

Modern Drama

*Selected Plays
from 1879
to the Present*

Edited by

Walter Levy

Pace University

PRENTICE HALL
Upper Saddle River, New Jersey 07458

influence from Ibsen to Shaw greatly affected modern and contemporary dramatists who work in the style of the well-made play, especially Eugene O'Neill, Susan Glaspell, Lillian Hellman, Arthur Miller, and Lorraine Hansberry.

Film

- A Doll's House* (1959), with Julie Harris, Christopher Plummer, Jason Robards, Jr., Hume Cronyn, Eileen Heckart, and Richard Thomas. MGM.
- A Doll's House* (1973), directed by Joseph Losey, with Jane Fonda, Edward Fox, Trevor Howard, David Warner, and Delphine Syrig. World Film Services/Films de la Boétie.
- A Doll's House* (1989), directed by Patrick Garland, with Claire Bloom, Anthony Hopkins, Ralph Richardson, Denholm Elliot, Anna Massey, and Edith Evans. Elkins/Freeward.

A Doll's House

TRANSLATED BY OTTO REINERT

CHARACTERS

TORVALD HELMER, a lawyer
 NORA, his wife
 DR. RANK
 MRS. LINDE
 KROGSTAD

THE HELMERS' THREE SMALL CHILDREN
 ANNE-MARIE, the children's nurse
 A HOUSEMAID
 A PORTER

SCENE. *The Helmers' living room.*

ACT I

A pleasant, tastefully but not expensively furnished, living room. A door on the rear wall, right, leads to the front hall, another door, left, to HELMER's study. Between the two doors a piano. A third door in the middle of the left wall; further front a window. Near the window a round table and a small couch. Towards the rear of the right wall a fourth door; further front a tile stove with a rocking chair and a couple of armchairs in front of it. Between the stove and the door a small table. Copperplate etchings on the walls. A whatnot with porcelain figurines and other small objects. A small bookcase with de luxe editions. A rug on the floor; fire in the stove. Winter day.

The doorbell rings, then the sound of the front door opening. NORA, dressed for outdoors, enters, humming cheerfully. She carries several packages, which she puts down on the table, right. She leaves the door to the front hall open; there a PORTER is seen holding a Christmas tree and a basket. He gives them to the MAID who has let them in.

NORA: Be sure to hide the Christmas tree, Helene. The children mustn't see it before tonight when we've trimmed it. [*Opens her purse; to the PORTER.*] How much?

PORTER: Fifty ore.

NORA: Here's a crown. No, keep the change. [*The PORTER thanks her, leaves. NORA closes the door. She keeps laughing quietly to herself as she takes off her coat, etc. She takes a bag of macaroons from her pocket and eats a couple. She walks cautiously over to the door to the study and listens.*] Yes, he's home. [*Resumes her humming, walks over to the table, right.*]

HELMER [*in his study*]: Is that my little lark twittering out there?

NORA [*opening some packages*]: That's right.

HELMER: My squirrel bustling about?

NORA: Yes.

HELMER: When did squirrel come home?

NORA: Just now. [*Puts the bag of macaroons back in her pocket, wipes her mouth.*] Come out here, Torvald. I want to show you what I've bought.

HELMER: I'm busy! [*After a little while he opens the door and looks in, pen in hand.*] Bought, eh? All that? So little wastrel has been throwing money around again?

NORA: Oh but Torvald, this Christmas we can be a little extravagant, can't we? It's the first Christmas we don't have to scrimp.

HELMER: I don't know about that. We certainly don't have money to waste.

NORA: Yes, Torvald, we do. A little, anyway. Just a tiny little bit? Now that you're going to get that big salary and make lots and lots of money.

HELMER: Starting at New Year's, yes. But payday isn't till the end of the quarter.

NORA: That doesn't matter. We can always borrow.

HELMER: Nora! [*Goes over to her and playfully pulls her ear.*] There you go being irresponsible again. Suppose I borrowed a thousand crowns today and you spent it all for Christmas and on New Year's Eve a tile hit me in the head and laid me out cold.

NORA [*putting her hand over his mouth*]: I won't have you say such horrid things.

HELMER: But suppose it happened. Then what?

NORA: If it did, I wouldn't care whether we owed money or not.

HELMER: But what about the people I had borrowed from?

NORA: Who cares about them! They are strangers.

HELMER: Nora, Nora, you *are* a woman! No, really! You know how I feel about that. No debts! A home in debt isn't a free home, and if it isn't free it isn't

beautiful. We've managed nicely so far, you and I, and that's the way we'll go on. It won't be for much longer.

NORA [*walks over toward the stove*]: All right, Torvald. Whatever you say.

HELMER [*follows her*]: Come, come, my little songbird mustn't droop her wings. What's this? Can't have a pouty squirrel in the house, you know. [*Takes out his wallet.*] Nora, what do you think I have here?

NORA [*turns around quickly*]: Money!

HELMER: Here. [*Gives her some bills.*] Don't you think I know Christmas is expensive?

NORA [*counting*]: Ten—twenty—thirty—forty. Thank you, thank you, Torvald. This helps a lot.

HELMER: I certainly hope so.

NORA: It does, it does. But I want to show you what I got. It was cheap, too. Look. New clothes for Ivar. And a sword. And a horse and trumpet for Bob. And a doll and a little bed for Emmy. It isn't any good, but it wouldn't last, anyway. And here's some dress material and scarves for the maids. I feel bad about old Anne-Marie, though. She really should be getting much more.



Donald Madden, Patricia Elliott, and Claire Bloom in *A Doll's House*, directed by Patrick Garland, the Playhouse Theatre, 1971.

- HELMER: And what's in here?
 NORA [*cries*]: Not till tonight!
 HELMER: I see. But now what does my little prodigal have in mind for herself?
 NORA: Oh, nothing. I really don't care.
 HELMER: Of course you do. Tell me what you'd like. Within reason.
 NORA: Oh, I don't know. Really, I don't. The only thing—
 HELMER: Well?
 NORA [*fiddling with his buttons, without looking at him*]: If you really want to give me something, you might—you could—
 HELMER: All right, let's have it.
 NORA [*quickly*]: Some money, Torvald. Just as much as you think you can spare. Then I'll buy myself something one of these days.
 HELMER: No, really Nora—
 NORA: Oh yes, please, Torvald. Please? I'll wrap the money in pretty gold paper and hang it on the tree. Won't that be nice?
 HELMER: What's the name for little birds that are always spending money?
 NORA: Wastrels, I know. But please let's do it my way, Torvald. Then I'll have time to decide what I need most. Now that's sensible, isn't it?
 HELMER [*smiling*]: Oh, very sensible. That is, if you really bought yourself something you could use. But it all disappears in the household expenses or you buy things you don't need. And then you come back to me for more.
 NORA: Oh, but Torvald—
 HELMER: That's the truth, dear little Nora, and you know it. [*Puts his arm around her.*] My wastrel is a little sweetheart, but she *does* go through an awful lot of money awfully fast. You've no idea how expensive it is for a man to keep a wastrel.
 NORA: That's not fair, Torvald. I really save all I can.
 HELMER [*laughs*]: Oh, I believe that. All you can. Meaning, exactly nothing!
 NORA [*hums, smiles mysteriously*]: You don't know all the things we songbirds and squirrels need money for, Torvald.
 HELMER: You know, you're funny. Just like your father. You're always looking for ways to get money, but as soon as you do it runs through your fingers and you can never say what you spent it for. Well, I guess I'll just have to take you the way you are. It's in your blood. Yes, that sort of thing is hereditary, Nora.
 NORA: In that case, I wish I had inherited many of Daddy's qualities.
 HELMER: And I don't want you any different from just what you are—my own sweet little songbird. Hey!—I think I just noticed something. Aren't you looking—what's the word?—a little—sly—?
- NORA: I am?
 HELMER: You definitely are. Look at me.
 NORA [*looks at him*]: Well?
 HELMER [*wagging a finger*]: Little sweet-tooth hasn't by any chance been on a rampage today, has she?
 NORA: Of course not. Whatever makes you think that?
 HELMER: A little detour by the pastryshop maybe?
 NORA: No, I assure you, Torvald—
 HELMER: Nibbled a little jam?
 NORA: Certainly not!
 HELMER: Munched a macaroon or two?
 NORA: No, really, Torvald, I honestly—
 HELMER: All right. Of course I was only joking.
 NORA [*walks toward the table, right*]: You know I wouldn't do anything to displease you.
 HELMER: I know. And I have your promise. [*Over to her.*] All right, keep your little Christmas secrets to yourself, Nora darling. They'll all come out tonight, I suppose, when we light the tree.
 NORA: Did you remember to invite Rank?
 HELMER: No, but there's no need to. He knows he'll have dinner with us. Anyway, I'll see him later this morning. I'll ask him then. I did order some good wine. Oh Nora, you've no idea how much I'm looking forward to tonight!
 NORA: Me, too. And the children Torvald! They'll have such a good time!
 HELMER: You know, it *is* nice to have a good, safe job and a comfortable income. Feels good just thinking about it. Don't you agree?
 NORA: Oh, it's wonderful!
 HELMER: Remember last Christmas? For three whole weeks you shut yourself up every evening till long after midnight making ornaments for the Christmas tree and I don't know what else. Some big surprise for all of us, anyway. I'll be damned if I've ever been so bored in my whole life!
 NORA: I wasn't bored at all!
 HELMER [*smiling*]: But you've got to admit you didn't have much to show for it in the end.
 NORA: Oh, don't tease me again about that! Could I help it that the cat got in and tore up everything?
 HELMER: Of course you couldn't, my poor little Nora. You just wanted to please the rest of us, and that's the important thing. But I *am* glad the hard times are behind us. Aren't you?
 NORA: Oh yes. I think it's just wonderful.
 HELMER: This year, I won't be bored and lonely. And you won't have to strain your dear eyes and your delicate little hands—
 NORA [*claps her hands*]: No I won't, will I Torvald? Oh, how wonderful, how lovely, to hear you say that! [*Puts her arm under his.*] Let me tell you how I think we should arrange things, Torvald. Soon as Christmas is over— [*The doorbell rings.*] Someone's

at the door. [*Straightens things up a bit.*] A caller, I suppose. Bother!

HELMER: Remember, I'm not home for visitors.

THE MAID [*in the door to the front hall*]: Ma'am, there's a lady here—

NORA: All right. Ask her to come in.

THE MAID [*to HELMER*]: And the Doctor just arrived.

HELMER: Is he in the study?

THE MAID: Yes, sir.

[HELMER exits into his study. THE MAID shows MRS. LINDE in and closes the door behind her as she leaves. MRS. LINDE is in travel dress.]

MRS. LINDE [*timid and a little hesitant*]: Good morning, Nora.

NORA [*uncertainly*]: Good morning.

MRS. LINDE: I don't believe you know who I am.

NORA: No—I'm not sure—Though I know I should—Of course! Kristine! It's you!

MRS. LINDE: Yes, it's me.

NORA: And I didn't even recognize you! I had no idea [*In a lower voice.*] You've changed, Kristine.

MRS. LINDE: I'm sure I have. It's been nine or ten long years.

NORA: Has it really been that long? Yes, you're right. I've been so happy these last eight years. And now you're here. Such a long trip in the middle of winter. How brave!

MRS. LINDE: I got in on the steamer this morning.

NORA: To have some fun over the holidays, of course. That's lovely. For we are going to have fun. But take off your coat! You aren't cold, are you? [*Helps her.*] There, now! Let's sit down here by the fire and just relax and talk. No, you sit there. I want the rocking chair. [*Takes her hands.*] And now you've got your old face back. It was just for a minute, right at first—Though you are a little more pale, Kristine. And maybe a little thinner.

MRS. LINDE: And much, much older, Nora.

NORA: Maybe a little older. Just a teeny-weeny bit, not much. [*Interrupts herself, serious.*] Oh, but how thoughtless of me, chatting away like this! Sweet, good Kristine, can you forgive me?

MRS. LINDE: Forgive you what, Nora?

NORA [*in a low voice*]: You poor dear, you lost your husband, didn't you?

MRS. LINDE: Three years ago, yes.

NORA: I know. I saw it in the paper. Oh please believe me, Kristine. I really meant to write you, but I never got around to it. Something was always coming up.

MRS. LINDE: Of course, Nora. I understand.

NORA: No, that wasn't very nice of me. You poor thing, all you must have been through. And he didn't leave you much, either, did he?

MRS. LINDE: No.

NORA: And no children?

MRS. LINDE: No.

NORA: Nothing at all, in other words?

MRS. LINDE: Not so much as a sense of loss—a grief to live on—

NORA [*incredulous*]: But Kristine, how can that be?

MRS. LINDE [*with a sad smile, strokes NORA's hair*]: That's the way it sometimes is, Nora.

NORA: All alone. How awful for you. I have three darling children. You can't see them right now, though; they're out with their nurse. But now you must tell me everything—

MRS. LINDE: No, no; I'd rather listen to you.

NORA: No, you begin. Today I won't be selfish. Today I'll think only of you. Except there's one thing I've just got to tell you first. Something marvelous that's happened to us just these last few days. You haven't heard, have you?

MRS. LINDE: No; tell me.

NORA: Just think. My husband's been made manager of the Mutual Bank.

MRS. LINDE: Your husband—! Oh, I'm so glad!

NORA: Yes, isn't that great? You see, private law practice is so uncertain, especially when you won't have anything to do with cases that aren't—you know—quite nice. And of course Torvald won't do that and I quite agree with him. Oh, you've no idea how delighted we are! He takes over at New Year's, and he'll be getting a big salary and all sorts of extras. From now on we'll be able to live in quite a different way—exactly as we like. Oh, Kristine! I feel so carefree and happy! It's lovely to have lots and lots of money and not have to worry about a thing! Don't you agree?

MRS. LINDE: It would be nice to have enough at any rate.

NORA: No, I don't mean just enough. I mean lots and lots!

MRS. LINDE [*smiles*]: Nora, Nora, when are you going to be sensible? In school you spent a great deal of money.

NORA [*quietly laughing*]: Yes, and Torvald says I still do. [*Raises her finger at MRS. LINDE.*] But "Nora, Nora" isn't so crazy as you all think. Believe me, we've had nothing to be extravagant with. We've both had to work.

MRS. LINDE: You too?

NORA: Yes. Oh, it's been little things, mostly—sewing, crocheting, embroidery—that sort of thing. [*Casually.*] And other things too. You know, of course, that Torvald left government service when we got married? There was no chance of promotion in his department, and of course he had to make more money than he had been making. So for the first few years he worked altogether too

hard. He had to take jobs on the side and work night and day. It turned out to be too much for him. He became seriously ill. The doctors told him he needed to go south.

MRS. LINDE: That's right; you spent a year in Italy, didn't you?

NORA: Yes, we did. But you won't believe how hard it was to get away. Ivar had just been born. But of course we had to go. Oh, it was a wonderful trip. And it saved Torvald's life. But it took a lot of money, Kristine.

MRS. LINDE: I'm sure it did.

NORA: Twelve hundred specie dollars. Four thousand eight hundred crowns. That's a lot of money.

MRS. LINDE: Yes. So it's lucky you have it when something like that happens.

NORA: Well, actually we got the money from Daddy.

MRS. LINDE: I see. That was about the time your father died, I believe.

NORA: Yes, just about then. And I couldn't even go and take care of him. I was expecting little Ivar any day. And I had poor Torvald to look after, desperately sick and all. My dear, good Daddy! I never saw him again, Kristine. That's the saddest thing that's happened to me since I got married.

MRS. LINDE: I know you were very fond of him. But then you went to Italy?

NORA: Yes, for now we had the money, and the doctors urged us to go. So we left about a month later.

MRS. LINDE: And when you came back your husband was well again?

NORA: Healthy as a horse!

MRS. LINDE: But—the doctor?

NORA: What do you mean?

MRS. LINDE: I thought the maid said it was the doctor, that gentleman who came the same time I did.

NORA: Oh, that's Dr. Rank. He doesn't come as a doctor. He's our closest friend. He looks in at least once every day. No, Torvald hasn't been sick once since then. And the children are strong and healthy, too, and so am I. [*Jumps up and claps her hands.*] Oh God, Kristine! Isn't it wonderful to be alive and happy! Isn't it just lovely!—But now I'm being mean again, talking only about myself and my things. [*Sits down on a footstool close to MRS. LINDE and puts her arm on her lap.*] Please don't be angry with me! Tell me, is it really true that you didn't care for your husband? Then why did you marry him?

MRS. LINDE: Mother was still alive then, but she was bedridden and helpless. And I had my two younger brothers to look after. I didn't think I had the right to turn him down.

NORA: No, I suppose not. So he had money then?

MRS. LINDE: He was quite well off, I think. But it was an uncertain business, Nora. When he died, the whole thing collapsed and there was nothing left.

NORA: And then—?

MRS. LINDE: Well, I had to manage as best I could.

With a little store and a little school and anything else I could think of. The last three years have been one long work day for me, Nora, without any rest. But now it's over. My poor mother doesn't need me any more. She's passed away. And the boys are on their own too. They've both got jobs and support themselves.

NORA: What a relief for you—

MRS. LINDE: No, not relief. Just a great emptiness.

Nobody to live for any more. [*Gets up restlessly.*] That's why I couldn't stand it any longer in that little hole. Here in town it has to be easier to find something to keep me busy and occupy my thoughts. With a little luck I should be able to find a permanent job, something in an office—

NORA: Oh but Kristine, that's exhausting work, and you look worn out already. It would be much better for you to go to a resort.

MRS. LINDE [*walks over to the window*]: I don't have a Daddy who can give me the money, Nora.

NORA [*getting up*]: Oh, don't be angry with me.

MRS. LINDE [*over to her*]: Dear Nora, don't you be angry with me. That's the worst thing about my kind of situation: you become so bitter. You've nobody to work for, and yet you have to look out for yourself, somehow. You've got to keep on living, and so you become selfish. Do you know—when you told me about your husband's new position I was delighted not so much for your sake as for my own.

NORA: Why was that? Oh, I see. You think maybe Torvald can give you a job?

MRS. LINDE: That's what I had in mind.

NORA: And he will too, Kristine. Just leave it to me.

I'll be ever so subtle about it. I'll think of something nice to tell him, something he'll like. Oh I so much want to help you.

MRS. LINDE: That's very good of you, Nora—making an effort like that for me. Especially since you've known so little trouble and hardship in your own life.

NORA: I—?—have known so little—?

MRS. LINDE [*smiling*]: Oh well, a little sewing or whatever it was. You're still a child, Nora.

NORA [*with a toss of her head, walks away*]: You shouldn't sound so superior.

MRS. LINDE: I shouldn't?

NORA: You're just like all the others. None of you think I'm good for anything really serious.

MRS. LINDE: Well, now—

NORA: That I've never been through anything difficult.

MRS. LINDE: But Nora! You just told me all your troubles!

NORA: That's nothing! [*Lowers her voice.*] I haven't told you about it.

MRS. LINDE: It? What's that? What do you mean?

NORA: You patronize me, Kristine, and that's not fair. You're proud that you worked so long and so hard for your mother.

MRS. LINDE: I don't think I patronize anyone. But it is true that I'm both proud and happy that I could make mother's last years comparatively easy.

NORA: And you're proud of all you did for your brothers.

MRS. LINDE: I think I have the right to be.

NORA: And so do I. But now I want to tell you something, Kristine. I have something to be proud and happy about too.

MRS. LINDE: I don't doubt that for a moment. But what exactly do you mean?

NORA: Not so loud! Torvald mustn't hear—not for anything in the world. Nobody must know about this, Kristine. Nobody but you.

MRS. LINDE: But what is it?

NORA: Come here. [*Pulls her down on the couch beside her.*] You see, I *do* have something to be proud and happy about. I've saved Torvald's life.

MRS. LINDE: Saved—? How do you mean—"saved"?

NORA: I told you about our trip to Italy. Torvald would have died if he hadn't gone.

MRS. LINDE: I understand that. And so your father gave you the money you needed.

NORA [*smiles*]: Yes, that's what Torvald and all the others think. But—

MRS. LINDE: But what?

NORA: Daddy didn't give us a penny. I raised that money.

MRS. LINDE: You did? That whole big amount?

NORA: Twelve hundred specie dollars. Four thousand eight hundred crowns. Now what do you say?

MRS. LINDE: But Nora, how could you? Did you win in the state lottery?

NORA [*contemptuously*]: State lottery! [*Snorts.*] What is so great about that?

MRS. LINDE: Where did it come from then?

NORA [*humming and smiling, enjoying her secret*]: Hmmm. Tra-la-la-la-la!

MRS. LINDE: You certainly couldn't have borrowed it.

NORA: Oh? And why not?

MRS. LINDE: A wife can't borrow money without her husband's consent.

NORA [*with a toss of her head*]: Oh, I don't know—take a wife with a little bit of a head for business—a wife who knows how to manage things—

MRS. LINDE: But Nora, I don't understand at all—

NORA: You don't have to. I didn't say I borrowed the money, did I? I could have gotten it some other way. [*Leans back.*] An admirer may have given it to me. When you're as tolerably good-looking as I am—

MRS. LINDE: Oh, you're crazy.

NORA: I think you're dying from curiosity, Kristine.

MRS. LINDE: I'm beginning to think you've done something very foolish, Nora.

NORA [*sits up*]: Is it foolish to save your husband's life?

MRS. LINDE: I say it's foolish to act behind his back.

NORA: But don't you see: he couldn't be told! You're missing the whole point, Kristine. We couldn't even let him know how seriously ill he was. The doctors came to *me* and told me his life was in danger, that nothing could save him but a stay in the south. Don't you think I tried to work on him? I told him how lovely it would be if I could go abroad like other young wives. I cried and begged. I said he'd better remember what condition I was in, that he had to be nice to me and do what I wanted. I even hinted he could borrow the money. But that almost made him angry with me. He told me I was being irresponsible and that it was his duty as my husband not to give in to my moods and whims—I think that's what he called it. All right, I said to myself, you've got to be saved somehow, and so I found a way—

MRS. LINDE: And your husband never learned from your father that the money didn't come from him?

NORA: Never. Daddy died that same week. I thought of telling him all about it and ask him not to say anything. But since he was so sick—It turned out I didn't have to—

MRS. LINDE: And you've never told your husband?

NORA: Of course not! Good heavens, how could I? He, with his strict principles! Besides, you know how men are. Torvald would find it embarrassing and humiliating to learn that he owed me anything. It would upset our whole relationship. Our happy, beautiful home would no longer be what it is.

MRS. LINDE: Aren't you ever going to tell him?

NORA [*reflectively, half smiling*]: Yes—one day, maybe. Many, many years from now, when I'm no longer young and pretty. Don't laugh! I mean when Torvald no longer feels about me the way he does now, when he no longer thinks it's fun when I dance for him and put on costumes and recite for him. Then it will be good to have something in reserve— [*Interrupts herself.*] Oh, I'm just being silly! That day will never come.—Well, now, Kristine, what do you think of my great secret? Don't you think I'm good for something too?—By the way, you wouldn't believe all the worry I've had because of it. It's been very hard to meet my obligations on schedule. You see, in business there's something called quarterly interest and something called installments on the principal, and those are terribly hard to come up with. I've

had to save a little here and a little there, whenever I could. I couldn't use much of the house-keeping money, for Torvald has to eat well. And I couldn't use what I got for clothes for the children. They have to look nice, and I didn't think it would be right to spend less than I got—the sweet little things!

MRS. LINDE: Poor Nora! So you had to take it from your own allowance!

NORA: Yes, of course. After all, it was my affair. Every time Torvald gave me money for a new dress and things like that, I never used more than half of it. I always bought the cheapest, simplest things for myself. Thank God, everything looks good on me, so Torvald never noticed. But it was hard many times, Kristine, for it's fun to have pretty clothes. Don't you think?

MRS. LINDE: Certainly.

NORA: Anyway, I had other ways of making money too. Last winter I was lucky enough to get some copying work. So I locked the door and sat up writing every night till quite late. God! I often got so tired—! But it was great fun, too, working and making money. It was almost like being a man.

MRS. LINDE: But how much have you been able to pay off this way?

NORA: I couldn't tell you exactly. You see, it's very difficult to keep track of business like that. All I know is I have been paying off as much as I've been able to scrape together. Many times I just didn't know what to do. [*Smiles.*] Then I used to imagine a rich old gentleman had fallen in love with me—

MRS. LINDE: What! What old gentleman?

NORA: Phooey! And now he was dead and they were reading his will, and there it said in big letters, "All my money is to be paid in cash immediately to the charming Mrs. Nora Helmer."

MRS. LINDE: But dearest Nora—who *was* this old gentleman?

NORA: For heaven's sake, Kristine, don't you see? There *was* no old gentleman. He was just somebody I made up when I couldn't think of any way to raise the money. But never mind him. The old bore can be anyone he likes to for all I care. I have no use for him or his last will, for now I don't have a single worry in the world. [*Jumps up.*] Dear God, what a lovely thought this is! To be able to play and have fun with the children, to have everything nice and pretty in the house, just the way Torvald likes it! Not a care! And soon spring will be here, and the air will be blue and high. Maybe we can travel again. Maybe I'll see the ocean again! Oh yes, yes!—it's wonderful to be alive and happy!

The doorbell rings.

MRS. LINDE [*getting up*]: There's the doorbell. Maybe I better be going.

NORA: No, please stay. I'm sure it's just someone for Torvald—

THE MAID [*in the hall door*]: Excuse me, ma'am. There's a gentleman here who'd like to see Mr. Helmer.

NORA: You mean the bank manager.

THE MAID: Sorry, ma'am; the bank manager. But I didn't know—since the Doctor is with him—

NORA: Who is the gentleman?

KROGSTAD [*appearing in the door*]: It's just me, Mrs. Helmer.

MRS. LINDE *starts, looks, turns away toward the window.*

NORA [*takes a step toward him, tense, in a low voice*]: You? What do you want? What do you want with my husband?

KROGSTAD: Bank business—in a way. I have a small job in the Mutual, and I understand your husband is going to be our new boss—

NORA: So it's just—

KROGSTAD: Just routine business, ma'am. Nothing else.

NORA: All right. In that case, why don't you go through the door to the office.

Dismisses him casually as she closes the door. Walks over to the stove and tends the fire.

MRS. LINDE: Nora—who was that man?

NORA: His name's Krogstad. He's a lawyer.

MRS. LINDE: So it *was* him.

NORA: Do you know him?

MRS. LINDE: I used to—many years ago. For a while he clerked in our part of the country.

NORA: Right. He did.

MRS. LINDE: He has changed a great deal.

NORA: I believe he had a very unhappy marriage.

MRS. LINDE: And now he's a widower, isn't he?

NORA: With many children. There now; it's burning nicely again. [*Closes the stove and moves the rocking chair a little to the side.*]

MRS. LINDE: They say he's into all sorts of business.

NORA: Really? Maybe so. I wouldn't know. But let's not think about business. It's such a bore.

DR. RANK [*appears in the door to HELMER's study*]: No. I don't want to be in the way. I'd rather talk to your wife a bit. [*Closes the door and notices MRS. LINDE.*] Oh, I beg your pardon. I believe I'm in the way here too.

NORA: No, not at all. [*Introduces them.*] Dr. Rank. Mrs. Linde.

RANK: Aha. A name often heard in this house. I believe I passed you on the stairs coming up.

MRS. LINDE: Yes. I'm afraid I climb stairs very slowly. They aren't good for me.

RANK: I see. A slight case of inner decay, perhaps?

MRS. LINDE: Overwork, rather.

RANK: Oh, is that all? And now you've come to town to relax at all the parties?

MRS. LINDE: I have come to look for a job.

RANK: A proven cure for overwork, I take it?

MRS. LINDE: One has to live, Doctor.

RANK: Yes, that seems to be the common opinion.

NORA: Come on, Dr. Rank—you want to live just as much as the rest of us.

RANK: Of course I do. Miserable as I am, I prefer to go on being tortured as long as possible. All my patients feel the same way. And that's true of the moral invalids too. Helmer is talking with a specimen right this minute.

MRS. LINDE [*in a low voice*]: Ah!

NORA: What do you mean?

RANK: Oh, this lawyer, Krogstad. You don't know him. The roots of his character are decayed. But even he began by saying something about having to live—as if it were a matter of the highest importance.

NORA: Oh? What did he want with Torvald?

RANK: I don't really know. All I heard was something about the bank.

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

RANK: Yes, he seems to have some kind of job there. [*To MRS. LINDE.*] I don't know if you are familiar in your part of the country with the kind of person who is always running around trying to sniff out cases of moral decrepitude and as soon as he finds one puts the individual under observation in some excellent position or other. All the healthy ones are left out in the cold.

MRS. LINDE: I should think it's the sick who need looking after the most.

RANK [*shrugs his shoulders*]: There we are. That's the attitude that turns society into a hospital.

[NORA, *absorbed in her own thoughts, suddenly starts giggling and clapping her hands.*]

RANK: What's so funny about that? Do you even know what society is?

NORA: What do I care about your stupid society! I laughed at something entirely different—something terribly amusing. Tell me, Dr. Rank—all the employees in the Mutual Bank, from now on they'll all be dependent on Torvald, right?

RANK: Is that what you find so enormously amusing?

NORA [*smiles and hums*]: That's my business, that's my business! [*Walks around.*] Yes, I do think it's fun that we—that Torvald is going to have so much influence on so many people's lives. [*Brings out the bag of macaroons.*] Have a macaroon, Dr. Rank.

RANK: Well, well—macaroons. I thought they were banned around here.

NORA: Yes, but these were some that Kristine gave me.

MRS. LINDE: What! I?

NORA: That's all right. Don't look so scared. You couldn't know that Torvald won't let me have them. He's afraid they'll ruin my teeth. But who cares! Just once in a while—! Right, Dr. Rank? Have one! [*Puts a macaroon into his mouth.*] You too, Kristine. And one for me. A very small one. Or at most two. [*Walks around again.*] Yes, I really feel very, very happy. Now there's just one thing I'm dying to do.

RANK: Oh, and what's that?

NORA: Something I'm dying to say so Torvald could hear.

RANK: And why can't you?

NORA: I don't dare to, for it's not nice.

MRS. LINDE: Not nice?

RANK: In that case, I guess you'd better not. But surely for the two of us—? What is it you'd like to say for Helmer to hear?

NORA: I want to say, "Goddammit!"

RANK: Are you out of your mind!

MRS. LINDE: For heaven's sake, Nora!

RANK: Say it. Here he comes.

NORA [*hiding the macaroons*]: Shhh!

[HELMER *enters from his study, carrying his hat and overcoat.*]

NORA [*going to him*]: Well, dear, did you get rid of him?

HELMER: Yes, he just left.

NORA: Torvald, I want you to meet Kristine. She's just come to town.

HELMER: Kristine—? I'm sorry; I don't think—

NORA: Mrs. Linde, Torvald dear. Mrs. Kristine Linde.

HELMER: Ah, yes. A childhood friend of my wife's, I suppose.

MRS. LINDE: Yes, we've known each other for a long time.

NORA: Just think; she has come all this way just to see you.

HELMER: I'm not sure I understand—

MRS. LINDE: Well, not really—

NORA: You see, Kristine is an absolutely fantastic secretary, and she would so much like to work for a competent executive and learn more than she knows already—

HELMER: Very sensible, I'm sure, Mrs. Linde.

NORA: So when she heard about your appointment—there was a wire—she came here as fast as she could. How about it, Torvald? Couldn't you do something for Kristine? For my sake. Please?

HELMER: Quite possibly. I take it you're a widow, Mrs. Linde?

MRS. LINDE: Yes.

HELMER: And you've had office experience?

MRS. LINDE: Some—yes.

HELMER: In that case I think it's quite likely that I'll be able to find you a position.

NORA [*claps her hands*]: I knew it! I knew it!

HELMER: You've arrived at a most opportune time, Mrs. Linde.

MRS. LINDE: Oh, how can I ever thank you—

HELMER: Not at all, not at all. [*Puts his coat on.*] But today you'll have to excuse me—

RANK: Wait a minute; I'll come with you. [*Gets his fur coat from the front hall, warms it by the stove.*]

NORA: Don't be long, Torvald.

HELMER: An hour or so; no more.

NORA: Are you leaving, too, Kristine?

MRS. LINDE [*putting on her things*]: Yes, I'd better go and find a place to stay.

HELMER: Good. Then we'll be going the same way.

NORA [*helping her*]: I'm sorry this place is so small, but I don't think we very well could—

MRS. LINDE: Of course! Don't be silly, Nora. Good-bye, and thank you for everything.

NORA: Goodbye. We'll see you soon. You'll be back this evening, of course. And you too, Dr. Rank; right? If you feel well enough? Of course you will. Just wrap yourself up.

[*General small talk as all exit into the hall. Children's voices are heard on the stairs.*]

NORA: There they are! There they are! [*She runs and opens the door. The nurse ANNE-MARIE enters with the children.*]

NORA: Come in! Come in! [*Bends over and kisses them.*] Oh, you sweet, sweet darlings! Look at them, Kristine! Aren't they beautiful?

RANK: No standing around in the draft!

HELMER: Come along, Mrs. Linde. This place isn't fit for anyone but mothers right now.

[*DR. RANK, HELMER, and MRS. LINDE go down the stairs. The NURSE enters the living room with the children. NORA follows, closing the door behind her.*]

NORA: My, how nice you all look! Such red cheeks! Like apples and roses. [*The children all talk at the same time.*] You've had so much fun? I bet you

have. Oh, isn't that nice! You pulled both Emmy and Bob on your sleigh? Both at the same time? That's very good, Ivar. Oh, let me hold her for a minute, Anne-Marie. My sweet little doll baby! [*Takes the smallest of the children from the NURSE and dances with her.*] Yes, yes, of course; Mama'll dance with you too, Bob. What? You threw snowballs? Oh, I wish I'd been there! No, no; I want to take their clothes off, Anne-Marie. Please let me; I think it's so much fun. You go on in. You look frozen. There's hot coffee on the stove.

[*The NURSE exits into the room to the left. NORA takes the children's wraps off and throws them all around. They all keep telling her things at the same time.*]

NORA: Oh, really? A big dog ran after you? But it didn't bite you. Of course not. Dogs don't bite sweet little doll babies. Don't peek at the packages, Ivar! What's in them? Wouldn't you like to know! No, no; that's something terrible! Play? You want to play? What do you want to play? Okay, let's play hide-and-seek. Bob hides first. You want me to? All right. I'll go first.

[*Laughing and shouting, NORA and the children play in the living room and in the adjacent room, right. Finally, NORA hides herself under the table; the children rush in, look for her, can't find her. They hear her low giggle, run to the table, lift the rug that covers it, see her. General hilarity. She crawls out, pretends to scare them. New delight. In the meantime there has been a knock on the door between the living room and the front hall, but nobody has noticed. Now the door is opened half-way; KROGSTAD appears. He waits a little. The play goes on.*]

KROGSTAD: Pardon me, Mrs. Helmer—

NORA [*with a muted cry turns around, jumps up*]: Ah! What do you want?

KROGSTAD: I'm sorry. The front door was open. Somebody must have forgotten to close it—

NORA [*standing up*]: My husband isn't here, Mr. Krogstad.

KROGSTAD: I know.

NORA: So what do you want?

KROGSTAD: I'd like a word with you.

NORA: With—? [*To the children.*] Go in to Anne-Marie. What? No, the strange man won't do anything bad to Mama. When he's gone we'll play some more.

[*She takes the children into the room to the left and closes the door.*]

NORA [*tense, troubled*]: You want to speak with me?

KROGSTAD: Yes I do.

NORA: Today—? It isn't the first of the month yet.

KROGSTAD: No, it's Christmas Eve. It's up to you what kind of holiday you'll have.

NORA: What do you want? I can't possibly—

KROGSTAD: Let's not talk about that just yet. There's something else. You do have a few minutes, don't you?

NORA: Yes. Yes, of course. That is,—

KROGSTAD: Good. I was sitting in Olsen's restaurant when I saw your husband go by.

NORA: Yes—?

KROGSTAD: —with a lady.

NORA: What of it?

KROGSTAD: May I be so free as to ask: wasn't that lady Mrs. Linde?

NORA: Yes.

KROGSTAD: Just arrived in town?

NORA: Yes, today.

KROGSTAD: She's a good friend of yours, I understand?

NORA: Yes, she is. But I fail to see—

KROGSTAD: I used to know her myself.

NORA: I know that.

KROGSTAD: So you know about that. I thought as much.

In that case, let me ask you a simple question. Is Mrs. Linde going to be employed in the bank?

NORA: What makes you think you have the right to cross-examine me like this, Mr. Krogstad—you, one of my husband's employees? But since you ask, I'll tell you. Yes, Mrs. Linde is going to be working in the bank. And it was I who recommended her, Mr. Krogstad. Now you know.

KROGSTAD: So, I was right.

NORA [*walks up and down*]: After all, one does have a little influence, you know. Just because you're a woman, it doesn't mean that—Really, Mr.

Krogstad, people in a subordinate position should be careful not to offend someone who—oh well—

KROGSTAD: —has influence?

NORA: Exactly.

KROGSTAD [*changing his tone*]: Mrs. Helmer, I must ask you to be good enough to use your influence on my behalf.

NORA: What do you mean?

KROGSTAD: I want you to make sure that I am going to keep my subordinate position in the bank.

NORA: I don't understand. Who is going to take your position away from you?

KROGSTAD: There's no point in playing ignorant with me, Mrs. Helmer. I can very well appreciate that your friend would find it unpleasant to run into me. So now I know who I can thank for my dismissal.

NORA: But I assure you—

KROGSTAD: Never mind. Just want to say you still have time. I advise you to use your influence to prevent it.

NORA: But Mr. Krogstad, I don't have any influence—none at all.

KROGSTAD: No? I thought you just said—

NORA: Of course I didn't mean it that way. I!

Whatever makes you think that I have any influence of that kind on my husband?

KROGSTAD: I went to law school with your husband. I have no reason to think that the bank manager is less susceptible than other husbands.

NORA: If you're going to insult my husband, I'll ask you to leave.

KROGSTAD: You're brave, Mrs. Helmer.

NORA: I'm not afraid of you any more. After New Year's I'll be out of this thing with you.

KROGSTAD [*more controlled*]: Listen, Mrs. Helmer. If necessary I'll fight as for my life to keep my little job in the bank.

NORA: So it seems.

KROGSTAD: It isn't just the money; that's really the smallest part of it. There is something else—Well, I guess I might as well tell you. It's like this. I'm sure you know, like everybody else, that some years ago I committed—an impropriety.

NORA: I believe I've heard it mentioned.

KROGSTAD: The case never came to court, but from that moment all doors were closed to me. So I took up the kind of business you know about. I had to do something, and I think I can say about myself that I have not been among the worst. But now I want to get out of all that. My sons are growing up. For their sake I must get back as much of my good name as I can. This job in the bank was like the first rung on the ladder. And now your husband wants to kick me down and leave me back in the mud again.

NORA: But I swear to you, Mr. Krogstad; it's not at all in my power to help you.

KROGSTAD: That's because you don't want to. But I have the means to force you.

NORA: You don't mean you're going to tell my husband I owe you money?

KROGSTAD: And if I did?

NORA: That would be a mean thing to do. [*Almost crying.*] That secret, which is my joy and my pride—for him to learn about it in such a coarse and ugly manner—to learn it from *you*—! It would be terribly unpleasant for me.

KROGSTAD: Just unpleasant?

NORA [*heatedly*]: But go ahead! Do it! It will be worse for you than for me. When my husband realizes what a bad person you are, you'll be sure to lose your job.

KROGSTAD: I asked you if it was just domestic unpleasantness you were afraid of?

NORA: When my husband finds out, of course he'll pay off the loan, and then we won't have anything more to do with you.

KROGSTAD [*stepping closer*]: Listen, Mrs. Helmer—either you have a very bad memory, or you don't know much about business. I think I had better straighten you out on a few things.

NORA: What do you mean?

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

NORA: I knew nobody else.

KROGSTAD: I promised to get you the money—

NORA: And you did.

KROGSTAD: I promised to get you the money on certain conditions. At the time you were so anxious about your husband's health and so set on getting him away that I doubt very much that you paid much attention to the details of our transaction. That's why I remind you of them now. Anyway, I promised to get you the money if you would sign an I.O.U., which I drafted.

NORA: And which I signed.

KROGSTAD: Good. But below your signature I added a few lines, making your father security for the loan. Your father was supposed to put his signature to those lines.

NORA: Supposed to—? He did.

KROGSTAD: I had left the date blank. That is, your father was to date his own signature. You recall that, don't you, Mrs. Helmer?

NORA: I guess so—

KROGSTAD: I gave the note to you. You were to mail it to your father. Am I correct?

NORA: Yes.

KROGSTAD: And of course you did so right away, for no more than five or six days later you brought the paper back to me, signed by your father. Then I paid you the money.

NORA: Well? And haven't I been keeping up with the payments?

KROGSTAD: Fairly well, yes. But to get back to what we were talking about—those were difficult days for you, weren't they, Mrs. Helmer?

NORA: Yes, they were.

KROGSTAD: Your father was quite ill, I believe.

NORA: He was dying.

KROGSTAD: And died shortly afterwards?

NORA: That's right.

KROGSTAD: Tell me, Mrs. Helmer; do you happen to remember the date of your father's death? I mean the exact day of the month?

NORA: Daddy died on September 29.

KROGSTAD: Quite correct. I have ascertained that fact. That's why there is something peculiar about this [*takes out a piece of paper*], which I can't account for.

NORA: Peculiar? How? I don't understand—

KROGSTAD: It seems very peculiar, Mrs. Helmer, that your father signed this promissory note three days after his death.

NORA: How so? I don't see what—

KROGSTAD: Your father died on September 29. Now look. He has dated his signature October 2. Isn't that odd?

[*NORA remains silent.*]

KROGSTAD: Can you explain it?

[*NORA is still silent.*]

KROGSTAD: I also find it striking that the date and the month and the year are not in your father's handwriting but in a hand I think I recognize. Well, that might be explained. Your father may have forgotten to date his signature and somebody else may have done it here, guessing at the date before he had learned of your father's death. That's all right. It's only the signature itself that matters. And that is genuine, isn't it, Mrs. Helmer? Your father *did* put his name to this note?

NORA [*after a brief silence tosses her head back and looks defiantly at him*]: No, he didn't. I wrote Daddy's name.

KROGSTAD: Mrs. Helmer—do you realize what a dangerous admission you just made?

NORA: Why? You'll get your money soon.

KROGSTAD: Let me ask you something. Why didn't you mail this note to your father?

NORA: Because it was impossible. Daddy was sick—you know that. If I had asked him to sign it, I would have had to tell him what the money was for. But I couldn't tell him, as sick as he was, that my husband's life was in danger. That was impossible. Surely you can see that.

KROGSTAD: Then it would have been better for you if you had given up your trip abroad.

NORA: No, that was impossible! That trip was to save my husband's life. I couldn't give it up.

KROGSTAD: But didn't you realize that what you did amounted to fraud against me?

NORA: I couldn't let that make any difference. I didn't care about you at all. I hated the way you made all those difficulties for me, even though you knew the danger my husband was in. I thought you were cold and unfeeling.

KROGSTAD: Mrs. Helmer, obviously you have no clear idea of what you have done. Let me tell you that what I did that time was no more and no worse. And it ruined my name and reputation.

NORA: You! Are you trying to tell me that you did something brave once in order to save your wife's life?

KROGSTAD: The law doesn't ask about motives.

NORA: Then it's a bad law.

KROGSTAD: Bad or not—if I produce this note in court you'll be judged according to the law.

NORA: I refuse to believe you. A daughter shouldn't have the right to spare her dying old father worry and anxiety? A wife shouldn't have the right to save her husband's life? I don't know the laws very well, but I'm sure that somewhere they make allowance for cases like that. And you, a lawyer, don't know that? I think you must be a bad lawyer, Mr. Krogstad.

KROGSTAD: That may be. But business—the kind of business you and I have with one another—don't you think I know something about that? Very well. Do what you like. But let me tell you this: if I'm going to be kicked out again, you'll keep me company. [*He bows and exits through the front hall.*]

NORA [*pauses thoughtfully; then, with a defiant toss of her head*]: Oh, nonsense! Trying to scare me like that! I'm not all that silly. [*Starts picking up the children's clothes; soon stops.*] But—? No! That's impossible! I did it for love!

THE CHILDREN [*in the door to the left*]: Mama, the strange man just left. We saw him.

NORA: Yes, yes; I know. But don't tell anybody about the strange man. Do you hear? Not even Daddy.

THE CHILDREN: We won't. But now you'll play with us again, won't you, Mama?

NORA: No, not right now.

THE CHILDREN: But Mama—you promised.

NORA: I know, but I can't just now. Go to your own room. I've so much to do. Be nice now, my little darlings. Do as I say. [*She nudges them gently into the other room and closes the door. She sits down on the couch, picks up a piece of embroidery, makes a few stitches, then stops.*] No! [*Throws the embroidery down, goes to the hall door and calls out.*] Helene! Bring the Christmas tree in here, please! [*Goes to the table, left, opens the drawer, halts.*] No—that's impossible!

THE MAID [*with the Christmas tree*]: Where do you want it, ma'am?

NORA: There. The middle of the floor.

THE MAID: You want anything else?

NORA: No, thanks. I have everything I need. [*THE MAID goes out. NORA starts trimming the tree.*] I want candles—and flowers—That awful man! Oh, nonsense! There's nothing wrong. This will be a lovely tree. I'll do everything you want me to, Torvald. I'll sing for you—dance for you—

[*HELMER, a bundle of papers under his arm, enters from outside.*]

NORA: Ah—you're back already?

HELMER: Yes. Has anybody been here?

NORA: Here? No.

HELMER: That's funny. I saw Krogstad leaving just now.

NORA: Oh? Oh yes, that's right. Krogstad was here for just a moment.

HELMER: I can tell from your face that he came to ask you to put in a word for him.

NORA: Yes.

HELMER: And it was supposed to be your own idea, wasn't it? You were not to tell me he'd been here. He asked you that too, didn't he?

NORA: Yes, Torvald, but—

HELMER: Nora, Nora, how could you! Talk to a man like that and make him promises! And lying to me about it afterwards—!

NORA: Lying—?

HELMER: Didn't you say nobody had been here?

[*Shakes his finger at her.*] My little songbird must never do that again. Songbirds are supposed to have clean beaks to chirp with—no false notes.

[*Puts his arms around her waist.*] Isn't that so? Of course it is. [*Lets her go.*] And that's enough about that. [*Sits down in front of the fireplace.*] Ah, it's nice and warm in here. [*Begins to leaf through his papers.*]

NORA [*busy with the tree; after a brief pause*]: Torvald.

HELMER: Yes.

NORA: I'm looking forward so much to the Stenborgs' costume party day after tomorrow.

HELMER: And I can't wait to find out what you're going to surprise me with.

NORA: Oh, that silly idea!

HELMER: Oh?

NORA: I can't think of anything. It all seems so foolish and pointless.

HELMER: Ah, my little Nora admits that?

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

HELMER: Well—

NORA: What are all those papers?

HELMER: Bank business.

NORA: Already?

HELMER: I've asked the board to give me the authority to make certain changes in organization and personnel. That's what I'll be doing over the holidays. I want it all settled before New Year's.

NORA: So that's why this poor Krogstad—

HELMER: Hm.

NORA [*leisurely playing with the hair on his neck*]: If you weren't so busy, Torvald, I'd ask you for a great big favor.

HELMER: Let's hear it, anyway.

NORA: I don't know anyone with better taste than you, and I want so much to look nice at the party. Couldn't you sort of take charge of me, Torvald, and decide what I'll wear—Help me with my costume?

HELMER: Aha! Little Lady Obstinate is looking for someone to rescue her?

NORA: Yes, Torvald. I won't get anywhere without your help.

HELMER: All right. I'll think about it. We'll come up with something.

NORA: Oh, you *are* nice! [*Goes back to the Christmas tree. A pause.*] Those red flowers look so pretty.—Tell me, was it really all that bad what this Krogstad fellow did?

HELMER: He forged signatures. Do you have any idea what that means?

NORA: Couldn't it have been because he felt he had to?

HELMER: Yes, or like so many others he may simply have been thoughtless. I'm not so heartless as to condemn a man absolutely because of a single imprudent act.

NORA: Of course not, Torvald!

HELMER: People like him can redeem themselves morally by openly confessing their crime and taking their punishment.

NORA: Punishment—?

HELMER: But that was not the way Krogstad chose. He got out of it with tricks and evasions. That's what has corrupted him.

NORA: So you think that if—?

HELMER: Can't you imagine how a guilty person like that has to lie and fake and dissemble wherever he goes—putting on a mask before everybody he's close to, even his own wife and children. It's this thing with the children that's the worst part of it, Nora.

NORA: Why is that?

HELMER: Because when a man lives inside such a circle of stinking lies he brings infection into his own home and contaminates his whole family. With every breath of air his children inhale the germs of something ugly.

NORA [*moving closer behind him*]: Are you so sure of that?

HELMER: Of course I am. I have seen enough examples of that in my work. Nearly all young criminals have had mothers who lied.

NORA: Why mothers—particularly?

HELMER: Most often mothers. But of course fathers tend to have the same influence. Every lawyer knows that. And yet, for years this Krogstad has been poisoning his own children in an atmosphere of lies and deceit. That's why I call him a lost soul morally. [*Reaches out for her hands.*] And that's why

my sweet little Nora must promise me never to take his side again. Let's shake on that.—What? What's this? Give me your hand. There! Now that's settled. I assure you, I would find it impossible to work in the same room with that man. I feel literally sick when I'm around people like that.

NORA [*withdraws her hand and goes to the other side of the Christmas tree*]: It's so hot in here. And I have so much to do.

HELMER [*gets up and collects his papers*]: Yes, and I really should try to get some of this reading done before dinner. I must think about your costume too. And maybe just possibly I'll have something to wrap in gilt paper and hang on the Christmas tree. [*Puts his hand on her head.*] Oh my adorable little songbird! [*Enters his study and closes the door.*]

NORA [*after a pause, in a low voice*]: It's all a lot of nonsense. It's not that way at all. It's impossible. It has to be impossible.

THE NURSE [*in the door, left*]: The little ones are asking ever so nicely if they can't come in and be with their mama.

NORA: No, no no! Don't let them in here! You stay with them, Anne-Marie.

THE NURSE: If you say so, ma'am. [*Closes the door.*]

NORA [*pale with terror*]: Corrupt my little children—! Poison my home—? [*Brief pause; she lifts her head.*] That's not true. Never. Never in a million years.

ACT II

The same room. The Christmas tree is in the corner by the piano, stripped, shabby-looking, with burnt-down candles. NORA's outside clothes are on the couch. NORA is alone. She walks around restlessly. She stops by the couch and picks up her coat.

NORA [*drops the coat again*]: There's somebody now! [*Goes to the door, listens.*] No. Nobody. Of course not—not on Christmas. And not tomorrow either.—But perhaps— [*Opens the door and looks.*] No, nothing in the mailbox. All empty. [*Comes forward.*] How silly I am! Of course he isn't serious. Nothing like that could happen. After all, I have three small children.

[*The NURSE enters from the room, left, carrying a big carton.*]

THE NURSE: Well, at last I found it—the box with your costume.

NORA: Thanks. Just put it on the table.

NURSE [*does so*]: But it's all a big mess, I'm afraid.

NORA: Oh, I wish I could tear the whole thing to little pieces!

NURSE: Heavens! It's not as bad as all that. It can be fixed all right. All it takes is a little patience.

NORA: I'll go over and get Mrs. Linde to help me.

NURSE: Going out again? In this awful weather?
You'll catch a cold.

NORA: That might not be such a bad thing. How are the children?

NURSE: The poor little dears are playing with their presents, but—

NORA: Do they keep asking for me?

NURSE: Well, you know, they're used to being with their mamma.

NORA: I know. But Anne-Marie, from now on I can't be with them as much as before.

NURSE: Oh well. Little children get used to everything.

NORA: You think so? Do you think they'll forget their mamma if I were gone altogether?

NURSE: Goodness me—gone altogether?

NORA: Listen, Anne-Marie—something I've wondered about. How could you bring yourself to leave your child with strangers?

NURSE: But I had to, if I were to nurse you.

NORA: Yes, but how could you *want* to?

NURSE: When I could get such a nice place? When something like that happens to a poor young girl, she'd better be grateful for whatever she gets. For *he* didn't do a thing for me—the louse!

NORA: But your daughter has forgotten all about you, hasn't she?

NURSE: Oh no! Not at all! She wrote to me both when she was confirmed and when she got married.

NORA [*putting her arms around her neck*]: You dear old thing—you were a good mother to me when I was little.

NURSE: Poor little Nora had no one else, you know.

NORA: And if my little ones didn't, I know you'd—oh, I'm being silly! [*Opens the carton.*] Go in to them, please. I really should—. Tomorrow you'll see how pretty I'll be.

NURSE: I know. There won't be anybody at that party half as pretty as you, ma'am. [*Goes out, left.*]

NORA [*begins to take clothes out of the carton; in a moment she throws it all down*]: If only I dared to go out. If only I knew nobody would come. That nothing would happen while I was gone.—How silly! Nobody'll come. Just don't think about it. Brush the muff. Beautiful gloves. Beautiful gloves. Forget it. Forget it. One, two, three, four, five, six— [*Cries out.*] There they are! [*Moves toward the door, stops irresolutely.*]

[*MRS. LINDE enters from the hall. She has already taken off her coat.*]

NORA: Oh, it's you, Kristine. There's no one else out there, is there? I'm so glad you're here.

MRS. LINDE: They told me you'd asked for me.

NORA: I just happened to walk by. I need your help with something—badly. Let's sit here on the couch. Look. Torvald and I are going to a costume party tomorrow night—at Consul Stenborg's upstairs—and Torvald wants me to go as a Neapolitan fisher girl and dance the tarantella. I learned it when we were on Capri.

MRS. LINDE: Well, well! So you'll be putting on a whole show?

NORA: Yes. Torvald thinks I should. Look, here's the costume. Torvald had it made for me while we were there. But it's all so torn and everything. I just don't know—

MRS. LINDE: Oh, that can be fixed. It's not that much. The trimmings have come loose in a few places. Do you have needle and thread? Ah, here we are. All set.

NORA: I really appreciate it, Kristine.

MRS. LINDE [*sewing*]: So you'll be in disguise tomorrow night, eh? You know—I may come by for just a moment, just to look at you.—Oh dear. I haven't even thanked you for the nice evening last night.

NORA [*gets up, moves around*]: Oh, I don't know. I don't think last night was as nice as it usually is.—You should have come to town a little earlier, Kristine.—Yes, Torvald knows how to make it nice and pretty around here.

MRS. LINDE: You too, I should think. After all, you're your father's daughter. By the way, is Dr. Rank always as depressed as he was last night?

NORA: No, last night was unusual. He's a very sick man, you know—very sick. Poor Rank, his spine is rotting away. Tuberculosis, I think. You see, his father was a nasty old man with mistresses and all that sort of thing. Rank has been sickly ever since he was a little boy.

MRS. LINDE [*dropping her sewing to her lap*]: But dearest, Nora, where have you learned about things like that?

NORA [*still walking about*]: Oh, you know—with three children you sometimes get to talk with—other wives. Some of them know quite a bit about medicine. So you pick up a few things.

MRS. LINDE [*resumes her sewing; after a brief pause*]: Does Dr. Rank come here every day?

NORA: Every single day. He's Torvald's oldest and best friend, after all. And my friend too, for that matter. He's part of the family, almost.

MRS. LINDE: But tell me, is he quite sincere? I mean, isn't he the kind of man who likes to say nice things to people?

NORA: No, not at all. Rather the opposite, in fact. What makes you say that?

MRS. LINDE: When you introduced us yesterday, he told me he'd often heard my name mentioned in this house. But later on it was quite obvious that

your husband really had no idea who I was. So how could Dr. Rank—?

NORA: You're right, Kristine, but I can explain that. You see, Torvald loves me so very much that he wants me all to himself. That's what he says. When we were first married he got almost jealous when I as much as mentioned anybody from back home that I was fond of. So of course I soon stopped doing that. But with Dr. Rank I often talk about home. You see, he likes to listen to me.

MRS. LINDE: Look here, Nora. In many ways you're still a child. After all, I'm quite a bit older than you and have had more experience. I want to give you a piece of advice. I think you should get out of this thing with Dr. Rank.

NORA: Get out of what thing?

MRS. LINDE: Several things in fact, if you want my opinion. Yesterday you said something about a rich admirer who was going to give you money—

NORA: One who doesn't exist, unfortunately. What of it?

MRS. LINDE: Does Dr. Rank have money?

NORA: Yes, he does.

MRS. LINDE: And no dependents?

NORA: No. But—?

MRS. LINDE: And he comes here every day?

NORA: Yes, I told you that already.

MRS. LINDE: But how can that sensitive man be so tactless?

NORA: I haven't the slightest idea what you're talking about.

MRS. LINDE: Don't play games with me, Nora. Don't you think I know who you borrowed the twelve hundred dollars from?

NORA: Are you out of your mind! The very idea—! A friend of both of us who sees us every day—! What a dreadfully uncomfortable position that would be!

MRS. LINDE: So it really isn't Dr. Rank?

NORA: Most certainly not! I would never have dreamed of asking him—not for a moment. Anyway, he didn't have any money then. He inherited it afterwards.

MRS. LINDE: Well, I still think it may have been lucky for you, Nora dear.

NORA: The idea! It would never have occurred to me to ask Dr. Rank—. Though I'm sure that if I *did* ask him—

MRS. LINDE: But of course you wouldn't.

NORA: Of course not. I can't imagine that that would ever be necessary. But I am quite sure that if I told Dr. Rank—

MRS. LINDE: Behind your husband's back?

NORA: I must get out of—this other thing. That's also behind his back. I *must* get out of it.

MRS. LINDE: That's what I told you yesterday. But—

NORA [*walking up and down*]: A man manages these things so much better than a woman—

MRS. LINDE: One's husband, yes.

NORA: Silly, silly! [*Stops.*] When you've paid off all you owe, you get your I.O.U. back; right?

MRS. LINDE: Yes, of course.

NORA: And you can tear it into a hundred thousand little pieces and burn it—that dirty, filthy, paper!

MRS. LINDE [*looks hard at her, puts down her sewing, rises slowly*]: Nora—you're hiding something from me.

NORA: Can you tell?

MRS. LINDE: Something's happened to you, Nora, since yesterday morning. What is it?

NORA [*going to her*]: Kristine! [*Listens.*] Shhh. Torvald just came back. Listen. Why don't you go in to the children for a while. Torvald can't stand having sewing around. Get Anne-Marie to help you.

MRS. LINDE [*gathers some of the sewing things together*]: All right, but I'm not leaving here till you and I have talked.

[*She goes out left, as HELMER enters from the front hall.*]

NORA [*towards him*]: I have been waiting and waiting for you, Torvald.

HELMER: Was that the dressmaker?

NORA: No, it was Kristine. She's helping me with my costume. Oh Torvald, just wait till you see how nice I'll look!

HELMER: I told you. Pretty good idea I had, wasn't it?

NORA: Lovely! And wasn't it nice of me to go along with it?

HELMER [*his hands under her chin*]: Nice? To do what your husband tells you? All right, you little rascal; I know you didn't mean it that way. But don't let me interrupt you. I suppose you want to try it on.

NORA: And you'll be working?

HELMER: Yes. [*Shows her a pile of papers.*] Look. I've been down to the bank. [*Is about to enter his study.*]

NORA: Torvald.

HELMER [*halts*]: Yes?

NORA: What if your little squirrel asked you ever so nicely—

HELMER: For what?

NORA: Would you do it?

HELMER: Depends on what it is.

NORA: Squirrel would run around and do all sorts of fun tricks if you'd be nice and agreeable.

HELMER: All right. What is it?

NORA: Lark would chirp and twitter in all the rooms, up and down—

HELMER: So what? Lark does that anyway.

NORA: I'll be your elfmaid and dance for you in the moonlight, Torvald.

HELMER: Nora, don't tell me it's the same thing you mentioned this morning?

NORA [*closer to him*]: Yes, Torvald. I beg you!

HELMER: You really have the nerve to bring that up again?

NORA: Yes. You've just got to do as I say. You *must* let Krogstad keep his job.

HELMER: My dear Nora. It's his job I intend to give to Mrs. Linde.

NORA: I know. And that's ever so nice of you. But can't you just fire somebody else?

HELMER: This is incredible! You just don't give up do you? Because you make some foolish promise, I am supposed to—!

NORA: That's not the reason, Torvald. It's for your own sake. That man writes for the worst newspapers. You've said so yourself. There's no telling what he may do to you. I'm scared to death of him.

HELMER: Ah, I understand. You're afraid because of what happened before.

NORA: What do you mean?

HELMER: You're thinking of your father, of course.

NORA: Yes. Yes, you're right. Remember the awful things they wrote about Daddy in the newspapers. I really think they might have forced him to resign if the ministry hadn't sent you to look into the charges and if you hadn't been so helpful and understanding.

HELMER: My dear little Nora, there is a world of difference between your father and me. Your father's official conduct was not above reproach. Mine is, and I intend for it to remain that way as long as I hold my position.

NORA: Oh, but you don't know what vicious people like that may think of. Oh, Torvald! Now all of us could be so happy together here in our own home, peaceful and carefree. Such a good life, Torvald, for you and me and the children! That's why I implore you—

HELMER: And it's exactly because you plead for him that you make it impossible for me to keep him. It's already common knowledge in the bank that I intend to let Krogstad go. If it gets out that the new manager has changed his mind because of his wife—

NORA: Yes? What then?

HELMER: No, of course, that wouldn't matter at all as long as little Mrs. Pighead here got her way! Do you want me to make myself look ridiculous before my whole staff—make people think I can be swayed by just anybody—by outsiders? Believe me, I would soon enough find out what the consequences would be! Besides, there's another thing that makes it absolutely impossible for Krogstad to stay on in the bank now that I'm in charge.

NORA: What's that?

HELMER: I suppose in a pinch I could overlook his moral shortcomings—

NORA: Yes, you could; couldn't you, Torvald?

HELMER: And I understand he's quite a good worker, too. But we've known each other for a long time. It's one of those imprudent relationships you get into when you're young that embarrass you for the rest of your life. I guess I might as well be frank with you: he and I are on a first name basis. And that tactless fellow never hides the fact even when other people are around. Rather, he seems to think it entitles him to be familiar with me. Every chance he gets he comes out with his damn "Torvald, Torvald." I'm telling you, I find it most awkward. He would make my position in the bank intolerable.

NORA: You don't really mean any of this, Torvald.

HELMER: Oh? I don't? And why not?

NORA: No, for it's all so petty.

HELMER: What! Petty? You think I'm being petty!

NORA: No, I *don't* think you are petty, Torvald dear.

That's exactly why I—

HELMER: Never mind. You think my reasons are petty, so it follows that I must be petty too. Petty! Indeed! By God, I'll put an end to this right now! [*Opens the door to the front hall and calls out.*] Helene!

NORA: What are you doing?

HELMER [*searching among his papers*]: Making a decision. [*THE MAID enters.*] Here. Take this letter. Go out with it right away. Find somebody to deliver it. But quick. The address is on the envelope. Wait. Here's money.

THE MAID: Very good sir. [*She takes the letter and goes out.*]

HELMER [*collecting his papers*]: There now, little Mrs. Obstinate!

NORA [*breathless*]: Torvald—what was that letter?

HELMER: Krogstad's dismissal.

NORA: Call it back, Torvald! There's still time! Oh Torvald, please—call it back! For my sake, for your own sake, for the sake of the children! Listen to me, Torvald! Do it! You don't know what you're doing to all of us!

HELMER: Too late.

NORA: Yes. Too late.

HELMER: Dear Nora, I forgive you this fear you're in, although it really is an insult to me. Yes, it is! It's an insult to think that I am scared of a shabby scrivener's revenge. But I forgive you, for it's such a beautiful proof how much you love me. [*Takes her in his arms.*] And that's the way it should be, my sweet darling. Whatever happens, you'll see that when things get really rough I have both strength and courage. You'll find out that I am man enough to shoulder the whole burden.

NORA [*terrified*]: What do you mean by that?

HELMER: All of it, I tell you—

NORA [*composed*]: You'll never have to do that.

HELMER: Good. Then we'll share the burden, Nora—like husband and wife, the way it ought to be. [*Caresses her.*] Now are you satisfied? There, there, there. Not that look in your eyes—like a frightened dove. It's all your own foolish imagination.—Why don't you practice the tarantella—and your tambourine, too. I'll be in the inner office and close both doors, so I won't hear you. You can make as much noise as you like. [*Turning in the doorway.*] And when Rank comes, tell him where to find me. [*He nods to her, enters his study carrying his papers, and closes the door.*]

NORA [*transfixed by terror, whispers*]: He would do it. He'll do it. He'll do it in spite of the whole world.—No, this mustn't happen. Anything rather than that! There must be a way—! [*The doorbell rings.*] Dr. Rank! Anything rather than that! Anything—anything at all!

[*She passes her hand over her face, pulls herself together, and opens the door to the hall. DR. RANK is out there, hanging up his coat. Darkness begins to fall during the following scene.*]

NORA: Hello there, Dr. Rank. I recognized your ringing. Don't go in to Torvald yet. I think he's busy.

RANK: And you?

NORA [*as he enters and she closes the door behind him*]: You know I always have time for you.

RANK: Thanks. I'll make use of that as long as I can.

NORA: What do you mean by that—As long as you can?

RANK: Does that frighten you?

NORA: Well, it's a funny expression. As if something was going to happen.

RANK: Something is going to happen that I've long been expecting. But I admit I hadn't thought it would come quite so soon.

NORA [*seizes his arm*]: What is it you've found out? Dr. Rank—tell me!

RANK [*sits down by the stove*]: I'm going downhill fast. There's nothing to do about that.

NORA [*with audible relief*]: So it's you—

RANK: Who else? No point in lying to myself. I'm in worse shape than any of my other patients, Mrs. Helmer. These last few days I've been making up my inner status. Bankrupt. Chances are that within a month I'll be rotting up in the cemetery.

NORA: Shame on you! Talking that horrid way!

RANK: The thing itself is horrid—damn horrid. The worst of it, though, is all that other horror that comes first. There is only one more test I need to make. After that I'll have a pretty good idea when I'll start coming apart. There is something I want

to say to you. Helmer's refined nature can't stand anything hideous. I don't want him in my sick room.

NORA: Oh, but Dr. Rank—

RANK: I don't want him there. Under no circumstances. I'll close my door to him. As soon as I have full certainty that the worst is about to begin I'll give you my card with a black cross on it. Then you'll know the last horror of destruction has started.

NORA: Today you're really quite impossible. And I had hoped you'd be in a particularly good mood.

RANK: With death on my hands? Paying for someone else's sins? Is there justice in that? And yet there isn't a single family that isn't ruled by the same law of ruthless retribution, in one way or another.

NORA [*puts her hands over her ears*]: Poppycock! Be fun! Be fun!

RANK: Well, yes. You may just as well laugh at the whole thing. My poor, innocent spine is suffering from my father's frolics as a young lieutenant.

NORA [*over by the table, left*]: Right. He was addicted to asparagus and goose liver paté, wasn't he?

RANK: And truffles.

NORA: Of course. Truffles. And oysters too, I think.

RANK: And oysters. Obviously.

NORA: And all the port and champagne that go with it. It's really too bad that goodies like that ruin your backbone.

RANK: Particularly an unfortunate backbone that never enjoyed any of it.

NORA: Ah yes, that's the saddest part of it all.

RANK [*looks searchingly at her*]: Hm—

NORA [*after a brief pause*]: Why did you smile just then?

RANK: No, it was you that laughed.

NORA: No, it was you that smiled, Dr. Rank!

RANK [*gets up*]: You're more of a mischief-maker than I thought.

NORA: I feel in the mood for mischief today.

RANK: So it seems.

NORA [*with both her hands on his shoulders*]: Dear, dear Dr. Rank, don't you go and die and leave Torvald and me.

RANK: Oh, you won't miss me for very long. Those who go away are soon forgotten.

NORA [*with an anxious look*]: Do you believe that?

RANK: You'll make new friends, and then—

NORA: Who'll make new friends?

RANK: Both you and Helmer, once I'm gone. You yourself seem to have made a good start already. What was this Mrs. Linde doing here last night?

NORA: Aha—Don't tell me you're jealous of poor Kristine?

RANK: Yes, I am. She'll be my successor in this house. As soon as I have made my excuses, that woman is likely to—

NORA: Shh—not so loud. She's in there.

RANK: Today too? There you are!

NORA: She's mending my costume. My God, you really *are* unreasonable. [*Sits down on the couch.*] Now be nice, Dr. Rank. Tomorrow you'll see how beautifully I'll dance, and then you are to pretend I'm dancing just for you—and for Torvald too, of course. [*Takes several items out of the carton.*] Sit down, Dr. Rank; I want to show you something.

RANK [*sitting down*]: What?

NORA: Look.

RANK: Silk stockings.

NORA: Flesh-colored. Aren't they lovely? Now it's getting dark in here, but tomorrow—No, no. You only get to see the foot. Oh well, you might as well see all of it.

RANK: Hmm.

NORA: Why do you look so critical? Don't you think they'll fit?

RANK: That's something I can't possibly have a reasoned opinion about.

NORA [*looks at him for a moment*]: Shame on you. [*Slaps his ear lightly with the stocking.*] That's what you get. [*Puts the things back in the carton.*]

RANK: And what other treasures are you going to show me?

NORA: Nothing at all, because you're naughty. [*She hums a little and rummages in the carton.*]

RANK [*after a brief silence*]: When I sit here like this, talking confidently with you, I can't imagine—I can't possibly imagine what would have become of me if I hadn't had you and Helmer.

NORA [*smiles*]: Well, yes—I do believe you like being with us.

RANK [*in a lower voice, lost in thought*]: And then to have to go away from it all—

NORA: Nonsense. You are not going anywhere.

RANK [*as before*]: —and not to leave behind as much as a poor little token of gratitude, hardly a brief memory of someone missed, nothing but a vacant place that anyone can fill.

NORA: And what if I were to ask you—? No—

RANK: Ask me what?

NORA: For a great proof of your friendship—

RANK: Yes, yes—?

NORA: No, I mean—for an enormous favor—

RANK: Would you really for once make me as happy as all that?

NORA: But you don't even know what it is.

RANK: Well, then; tell me.

NORA: Oh, but I can't, Dr. Rank. It's altogether too much to ask—It's advice and help and a favor—

RANK: So much the better. I can't even begin to guess what it is you have in mind. So for heaven's sake tell me! Don't you trust me?

NORA: Yes, I trust you more than anyone else I know. You are my best and most faithful friend. I know that. So I will tell you. All right, Dr. Rank. There is something you can help me prevent. You know how much Torvald loves me—beyond all words. Never for a moment would he hesitate to give his life for me.

RANK [*leaning over to her*]: Nora—do you really think he's the only one—?

NORA [*with a slight start*]: Who—?

RANK: —would gladly give his life for you.

NORA [*heavily*]: I see.

RANK: I have sworn an oath to myself to tell you before I go. I'll never find a better occasion.—All right, Nora; now you know. And now you also know that you can confide in me more than in anyone else.

NORA [*gets up; in a calm, steady voice*]: Let me get by.

RANK [*makes room for her but remains seated*]: Nora—

NORA [*in the door to the front hall*]: Helene, bring the lamp in here, please. [*Walks over to the stove.*] Oh, dear Dr. Rank. That really wasn't very nice of you.

RANK [*gets up*]: That I have loved you as much as anybody—was that not nice?

NORA: No; not that. But that you told me. There was no need for that.

RANK: What do you mean? Have you known—?

[THE MAID enters with the lamp, puts it on the table, and goes out.]

RANK: Nora—Mrs. Helmer—I'm asking you: did you know?

NORA: Oh, how can I tell what I knew and didn't know! I really can't say—But that you could be so awkward, Dr. Rank! Just when everything was so comfortable.

RANK: Well, anyway, now you know that I'm at your service with my life and soul. And now you must speak.

NORA [*looks at him*]: After what just happened?

RANK: I beg of you—let me know what it is.

NORA: There is nothing I can tell you now.

RANK: Yes, yes. You mustn't punish me this way.

Please let me do for you whatever anyone *can* do.

NORA: Now there is nothing you can do. Besides, I don't think I really need any help, anyway. It's probably just my imagination. Of course that's all it is. I'm sure of it! [*Sits down in the rocking chair, looks at him, smiles.*] Well, well, well, Dr. Rank!

What a fine gentleman you turned out to be! Aren't you ashamed of yourself, now that we have light?

RANK: No, not really. But perhaps I ought to leave—and not come back?

NORA: Don't be silly; of course not! You'll come here exactly as you have been doing. You know

perfectly well that Torvald can't do without you.

RANK: Yes, but what about you?

NORA: Oh, I always think it's perfectly delightful when you come.

RANK: That's the very thing that misled me. You are a riddle to me. It has often seemed to me that you'd just as soon be with me as with Helmer.

NORA: Well, you see, there are people you love, and then there are other people you'd almost rather be with.

RANK: Yes, there is something in that.

NORA: When I lived at home with Daddy, of course I loved him most. But I always thought it was so much fun to sneak off down to the maids' room, for they never gave me good advice and they always talked about such fun things.

RANK: Aha! So it's *their* place I have taken.

NORA [*jumps up and goes over to him*]: Oh dear, kind Dr. Rank, you know very well I didn't mean it that way. Can't you see that with Torvald it is the way it used to be with Daddy?

[THE MAID enters from the front hall.]

THE MAID: Ma'am! [*Whispers to her and gives her a caller's card.*]

NORA [*glances at the card*]: Ah! [*Puts it in her pocket.*]

RANK: Anything wrong?

NORA: No, no; not at all. It's nothing—just my new costume—

RANK: But your costume is lying right there!

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

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

NORA: That's it. Why don't you go in to him, please. He's in the inner office. And keep him there for a while—

RANK: Don't worry. He won't get away. [*Enters HELMER'S study.*]

NORA [*to THE MAID*]: You say he's waiting in the kitchen?

THE MAID: Yes. He came up the back stairs.

NORA: But didn't you tell him there was somebody with me?

THE MAID: Yes, but he wouldn't listen.

NORA: He won't leave?

THE MAID: No, not till he's had a word with you, ma'am.

NORA: All right. But try not to make any noise. And, Helene—don't tell anyone he's here. It's supposed to be a surprise for my husband.

THE MAID: I understand, ma'am—[*She leaves.*]

NORA: The terrible is happening. It's happening, after all. No, no, no. It can't happen. It won't happen. [*She bolts the study door.*]

[THE MAID opens the front hall door for KROGSTAD and closes the door behind him. He wears a fur coat for traveling, boots, and a fur hat.]

NORA [*toward him*]: Keep your voice down. My husband's home.

KROGSTAD: That's all right.

NORA: What do you want?

KROGSTAD: To find out something.

NORA: Be quick, then. What is it?

KROGSTAD: I expect you know I've been fired.

NORA: I couldn't prevent it, Mr. Krogstad. I fought for you as long and as hard as I could but it didn't do any good.

KROGSTAD: Your husband doesn't love you any more than that? He knows what I can do to you, and yet he runs the risk—

NORA: Surely you didn't think I'd tell him?

KROGSTAD: No, I really didn't. It wouldn't be like Torvald Helmer to show that kind of guts—

NORA: Mr. Krogstad, I insist that you show respect for my husband.

KROGSTAD: By all means. All due respect. But since you're so anxious to keep this a secret, may I assume that you are a little better informed than yesterday about exactly what you have done?

NORA: Better than *you* could ever teach me.

KROGSTAD: Of course. Such a bad lawyer as I am—

NORA: What do you want of me?

KROGSTAD: I just wanted to find out how you are, Mrs. Helmer. I've been thinking about you all day. You see, even a bill collector, a pen pusher, a—anyway, someone like me—even he has a little of what they call a heart.

NORA: Then show it. Think of my little children.

KROGSTAD: Have you and your husband thought of mine? Never mind. All I want to tell you is that you don't need to take this business too seriously. I have no intention of bringing charges right away.

NORA: Oh no, you wouldn't; would you? I knew you wouldn't.

KROGSTAD: The whole thing can be settled quite amiably. Nobody else needs to know anything. It will be between the three of us.

NORA: My husband must never find out about this.

KROGSTAD: How are you going to prevent that?

Maybe you can pay me the balance on the loan?

NORA: No, not right now.

KROGSTAD: Or do you have a way of raising the money one of these next few days?

NORA: None I intend to make use of.

KROGSTAD: It wouldn't do you any good, anyway. Even if you had the cash in your hand right this minute, I wouldn't give you your note back. It wouldn't make any difference *how* much money you offered me.

NORA: Then you'll have to tell me what you plan to use the note *for*.

KROGSTAD: Just keep it; that's all. Have it on hand, so to speak. I won't say a word to anybody else. So if you've been thinking about doing something desperate—

NORA: I have.

KROGSTAD: —like leaving house and home—

NORA: I have!

KROGSTAD: —or even something worse—

NORA: How did you know?

KROGSTAD: —then: don't.

NORA: How did you know I was thinking of *that*?

KROGSTAD: Most of us do, right at first. I did, too, but when it came down to it I didn't have the courage—

NORA [*tonelessly*]: Nor do I.

KROGSTAD [*relieved*]: See what I mean? I thought so. You don't either.

NORA: I don't. I don't.

KROGSTAD: Besides, it would be very silly of you. Once that first domestic blowup is behind you— Here in my pocket is a letter for your husband.

NORA: Telling him everything?

KROGSTAD: As delicately as possible.

NORA [*quickly*]: He mustn't get that letter. Tear it up. I'll get you the money somehow.

KROGSTAD: Excuse me, Mrs. Helmer, I thought I just told you—

NORA: I'm not talking about the money I owe you. Just let me know how much money you want from my husband, and I'll get it for you.

KROGSTAD: I want no money from your husband.

NORA: Then, what *do* you want?

KROGSTAD: I'll tell you, Mrs. Helmer. I want to rehabilitate myself; I want to get up in the world; and your husband is going to help me. For a year and a half I haven't done anything disreputable. All that time I have been struggling with the most miserable circumstances. I was content to work my way up step by step. Now I've been kicked out, and I'm no longer satisfied just getting my old job back. I want more than that; I want to get to the top. I'm being quite serious. I want the bank to take me back but in a higher position. I want your husband to create a new job for me—

NORA: He'll never do that!

KROGSTAD: He will. I know him. He won't dare not to. And once I'm back inside and he and I are working together, you'll see! Within a year I'll be the manager's right hand. It will be Nils Krogstad and not Torvald Helmer who'll be running the Mutual Bank!

NORA: You'll never see that happen!

KROGSTAD: Are you thinking of—?

NORA: Now I *do* have the courage.

KROGSTAD: You can't scare me. A fine, spoiled lady like you—

NORA: You'll see, you'll see!

KROGSTAD: Under the ice, perhaps? Down into that cold, black water? Then spring comes, and you float up again—hideous, can't be identified, hair all gone—

NORA: You don't frighten me.

KROGSTAD: Nor you me. One doesn't do that sort of thing, Mrs. Helmer. Besides, what good would it do? He'd still be in my power.

NORA: Afterwards? When I'm no longer—?

KROGSTAD: Aren't you forgetting that your reputation would be in my hands?

[NORA stares at him, speechless.]

KROGSTAD: All right; now I've told you what to expect. So don't do anything foolish. When Helmer gets my letter I expect to hear from him. And don't you forget that it's your husband himself who forces me to use such means again. That I'll never forgive him. Goodbye, Mrs. Helmer. [*Goes out through the hall.*]

NORA [*at the door, opens it a little, listens*]: He's going. And no letter. Of course not! That would be impossible. [*Opens the door more.*] What's he doing? He's still there. Doesn't go down. Having second thoughts—? Will he—?

[*The sound of a letter dropping into the mailbox. Then KROGSTAD's steps are heard going down the stairs, gradually dying away.*]

NORA [*with a muted cry runs forward to the table by the couch; brief pause*]: In the mailbox. [*Tiptoes back to the door to the front hall.*] There it is. Torvald, Torvald—now we're lost!

MRS. LINDE [*enters from the left, carrying NORA's Capri costume*]: There now. I think it's all fixed. Why don't we try it on you—

NORA [*in a low, hoarse voice*]: Kristine, come here.

MRS. LINDE: What's wrong with you? You look quite beside yourself.

NORA: Come over here. Do you see that letter? There, look—through the glass in the mailbox.

MRS. LINDE: Yes, yes; I see it.

NORA: That letter is from Krogstad.

MRS. LINDE: Nora—it was Krogstad who lent you the money!

NORA: Yes, and now Torvald will find out about it.

MRS. LINDE: Oh believe me, Nora. That's the best thing for both of you.

NORA: There's more to it than you know. I forged a signature—

MRS. LINDE: Oh my God—!

NORA: I just want to tell you this, Kristine, that you must be my witness.
 MRS. LINDE: Witness? How? Witness to what?
 NORA: If I lose my mind—and that could very well happen—
 MRS. LINDE: Nora!
 NORA: —or if something were to happen to me—something that made it impossible for me to be here—
 MRS. LINDE: Nora, Nora! You're not yourself!
 NORA: —and if someone were to take all the blame, assume the whole responsibility—Do you understand—?
 MRS. LINDE: Yes, yes; but how can you think—!
 NORA: Then you are to witness that that's not so, Kristine. I am not beside myself. I am perfectly rational, and what I'm telling you is that nobody else has known about this. I've done it all by myself, the whole thing. Just remember that.
 MRS. LINDE: I will. But I don't understand any of it.
 NORA: Oh, how could you! For it's the wonderful that's about to happen.
 MRS. LINDE: The wonderful?
 NORA: Yes, the wonderful. But it's so terrible, Kristine. It mustn't happen for anything in the whole world!
 MRS. LINDE: I'm going over to talk to Krogstad right now.
 NORA: No, don't. Don't go to him. He'll do something bad to you.
 MRS. LINDE: There was a time when he would have done anything for me.
 NORA: He!
 MRS. LINDE: Where does he live?
 NORA: Oh, I don't know—Yes, wait a minute—
 [Reaches into her pocket.] here's his card.—But the letter, the letter—!
 HELMER [in his study, knocks on the door]: Nora!
 NORA [cries out in fear]: Oh, what is it? What do you want?
 HELMER: That's all right. Nothing to be scared about. We're not coming in. For one thing, you've bolted the door, you know. Are you modeling your costume?
 NORA: Yes, yes; I am. I'm going to be so pretty, Torvald.
 MRS. LINDE [having looked at the card]: He lives just around the corner.
 NORA: Yes, but it's no use. Nothing can save us now. The letter is in the mailbox.
 MRS. LINDE: And your husband has the key?
 NORA: Yes. He always keeps it with him.
 MRS. LINDE: Krogstad must ask for his letter back, unread. He's got to think up some pretext or other—
 NORA: But this is just the time of day when Torvald—

MRS. LINDE: Delay him. Go in to him. I'll be back as soon as I can. [She hurries out through the hall door.]
 NORA [walks over to HELMER's door, opens it, and peeks in]: Torvald.
 HELMER [still offstage]: Well, well! So now one's allowed in one's own living room again. Come on, Rank. Now we'll see— [In the doorway.] But what's this?
 NORA: What, Torvald dear?
 HELMER: Rank prepared me for a splendid metamorphosis.
 RANK [in the doorway]: That's how I understood it. Evidently I was mistaken.
 NORA: Nobody gets to admire me in my costume before tomorrow.
 HELMER: But, dearest Nora—you look all done in. Have you been practicing too hard?
 NORA: No, I haven't practiced at all.
 HELMER: But you'll have to, you know.
 NORA: I know it, Torvald. I simply must. But I can't do a thing unless you help me. I have forgotten everything.
 HELMER: Oh it will all come back. We'll work on it.
 NORA: Oh yes, please, Torvald. You just have to help me. Promise? I am so nervous. That big party— You mustn't do anything else tonight. Not a bit of business. Don't even touch a pen. Will you promise, Torvald?
 HELMER: I promise. Tonight I'll be entirely at your service—you helpless little thing.—Just a moment, though. First I want to— [Goes to the door to the front hall.]
 NORA: What are you doing out there?
 HELMER: Just looking to see if there's any mail.
 NORA: No, no! Don't, Torvald!
 HELMER: Why not?
 NORA: Torvald, I beg you. There is no mail.
 HELMER: Let me just look, anyway. [Is about to go out.]
 [NORA by the piano, plays the first bars of the tarantella dance.]
 HELMER [halts at the door]: Aha!
 NORA: I won't be able to dance tomorrow if I don't get to practice with you.
 HELMER [goes to her]: Are you really all that scared, Nora dear?
 NORA: Yes, so terribly scared. Let's try it right now. There's still time before we eat. Oh please, sit down and play for me, Torvald. Teach me, coach me, the way you always do.
 HELMER: Of course I will, my darling, if that's what you want. [Sits down at the piano.]
 [NORA takes the tambourine out of the carton, as well as a long, many-colored shawl. She quickly drapes the shawl around herself, then leaps into the middle of the floor.]

NORA: Play for me! I want to dance!

[HELMER plays and NORA dances. DR. RANK stands by the piano behind HELMER and watches.]

HELMER [playing]: Slow down, slow down!

NORA: Can't!

HELMER: Not so violent, Nora!

NORA: It has to be this way.

HELMER [stops playing]: No, no. This won't do at all.

NORA [laughing, swinging her tambourine]: What did I tell you?

RANK: Why don't you let me play?

HELMER [getting up]: Good idea. Then I can direct her better.

[RANK sits down at the piano and starts playing. NORA dances more and more wildly. HELMER stands over by the stove, repeatedly correcting her. She doesn't seem to hear. Her hair comes loose and falls down over her shoulders. She doesn't notice but keeps on dancing. MRS. LINDE enters.]

MRS. LINDE [stops by the door, dumbfounded]: Ah—!

NORA [dancing]: We're having such fun, Kristine!

HELMER: My dearest Nora, you're dancing as if it were a matter of life and death!

NORA: It is! It is!

HELMER: Rank, stop. This is sheer madness. Stop, I say!

[RANK stops playing; NORA suddenly stops dancing.]

HELMER [goes over to her]: If I hadn't seen it I wouldn't have believed it. You've forgotten every single thing I ever taught you.

NORA [tosses away the tambourine]: See? I told you.

HELMER: Well! You certainly need coaching.

NORA: Didn't I tell you I did? Now you've seen for yourself. I'll need your help till the very minute we're leaving for the party. Will you promise, Torvald?

HELMER: You can count on it.

NORA: You're not to think of anything except me—not tonight and not tomorrow. You're not to read any letters—not to look in the mailbox—

HELMER: Ah, I see. You're still afraid of that man.

NORA: Yes—yes, that too.

HELMER: Nora, I can tell from looking at you. There's a letter from him out there.

NORA: I don't know. I think so. But you're not to read it now. I don't want anything ugly to come between us before it's all over.

RANK [to HELMER in a low voice]: Better not argue with her.

HELMER [throws his arm around her]: The child shall have her way. But tomorrow night, when you've done your dance—

NORA: Then you'll be free.

THE MAID [in the door, right]: Dinner can be served any time, ma'am.

NORA: We want champagne, Helene.

THE MAID: Very good, ma'am. [Goes out.]

HELMER: Aha! Having a party, eh?

NORA: Champagne from now till sunrise! [Calls out.]

And some macaroons, Helene. Lots!—just this once.

HELMER [taking her hands]: There, there—I don't like this wild—frenzy—Be my own sweet little lark again, the way you always are.

NORA: Oh, I will. But you go on in. You too, Dr. Rank. Kristine, please help me put up my hair.

RANK [in a low voice to HELMER as they go out]: You don't think she is—you know—expecting—?

HELMER: Oh no. Nothing like that. It's just this childish fear I was telling you about. [They go out, right.]

NORA: Well?

MRS. LINDE: Left town.

NORA: I saw it in your face.

MRS. LINDE: He'll be back tomorrow night. I left him a note.

NORA: You shouldn't have. I don't want you to try to stop anything. You see, it's a kind of ecstasy, too, this waiting for the wonderful.

MRS. LINDE: But what is it you're waiting for?

NORA: You wouldn't understand. Why don't you go in to the others. I'll be there in a minute.

[MRS. LINDE enters the dining room, right.]

NORA [stands still for a little while, as if collecting herself; she looks at her watch]: Five o'clock. Seven hours till midnight. Twenty-four more hours till next midnight. Then the tarantella is over. Twenty-four plus seven—thirty-one more hours to live.

HELMER [in the door, right]: What's happening to my little lark?

NORA [to him, with open arms]: Here's your lark!

ACT III

The same room. The table by the couch and the chairs around it have been moved to the middle of the floor. A lighted lamp is on the table. The door to the front hall is open. Dance music is heard from upstairs.

MRS. LINDE is seated by the table, idly leafing through the pages of a book. She tries to read but seems unable to concentrate. Once or twice she turns her head in the direction of the door, anxiously listening.

MRS. LINDE [looks at her watch]: Not yet. It's almost too late. If only he hasn't— [Listens again.] Ah! There he is. [She goes to the hall and opens the front door carefully. Quiet footsteps on the stairs. She whispers.] Come in. There's nobody here.

KROGSTAD [*in the door*]: I found your note when I got home. What's this all about?
 MRS. LINDE: I've got to talk to you.
 KROGSTAD: Oh? And it has to be here?
 MRS. LINDE: It couldn't be at my place. My room doesn't have a separate entrance. Come in. We're quite alone. The maid is asleep and the Helmers are at a party upstairs.
 KROGSTAD [*entering*]: Really? The Helmers are dancing tonight, are they?
 MRS. LINDE: And why not?
 KROGSTAD: You're right. Why not, indeed.
 MRS. LINDE: All right, Krogstad. Let's talk, you and I.
 KROGSTAD: I didn't know we had anything to talk about.
 MRS. LINDE: We have much to talk about.
 KROGSTAD: I didn't think so.
 MRS. LINDE: No, because you've never really understood me.
 KROGSTAD: What was there to understand? What happened was perfectly commonplace. A heartless woman jilts a man when she gets a more attractive offer.
 MRS. LINDE: Do you think I'm all that heartless? And do you think it was easy for me to break with you?
 KROGSTAD: No?
 MRS. LINDE: You really thought it was?
 KROGSTAD: If it wasn't, why did you write the way you did that time?
 MRS. LINDE: What else could I do? If I had to make a break, I also had the duty to destroy whatever feelings you had for me.
 KROGSTAD [*clenching his hands*]: So that's the way it was. And you did—that—just for money!
 MRS. LINDE: Don't forget I had a helpless mother and two small brothers. We couldn't wait for you, Krogstad. You know yourself how uncertain your prospects were then.
 KROGSTAD: All right. But you still didn't have the right to throw me over for somebody else.
 MRS. LINDE: I don't know. I have asked myself that question many times. Did I have that right?
 KROGSTAD [*in a lower voice*]: When I lost you I lost my footing. Look at me now. A shipwrecked man on a raft.
 MRS. LINDE: Rescue may be near.
 KROGSTAD: It *was* near. Then you came between.
 MRS. LINDE: I didn't know that, Krogstad. Only today did I find out it's your job I'm taking over in the bank.
 KROGSTAD: I believe you when you say so. But now that you *do* know, aren't you going to step aside?
 MRS. LINDE: No, for it wouldn't do you any good.
 KROGSTAD: Whether it would or not—I would do it.
 MRS. LINDE: I have learned common sense. Life and hard necessity have taught me that.

KROGSTAD: And life has taught me not to believe in pretty speeches.
 MRS. LINDE: Then life has taught you a very sensible thing. But you do believe in actions, don't you?
 KROGSTAD: How do you mean?
 MRS. LINDE: You referred to yourself just now as a shipwrecked man.
 KROGSTAD: It seems to me I had every reason to do so.
 MRS. LINDE: And I am a shipwrecked woman. No one to grieve for, no one to care for.
 KROGSTAD: You made your choice.
 MRS. LINDE: I had no other choice that time.
 KROGSTAD: Let's say you didn't. What then?
 MRS. LINDE: Krogstad, how would it be if we two shipwrecked people got together?
 KROGSTAD: What's this!
 MRS. LINDE: Two on one wreck are better off than each on his own.
 KROGSTAD: Kristine!
 MRS. LINDE: Why do you think I came to town?
 KROGSTAD: Surely not because of me?
 MRS. LINDE: If I'm going to live at all I must work. All my life, for as long as I can remember, I have worked. That's been my one and only pleasure. But now that I'm all alone in the world I feel nothing but this terrible emptiness and desolation. There is no joy in working just for yourself. Krogstad—give me someone and something to work for.
 KROGSTAD: I don't believe this. Only hysterical females go in for that kind of high-minded self-sacrifice.
 MRS. LINDE: Did you ever know me to be hysterical?
 KROGSTAD: You really could do this? Listen—do you know about my past? All of it?
 MRS. LINDE: Yes, I do.
 KROGSTAD: Do you also know what people think of me around here?
 MRS. LINDE: A little while ago you sounded as if you thought that together with me you might have become a different person.
 KROGSTAD: I'm sure of it.
 MRS. LINDE: Couldn't that still be?
 KROGSTAD: Kristine—do you know what you are doing? Yes, I see you do. And you think you have the courage—?
 MRS. LINDE: I need someone to be a mother to, and your children need a mother. You and I need one another. Nils, I believe in you—in the real you. Together with you I dare to do anything.
 KROGSTAD [*seizes her hands*]: Thanks, thanks, Kristine—Now I know I'll raise myself in the eyes of others—Ah, but I forget—!
 MRS. LINDE [*listening*]: Shh!—there's the tarantella. You must go; hurry!
 KROGSTAD: Why? What is it?

MRS. LINDE: Do you hear what they're playing up there? When that dance is over they'll be down.

KROGSTAD: All right. I'm leaving. The whole thing is pointless, anyway. Of course you don't know what I'm doing to the Helmers.

MRS. LINDE: Yes, Krogstad; I do know.

KROGSTAD: Still, you're brave enough—?

MRS. LINDE: I very well understand to what extremes despair can drive a man like you.

KROGSTAD: If only it could be undone!

MRS. LINDE: It could, for your letter is still out there in the mailbox.

KROGSTAD: Are you sure?

MRS. LINDE: Quite sure. But—

KROGSTAD [*looks searchingly at her*]: Maybe I'm beginning to understand. You want to save your friend at any cost. Be honest with me. That's it, isn't it?

MRS. LINDE: Krogstad, you may sell yourself once for somebody else's sake, but you don't do it twice.

KROGSTAD: I'll demand my letter back.

MRS. LINDE: No, no.

KROGSTAD: Yes, of course. I'll wait here till Helmer comes down. Then I'll ask him for my letter. I'll tell him it's just about my dismissal—that he shouldn't read it.

MRS. LINDE: No, Krogstad. You are not to ask for that letter back.

KROGSTAD: But tell me—wasn't that the real reason you wanted to meet me here?

MRS. LINDE: At first it was, because I was so frightened. But that was yesterday. Since then I have seen the most incredible things going on in this house. Helmer must learn the whole truth. This miserable secret must come out in the open; those two must come to a full understanding. They simply can't continue with all this concealment and evasion.

KROGSTAD: All right; if you want to take that chance. But there is one thing I *can* do, and I'll do that right now.

MRS. LINDE [*listening*]: But hurry! Go! The dance is over. We aren't safe another minute.

KROGSTAD: I'll be waiting for you downstairs.

MRS. LINDE: Yes, do. You must see me home.

KROGSTAD: I've never been so happy in my whole life. [*He leaves through the front door. The door between the living room and the front hall remains open.*]

MRS. LINDE [*straightens up the room a little and gets her things ready*]: What a change! Oh yes!—what a change! People to work for—to live for—a home to bring happiness to. I can't wait to get to work—! If only they'd come soon— [*Listens.*] Ah, there they are. Get my coat on— [*Puts on her coat and hat.*]

[HELMER's and NORA's voices are heard outside. A key is turned in the lock, and HELMER almost forces NORA into

the hall. She is dressed in her Italian costume, with a big black shawl over her shoulders. He is in evening dress under an open black cloak.]

NORA [*in the door, still resisting*]: No, no, no! I don't want to! I want to go back upstairs. I don't want to leave so early.

HELMER: But dearest Nora—

NORA: Oh please, Torvald—please! I'm asking you as nicely as I can—just another hour!

HELMER: Not another minute, sweet. You know we agreed. There now. Get inside. You'll catch a cold out here. [*She still resists, but he guides her gently into the room.*]

MRS. LINDE: Good evening.

NORA: Kristine!

HELMER: Ah, Mrs. Linde. Still here?

MRS. LINDE: I know. I really should apologize, but I so much wanted to see Nora in her costume.

NORA: You've been waiting up for me?

MRS. LINDE: Yes, unfortunately I didn't get here in time. You were already upstairs, but I just didn't feel like leaving till I had seen you.

HELMER [*removing NORA's shawl*]: Yes, do take a good look at her, Mrs. Linde. I think I may say she's worth looking at. Isn't she lovely?

MRS. LINDE: She certainly is—

HELMER: Isn't she a miracle of loveliness, though? That was the general opinion at the party, too. But dreadfully obstinate—that she is, the sweet little thing. What can we do about that? Will you believe it—I practically had to use force to get her away.

NORA: Oh Torvald, you're going to be sorry you didn't give me even half an hour more.

HELMER: See what I mean, Mrs. Linde? She dances the tarantella—she is a tremendous success—quite deservedly so, though perhaps her performance was a little too natural—I mean, more than could be reconciled with the rules of art. But all right! The point is: she's a success, a tremendous success. So should I let her stay after that? Weaken the effect? Of course not. So I take my lovely little Capri girl—I might say, my capricious little Capri girl—under my arm—a quick turn around the room—a graceful bow in all directions, and—as they say in the novels—the beautiful apparition is gone. A finale should always be done for effect, Mrs. Linde, but there doesn't seem to be any way of getting that into Nora's head. Pooh—! It's hot in here. [*Throws his cloak down on a chair and opens the door to his room.*] Why, it's dark in here! Of course. Excuse me— [*Goes inside and lights a couple of candles.*]

NORA [*in a hurried, breathless whisper*]: Well?

MRS. LINDE [*in a low voice*]: I have talked to him.

NORA: And—?

MRS. LINDE: Nora—you've got to tell your husband everything.

NORA [*no expression in her voice*]: I knew it.

MRS. LINDE: You have nothing to fear from Krogstad. But you must speak.

NORA: I'll say nothing.

MRS. LINDE: Then the letter will.

NORA: Thank you, Kristine. Now I know what I have to do. Shh!

HELMER [*returning*]: Well, Mrs. Linde, have you looked your fill?

MRS. LINDE: Yes. And now I'll say goodnight.

HELMER: So soon? Is that your knitting?

MRS. LINDE [*takes it*]: Yes, thank you. I almost forgot.

HELMER: So you knit, do you?

MRS. LINDE: Oh yes.

HELMER: You know—you ought to take up embroidery instead.

MRS. LINDE: Oh? Why?

HELMER: Because it's so much more beautiful. Look. You hold the embroidery so—in your left hand. Then with your right you move the needle—like this—in an easy, elongated arc—you see?

MRS. LINDE: Maybe you're right—

HELMER: Knitting, on the other hand, can never be anything but ugly. Look here: arms pressed close to the sides—the needles going up and down—there's something Chinese about it somehow—That really was an excellent champagne they served us tonight.

MRS. LINDE: Well, goodnight! Nora. And don't be obstinate any more.

HELMER: Well said, Mrs. Linde!

MRS. LINDE: Goodnight, sir.

HELMER [*sees her to the front door*]: Goodnight, goodnight. I hope you'll get home all right? I'd be very glad to—but of course you don't have far to walk, do you? Goodnight, goodnight. [*She leaves. He closes the door behind her and returns to the living room.*] There! At last we got rid of her. She really is an incredible bore, that woman.

NORA: Aren't you very tired, Torvald?

HELMER: No, not in the least.

NORA: Not sleepy either?

HELMER: Not at all. Quite the opposite. I feel enormously—animated. How about you? Yes, you do look tired and sleepy.

NORA: Yes, I am very tired. Soon I'll be asleep.

HELMER: What did I tell you? I was right, wasn't I? Good thing I didn't let you stay any longer.

NORA: Everything you do is right.

HELMER [*kissing her forehead*]: Now my little lark is talking like a human being. But did you notice what splendid spirits Rank was in tonight?

NORA: Was he? I didn't notice. I didn't get to talk with him.

HELMER: Nor did I—hardly. But I haven't seen him in such a good mood for a long time. [*Looks at her, comes closer to her.*] Ah! It does feel good to be back in our own home again, to be quite alone with you—my young, lovely, ravishing woman!

NORA: Don't look at me like that, Torvald!

HELMER: Am I not to look at my most precious possession? All that loveliness that is mine, nobody's but mine, all of it mine.

NORA [*walks to the other side of the table*]: I won't have you talk to me like that tonight.

HELMER [*follows her*]: The Tarantella is still in your blood. I can tell. That only makes you all the more alluring. Listen! The guests are beginning to leave. [*Softly.*] Nora—soon the whole house will be quiet.

NORA: Yes, I hope so.

HELMER: Yes, don't you, my darling? Do you know—when I'm at a party with you, like tonight—do you know why I hardly ever talk to you, why I keep away from you, only look at you once in a while—a few stolen glances—do you know why I do that? It's because I pretend that you are my secret love, my young, secret bride-to-be, and nobody has the slightest suspicion that there is anything between us.

NORA: Yes, I know. All your thoughts are with me.

HELMER: Then when we're leaving and I lay your shawl around your delicate young shoulders—around that wonderful curve of your neck—then I imagine you're my young bride, that we're coming away from the wedding, that I am taking you to my home for the first time—that I am alone with you for the first time—quite alone with you, you young, trembling beauty! I have desired you all evening—there hasn't been a longing in me that hasn't been for you. When you were dancing the tarantella, chasing, inviting—my blood was on fire; I couldn't stand it any longer—that's why I brought you down so early—

NORA: Leave me now, Torvald. Please! I don't want all this.

HELMER: What do you mean? You're only playing your little teasing bird game with me; aren't you, Nora? Don't want to? I'm your husband, aren't I?

[*There is a knock on the front door.*]

NORA [*with a start*]: Did you hear that—?

HELMER [*on his way to the hall*]: Who is it?

RANK [*outside*]: It's me. May I come in for a moment?

HELMER [*in a low voice, annoyed*]: Oh, what does he want now? [*Aloud.*] Just a minute. [*Opens the door.*] Well! How good of you not to pass by our door.

RANK: I thought I heard your voice, so I felt like saying hello. [*Looks around.*] Ah yes—this dear, familiar room. What a cozy, comfortable place you have here, you two.

HELMER: Looked to me as if you were quite comfortable upstairs too.

RANK: I certainly was. Why not? Why not enjoy all you can in this world? As much as you can for as long as you can, anyway. Excellent wine.

HELMER: The champagne, particularly.

RANK: You noticed that too? Incredible how much I managed to put away.

NORA: Torvald drank a lot of champagne tonight, too.

RANK: Did he?

NORA: Yes, he did, and then he's always so much fun afterwards.

RANK: Well, why not have some fun in the evening after a well spent day?

HELMER: Well spent? I'm afraid I can't claim that.

RANK [*slapping him lightly on the shoulder*]: But you see, I can!

NORA: Dr. Rank, I believe you must have been conducting a scientific test today.

RANK: Exactly.

HELMER: What do you know—little Nora talking about scientific tests!

NORA: May I congratulate you on the result?

RANK: You may indeed.

NORA: It was a good one?

RANK: The best possible for both doctor and patient—certainty.

NORA [*a quick query*]: Certainty?

RANK: Absolute certainty. So why shouldn't I have myself an enjoyable evening afterwards?

NORA: I quite agree with you, Dr. Rank. You should.

HELMER: And so do I. If only you don't pay for it tomorrow.

RANK: Oh well—you get nothing for nothing in this world.

NORA: Dr. Rank—you are fond of costume parties, aren't you?

RANK: Yes, particularly when there is a reasonable number of amusing disguises.

NORA: Listen—what are the two of us going to be the next time?

HELMER: You frivolous little thing! Already thinking about the next party!

RANK: You and I? That's easy. You'll be Fortune's Child.

HELMER: Yes, but what is a fitting costume for that?

RANK: Let your wife appear just the way she always is.

HELMER: Beautiful. Very good indeed. But how about yourself? Don't you know what you'll go as?

RANK: Yes, my friend. I know precisely what I'll be.

HELMER: Yes?

RANK: At the next masquerade I'll be invisible.

HELMER: That's a funny idea.

RANK: There's a certain black hat—you've heard about the hat that makes you invisible, haven't you? You put that on, and nobody can see you.

HELMER [*suppressing a smile*]: I guess that's right.

RANK: But I'm forgetting what I came for. Helmer, give me a cigar—one of your dark Havanas.

HELMER: With the greatest pleasure. [*Offers him his case.*]

RANK [*takes one and cuts off the tip*]: Thanks.

NORA [*striking a match*]: Let me give you a light.

RANK: Thanks. [*She holds the match; he lights his cigar.*]

And now goodbye!

HELMER: Goodbye, goodbye, my friend.

NORA: Sleep well, Dr. Rank.

RANK: I thank you.

NORA: Wish me the same.

RANK: You? Well, if you really want me to—Sleep well. And thanks for the light. [*He nods to both of them and goes out.*]

HELMER [*in a low voice*]: He had had quite a bit to drink.

NORA [*absently*]: Maybe so.

[HELMER *takes out his keys and goes out into the hall.*]

NORA: Torvald—what are you doing out there?

HELMER: Emptying the mailbox. It is quite full. There wouldn't be room for the newspapers in the morning—

NORA: Are you going to work tonight?

HELMER: You know very well I won't.—Say! What's this? Somebody's been at the lock.

NORA: The lock—?

HELMER: Yes. Why, I wonder. I hate to think that any of the maids—. Here's a broken hairpin. It's one of yours. Nora.

NORA [*quickly*]: Then it must be one of the children.

HELMER: You better make damn sure they stop that.

Hm, hm.— There! I got it open, finally. [*Gathers up the mail, calls out to the kitchen.*]

Helene?—Oh Helene—turn out the light here in the hall, will you? [*He comes back into the living room and closes the door.*] Look how it's been piling up. [*Shows her the bundle of letters. Starts leafing through it.*]

What's this? NORA [*by the window*]: The letter! Oh no, no, Torvald!

HELMER: Two calling cards—from Rank.

NORA: From Dr. Rank?

HELMER [*looking at them*]: "Doctor medicinae Rank."

They were on top. He must have put them there when he left just now.

NORA: Anything written on them?

HELMER: A black cross above the name. What a macabre idea. Like announcing his own death.

NORA: That's what it is.

HELMER: Hm? You know about this? Has he said anything to you?

NORA: That card means he has said goodbye to us. He'll lock himself up to die.

HELMER: My poor friend. I knew of course he wouldn't be with me very long. But so soon—

And hiding himself away like a wounded animal—

NORA: When it has to be, it's better it happens without words. Don't you think so, Torvald?

HELMER [*walking up and down*]: He'd grown so close to us. I find it hard to think of him as gone. With his suffering and loneliness he was like a clouded background for our happy sunshine. Well, it may be better this way. For him, at any rate. [*Stops.*] And perhaps for us, too, Nora. For now we have nobody but each other. [*Embraces her.*] Oh you—my beloved wife! I feel I just can't hold you close enough. Do you know, Nora—many times I have wished some great danger threatened you, so I could risk my life and blood and everything—everything, for your sake.

NORA [*frees herself and says in a strong and firm voice*]: I think you should go and read your letters now, Torvald.

HELMER: No, no—not tonight. I want to be with you, my darling.

NORA: With the thought of your dying friend—?

HELMER: You are right. This has shaken both of us. Something not beautiful has come between us. Thoughts of death and dissolution. We must try to get over it—out of it. Till then—we'll each go to our own room.

NORA [*her arms around his neck*]: Torvald—goodnight! Goodnight!

HELMER [*kisses her forehead*]: Goodnight, my little songbird. Sleep well, Nora. Now I'll read my letters. [*He goes into his room, carrying the mail. Closes the door.*]

NORA [*her eyes desperate, her hands groping, finds HELMER's black cloak and throws it around her; she whispers, quickly, brokenly, hoarsely*]: Never see him again. Never. Never. Never. [*Puts her shawl over her head.*] And never see the children again, either. Never; never.—The black, icy water—fathomless—this—! If only it was all over.—Now he has it. Now he's reading it. No, no; not yet. Torvald—goodbye—you—the children—

[*She is about to hurry through the hall, when HELMER flings open the door to his room and stands there with an open letter in his hand.*]

HELMER: Nora!

NORA [*cries out*]: Ah—!

HELMER: What is it? You know what's in this letter?

NORA: Yes, I do! Let me go! Let me out!

HELMER [*holds her back*]: Where do you think you're going?

NORA [*trying to tear herself loose from him*]: I won't let you save me, Torvald!

HELMER [*tumbles back*]: True! Is it true what he writes? Oh my God! No, no—this can't possibly be true.

NORA: It is true. I have loved you more than anything else in the whole world.

HELMER: Oh, don't give me any silly excuses.

NORA [*taking a step towards him*]: Torvald—!

HELMER: You wretch! What have you done!

NORA: Let me go. You are not to sacrifice yourself for me. You are not to take the blame.

HELMER: No more playacting. [*Locks the door to the front hall.*] You'll stay here and answer me. Do you understand what you have done? Answer me! Do you understand?

NORA [*gazes steadily at him with an increasingly frozen expression*]: Yes. Now I'm beginning to understand.

HELMER [*walking up and down*]: What a dreadful awakening. All these years—all these eight years—she, my pride and my joy—a hypocrite, a liar—oh worse! worse!—a criminal! Oh, the bottomless ugliness in all this! Damn! Damn! Damn!

[*NORA, silent, keeps gazing at him.*]

HELMER [*stops in front of her*]: I ought to have guessed that something like this would happen. I should have expected it. All your father's loose principles—Silence! You have inherited every one of your father's loose principles. No religion, no morals, no sense of duty—. Now I am being punished for my leniency with him. I did it for your sake, and this is how you pay me back.

NORA: Yes. This is how.

HELMER: You have ruined all my happiness. My whole future—that's what you have destroyed. Oh, it's terrible to think about. I am at the mercy of an unscrupulous man. He can do with me whatever he likes, demand anything of me, command me and dispose of me just as he pleases—I dare not say a word! To go down so miserably, to be destroyed—all because of an irresponsible woman!

NORA: When I am gone from the world, you'll be free.

HELMER: No noble gestures, please. Your father was always full of such phrases too. What good would it do me if you were gone from the world, as you put it? Not the slightest good at all. He could still make the whole thing public, and if he did, people would be likely to think I had been your accomplice. They might even think it was my idea—that it was I who urged you to do it! And for all this I have you to thank—you, whom I've borne on my hands through all the years of our marriage. *Now* do you understand what you've done to me?

NORA [*with cold calm*]: Yes.

HELMER: I just can't get it into my head that this is happening; it's all so incredible. But we have to come to terms with it somehow. Take your shawl off. Take it off, I say! I have to satisfy him one way

or another. The whole affair must be kept quiet at whatever cost.—And as far as you and I are concerned, nothing must seem to have changed. I'm talking about appearances, of course. You'll go on living here; that goes without saying. But I won't let you bring up the children; I dare not trust you with them.—Oh! Having to say this to one I have loved so much, and whom I still—! But all that is past. It's not a question of happiness any more but of hanging on to what can be salvaged—pieces, appearances— [*The doorbell rings.*]

HELMER [*jumps*]: What's that? So late. Is the worst—? Has he—! Hide, Nora! Say you're sick.

NORA *doesn't move*. HELMER *opens the door to the hall*.

THE MAID [*half dressed, out in the hall*]: A letter for your wife, sir.

HELMER: Give it to me. [*Takes the letter and closes the door.*] Yes, it's from him. But I won't let you have it. I'll read it myself.

NORA: Yes, you read it.

HELMER [*by the lamp*]: I hardly dare. Perhaps we're lost, both you and I. No; I've got to know. [*Tears the letter open, glances through it, looks at an enclosure; a cry of joy.*] Nora!

[NORA *looks at him with a question in her eyes.*]

HELMER: Nora!—No, I must read it again.—Yes, yes; it is so! I'm saved! Nora, I'm saved!

NORA: And I?

HELMER: You too, of course; we're both saved, both you and I. Look! He's returning your note. He writes that he's sorry, he regrets, a happy turn in his life—oh, it doesn't matter what he writes. We're saved, Nora! Nobody can do anything to you now. Oh Nora, Nora—. No, I want to get rid of this disgusting thing first. Let me see— [*Looks at the signature.*] No, I don't want to see it. I don't want it to be more than a bad dream, the whole thing. [*Tears up the note and both letters, throws the pieces in the stove, and watches them burn.*] There! Now it's gone.—He wrote that ever since Christmas Eve—. Good God, Nora, these must have been three terrible days for you.

NORA: I have fought a hard fight these last three days.

HELMER: And been in agony and seen no other way out than—. No, we won't think of all that ugliness. We'll just rejoice and tell ourselves it's over, it's all over! Oh, listen to me, Nora. You don't seem to understand. It's over. What is it? Why do you look like that—that frozen expression on your face? Oh my poor little Nora, don't you think I know what it is? You can't make yourself believe that I have forgiven you. But I have, Nora; I swear to you,

I have forgiven you for everything. Of course I know that what you did was for love of me.

NORA: That is true.

HELMER: You have loved me the way a wife ought to love her husband. You just didn't have the wisdom to judge the means. But do you think I love you any less because you don't know how to act on your own? Of course not. Just lean on me. I'll advise you; I'll guide you. I wouldn't be a man if I didn't find you twice as attractive because of your womanly helplessness. You mustn't pay any attention to the hard words I said to you right at first. It was just that first shock when I thought everything was collapsing all around me. I have forgiven you, Nora. I swear to you—I really have forgiven you.

NORA: I thank you for your forgiveness. [*She goes out through the door, right.*]

HELMER: No, stay— [*Looks into the room she entered.*] What are you doing in there?

NORA [*within*]: Getting out of my costume.

HELMER [*by the open door*]: Good, good. Try to calm down and compose yourself, my poor little frightened songbird. Rest safely; I have broad wings to cover you with. [*Walks around near the door.*] What a nice and cozy home we have, Nora. Here's shelter for you. Here I'll keep you safe like a hunted dove I have rescued from the hawk's talons. Believe me: I'll know how to quiet your beating heart. It will happen by and by, Nora; you'll see. Why, tomorrow you'll look at all this in quite a different light. And soon everything will be just the way it was before. I won't need to keep reassuring you that I have forgiven you; you'll feel it yourself. Did you really think I could have abandoned you, or even reproached you? Oh, you don't know a real man's heart, Nora. There is something unspeakably sweet and satisfactory for a man to know deep in himself that he has forgiven his wife—forgiven her in all the fullness of his honest heart. You see, that way she becomes his very own all over again—in a double sense, you might say. He has, so to speak, given her a second birth; it is as if she had become his wife and his child, both. From now on that's what you'll be to me, you lost and helpless creature. Don't worry about a thing, Nora. Only be frank with me, and I'll be your will and your conscience.—What's this? You're not in bed? You've changed your dress—!

NORA [*in an everyday dress*]: Yes, Torvald. I have changed my dress.

HELMER: But why—now—this late?

NORA: I'm not going to sleep tonight.

HELMER: But my dear Nora—

NORA [*looks at her watch*]: It isn't all that late. Sit down here with me, Torvald. You and I have much to talk about. [*Sits down at the table.*]

HELMER: Nora—what is this all about? That rigid face—

NORA: Sit down. This will take a while. I have much to say to you.

HELMER [*sits down, facing her across the table*]: You worry me, Nora. I don't understand you.

NORA: No, that's just it. You don't understand me. And I have never understood you—not till tonight. No, don't interrupt me. Just listen to what I have to say.—This is a settling of accounts, Torvald.

HELMER: What do you mean by that?

NORA [*after a brief silence*]: Doesn't one thing strike you, now that we are sitting together like this?

HELMER: What would that be?

NORA: We have been married for eight years. Doesn't it occur to you that this is the first time that you and I, husband and wife, are having a serious talk?

HELMER: Well—serious—. What do you mean by that?

NORA: For eight whole years—longer, in fact—ever since we first met, we have never talked seriously to each other about a single serious thing.

HELMER: You mean I should forever have been telling you about worries you couldn't have helped me with anyway?

NORA: I am not talking about worries. I'm saying we have never tried seriously to get to the bottom of anything together.

HELMER: But dearest Nora, I hardly think that would have been something *you*—

NORA: That's the whole point. You have never understood me. Great wrong has been done to me, Torvald. First by Daddy and then by you.

HELMER: What! By us two? We who have loved you more deeply than anyone else?

NORA [*shakes her head*]: You never loved me—neither Daddy nor you. You only thought it was fun to be in love with me.

HELMER: But, Nora—what an expression to use!

NORA: That's the way it has been, Torvald. When I was home with Daddy, he told me all his opinions, and so they became my opinions too. If I disagreed with him I kept it to myself, for he wouldn't have liked that. He called me his little doll baby, and he played with me the way I played with my dolls. Then I came to your house—

HELMER: What a way to talk about our marriage!

NORA [*imperturbably*]: I mean that I passed from Daddy's hands into yours. You arranged everything according to your taste, and so I came to share it—or I pretended to; I'm not sure which. I think it was a little of both, now one

and now the other. When I look back on it now, it seems to me I've been living here like a pauper—just a hand-to-mouth kind of existence. I have earned my keep by doing tricks for you, Torvald. But that's the way you wanted it. You have great sins against me to answer for, Daddy and you. It's your fault that nothing has become of me.

HELMER: Nora, you're being both unreasonable and ungrateful. Haven't you been happy here?

NORA: No, never. I thought I was, but I wasn't.

HELMER: Not—not happy!

NORA: No; just having fun. And you have always been very good to me. But our home has never been more than a playroom. I have been your doll wife here, just the way I used to be Daddy's doll child. And the children have been my dolls. I thought it was fun when you played with me, just as they thought it was fun when I played with them. That's been our marriage, Torvald.

HELMER: There is something in what you are saying—exaggerated and hysterical though it is. But from now on things will be different. Playtime is over; it's time for growing up.

NORA: Whose growing up—mine or the children's?

HELMER: Both yours and the children's, Nora darling.

NORA: Oh Torvald, you're not the man to bring me up to be the right kind of wife for you.

HELMER: How can you say that?

NORA: And I—? What qualifications do I have for bringing up the children?

HELMER: Nora!

NORA: You said so yourself a minute ago—that you didn't dare to trust me with them.

HELMER: In the first flush of anger, yes. Surely, you're not going to count that.

NORA: But you were quite right. I am *not* qualified.

Something else has to come first. Somehow I have to grow up myself. And you are not the man to help me do that. That's a job I have to do by myself. And that's why I'm leaving you.

HELMER [*jumps up*]: What did you say!

NORA: I have to be by myself if I am to find out about myself and about all the other things too. So I can't stay here with you any longer.

HELMER: Nora, Nora!

NORA: I'm leaving now. I'm sure Kristine will put me up for tonight.

HELMER: You're out of your mind! I won't let you! I forbid you!

NORA: You can't forbid me anything any more; it won't do any good. I'm taking my own things with me. I won't accept anything from you, either now or later.

HELMER: But this is madness!

NORA: Tomorrow I'm going home—I mean back to my old home town. It will be easier for me to find some kind of job there.

HELMER: Oh, you blind, inexperienced creature—!

NORA: I must see to it that I get experience, Torvald.

HELMER: Leaving your home, your husband, your children! Not a thought of what people will say!

NORA: I can't worry about that. All I know is that I have to leave.

HELMER: Oh, this is shocking! Betraying your most sacred duties like this!

NORA: And what do you consider my most sacred duties?

HELMER: Do I need to tell you that? They are your duties to your husband and your children.

NORA: I have other duties equally sacred.

HELMER: You do not. What duties would they be?

NORA: My duties to myself.

HELMER: You are a wife and a mother before you are anything else.

NORA: I don't believe that any more. I believe I am first of all a human being, just as much as you—or at any rate that I must try to become one. Oh, I know very well that most people agree with you, Torvald, and that it says something like that in all the books. But what people say and what the books say is no longer enough for me. I have to think about these things myself and see if I can't find the answers.

HELMER: You mean to tell me you don't know what your proper place in your own home is? Don't you have a reliable guide in such matters? Don't you have religion?

NORA: Oh but Torvald—I don't really know what religion is.

HELMER: What are you saying!

NORA: All I know is what the Reverend Hansen told me when he prepared me for confirmation. He said that religion was *this* and it was *that*. When I get by myself, away from here, I'll have to look into that, too. I have to decide if what the Reverend Hansen said was right, or anyway if it is right for *me*.

HELMER: Oh, this is unheard of in a young woman! If religion can't guide you, let me appeal to your conscience. For surely you have moral feelings? Or—answer me—maybe you don't?

NORA: Well, you see, Torvald, I don't really know what to say. I just don't know. I am confused about these things. All I know is that my ideas are quite different from yours. I have just found out that the laws are different from what I thought they were, but in no way can I get it into my head that those laws are right. A woman shouldn't have the right to spare her dying old father or save her husband's life! I just can't believe that.

HELMER: You speak like a child. You don't understand the society you live in.

NORA: No, I don't. But I want to find out about it. I have to make up my mind who is right, society or I.

HELMER: You are sick, Nora; you have a fever. I really don't think you are in your right mind.

NORA: I have never felt so clearheaded and sure of myself as I do tonight.

HELMER: And clearheaded and sure of yourself you're leaving your husband and children?

NORA: Yes.

HELMER: Then there is only one possible explanation.

NORA: What?

HELMER: You don't love me any more.

NORA: No, that's just it.

HELMER: Nora! Can you say that?

NORA: I am sorry, Torvald, for you have always been so good to me. But I can't help it. I don't love you any more.

HELMER [*with forced composure*]: And this too is a clear and sure conviction?

NORA: Completely clear and sure. That's why I don't want to stay here any more.

HELMER: And are you ready to explain to me how I came to forfeit your love?

NORA: Certainly I am. It was tonight, when the wonderful didn't happen. That was when I realized you were not the man I thought you were.

HELMER: You have to explain. I don't understand.

NORA: I have waited patiently for eight years, for I wasn't such a fool that I thought the wonderful is something that happens any old day. Then this—thing—came crashing in on me, and then there wasn't a doubt in my mind that now—now comes the wonderful. When Krogstad's letter was in that mailbox, never for a moment did it even occur to me that you would submit to his conditions. I was so absolutely certain that you would say to him: make the whole thing public—tell everybody. And when that had happened—

HELMER: Yes, then what? When I had surrendered my wife to shame and disgrace—!

NORA: When that had happened, I was absolutely certain that you would stand up and take the blame and say, "I'm the guilty one."

HELMER: Nora!

NORA: You mean I never would have accepted such a sacrifice from you? Of course not. But what would my protests have counted against yours. *That* was the wonderful I was hoping for in terror. And to prevent that I was going to kill myself.

HELMER: I'd gladly work nights and days for you, Nora—endure sorrow and want for your sake. But nobody sacrifices his *honor* for his love.

NORA: A hundred thousand women have done so.

HELMER: Oh, you think and talk like a silly child.

NORA: All right. But you don't think and talk like the man I can live with. When you had gotten over your fright—not because of what threatened *me* but because of the risk to *you*—and the whole danger was past, then you acted as if nothing at all had happened. Once again I was your little songbird, your doll, just as before, only now you had to handle her even more carefully, because she was so frail and weak. [*Rises.*] Torvald—that moment I realized that I had been living here for eight years with a stranger and had borne him three children—Oh, I can't stand thinking about it! I feel like tearing myself to pieces!

HELMER [*heavily*]: I see it, I see it. An abyss has opened up between us.—Oh but Nora—surely it can be filled?

NORA: The way I am now I am no wife for you.

HELMER: I have it in me to change.

NORA: Perhaps—if your doll is taken from you.

HELMER: To part—to part from you! No, no, Nora! I can't grasp that thought!

NORA [*goes out, right*]: All the more reason why it has to be. [*She returns with her outdoor clothes and a small bag, which she sets down on the chair by the table.*]

HELMER: Nora, Nora! Not now! Wait till tomorrow.

NORA [*putting on her coat*]: I can't spend the night in a stranger's rooms.

HELMER: But couldn't we live here together like brother and sister—?

NORA [*tying on her hat*]: You know very well that wouldn't last long—. [*Wraps her shawl around her.*] Goodbye, Torvald. I don't want to see the children. I know I leave them in better hands than mine. The way I am now I can't be anything to them.

HELMER: But some day, Nora—some day—?

NORA: How can I tell? I have no idea what's going to become of me.

HELMER: But you're still my wife, both as you are now and as you will be.

NORA: Listen, Torvald—when a wife leaves her husband's house, the way I am doing now, I have heard he has no more legal responsibilities for her.

At any rate, I now release you from all responsibility. You are not to feel yourself obliged to me for anything, and I have no obligations to you. There has to be full freedom on both sides. Here is your ring back. Now give me mine.

HELMER: Even this?

NORA: Even this.

HELMER: Here it is.

NORA: There. So now it's over. I'm putting the keys here. The maids know everything about the house—better than I. Tomorrow, after I'm gone, Kristine will come over and pack my things from home. I want them sent after me.

HELMER: Over! It's all over! Nora, will you never think of me?

NORA: I'm sure I'll often think of you and the children and this house.

HELMER: May I write to you, Nora?

NORA: No—never. I won't have that.

HELMER: But send you things—? You must let me.

NORA: Nothing, nothing.

HELMER: —help you, when you need help—?

NORA: I told you, no; I won't have it. I'll accept nothing from strangers.

HELMER: Nora—can I never again be more to you than a stranger?

NORA [*picks up her bag*]: Oh Torvald—then the most wonderful of all would have to happen—

HELMER: Tell me what that would be—!

NORA: For that to happen, both you and I would have to change so that—Oh Torvald, I no longer believe in the wonderful.

HELMER: But I *will* believe. Tell me! Change, so that—?

NORA: So that our living together would become a true marriage. Goodbye. [*She goes out through the hall.*]

HELMER [*sinks down on a chair near the door and covers his face with his hands*]: Nora! Nora! [*Looks around him and gets up.*] All empty. She's gone. [*With sudden hope.*] The most wonderful—?!

[*From downstairs comes the sound of a heavy door slamming shut.*]