge of the wood to the right*]. Come, come! We are not far from the view now. There used to be a seat there.

ELLA RENTHEIM [*appearing among the trees*]. Do you remember it ?

BORKMAN. You can rest there.

[They have emerged upon a small high-lying, open plateau in the wood. The mountain rises abruptly behind them. To the left, far below, an extensive fiord landscape, with high ranges in the distance, towering one above the other. On the plateau, to the left, a dead fir-tree with a bench under it. The snow lies deep upon the plateau.]

[BORKMAN and, after him, ELLA RENTHEIM enter from the right and wade with difficulty through the snow.

BORKMAN [*stopping at the verge of the steep declivity on the left*]. Come here, Ella, and you shall see.

ELLA RENTHEIM [*coming up to him*]. What do you want to show me, John?

BORKMAN [*pointing outwards*]. Do you see how free and open the country lies before us—away to the far horizon ?

ELLA RENTHEIM. We have often sat on this bench before, and looked out into a much, much farther distance.

BORKMAN. It was a dreamland we then looked out over.

ELLA RENTHEIM [*nodding sadly*]. It was the dreamland of our life, yes. And now that land is buried in snow. And the old tree is dead.

BORKMAN [*not listening to her*]* Can you see the smoke of the great steamships out on the fiord?

ELLA RENTHEIM. NO.

BORKMAN. I can. They come and they go. They weave a network of fellowship all round the world. They shed light and warmth over the souls of men in many thousands of homes. That was what I dreamed of doing.

ELLA RENTHEIM [*softly*]. And it remained a dream.

BORKMAN. It remained a dream, yes. [*Listening.*] And hark, down by the river, dear! The factories are working! My factories! All those that I would have created! Listen! Do you hear them humming? The night shift is on—so they are working night and day. Hark! hark! the wheels are whirling and the bands are flashing—round and round and round. Can't you hear, Ella?

ELLA RENTHEIM. NO.

BORKMAN. I can hear it.

ELLA RENTHEIM [*anxiously*]. I think you are mistaken, John.

BORKMAN [*more and more fired*]. Oh, but all these—they are only like the outworks around the kingdom, I tell you!

ELLA RENTHEIM. The kingdom, you say? What kingdom?

BORKMAN. My kingdom, of course! The kingdom I was on the point of conquering when I—when I died.

ELLA RENTHEIM [*shaken, in a low voice*]. Oh, John, John!

BORKMAN. And now there it lies—defenceless, masterless—exposed to all the robbers and plunderers. Ella, do you see the mountain chains there—far away? They soar, they tower aloft, one behind the other! That is my vast, my infinite, inexhaustible kingdom!

ELLA RENTHEIM. Oh, but there comes an icy blast from that kingdom, John!

BORKMAN. That blast is the breath of life to me. That blast comes to me like a greeting from subject spirits. I seem to touch them, the prisoned millions; I can see the veins of metal stretch out their winding, branching, luring arms to me. I saw them before my eyes like living shapes, that night when I stood

in the strong-room with the candle in *my* hand. You begged to be liberated, and I tried to free you. But my strength failed me; and the treasure sank back into the deep again, [*With outstretched hands.*] But I will whisper it to you here in the stillness of the night: I love you, as you lie there spellbound in the deeps and the darkness! I love you, unborn treasures, yearning for the light! I love you, with all your shining train of power and glory! I love you, love you, love you!

ELLA RENTHEIM [*in suppressed but rising agitation*]. Yes, your love is still down there, John. It has always been rooted there. But here, in the light of day, here there was a living, warm, human heart that throbbed and glowed for you. And this heart you crushed. Oh worse than that! Ten times worse! You sold it for—for——

BORKMAN [*trembles; a cold shudder seems to go through him*]. For the kingdom—and the power—and the glory—you mean?

ELLA RENTHEIM. Yes, that is what I mean. I have said it once before to-night: you have murdered the love-life in the woman who loved you. And whom you loved in return, so far as you could love any one. [*With uplifted arm.*] And therefore I prophesy to you, John Gabriel Borkman—you will never touch the price you demanded for the murder. You will never enter in triumph into your cold, dark kingdom!

BORKMAN [*staggers to the bench and seats himself heavily*]. I almost fear your prophecy will come true, Ella.

ELLA RENTHEIM [*going up to him*]. You must not fear it, John. That is the best thing that can happen to you.

BORKMAN [*with a shriek; clutching at his breast*]. Ah——! [*Feebly.*] Now it let me go again.

ELLA RENTHEIM [*shaking him*]. What was it, John?

BORKMAN [*sinking down against the back of the seat*]. It was a hand of ice that clutched at my heart.

ELLA RENTHEIM. John! Did you feel the ice-hand again!

BORKMAN [*murmurs*]. No. No ice-hand. It was a metal hand, [*He sinks right down upon the bench.*

ELLA RENTHEIM [*tears off her cloak and throws it over him*]. Lie still where you are! I will go and bring help for you.

[She goes a step or two towards the right; then she stops, returns, and carefully feels his pulse and touches his face.]

ELLA RENTHEIM *[softly and firmly]*. No. It is best so, Jdhn Borkman. Best so for you.

[She spreads the cloak closer around him, and sinks down in the snow in front of the bench. A short silence.]

[MRS. BORKMAN, wrapped in a mantle, comes through the wood on the right. THE MAID goes before her carrying a lantern.]

THE MAID *[throwing the light upon the snow]*. Yes, yes, ma'am, here are their tracks.

MRS. BORKMAN *[peering around]*. Yes, here they are! They are sitting there on the bench. *[Calls.]* Ella!

ELLA RENTHEIM *[rising]*. Are you looking for us?

MRS. BORKMAN *[sternly]*. Yes, you see I have to.

ELLA RENTHEIM *[pointing]*. Look, there he lies, Gunhild.

MRS. BORKMAN. Sleeping?

ELLA RENTHEIM. A long, deep sleep, I think.

MRS. BORKMAN *[with an outburst]*. Ella! *[Controls herself and asks in a low voice.]* Did he do it—of his own accord?

ELLA RENTHEIM. NO.

MRS. BORKMAN *[relieved]*. Not by his own hand then?

ELLA RENTHEIM. NO. It was an ice-cold metal hand that gripped him by the heart.

MRS. BORKMAN *[to THE MAID]*. GO for help. Get the men to come up from the farm.

THE MAID. Yes, I will, ma'am. *[To herself.]* Lord save us! *[She goes out through the wood to the right.]*

MRS. BORKMAN *[standing behind the bench]*. So the night air has killed him——

ELLA RENTHEIM. So it appears.

MRS. BORKMAN.——strong man that he was.

ELLA RENTHEIM *[coming in front of the bench]*. Will you not look at him, Gunhild?

MRS. BORKMAN *[with a gesture of repulsion]*. No, no, no. *[Lowering her voice.]* He was a miner's son, John Gabriel Borkman. He could not live in the fresh air.

ELLA RENTHEIM. It was rather the cold that killed him.

MRS. BORKMAN [*shakes her head*]. The cold, you say? The cold—that had killed him long ago.

ELLA RENTHJEIM [*nodding at her*]. Yes—and changed us two into shadows.

MRS. BORKMAN. You are right there.

ELLA RENTHEIM [*with a painful smile*]. A dead man and two shadows—t h a t is what the cold has made of us.

MRS. BORKMAN. Yes, the coldness of heart.—And now I think we two may hold out our hands to each other, Ella.

ELLA RENTHEIM. I think we may, now.

MRS. BORKMAN. We twin sisters—over him we have both loved.

ELLA RENTHEIM. We two shadows—over the dead man.

[MRS. BORKMAN *behind the bench, and* ELLA RENTHEIM *in front of it, take each hand.*

Curtain

