

GREGERS. If you are right and I am wrong, then life is not worth living.

RELLING. Oh, life would be tolerable enough, even so, if we could only be rid of these infernal duns who come to us poor people's doors with their claim of the ideal.

GREGERS [*looking in front of him*]. In that case, I am glad my destiny is what it is.

RELLING. May I ask – what is your destiny?

GREGERS [*on the point of going*]. To be thirteenth at table.

RELLING. I wonder. ...

HEDDA GABLER

CHARACTERS

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JÖRGEN TESMAN, a scholar engaged in research in the history of civilization
HEDDA TESMAN, his wife
JULIANE TESMAN, his aunt
MRS ELVSTED
BRACK, a puisne judge
EJLERT LÖVBORG
BERTE, the Tesmans' servant

The action takes place in the Tesmans' villa on the west side of the town

ACT ONE

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[A large drawing-room, well furnished, in good taste, and decorated in dark colours. In the back wall there is a wide doorway with its curtains pulled back. This opening leads into a smaller room decorated in the same style as the drawing-room. In the right wall of this outer room is a folding door that leads into the hall. In the opposite wall, left, is a glass door also with curtains pulled back. Through its panes can be seen part of a veranda outside and autumn foliage. In the middle of the stage is an oval table with a cloth on it and chairs round it. Downstage, against the right wall are a large, dark porcelain stove, a high-backed arm-chair, a padded foot-rest and two stools. Up in the right corner are a corner sofa and a little round table. Downstage, left, a little way from the wall, is a sofa. Above the glass door, a piano. On each side of the doorway at the back stands a what-not with terra-cotta and majolica ornaments. Against the back wall of the inner room can be seen a sofa, a table and a chair or two. Over this sofa hangs the portrait of a handsome, elderly man in a general's uniform. Over the table a hanging lamp with a soft, opal glass shade. All round the drawing-room are bouquets of flowers in vases and glasses; others are lying on the tables. The floors in both rooms are covered with thick carpets. Morning light: the sun shines in through the glass doors.]

Miss Juliane Tesman, wearing her hat and carrying a parasol, comes in from the hall followed by Berte carrying a bouquet wrapped in paper. Miss Tesman is a comely, sweet-tempered-looking woman of about sixty-five, well but simply dressed in grey outdoor clothes. Berte is a servant getting on in years, with a homely, rather countrified look.]

MISS TESMAN [*stops just inside the door, listens and says softly*]. Why, I don't believe they're up yet!

BERTE [*softly, too*]. That's what I said, Miss. Think how late the boat came in last night. And on top of that, my goodness! All the things the young mistress *would* unpack before she'd settle down.

MISS TESMAN. Well, well. Let them have their sleep out, of course. But they must have fresh morning air to breathe when they do come out. [*She goes over to the glass door and throws it wide open.*]

BERTE [*standing by the table, not knowing what to do with the bouquet in her hand*]. Well, upon my word, there just isn't anywhere left for it. I think I'd better put it here, Miss. [*She stands it up on the piano.*]

MISS TESMAN. Well now, Berte my dear, you've got a new mistress. Heaven knows it was dreadfully hard for me to part with you!

BERTE [*nearly crying*]. What do you think it was for *me*, Miss? I just can't tell you. After all these many years I've been with you two ladies.

MISS TESMAN. We must try to be contented, Berte. There's really nothing else to be done. You know, Jörgen must have you in the house with him. He simply *must*. You have been used to looking after him ever since he was a little boy.

BERTE. Yes, Miss. But I keep thinking of her lying there at home. Poor thing! So helpless and all. And that new girl, too! *She'll* never learn to look after a sick person properly. Never!

MISS TESMAN. Oh, I shall manage to train her. And, you know, I shall take over most of it myself. Berte dear, there's no need for you to worry so much about my poor sister.

BERTE. Yes, but there's another thing, Miss. I'm really afraid I'll never manage to suit the young mistress.

MISS TESMAN. Oh, come now! Just at first, perhaps, there may be one or two things ...

BERTE. Because, of course, she's a fine lady – and that particular!

MISS TESMAN. You can understand that, can't you, with General Gabler's daughter? Think what she was accustomed to in the General's day. Do you remember her riding along the road with her father? In that long black habit? And feathers in her hat?

BERTE. My, yes! I should think I do. But, upon my word, I never thought it would be a match between her and Mr Jörgen. Not in those days.

MISS TESMAN. Nor did I. But that reminds me, Berte, while I think of it – you mustn't call Jörgen 'Mr' any more. You must say 'Doctor'.

BERTE. Yes, the young mistress said something about that, too, as soon as they got in last night. Is it true, then, Miss?

MISS TESMAN. Yes, perfectly true. Just think of it, Berte, they made him a doctor abroad! While he was away this time, you know. I didn't know a single word about it, not till he told me down at the pier.

BERTE. Oh, of course, he can be anything – he can. Clever, like he is. But I never thought he'd take up doctoring, too.

MISS TESMAN. Oh, it's not *that* kind of doctor he is. [*With a nod full of meaning.*] Come to that, you may soon be able to call him something else – something even grander.

BERTE. You don't say, Miss! What would that be, Miss?

MISS TESMAN [*smiling*]. Ah! If you only knew! [*Touched.*] God bless us! If poor dear Jochum could look up from his grave and see what his little boy has grown up to be! [*Looking about her.*] Oh, but – I say, Berte! Why *have* you done that? Taken all the covers off the furniture?

BERTE. The mistress said I was to. Says she can't do with covers on the chairs.

MISS TESMAN. Are they going to use this room for every day, then?

BERTE. So it seemed, from what the mistress said. The master – the Doctor – he didn't say anything.

[*Jörgen Tesman, humming to himself, comes into the inner room from the right. He is carrying an empty, unfastened suit-case. He is a youngish-looking man of thirty-three, middle-sized, stoutish, with a round, frank, happy face. His hair and beard are fair; he wears glasses. He is comfortably – almost carelessly – dressed, in an indoor suit.*]

MISS TESMAN. Good morning, good morning, Jörgen!

TESMAN [*in the doorway between the rooms*]. Aunt Julle! My dear Aunt Julle! [*Goes up and shakes her hand affectionately.*] All the way out here so early! Eh?

MISS TESMAN. Well, you can just imagine! I *had* to have a look at you both.

TESMAN. Although you haven't had anything like a proper night's rest!

MISS TESMAN. Oh, that doesn't make a bit of difference to me.

TESMAN. But you did get home from the pier all right? Eh?

MISS TESMAN. Oh yes, quite all right, I'm glad to say. Mr Brack was so very kind and saw me right to my door.

TESMAN. We *were* so sorry we couldn't give you a lift. But you saw how it was yourself. Hedda had so much luggage that she had to have with her.

MISS TESMAN. Yes, she certainly did have a tremendous lot of luggage.

BERTE [*to Tesman*]. Shall I go in and ask the mistress if there's anything I could help her with?

TESMAN. No, thanks, Berte, you needn't do that. If she wants you for anything, she says she'll ring.

BERTE [*to the right*]. Very well.

TESMAN. Oh, but, here – take this suit-case, will you?

BERTE [*taking it*]. I'll put it up in the attic. [*Goes out by the hall door.*]

TESMAN. Just think, Aunt Julle, I had that whole suit-case crammed full, just with the stuff I'd copied. You wouldn't believe what I've managed to collect, going through the archives. Curious old things that no one really knows about.

MISS TESMAN. Well, well, Jörgen, you certainly haven't wasted your time on your honeymoon.

TESMAN. No, I jolly well haven't! But take your hat off, Aunt Julle. Here, let me unfasten the bow. Eh?

MISS TESMAN [*while he is doing it*]. Bless me! It's just as though you were still at home with us.

TESMAN [*turning and twisting the hat in his hand*]. Why! What a fine, smart hat you've bought yourself!

MISS TESMAN. I got it because of Hedda.

TESMAN. Because of Hedda? Eh?

MISS TESMAN. Yes. So that Hedda shan't be ashamed of me if we go out together.

TESMAN [*patting her cheek*]. Dear Aunt Julle! You think of absolutely everything. [*Puts the hat on a chair by the table.*]

Now, look here; let's sit on the sofa and have a little chat till Hedda comes.

[*They sit down. She puts her parasol in the sofa-corner.*]

MISS TESMAN [*taking both his hands and looking at him*].

What a blessing it is to have you again, Jörgen, as large as life! My dear! Poor Jochum's own boy!

TESMAN. So it is for me, Aunt Julle, to see *you* again! You who've been my father and my mother.

MISS TESMAN. Yes, I know you'll always have a corner in your heart for your old aunts.

TESMAN. But I suppose there's no improvement in Aunt Rina, eh?

MISS TESMAN. Well, you know, we can't really expect any improvement in her, poor dear. She just lies there, the same as she has all these years. But I hope the good Lord will let me keep her a little longer. For I shan't know what to do with my life otherwise, Jörgen. Especially now, you know, that I haven't got you to look after any more.

TESMAN [*patting her on the back*]. Come, come, come!

MISS TESMAN [*with a sudden change*]. But just think, Jörgen, you're a married man! And to think it was you who carried off Hedda Gabler! The lovely Hedda Gabler! To think of it! She, who always had so many admirers.

TESMAN [*humming a little, with a satisfied smile*]. Yes, I expect a certain number of my good friends are going about this town feeling pretty envious. Eh?

MISS TESMAN. And to think that you were able to have such a long honeymoon! Over five months. Nearly six.

TESMAN. Well, for me it's been a kind of research tour as well – with all those old records I had to hunt through. And then, you know, the enormous number of books I had to read.

MISS TESMAN. Yes, that's quite true. [*Dropping her voice a little and speaking confidentially*.] But look here, Jörgen, haven't you anything ... anything, well, *special* to tell me?

TESMAN. About the trip?

MISS TESMAN. Yes.

TESMAN. No, I don't think there's anything else, except what I told you in my letters. About my taking my doctorate down there – well, I told you that yesterday.

MISS TESMAN. Oh yes, that kind of thing. Yes. But, I mean, haven't you any ... well, any hopes ... er ... ?

TESMAN. Hopes?

MISS TESMAN. Oh, come, Jörgen! After all, I *am* your old aunt!

TESMAN. Well, yes, of course I have hopes ...

MISS TESMAN. Ah!

TESMAN. ... I've the very best hopes of getting a professorship one of these days.

MISS TESMAN. Oh yes, a professorship. Yes.

TESMAN. Or I might say, rather, there's a certainty of my getting it. But, my dear Aunt Julle, you know that yourself perfectly well!

MISS TESMAN [*with a little laugh*]. Yes, of course I do. You're quite right. [*Changing her tone*.] But we were talking about your travels. It must have cost a lot of money, Jörgen?

TESMAN. Ye-es. But, you know, that big fellowship took us a good bit of the way.

MISS TESMAN. But I don't see how you can possibly have made that do for two.

TESMAN. Well, no; one could hardly expect that. Eh?

MISS TESMAN. Especially when it's a lady one's travelling with. For that usually comes more expensive – very much more, I've heard.

TESMAN. Well, yes, of course. It does come rather more expensive. But Hedda had to have that trip, Aunt Julle. She really had to. Nothing else would have done.

MISS TESMAN. No, no. Of course it wouldn't. A honeymoon abroad seems quite a matter of course, nowadays. But tell me, now. Have you had a chance yet to have a good look at the house?

TESMAN. You bet I have! I have been wandering round ever since it was light.

MISS TESMAN. And what do you think of it, on the whole?

TESMAN. Splendid! Absolutely splendid! There's only one thing I can't see – what we're going to do with the two empty rooms there between the back sitting-room and Hedda's bedroom.

MISS TESMAN [*with a little laugh*]. Oh, my dear Jörgen, there may be a use for them – all in good time.

TESMAN. Yes, you're perfectly right, Aunt Julle! Because, by degrees, as I get a bigger library, well – Eh?

MISS TESMAN. Of course, my dear boy. It was the library I was thinking of.

TESMAN. I'm specially glad for Hedda's sake. She often said, before we were engaged, that she'd never care to live anywhere except in Mrs Falk's house.

MISS TESMAN. Yes, just fancy! And then its happening like that – the house being for sale! Just as you had started.

TESMAN. Yes, Aunt Julle, the luck certainly was with us. Eh?

MISS TESMAN. But expensive, my dear Jörgen! It will be expensive for you, all this.

TESMAN [*looking at her, a little disheartened*]. Yes, I suppose it will, perhaps.

MISS TESMAN. Goodness, yes!

TESMAN. How much do you think? Roughly. Eh?

MISS TESMAN. Oh, I can't possibly tell till all the bills come in.

TESMAN. But fortunately Mr Brack has arranged the easiest possible terms for me. He wrote and told Hedda so himself.

MISS TESMAN. Well, don't you worry about it, my child. And as for the furniture and carpets, I have given security for them.

TESMAN. Security? You? My dear Aunt Julle, what kind of security could you give?

MISS TESMAN. I have given a mortgage on the annuity.

TESMAN [*jumping up*]. What! On yours and Aunt Rina's annuity?

MISS TESMAN. Yes. I didn't know what else to do, you see.

TESMAN [*standing in front of her*]. But, Aunt Julle, have you gone crazy? The annuity! The only thing you and Aunt Rina have to live on!

MISS TESMAN. Now, now – don't get so upset about it. The whole thing is just a formality, you know. That's what Mr Brack said, too. For it was he who so kindly arranged it for me. Just a formality, he said.

TESMAN. Yes, that may be so. But all the same ...

MISS TESMAN. Because you've got your own salary to rely on now. And – goodness me! – suppose we did have to spend a little too – help a little just at first? Why, it would only be a pleasure for us.

TESMAN. Oh, Aunt Julle, you will never be tired of sacrificing yourself for me.

MISS TESMAN [*getting up and laying her hands on his shoulders*]. Have I any other joy in this world but in smoothing the way for you, my dear boy? You who've had neither father nor mother to turn to. And now we've reached our goal, my dear! Things may have looked black now and again. But, thank goodness, you're through that now, Jörgen.

TESMAN. Yes, it's wonderful, really, how everything has worked out.

MISS TESMAN. Yes, and the people who stood in your way, who would have stopped your getting on, you have them at your feet. They have gone down before you, Jörgen – most of all, the person who was most dangerous to you. And there he lies now, on the bed he made for himself, the poor misguided creature.

TESMAN. Have you heard anything of Ejlert? Since I went away, I mean?

MISS TESMAN. No, only that he's supposed to have brought out a new book.

TESMAN. *What?* Ejlert Lövborg? Just recently? Eh?

MISS TESMAN. Yes, so they say. I shouldn't think there can be much in it, would you? Now when *your* new book comes out, that will be quite another story, Jörgen. What is it going to be about?

TESMAN. It's going to be about domestic crafts in Brabant in the Middle Ages.

MISS TESMAN. Well, well! To think you can write about a thing like that!

TESMAN. As a matter of fact, the book may take some time yet. I've got to arrange those enormous collections of material first, you know.

MISS TESMAN. Ah yes. Arranging and collecting – that's what you're so good at. You're not dear Jochum's son for nothing.

TESMAN. I'm looking forward immensely to getting down to it. Especially now that I've got a charming house of my own, my own home to work in.

MISS TESMAN. And first and foremost, my dear, now that you've got the wife your heart was set on.

TESMAN [*giving her a hug*]. Why, of course, Aunt Julle! Hedda! Why, that's the loveliest thing of all! [*Looking towards the centre doorway*.] I think she's coming. Eh?

[*Hedda comes in from the left, through the inner room. She is a woman of twenty-nine. Her face and figure show breeding and distinction, her complexion has an even pallor. Her eyes are steel-grey; cold, clear and calm. Her hair is a beautiful light brown, though not noticeably abundant. The loose-fitting morning costume she is wearing is in good style.*]

MISS TESMAN [*going up to Hedda*]. Good morning, Hedda dear! A very good morning to you!

HEDDA [*holding out her hand*]. Good morning, my dear Miss Tesman. What an early visit! It was kind of you.

MISS TESMAN [*seeming a little taken aback*]. Well, has the bride slept well in her new home?

HEDDA. Oh yes, thank you. Tolerably.

TESMAN. Tolerably! I like that, Hedda! You were sleeping like a log when I got up.

HEDDA. Fortunately. In any case, one has to get used to anything new, Miss Tesman. By degrees. [*Looking to the left*.] Oh! The maid has gone and opened the veranda door! There's a perfect flood of sunlight coming in.

MISS TESMAN [*going towards the door*]. Well, we'll shut it, then.

HEDDA. Oh no, don't do that, please. [*To Tesman*.] Just draw the blinds, my dear, will you? That gives a softer light.

TESMAN [*at the door*]. Yes, yes. All right. There you are, Hedda. Now you've got shade *and* fresh air.

HEDDA. Yes, we certainly need fresh air in here. All these precious flowers! But – won't you sit down, Miss Tesman?

MISS TESMAN. No, thank you very much. Now I know everything is going on all right here – thank goodness! – I must see about getting home again. Poor dear, she finds the time very long, lying there.

TESMAN. Give her my love and my best wishes, won't you? And tell her I'll come over and see her later on today.

MISS TESMAN. Yes, yes, I certainly will. But that reminds me, Jörgen. [*Feeling in her bag*.] I nearly forgot it. I've brought something of yours.

TESMAN. What is it, Aunt Julle? Eh?

MISS TESMAN [*bringing out a flat newspaper package and handing it to him*]. Look there, my dear boy.

TESMAN [*opening it*]. Well, I'm blessed! You've kept them for me, Aunt Julle! That really is sweet of her, Hedda, isn't it? Eh?

HEDDA [*by the what-not on the right*]. Yes, my dear. What is it?

TESMAN. My old morning shoes. My slippers – look!

HEDDA. Oh yes. I remember, you often spoke about them while we were away.

TESMAN. Yes, I missed them dreadfully. [*Going up to her.*] Now you shall see them, Hedda.

HEDDA [*going over to the stove*]. No, thanks. It really doesn't interest me.

TESMAN [*following her*]. Just think, Aunt Rina embroidered them for me in bed, lying ill like that. Oh, you can't imagine how many memories are worked into them!

HEDDA. Not for me, particularly.

MISS TESMAN. Hedda's right about that, Jörgen.

TESMAN. Yes, but I think, now she belongs to the family –

HEDDA [*interrupting*]. My dear, we shall never be able to manage with this maid.

MISS TESMAN. Not manage with Berte?

TESMAN. What makes you say that, my dear? Eh?

HEDDA [*pointing*]. Look there. She's left her old hat behind her on the chair.

TESMAN [*dropping his slippers on the floor in his dismay*]. But, Hedda –

HEDDA. Suppose anyone were to come in and see it?

TESMAN. But – but, Hedda, that is Aunt Julle's hat!

HEDDA. Oh! Is it?

MISS TESMAN [*picking up the hat*]. Yes, it's certainly mine.

And it isn't old, either, my dear little Hedda.

HEDDA. I really didn't look at it closely, Miss Tesman.

MISS TESMAN [*putting on the hat*]. As a matter of fact, it's the first time I've worn it. The very first, it is.

TESMAN. And a beautiful hat it is, too. Really grand!

MISS TESMAN. Oh, it's not all that, my dear Jörgen.

[*Looking round her.*] Parasol? Ah, here it is. [*Picking it up.*]

For that's mine, too. [*Under her breath.*] Not Berte's.

TESMAN. A new hat and a new parasol! Think of that, Hedda.

HEDDA. Yes, it's very nice. Charming.

TESMAN. Yes, isn't it? Eh? But, Aunt Julle, take a good look at Hedda before you go. See how nice and charming she is.

MISS TESMAN. Ah, my dear, there's nothing new in that. Hedda has been lovely all her life. [*She nods and goes towards the right.*]

TESMAN [*following her*]. Yes, but have you noticed how plump she's grown, and how well she is? How much she's filled out on our travels?

HEDDA [*crossing the room*]. Oh, be quiet – !

MISS TESMAN [*who has stopped and turned round*]. Filled out?

TESMAN. Of course, you can't see it so well, Aunt Julle, now she has that dress on. But I, who have the opportunity of –

HEDDA [*at the glass door, impatiently*]. Oh, you haven't any opportunity!

TESMAN. It must be the mountain air, down there in the Tyrol –

HEDDA [*interrupting curtly*]. I am exactly the same as I was when I went away.

TESMAN. Yes, so you keep on saying. But you certainly aren't. Don't you think so too, Aunt Julle?

MISS TESMAN [*gazing at her with clasped hands*]. Hedda is lovely – lovely – lovely! [*She goes up to Hedda, takes her head in both hands, and, bending it down, kisses her hair.*] May God bless and take care of our Hedda. For Jörgen's sake.

HEDDA [*freeing herself gently*]. Oh – let me go.

MISS TESMAN [*quietly, but with emotion*]. I shall come over and see you two every single day.

TESMAN. Yes, do, please, Aunt Julle! Eh?

MISS TESMAN. Good-bye. Good-bye.

[*She goes out by the hall door. Tesman goes with her, leaving the door half open. He can be heard repeating his messages to Aunt Rina and thanking her for the shoes. In the meanwhile Hedda crosses the room, raising her arms and clenching her hands, as if in fury. Then she pulls back the curtains from the glass door and stands there looking out.*

After a moment Tesman comes in again, shutting the door behind him.]

TESMAN [*picking up the slippers from the floor*]. What are you looking at, Hedda?

HEDDA [*calm and controlled again*]. I'm just looking at the leaves. They're so yellow, and so withered.

TESMAN [*wrapping up the shoes and putting them on the table*]. Well, after all, we're well on in September now.

HEDDA [*disturbed again*]. Yes, just think. We're already in – in September.

TESMAN. Don't you think Aunt Julle was rather unlike herself, my dear? A little bit – almost formal? Whatever do you think was the matter? Eh?

HEDDA. I hardly know her, you see. Isn't she like that as a rule?

TESMAN. No, not like she was today.

HEDDA [*moving away from the glass door*]. Do you think she was really upset about that business with the hat?

TESMAN. Oh, not much. Perhaps a little, just at the moment.

HEDDA. But what extraordinary manners! To throw her hat down here in the drawing-room. One doesn't do that kind of thing.

TESMAN. Well, you can be sure Aunt Julle won't do it again.

HEDDA. Anyway, I'll make it all right with her.

TESMAN. That's sweet of you, Hedda dear! If you would!

HEDDA. When you go in to see them presently, you might ask her over here for the evening.

TESMAN. Yes, I certainly will. And there's another thing you could do that would please her enormously.

HEDDA. Oh? What?

TESMAN. If you could bring yourself to speak a little more affectionately to her – as if you were one of the family. For my sake, Hedda? Eh?

HEDDA. No, no. You mustn't ask me to do that. I've told you that once already. I'll try to call her 'Aunt', and that must be enough.

TESMAN. Oh well, all right. Only it seems to me now that you belong to the family –

HEDDA. Well, I really don't know. ... [*She goes up towards the centre doorway*].

TESMAN [*after a pause*]. Is there anything the matter, Hedda? Eh?

HEDDA. I'm just looking at my old piano. It doesn't go very well with all these other things.

TESMAN. When I get my first salary cheque, we'll see about an exchange.

HEDDA. Oh no, not an exchange. I don't want to get rid of it. We can put it in there, in the back room. And we can have another in its place here. Some time or other, I mean.

TESMAN [*a little subdued*]. Yes. We can do that, of course.

HEDDA [*picking up the bouquet from the piano*]. These flowers weren't here when we came in last night.

TESMAN. Aunt Julle must have brought them for you.

HEDDA [*looking into the bouquet*]. A visiting-card. [*Taking it out and reading it*]. 'Will call again later on today.' Can you guess who it's from?

TESMAN. No. Who is it? Eh?

HEDDA. It says, 'Mrs Elvsted'.

TESMAN. Really? The wife of the District Magistrate. Miss Rysing that was.

HEDDA. Yes. Exactly. That girl with the tiresome hair, that she was always showing off. An old flame of yours, I've heard.

TESMAN [*laughing*]. Oh, it didn't last long! And it was before I knew you, Hedda. But fancy her being in town.

HEDDA. Odd, that she should call on us. I hardly know her, except that we were at school together.

TESMAN. Yes, I haven't seen her either for – heaven knows how long. I wonder she can bear it up there, in that hole of a place. Eh?

HEDDA [*thinks a moment and says suddenly*]. Tell me, isn't it somewhere up there that he lives – er – Ejlert Lövborg?

TESMAN. Yes it is. Up in those parts.

[*Berte comes in at the hall door.*]

BERTE. She's here again, ma'am. The lady who came and left the flowers an hour ago. [*Pointing.*] The ones you've got in your hand, ma'am.

HEDDA. Oh, is she? Show her in, will you?

[*Berte opens the door for Mrs Elvsted and goes out herself. Mrs Elvsted is a slender little thing with pretty, soft features. Her eyes are light blue, large, round and slightly prominent, with a startled, questioning expression. Her hair is remarkably fair, almost silver-gilt, and exceptionally thick and wavy. She is a couple of years younger than Hedda. She is wearing a dark calling costume, of a good style but not quite of the latest fashion.*]

HEDDA [*going to meet her in a friendly way*]. How are you, my dear Mrs Elvsted? It's nice to see you once more.

MRS ELVSTED [*nervous, and trying to control herself*]. Yes, it's a very long time since we met.

TESMAN [*giving her his hand*]. Or we two either. Eh?

HEDDA. Thank you for your lovely flowers.

MRS ELVSTED. Oh, please! I would have come here at once, yesterday afternoon. But I heard that you were away.

TESMAN. Have you only just come to town? Eh?

MRS ELVSTED. I got here about midday yesterday. I was absolutely in despair when I heard that you weren't at home.

HEDDA. In despair? But why?

TESMAN. But my dear, dear Mrs Rysing – Mrs Elvsted, I mean –

HEDDA. There isn't anything the matter, is there?

MRS ELVSTED. Yes, there is. And I don't know a living soul to turn to here in town, except you.

HEDDA [*putting the bouquet down on the table*]. Come now, let's sit here on the sofa.

MRS ELVSTED. No, I feel too worried and restless to sit down.

HEDDA. Oh no, you don't. Come along here. [*She pulls Mrs Elvsted down on to the sofa and sits beside her.*]

TESMAN. Well now, what is it, Mrs Elvsted?

HEDDA. Has anything gone wrong up there, at home?

MRS ELVSTED. Well, it has and it hasn't. Oh, I do so want you not to misunderstand me.

HEDDA. Then the best thing you can do, Mrs Elvsted, is to tell us all about it.

TESMAN. Because that's what you've come for, isn't it? Eh?

MRS ELVSTED. Yes, yes, it is, of course. Well, then, I must explain – if you don't know already – that Ejlert Lövborg is in town too.

HEDDA. Lövborg is!

TESMAN. Really? So Ejlert Lövborg's come back again! Fancy that, Hedda!

HEDDA. Quite. I heard all right.

MRS ELVSTED. He's been here a week now, already. Think of it! A whole week in this dangerous town. And alone! And all the bad company he could get into here!

HEDDA. But, my dear Mrs Elvsted, why does *he* specially matter to you?

MRS ELVSTED [*gives her a frightened glance and says quickly*].

He used to be the children's tutor.

HEDDA. Your children's?

MRS ELVSTED. My husband's. I haven't got any.

HEDDA. Your step-children's, then.

MRS ELVSTED. Yes.

TESMAN [*hesitantly*]. Was he ... er ... tolerably ... then ...

I don't quite know how to put it ... fairly steady in his habits – enough to be given *that* job? Eh?

MRS ELVSTED. For the last two years there hasn't been a word against him.

TESMAN. Really! Think of that, Hedda!

HEDDA. I heard.

MRS ELVSTED. Not the least thing, I assure you. Nothing of any kind. But still now, when I know he's here – in this great city – and with plenty of money in his pockets ... I'm desperately anxious about him now.

TESMAN. But why didn't he stay up there where he was, then? With you and your husband? Eh?

MRS ELVSTED. Once the book was out he was too restless and excited to stay up there with us.

TESMAN. Oh yes, that reminds me. Aunt Julle said he'd brought out a new book.

MRS ELVSTED. Yes, a big new book on the history of civilization; a sort of general survey. It's been out a fortnight now. And now that it's gone so well and made such a tremendous stir –

TESMAN. It has, has it? It must be something he had by him from his better days, then.

MRS ELVSTED. From some time ago, you mean?

TESMAN. Exactly.

MRS ELVSTED. No, he wrote the whole thing up at our place. Just lately – within the last year.

TESMAN. That's good news, isn't it, Hedda? Just fancy!

MRS ELVSTED. Yes, indeed. If only it would last.

HEDDA. Have you met him here in town?

MRS ELVSTED. No, not yet. I had a lot of trouble finding his address. But I got it at last, this morning.

HEDDA [*looking searchingly at her*]. You know, it seems a little odd of your husband to ... er ...

MRS ELVSTED [*starting nervously*]. Of my husband? What does?

HEDDA. To send you to town on an errand like this. Not to come in and look after his friend himself.

MRS ELVSTED. Oh, not at all! My husband hasn't time for that. And then there – there was some shopping I had to do.

HEDDA [*with a slight smile*]. Ah well, that's a different matter.

MRS ELVSTED [*getting up quickly, in some distress*]. So I do implore you, Mr Tesman, be good to Ejlert Lövborg if he comes to you! And he's sure to, because you were such good friends in the old days. And besides, you're both working in the same field. On the same subjects, as far as I can make out.

TESMAN. Well anyway, we were at one time.

MRS ELVSTED. Yes. And that's why I do beseech you – you really will keep a watchful eye on him too, won't you, Mr Tesman? You do promise me?

TESMAN. Yes, I'll be only too glad to, Mrs Rysing –

HEDDA. Elvsted.

TESMAN. I really will do what I can for Ejlert. Everything I possibly can. You can be sure of that.

MRS ELVSTED. Oh, you *are* being kind! [*Clasping his hands.*] Thank you, again and again. [*Frightened.*] Because my husband is so attached to him.

HEDDA [*getting up*]. You ought to write to him, my dear. He may not come to see you of his own accord.

TESMAN. Yes, Hedda, that probably would be best. Eh?

HEDDA. And the sooner the better. Now – at once – I think.

MRS ELVSTED [*beseechingly*]. Oh yes! If you *would!*

TESMAN. I'll write this very minute. Have you his address, Mrs – Elvsted?

MRS ELVSTED [*taking a small slip of paper out of her pocket and handing it to him*]. Here it is.

TESMAN. Good. Good. I'll go in, then. [*Looking round him.*] That reminds me – my slippers? Ah, here they are. [*Picks up the parcel and is just going.*]

HEDDA. Now write really kindly and affectionately. And a good long letter, too.

TESMAN. Yes, I certainly will.

MRS ELVSTED. But, please, don't say a word about my having asked you to!

TESMAN. Of course not. That goes without saying. Eh? [*He goes through the inner room to the right.*]

HEDDA [*goes up to Mrs Elvsted and says softly*]. That's right. Now we've killed two birds with one stone.

MRS ELVSTED. How do you mean?

HEDDA. Didn't you realize I wanted to get rid of him?

MRS ELVSTED. Yes, to write his letter.

HEDDA. And also so that I could talk to you alone.

MRS ELVSTED [*confused*]. About this business?

HEDDA. Exactly. About that.

MRS ELVSTED [*alarmed*]. But there isn't anything more, Mrs Tesman! Nothing at all!

HEDDA. Oh yes there is, now. There's a lot more. That much I do realize. Come over here, and we'll sit and be cosy and friendly together.

[*She pushes Mrs Elvsted into the easy-chair by the stove and sits on one of the stools herself.*]

MRS ELVSTED [*looking anxiously at her watch*]. But my dear Mrs Tesman, I really meant to go now.

HEDDA. Oh, surely there's no hurry. Now then, suppose you tell me a little about what your home's like.

MRS ELVSTED. But that's the last thing in the world I wanted to talk about!

HEDDA. Not to me, my dear? After all, we were at school together.

MRS ELVSTED. Yes, but you were a class above me. How dreadfully frightened of you I was in those days!

HEDDA. Were you frightened of me?

MRS ELVSTED. Yes. Dreadfully frightened. Because when we met on the stairs you always used to pull my hair.

HEDDA. No, *did I?*

MRS ELVSTED. Yes, and once you said you would burn it off.

HEDDA. Oh, that was only silly talk, you know.

MRS ELVSTED. Yes, but I was so stupid in those days. And since then, anyhow, we have drifted such a long, long way apart. Our circles were so entirely different.

HEDDA. Well, then, we'll see if we can come together again. Now, look here. When we were at school we used to talk like real close friends and call each other by our Christian names.

MRS ELVSTED. Oh no, you're making quite a mistake.

HEDDA. I certainly am *not*. I remember it perfectly well. So we are going to tell each other everything, as we did in the old days. [*Moving nearer with her stool.*] There we are! [*Kissing her cheek.*] Now you're to talk to me like a real friend and call me 'Hedda'.

MRS ELVSTED [*clasping and patting her hands*]. All this goodness and kindness – it's not a bit what I'm used to.

HEDDA. There, there, there! And I'm going to treat you like a friend, as I did before, and call you my dear Thora.

MRS ELVSTED. My name's Thea.

HEDDA. Yes, of course. Of course. I meant Thea. [*Looking sympathetically at her.*] So you're not used to much goodness or kindness, aren't you, Thea? Not in your own home?

MRS ELVSTED. Ah, if I *had* a home! But I haven't one. Never have had. ...

HEDDA [*looking at her a moment*]. I rather thought it must be something of that sort.

MRS ELVSTED [*gazing helplessly in front of her*]. Yes. Yes. Yes.

HEDDA. I can't quite remember now, but wasn't it as housekeeper that you went up there in the beginning – to the District Magistrate's?

MRS ELVSTED. Actually it was to have been as governess. But his wife – his late wife – was an invalid and was ill in bed most of the time. So I had to take charge of the house too.

HEDDA. But then, in the end, you became the mistress of the house.

MRS ELVSTED [*drearily*]. Yes, I did.

HEDDA. Let me see. ... About how long ago is it now?

MRS ELVSTED. Since I was married?

HEDDA. Yes.

MRS ELVSTED. It's five years ago now.

HEDDA. Yes, of course. It must be that.

MRS ELVSTED. Ah! Those five years – or rather the last two or three. Oh, if you could only imagine, Mrs Tesman –

HEDDA [*giving her a little slap on the hand*]. Mrs Tesman! Come, Thea!

MRS ELVSTED. Oh yes; I will try! Yes, Hedda, if you had any idea – if you understood –

HEDDA [*casually*]. Ejlert Lövborg was up there too for three years or so, I believe?

MRS ELVSTED [*looking at her doubtfully*]. Ejlert Lövborg? Why yes. He was.

HEDDA. Did you know him already? From the old days in town?

MRS ELVSTED. Hardly at all. Well I mean – by name, of course.

HEDDA. But when you were up there – then, he used to visit you and your husband?

MRS ELVSTED. Yes, he came over to us every day. You see, he was giving the children lessons. Because, in the long run, I couldn't manage it all myself.

HEDDA. No, I should think not. And your husband? I suppose he is often away from home?

MRS ELVSTED. Yes. You see, Mrs – er – you see, Hedda, being District Magistrate he's always having to go out on circuit.

HEDDA [*leaning against the arm of the chair*]. Thea, my poor little Thea. Now you're going to tell me all about it. Just how things are.

MRS ELVSTED. Very well. You ask me about it, then.

HEDDA. What is your husband really like, Thea? You know what I mean – in everyday life? Is he nice to you?

MRS ELVSTED [*evasively*]. He's quite sure himself that he does everything for the best.

HEDDA. Only, it seems to me, he must be much too old for you. More than twenty years older, surely?

MRS ELVSTED [*irritably*]. Yes, there's that too. What with one thing and another, I'm miserable with him. We haven't an idea in common, he and I. Not a thing in the world.

HEDDA. But isn't he fond of you, all the same? I mean, in his own way?

MRS ELVSTED. Oh, I don't know *what* he feels. I think I'm

just useful to him. After all, it doesn't cost much to keep me. I'm cheap.

HEDDA. That's silly of you.

MRS ELVSTED [*shaking her head*]. It can't be any different.

Not with him. He isn't really fond of anyone but himself. And perhaps the children – a little.

HEDDA. And of Ejlert Lövborg, Thea.

MRS ELVSTED [*looking at her*]. Of Ejlert Lövborg? What makes you think that?

HEDDA. But, my dear – it seems to me, when he sends you all the way into town after him. ... [*Smiling almost imperceptibly*.] And besides, you said so yourself to my husband.

MRS ELVSTED [*with a nervous start*]. What? Oh yes, so I did. [*Breaking out, but in a lowered voice*.] No. I might as well tell you now as later. It'll all come out, anyway.

HEDDA. But, my dear Thea –

MRS ELVSTED. Well, to be quite frank, my husband had no idea I was coming.

HEDDA. *What!* Didn't your husband know about it?

MRS ELVSTED. No, of course not. And, anyway, he wasn't at home. He was away too. Oh, I couldn't stand it any longer, Hedda! It was simply impossible. I should have been absolutely alone up there in future.

HEDDA. Well? So then?

MRS ELVSTED. So I packed up some of my things, you see – the ones I needed most. Very quietly, of course. And so I left the place.

HEDDA. Just like that? Nothing more?

MRS ELVSTED. No ... And then I took the train straight in to town.

HEDDA. But, my dear, precious child! How did you dare risk it?

MRS ELVSTED [*getting up and moving across the room*].

Well, what on earth could I do?

HEDDA. But what do you think your husband will say when you go back again?

MRS ELVSTED [*by the table, looking at her*]. Back there, to him?

HEDDA. Yes, of course. What then?

MRS ELVSTED. I'm never going back there to him.

HEDDA [*getting up and going nearer to her*]. Then you've left in real earnest, for good and all?

MRS ELVSTED. Yes. There didn't seem to be anything else for me to do.

HEDDA. And then – your doing it quite openly!

MRS ELVSTED. Oh, you can't keep that kind of thing secret, in any case.

HEDDA. But, Thea, what do you think people will say about you?

MRS ELVSTED. Heaven knows, they must say what they like. [*Sitting down on the sofa wearily and sadly*.] I have only done what I had to do.

HEDDA [*after a short silence*]. What do you mean to do now? What kind of job are you going to get?

MRS ELVSTED. I don't know yet. I only know that I must live here, where Ejlert Lövborg lives. That is, if I *must* live. ...

HEDDA [*moves a chair from the table, sits beside her and strokes her hands*]. Thea, my dear, how did it happen? This – this friendship between you and Ejlert Lövborg?

MRS ELVSTED. Oh, it happened by degrees, somehow. I came to have some kind of power over him.

HEDDA. Indeed? And then?

MRS ELVSTED. He gave up his old habits. Not because I asked him to. I never dared do that. But of course he noticed I didn't like that kind of thing. And so he left off.

HEDDA [*masking an involuntary sneer*]. In fact, you've what they call 'reclaimed him', you have, little Thea.

MRS ELVSTED. Yes. At least, he says so himself. And he, for his part, has made me into a real human being! Taught me to think ... and to understand ... one thing after another.

HEDDA. Perhaps he gave *you* lessons, too, did he?

MRS ELVSTED. No, not exactly lessons. ... But he used to talk to me about such endless numbers of things. And then came the glorious, happy moment when I began to share his work! When he let me help him.

HEDDA. And you did, did you?

MRS ELVSTED. Yes. When he was writing anything, we always had to work at it together.

HEDDA. I see. Like two good comrades.

MRS ELVSTED [*eagerly*]. Comrades! Why, Hedda, that's just what he called it! Oh, I ought to feel so perfectly happy. But I can't, though. Because I really don't know whether it will last.

HEDDA. Aren't you surer of him than that?

MRS ELVSTED [*drearily*]. There's the shadow of a woman standing between Ejlert Lövborg and me.

HEDDA [*looking intently at her*]. Who can that be?

MRS ELVSTED. I don't know. Someone or other from – from his past. Someone he's never really forgotten.

HEDDA. What has he said ... about it?

MRS ELVSTED. He only touched on it once – and quite vaguely.

HEDDA. Oh. And what did he say, then?

MRS ELVSTED. He said that when they parted she wanted to shoot him with a pistol.

HEDDA [*cold and controlled*]. How absurd! People don't do that kind of thing here.

MRS ELVSTED. No. And that's why I thought it must be that red-haired singer that he once –

HEDDA. Yes, that may be.

MRS ELVSTED. Because I remember people used to talk about her carrying loaded firearms.

HEDDA. Oh well, then, it's obviously she.

MRS ELVSTED [*wringing her hands*]. Yes, but just think, Hedda, now I hear that that singer – she's in town again! Oh, I'm simply desperate!

HEDDA [*glancing towards the inner room*]. Sh! Here comes my husband. [*Getting up and whispering.*] Thea, all this must be between our two selves.

MRS ELVSTED [*springing up*]. Why, yes! For heaven's sake! [*Jörgen Tesman, with a letter in his hand, comes in from the right through the inner room.*]

TESMAN. There we are! The letter's finished and ready.

HEDDA. That's good. But I think Mrs Elvsted wants to go now. Wait a minute. I'm going to the garden gate with her.

TESMAN. I say, Hedda, I wonder if Berte could see to this?

HEDDA [*taking the letter*]. I'll tell her to.

[*Berte comes in from the hall.*]

BERTE. Mr Brack's here and would like to see the master and mistress, please.

HEDDA. Ask Mr Brack if he will please come in. And – look here – put this letter in the post, will you?

BERTE [*taking the letter*]. Certainly, ma'am.

[*She opens the door for Brack and goes out herself. He is a man of forty-five, square but well built and light in his movements. His face is roundish, with a fine profile. His hair, still almost black, is short and carefully waved. His eyes are lively and bright. His eyebrows are thick and so is his moustache with its clipped ends. He is dressed in a well-cut outdoor suit – a little too young for his age. He wears an eye-glass, which he now and then lets fall.*]

BRACK [*bowing, with his hat in his hand*]. May one call so early as this?

HEDDA. One certainly may!

TESMAN [*clasping his hand*]. You will always be welcome
[*Introducing him.*] Mr Brack, Miss Rysing.

HEDDA. Oh!

BRACK [*bowing*]. A great pleasure.

HEDDA [*looking at him and laughing*]. It's very nice to have
a look at you by daylight, Mr Brack.

BRACK. Any difference, do you think?

HEDDA. Yes; I think a little younger.

BRACK. Thank you – very much.

TESMAN. But what do you say to Hedda? Eh? Doesn't
she look well? She's positively –

HEDDA. Oh, do leave me out of it, please. What about
thanking Mr Brack for all the trouble he has taken?

BRACK. Oh, no, no. It was only a pleasure.

HEDDA. Yes. You're a good friend. But here's Mrs Elvsted
longing to be off. Excuse me a moment; I shall be back
again directly.

[*Mutual good-byes. Mrs Elvsted and Hedda go out by the hall
door.*]

BRACK. Well now; is your wife fairly satisfied?

TESMAN. Rather! We can't thank you enough. Of course,
I gather there will have to be a little rearranging. And
there's a certain amount needed still. We shall have to
get a few little things.

BRACK. Is that so? Really?

TESMAN. But you're not to have any trouble over that.
Hedda said she would see to what was needed herself.
But why don't we sit down? Eh?

BRACK. Thanks. Just for a minute. [*He sits by the table.*]
There's something I rather wanted to talk to you about,
Tesman.

TESMAN. Is there? Ah, I understand! [*Sits down.*] I expect
it's the serious part of the fun that's coming now. Eh?

BRACK. Oh, there's no great hurry about the financial side.
However, I could wish we'd managed things a little
more economically.

TESMAN. But that wouldn't have done at all! Think of
Hedda, my dear man. You, who know her so well. I
couldn't possibly ask her to live in some little suburban
house.

BRACK. No. That's just the difficulty.

TESMAN. Besides, luckily it can't be long now before I get
my appointment.

BRACK. Well you know, a thing like that can often be a
slow business.

TESMAN. Have you heard anything further? Eh?

BRACK. Well, nothing definite – [*Breaking off.*] But that
reminds me, there's one piece of news I can tell you.

TESMAN. Oh?

BRACK. Your old friend, Ejler Lövborg, has come back
to town.

TESMAN. I know that already.

BRACK. Do you? How did you come to know?

TESMAN. She told us. The lady who went out with Hedda.

BRACK. Oh, I see. What was her name? I didn't quite
catch it.

TESMAN. Mrs Elvsted.

BRACK. Oh yes; the District Magistrate's wife. Of course,
it's up there he's been living.

TESMAN. And just think! I hear, to my great delight, that
he's become perfectly steady again.

BRACK. Yes, so I'm assured.

TESMAN. And that he's brought out a new book. Eh?

BRACK. Oh yes.

TESMAN. And it's made quite an impression, too.

BRACK. It's made quite an extraordinary impression.

TESMAN. Well, now! Isn't that good news? He, with his

remarkable gifts – I was terribly afraid he'd gone under for good.

BRACK. Yes. That was the general opinion about him.

TESMAN. But I can't imagine what he'll do now? What on earth can he be going to live on? Eh?

[*During the last words, Hedda has come in by the hall door.*]

HEDDA [*to Brack, laughing, with a touch of contempt*]. My husband's always worrying about what one's going to live on.

TESMAN. Oh but, my dear, we were talking about poor Ejlert Lövborg.

HEDDA [*looking quickly at him*]. Oh, were you? [*Sits in the easy-chair by the stove and asks, with a casual manner.*] What's wrong with him?

TESMAN. Well, he must have run through that money he inherited long ago. And he can't very well write a new book every year. Eh? So, you see, I really wonder what will become of him.

BRACK. Perhaps I could tell you something about that.

TESMAN. Really?

BRACK. You must remember that he has relatives with a good deal of influence.

TESMAN. Ah, but unfortunately, his relatives have completely washed their hands of him.

BRACK. Once upon a time they called him the hope of the family.

TESMAN. Once upon a time, yes! But he's wrecked all that himself.

HEDDA. Who knows? [*With a slight smile.*] After all, they've 'reclaimed' him up at the Elvsteds' place.

BRACK. And then this book that's come out –

TESMAN. Ah well, let's hope to goodness they'll get something or other for him. I've just written to him. Hedda, my dear, I asked him to come out to us this evening.

BRACK. But, my dear fellow, you're coming to my bachelor party this evening. You promised last night at the pier.

HEDDA. Had you forgotten it, my dear?

TESMAN. Yes, by Jove, I had!

BRACK. In any case, you needn't worry. He isn't likely to come.

TESMAN. Why do you think he won't? Eh?

BRACK [*hesitating a little. Gets up and rests his hands on the back of the chair*]. Mr dear Tesman – and you too, Mrs Tesman – I can't, in fairness, leave you in ignorance of something that ... er ... that –

TESMAN. Something that has to do with Ejlert?

BRACK. That has to do both with you and with him.

TESMAN. But, my dear Brack, tell me what it is!

BRACK. You must be prepared for your appointment not to come so quickly, perhaps, as you wish or expect it to.

TESMAN [*jumping up, uneasily*]. Has anything gone wrong? Eh?

BRACK. There may be some competition – perhaps – before the post is filled.

TESMAN. Competition! Fancy that, Hedda!

HEDDA [*leaning farther back in the easy-chair*]. Well, well, now!

TESMAN. But with whom? Surely, never with – ?

BRACK. Yes. Just so. With Ejlert Lövborg.

TESMAN [*clasping his hands*]. No, no! That's absolutely unthinkable! It's simply impossible! Eh?

BRACK. Well ... That's what we may see, all the same.

TESMAN. But look here, Brack, it would be incredibly inconsiderate to me! [*Gesticulating with his arms.*] Because – why, just think! – I'm a married man. We married on our prospects, Hedda and I. Went and got thoroughly in

debt, and borrowed money from Aunt Julle too. Why good Lord, the appointment was as good as promised to me! Eh?

BRACK. Steady, old man! No doubt you'll get the job, all right. But it will be contested first.

HEDDA [*motionless in the easy-chair*]. Think of that, my dear. It will be almost like a kind of sport.

TESMAN. But, Hedda dearest, how can you take it all so casually?

HEDDA [*as before*]. I'm not doing that at all. I'm quite excited about the result.

BRACK. At any rate, Mrs Tesman, it's as well you should know now how things stand. I mean, before you start making those little purchases I hear you have in mind.

HEDDA. This can't make any difference.

BRACK. Oh, indeed? Then there's no more to be said. Good-bye. [*To Tesman.*] When I go for my afternoon stroll, I'll come in and fetch you.

TESMAN. Oh yes. Yes. I really don't know *what* I'm going to do. ...

HEDDA [*lying back and reaching out her hand*]. Good-bye, Mr Brack. And do come again.

BRACK. Many thanks! Good-bye, good-bye.

TESMAN [*going to the door with him*]. Good-bye, my dear Brack. You must excuse me. ...

[*Brack goes out by the hall door.*]

TESMAN [*crossing the room*]. Well, Hedda, one should never venture into the land of romance. Eh?

HEDDA [*looking at him and smiling*]. Do you do that?

TESMAN. Why, my dear, it can't be denied. It *was* romantic to go and get married and set up house, simply and solely on our prospects.

HEDDA. You may be right, there.

TESMAN. Well, we have our charming home, anyhow.

Think, Hedda, it's the home we both used to dream of – that we fell in love with, I might almost say. Eh?

HEDDA [*getting up slowly and wearily*]. It was understood of course, that we should entertain – keep up some sort of establishment.

TESMAN. Goodness, yes! How I used to look forward to it, seeing you as hostess to a chosen circle of friends! Well, well, well. For the present we two must get along by ourselves, Hedda. Just have Aunt Julle out here every now and then. ... Oh, my dear, it was to have been so very, very different for you.

HEDDA. Naturally, now I shan't get a man-servant just at first.

TESMAN. No, I'm afraid you can't. There can be no question of keeping a man-servant, you know.

HEDDA. And the saddle-horse that I was going to –

TESMAN [*horrified*]. Saddle-horse!

HEDDA. I suppose it's no use even thinking of that now.

TESMAN. Good heavens, no! That goes without saying.

HEDDA [*crossing the room towards the back*]. Well, anyhow, I still have one thing to kill time with.

TESMAN [*beaming with pleasure*]. Thank heavens for that! But what is it, Hedda? Eh?

HEDDA [*at the centre doorway, looking at him with lurking contempt*]. My pistols, Jørgen.

TESMAN [*anxiously*]. Your pistols!

HEDDA [*with cold eyes*]. General Gabler's pistols. [*She goes through the inner room and out to the left.*]

TESMAN [*running to the centre doorway and calling after her*]. For goodness' sake! Hedda, darling! Don't touch those dangerous things! For my sake, Hedda! Eh?

ACT TWO

* ————— *

[The room at the Tesmans', as in the First Act, except that the piano has been taken away and a graceful little writing-table with a book case put in its place. A smaller table has been put by the sofa on the left; most of the bouquets are gone, but Mrs Elvsted's stands on the large table in the front of the stage. It is afternoon.]

Hedda, in an afternoon dress, is alone in the room. She is standing by the open glass door, loading a pistol. The fellow to it lies in an open pistol-case on the writing-table.]

HEDDA *[looking down the garden and calling]*. How do you do again, Mr Brack?

BRACK *[is heard from below, at a little distance]*. And you, Mrs Tesman?

HEDDA *[lifting the pistol and aiming]*. I'm going to shoot you, sir!

BRACK *[calling from below]*. No, no, no! Don't stand there aiming straight at me.

HEDDA. That comes of using the back way in. *[She shoots]*.

BRACK *[nearer]*. Are you quite crazy?

HEDDA. Dear me! I didn't hit you, did I?

BRACK *[still outside]*. Now stop this nonsense!

HEDDA. Well, come in then.

[Brack, dressed as for an informal party, comes in by the glass door. He is carrying a light overcoat on his arm.]

BRACK. The deuce! Do you still play that game? What are you shooting at?

HEDDA. Oh, I just stand and shoot up into the blue.

BRACK *[taking the pistol gently out of her hand]*. If you don't mind, my dear lady. *[Looking at it.]* Ah, this one. I know it well. *[Looking round him.]* Now, where have we got the case? Ah yes, here. *[Puts the pistol away and shuts the case.]* Because we're not going to play that game any more today.

HEDDA. Well, what in heaven's name do you expect me to do with myself?

BRACK. Haven't you had any visitors?

HEDDA *[shutting the glass door]*. Not a soul. I suppose everybody we know is still in the country.

BRACK. And isn't Tesman at home either?

HEDDA *[at the writing-table, shutting up the pistol-case in the drawer]*. No, the minute he had finished lunch he tore off to his aunts. He didn't expect you so soon.

BRACK. Hm — and I didn't think of that. That was stupid of me.

HEDDA *[turning her head and looking at him]*. Why stupid?

BRACK. Because if I had, I should have come here a little — earlier.

HEDDA *[crossing the room]*. Well, then you wouldn't have found anyone at all. I was in my room changing after lunch.

BRACK. And there isn't so much as a tiny chink in the door that one could have communicated through?

HEDDA. You've forgotten to arrange anything like that.

BRACK. That was stupid of me, too.

HEDDA. Well, we shall just have to sit down here and wait. My husband won't be home yet awhile.

BRACK. Well, never mind. I'll be patient.

[Hedda sits down in the corner of the sofa. Brack lays his coat over the back of the nearest chair and sits down, keeping his hat in his hand. There is a short pause. They look at each other.]

HEDDA. Well?

BRACK [*in the same tone*]. Well?

HEDDA. It was I who asked first.

BRACK [*leaning forward a little*]. Come now, let's have a cosy little gossip all to ourselves – Madam Hedda.

HEDDA [*leaning farther back on the sofa*]. Doesn't it feel like a whole eternity since we last talked to each other? Oh, of course, a word or two last night and this morning – but I don't count that.

BRACK. Not like this, between ourselves? Alone together, you mean?

HEDDA. Yes. More or less that.

BRACK. Here was I, every blessed day, wishing to goodness you were home again.

HEDDA. And there was I, the whole time, wishing exactly the same.

BRACK. You? Really, Madam Hedda! And I, thinking you had thoroughly enjoyed yourself on your travels!

HEDDA. You may be sure I did!

BRACK. But Tesman was always saying so in his letters.

HEDDA. Oh, *he* did all right. Rummaging in libraries is the most entrancing occupation he knows. Sitting and copying out old parchments, or whatever they are.

BRACK [*with a touch of malice*]. After all, that is his vocation in life. Partly, at least.

HEDDA. Oh yes, quite; it is. And of course then one can – But as for me! No, my dear sir. I was excruciatingly bored.

BRACK. Do you really mean it? In sober earnest?

HEDDA. Well, you can just imagine it for yourself. To go a whole six months and never meet a soul even remotely connected with our circle. Not a soul to talk to about the things we're interested in.

BRACK. Well, yes. I should feel the lack of that too.

HEDDA. And then, what's the most intolerable thing of all ...

BRACK. Well?

HEDDA. Everlastingly having to be with ... with one and the same person. ...

BRACK [*nodding agreement*]. Early and late; I know. At every conceivable moment.

HEDDA. What I said was 'everlastingly'.

BRACK. Quite. But with our good friend Tesman, I should have thought one would be able ...

HEDDA. Jörgen Tesman is – a learned man, you must remember.

BRACK. Admittedly.

HEDDA. And learned men are *not* entertaining as travelling companions. Not in the long run, anyhow.

BRACK. Not even a learned man one is in love with?

HEDDA. Oh! Don't use that sentimental word.

BRACK [*slightly taken aback*]. Why, what's the matter, Madam Hedda?

HEDDA [*half laughing, half annoyed*]. Well, you just try it yourself! Listening to someone talking about the history of civilization, early and late –

BRACK. – Everlastingly –

HEDDA. Yes, exactly! And all this business about domestic crafts in the Middle Ages! That's the most awful part of all.

BRACK [*looking searchingly at her*]. But, tell me ... I don't quite see why, in that case ... er ...

HEDDA. Why Jörgen and I ever made a match of it, you mean?

BRACK. Well, let's put it that way; yes.

HEDDA. After all, do you think that's extraordinary?

BRACK. Yes – and no, Madam Hedda.

HEDDA. I had simply danced myself out, my dear sir. My time was up. [*With a little start*.] Ah, no! I'm not going to say that. Nor think it, either.

BRACK. And by Jove, you have no reason to!

HEDDA. Oh, reason! [*Watching him rather carefully.*] And Jörgen Tesman ... one must admit that he's a thoroughly good creature.

BRACK. Good and reliable. No question.

HEDDA. And I can't see that there's anything actually ridiculous about him. Do you think there is?

BRACK. Ridiculous? No-o. I wouldn't exactly say that.

HEDDA. Quite so. But, anyway, he's an indefatigable researcher. And it's always possible that he may get somewhere in time, after all.

BRACK [*looking at her a little uncertainly*]. I thought you believed, like everyone else, that he was going to become a really eminent man.

HEDDA [*with a weary expression*]. Yes, so I did. And since he insisted with might and main on being allowed to support me, I don't know why I shouldn't have accepted the offer.

BRACK. No, no. Looking at it from that point of view. ...

HEDDA. Anyhow, it was more than my other friends and admirers were prepared to do, my dear sir.

BRACK [*laughing*]. Well, I can't answer for all the others. But as far as I myself am concerned, you know quite well that I have always preserved a – a certain respect for the marriage-tie. In a general way; in the abstract, at least, Madam Hedda.

HEDDA [*jesting*]. Ah, but I never had any hopes with regard to you.

BRACK. All I want is to have a pleasant, intimate circle of friends where I can be useful, in one way and another, and can come and go freely like – like a trusted friend.

HEDDA. Of the husband, you mean?

BRACK [*leaning forward*]. To be quite frank, preferably of the wife. But of the husband, too, in the second place, of

course. I assure you that sort of – shall I call it triangular relationship? – is actually a very pleasant thing for everybody concerned.

HEDDA. Yes. Many a time I longed for a third person on that trip. Driving side by side with just one other person ...!

BRACK. Fortunately the wedding-journey is over now.

HEDDA [*shaking her head*]. The journey will go on for a long time yet. I have only come to a stopping-place on the way.

BRACK. Why, then one jumps out and walks about a little, Madam Hedda.

HEDDA. I never jump out.

BRACK. Don't you really?

HEDDA. No. Because there is always someone at hand who –

BRACK [*laughing*]. – Who looks when you leap, you mean?

HEDDA. Precisely.

BRACK. Oh come, you know!

HEDDA [*with a gesture of disagreement*]. I don't care for that. I prefer to remain sitting where I am, alone with the other person.

BRACK. But suppose, now, a third person were to get in and join the other two?

HEDDA. Ah well, that's quite a different matter.

BRACK. A trusted and sympathetic friend –

HEDDA. – Someone who could talk entertainingly about all sorts of interesting things –

BRACK. – And nothing learned about him!

HEDDA [*with an audible sigh*]. Well, that certainly is a relief.

BRACK [*hearing the hall door open and glancing towards it*].

The triangle is complete.

HEDDA [*half aloud*]. And so the train goes on.

[*Jörgen Tesman, in a grey outdoor suit and a soft felt hat, comes*

in from the hall. He has a number of unbound books under his arm and in his pockets.]

TESMAN [*going up to the table by the corner sofa*]. It was pretty hot carrying that load. [*Putting the books down.*] I'm absolutely streaming, Hedda. Why, there you are, come already, Brack. Eh? Berte didn't say anything about it.

BRACK [*getting up*]. I came up through the garden.

HEDDA. What are those books you've brought?

TESMAN [*standing and dipping into them*]. They are some new learned publications that I simply had to have.

HEDDA. Learned publications?

BRACK. Ah yes. Learned publications, Mrs Tesman.

[*Brack and Hedda exchange an understanding smile.*]

HEDDA. Do you need any more learned publications?

TESMAN. Why, my dear Hedda, one can never have too many of them. One has to keep up with everything that's written and printed.

HEDDA. Yes, of course one does.

TESMAN [*turning over the books*]. And look here – I've got hold of Ejler Lovborg's new book too. [*Holding it out.*]

Perhaps you'd like to have a look at it, Hedda. Eh?

HEDDA. No, thank you very much. Or ... well perhaps later on.

TESMAN. I dipped into it on the way.

BRACK. Well, what do you think of it – as a learned man?

TESMAN. I think it's remarkable – the balance and judgment it has. He never used to write like this before. [*Gathering the books together.*] Now, I'll take all this in with me. It'll be a treat to cut the pages! And then I must tidy myself up a little, too. [*To Brack.*] I say, we don't need to start at once? Eh?

BRACK. Goodness no! There's no hurry for some time yet.

TESMAN. Ah well, I'll take my time, then. [*Is going out with the books, but stops in the centre doorway and turns.*]

Oh, while I think of it, Hedda, Aunt Julle won't be coming out to you this evening.

HEDDA. Won't she? Perhaps it's that business with the hat that's the trouble?

TESMAN. Oh Lord, no! How can you think that of Aunt Julle? No, the thing is Aunt Rina's very ill.

HEDDA. So she always is.

TESMAN. Yes, but today she was particularly bad, poor dear.

HEDDA. Oh, then it's only natural for the other one to stay with her. I must make the best of it.

TESMAN. And you can't imagine, my dear, how glad Aunt Julle was, in spite of that, that you'd got so plump on your holiday.

HEDDA [*half audibly, getting up*]. Oh! These everlasting aunts!

TESMAN. Eh?

HEDDA [*going to the glass door*]. Nothing.

TESMAN. Oh, all right.

[*He goes through the inner room and out to the right.*]

BRACK. What hat was it you were talking about?

HEDDA. Oh, that was something that happened with Miss Tesman this morning. She had put her hat down there on the chair. [*Looking at him and smiling.*] And I pretended I thought it was the servant's.

BRACK [*shaking his head*]. But my dear Madam Hedda, how could you do that? And to that nice old lady?

HEDDA [*nervously, walking across the room*]. Well, you know, that kind of thing comes over me – just like that. And then I can't stop myself. [*Throwing herself down in the easy-chair by the stove.*] I don't know, myself, how to explain it.

BRACK [*behind the easy-chair*]. You're not really happy. That's the trouble.

HEDDA [*looking straight in front of her*]. And I don't know

why I should be – happy. Perhaps you can tell me, can you?

BRACK. Well, among other things, because you've got the very home you wished for.

HEDDA [*looking up at him and laughing*]. Do you believe that fantasy too?

BRACK. Isn't there something in it, though?

HEDDA. Oh yes ... *Something*.

BRACK. Very well?

HEDDA. There's this much in it. Last summer I used Jörgen Tesman to see me home from evening parties.

BRACK. Unfortunately I was going quite another way.

HEDDA. True enough. You certainly were going another way last summer.

BRACK [*laughing*]. You ought to be ashamed of yourself, Madam Hedda! Well, but you and Tesman, then?

HEDDA. Why, we came past here one evening. And he, poor creature, was tying himself in knots because he didn't know how to find anything to talk about. And so I felt sorry for the poor, learned man.

BRACK [*smiling doubtfully*]. You did, did you? H'm.

HEDDA. Yes. I really did. And so, to help him out of his misery, I just said – quite casually – that I should like to live here, in this villa.

BRACK. No more than that?

HEDDA. Not that evening.

BRACK. But ... afterwards?

HEDDA. Yes; my thoughtlessness had its consequences, my dear sir.

BRACK. Unfortunately, our thoughtlessness all too often has, Madam Hedda.

HEDDA. Thank you. But, you see, it was through this passion for the villa of the late Mrs Falk that Jörgen Tesman and I found our way to an understanding. *That* led to our

engagement and marriage and wedding trip and everything. Well, well. As one makes one's bed one must lie on it, I was just going to say.

BRACK. This is delightful! And all the time, it seems, you weren't interested in the least?

HEDDA. No. Heaven knows, I wasn't.

BRACK. Well, but now? Now that we have made it more or less comfortable for you?

HEDDA. Oh! I seem to smell lavender and dried roses in all the rooms. But perhaps Aunt Julle brought the smell with her.

BRACK [*laughing*]. No, I should think it's more likely the late Mrs Falk bequeathed it to you!

HEDDA. It reminds one of the departed, all right. Like one's bouquet, the day after a ball. [*Clasping her hands at the back of her neck, leaning back in her chair and looking at him.*] My friend, you can't imagine how horribly bored I'm going to be out here.

BRACK. But won't there be some object or other in life for you to work for, like other people, Madam Hedda?

HEDDA. An object ... that would have something fascinating about it?

BRACK. Preferably, of course.

HEDDA. Lord knows what kind of an object it could be. I very often wonder – [*Breaking off.*] But that's no use either.

BRACK. It might be. Tell me about it.

HEDDA. Whether I could get my husband to go into politics, I was going to say.

BRACK [*laughing*]. Tesman! Oh, come now! Things like politics aren't a bit – they're not at all his line of country.

HEDDA. No, I quite believe you. But suppose I could get him to, all the same?

BRACK. Well, but what satisfaction would you get out of

it? When he isn't made that way? Why do you want to make him do it?

HEDDA. Because I'm bored, I tell you. [*After a pause.*] Then you think, do you, it would be absolutely impossible for him to get into the Government?

BRACK. Well you see, my dear Madam Hedda, to do that he'd need to be a fairly rich man in the first place.

HEDDA [*getting up impatiently*]. Yes. There we have it. It's this middle-class world that I've got into. [*Crossing the stage.*] It's that that makes life so wretched! So absolutely ludicrous! Because that's what it is.

BRACK. I rather fancy the trouble lies somewhere else.

HEDDA. Where?

BRACK. You have never gone through anything that really roused you.

HEDDA. Nothing serious, you mean?

BRACK. Yes, that's one way of putting it, certainly. But now perhaps that may come.

HEDDA [*with a jerk of her head*]. Oh, you're thinking of all the bother over that wretched professorship. But that's my husband's affair entirely. I'm not wasting so much as a thought on it.

BRACK. No, no. That wasn't what I was thinking of either.

But suppose now there comes what, in rather solemn language, is called a serious claim on you, one full of responsibility? [*Smiling.*] A new claim, little Madam Hedda.

HEDDA [*angrily*]. Be quiet! You'll never see anything of the kind.

BRACK [*gently*]. We'll talk about it in a year's time – at most.

HEDDA [*shortly*]. I have no gift for that kind of thing, Mr Brack. Not for things that make claims on me!

BRACK. Why shouldn't you have a gift, like most other women, for the calling that – ?

HEDDA [*over by the glass door*]. Oh, be quiet, I tell you! It often seems to me that I've only got a gift for one thing in the world.

BRACK [*going nearer*]. And what is that, if I may ask?

HEDDA [*stands looking out*]. For boring myself to death.

Now you know. [*Turning and looking towards the inner room with a laugh.*] Ah, just so! Here is our professor.

BRACK [*quietly, and with a warning*]. Now then, Madam Hedda!

[*Jörgen Tesman, dressed for the party, carrying his gloves and hat, comes through the inner room from the right.*]

TESMAN. Hedda, Ejler Lövborg hasn't sent to say he isn't coming? Eh?

HEDDA. No.

TESMAN. Ah, you'll see, then. We shall have him along in a little while.

BRACK. Do you really think he'll come?

TESMAN. Yes, I'm almost sure he will. Because that's only a vague rumour, you know – what you told us this morning.

BRACK. Is it?

TESMAN. Yes. At least, Aunt Julle said she didn't for one moment believe he'd stand in my way again. Just think of it!

BRACK. Oh well, then, everything's quite all right.

TESMAN [*putting his hat, with his gloves in it, on a chair to the right*]. Yes, but I really must wait as long as possible for him, if you don't mind.

BRACK. We've plenty of time for that. No one will turn up at my place before seven, or half past.

TESMAN. Oh well, we can keep Hedda company till then. And see what happens.

HEDDA [*putting Brack's overcoat and hat over on the corner sofa*]. And if the worst comes to the worst, Mr Lövborg can stay here with me.

BRACK [*trying to take his things himself*]. Please let me, Mrs Tesman! What do you mean by 'the worst'?

HEDDA. If he won't go with you and my husband.

TESMAN [*looking at her dubiously*]. But, Hedda dear, do you think that would quite do, for him to stay here with you? Eh? Remember, Aunt Julle can't come.

HEDDA. No, but Mrs Elvsted's coming. So the three of us will have tea together.

TESMAN. Oh, that'll be all right, then.

BRACK [*smiling*]. And perhaps that might be the wisest plan for him too.

HEDDA. Why?

BRACK. Good gracious, my dear lady, you've often enough said hard things about my little bachelor parties. They weren't suitable for any but men of the strongest principles.

HEDDA. But surely Mr Lövborg is a man of strong enough principles now? A converted sinner –
[*Berte appears at the hall door.*]

BERTE. There's a gentleman, ma'am, who'd like to see you.

HEDDA. Yes, show him in.

TESMAN [*quietly*]. I'm sure it's he. Just fancy!
[*Ejlert Lövborg comes in from the hall. He is slight and thin, the same age as Tesman but looking older and played out. His hair and beard are dark brown, his face is long and pale but with two patches of colour on the cheek-bones. He is dressed in a well-cut black suit, quite new, and is carrying dark gloves and a top-hat. He remains standing near the door and bows abruptly. He seems a little embarrassed.*]

TESMAN [*crossing to him and shaking his hand*]. Well, my dear Ejlert, so at last we meet once more!

EJLERT LÖVBORG [*speaking with lowered voice*]. Thank you for your letter, Jörgen. [*Approaching Hedda.*] May I shake hands with you too, Mrs Tesman?

HEDDA [*taking his hand*]. I am glad to see you, Mr Lövborg.

[*With a gesture.*] I don't know whether you two –

LÖVBORG [*with a slight bow*]. Mr Brack, I think.

BRACK [*returning it*]. Of course we do. Some years ago –

TESMAN [*to Lövborg, with his hands on his shoulders*]. And now you're to make yourself absolutely at home, Ejlert. Musn't he, Hedda? For you're going to settle down in town again, I hear. Eh?

LÖVBORG. I am.

TESMAN. Well, that's only natural. Oh, look here, I've got hold of your new book. But I really haven't had the time to read it yet.

LÖVBORG. You may as well save yourself the trouble.

TESMAN. Why may I?

LÖVBORG. Because there isn't much in it.

TESMAN. Well! Fancy your saying that!

BRACK. But it's very highly spoken of, I hear.

LÖVBORG. That's exactly what I wanted. So I wrote a book that everybody could agree with.

BRACK. Very wise.

TESMAN. Yes, but my dear Ejlert –

LÖVBORG. Because now I'm going to try and build myself up a position again. To begin over again.

TESMAN [*a little embarrassed*]. I see; that's what it is? Eh?

LÖVBORG [*smiling puts down his hat and takes a packet wrapped in paper out of his pocket*]. But when this one comes out, Jörgen Tesman, you must read it. For this is my first real book – the first I have put myself into.

TESMAN. Really? And what kind of book is that?

LÖVBORG. It's the continuation.

TESMAN. Continuation? Of what?

LÖVBORG. Of the book.

TESMAN. Of the new one?

LÖVBORG. Of course.

TESMAN. But my dear Ejlert, that one comes down to our own times!

LÖVBORG. It does. And this one deals with the future.

TESMAN. With the future? But, good gracious, we don't know anything about that.

LÖVBORG. No. But there are one or two things to be said about it, all the same. [*Opening the package.*] Here, you see –

TESMAN. But that's not your handwriting?

LÖVBORG. I dictated it. [*Turning over the pages.*] It's divided into two sections. The first is about the factors that will control civilization in the future. And the second part, here [*turning over the later pages*], this is about the probable direction civilization will take.

TESMAN. Amazing! It would never occur to me to write about a thing like that.

HEDDA [*drumming on the panes of the glass door*]. Hm. No ... it wouldn't.

LÖVBORG [*puts the MS. into the envelope and lays the packet on the table*]. I brought it with me because I thought of reading you a little of it this evening.

TESMAN. My dear fellow, that was very good of you. But, this evening ... ? [*He looks across at Brack.*] I don't quite know how it's to be managed.

LÖVBORG. Well, another time then. There's no hurry.

BRACK. I'll explain, Mr Lövborg. There's a little affair at my place tonight. Chiefly for Tesman, you know –

LÖVBORG [*looking for his hat*]. Ah, then I won't keep you –

BRACK. No, look here; won't you give me the pleasure of joining us?

LÖVBORG [*shortly and decidedly*]. No, I can't do that. Thank you very much.

BRACK. Oh, nonsense! Please do. We shall be a small,

select circle. And, believe me, we shall have quite a 'gay' time, as Mad – Mrs Tesman puts it.

LÖVBORG. I don't doubt it. But all the same –

BRACK. So you could take your manuscript along and read it to Tesman there, at my place. I've got plenty of rooms.

TESMAN. Yes, what about it, Ejlert? You could do that! Eh?

HEDDA [*intervening*]. But, my dear, if Mr Lövborg really doesn't want to! I'm sure he would much rather stay here and have supper with me.

LÖVBORG [*looking at her*]. With you, Mrs Tesman?

HEDDA. And with Mrs Elvsted.

LÖVBORG. Oh. [*Casually.*] I met her for a moment this morning.

HEDDA. Did you? Yes, she's coming out. So it's almost imperative for you to stay, Mr Lövborg. Otherwise she'll have no one to see her home.

LÖVBORG. That's true. Well, thank you very much, Mrs Tesman; then I'll stay here.

HEDDA. I'll just have a word with the maid.

[*She goes to the hall door and rings. Berte comes in. Hedda talks to her in an undertone and points to the inner room. Berte nods and goes out again.*]

TESMAN [*at the same time, to Ejlert Lövborg*]. Look here, Ejlert, is it this new material – about the future – that you're going to lecture on?

LÖVBORG. Yes.

TESMAN. Because I heard at the book-shop that you are going to give a course of lectures here in the autumn.

LÖVBORG. I am. You mustn't think hardly of me for it, Tesman.

TESMAN. Good gracious, no! But –

LÖVBORG. I can quite understand that it must be rather annoying for you.

TESMAN [*dispiritedly*]. Oh, I can't expect you to ... for my sake ...

LÖVBORG. But I'm waiting till you've got your appointment.

TESMAN. Waiting? Yes, but – but aren't you going to try for it, then? Eh?

LÖVBORG. No. I only want a *succès d'estime*.

TESMAN. But, good Lord! Aunt Julle was right after all, then! Of course that was it, I knew! Hedda! Think of it, my dear! Ejlert Lövborg isn't going to stand in our way at all!

HEDDA [*shortly*]. Our way? Please leave me out of it.

[*She goes up towards the inner room where Berte is putting a tray with decanters and glasses on the table. Hedda nods approvingly and comes down again. Berte goes out.*]

TESMAN [*at the same time.*] But what about you, Judge? What do you say to this? Eh?

BRACK. Why, I should say that honour and a *succès d'estime* ... they can be very pleasant things –

TESMAN. They certainly can. But all the same –

HEDDA [*looking at Tesman with a cold smile*]. You look to me as though you'd been thunderstruck.

TESMAN. Well, something like that. ... I almost feel ...

BRACK. As a matter of fact, a thunderstorm has just passed over us, Mrs Tesman.

HEDDA [*with a gesture towards the inner room*]. Wouldn't you men like to go in and have a glass of cold punch?

BRACK [*looking at his watch*]. By way of a stirrup-cup? That wouldn't be a bad idea.

TESMAN. Good, Hedda! Excellent! I feel so light-hearted now, that –

HEDDA. Won't you too, Mr Lövborg?

LÖVBORG [*with a gesture of refusal*]. No, thank you very much. Not for me.

BRACK. But, good Lord! Cold punch isn't poison, so far as I know.

LÖVBORG. Not for everybody, perhaps.

HEDDA. I'll entertain Mr Lövborg in the meantime.

TESMAN. That's right, Hedda dear. You do that.

[*He and Brack go into the inner room and sit down. During what follows they drink punch, smoke cigarettes and carry on a lively conversation. Ejlert Lövborg remains standing by the stove. Hedda goes to the writing-table.*]

HEDDA [*raising her voice a little*]. I'll show you some photographs, if you like. My husband and I made a trip through the Tyrol on our way home.

[*She brings an album and puts it on the table by the sofa, sitting down herself in the farthest corner. Ejlert Lövborg goes nearer, stands and looks at her. Then he takes a chair and sits down on her left with his back to the inner-room.*]

HEDDA [*opening the album*]. Do you see this mountain range, Mr Lövborg? It's the Ortler Group. My husband has written it underneath. Here it is: 'The Ortler Group at Meran.'

LÖVBORG [*who has been looking intently at her, speaking softly and slowly*]. Hedda – Gabler.

HEDDA [*glancing quickly at him*]. Hush, now!

LÖVBORG [*repeating softly*]. Hedda Gabler.

HEDDA [*looking at the album*]. Yes, that was my name once upon a time. In the days – when we two knew one another.

LÖVBORG. And in future – for the whole of my life – then, I must break myself of the habit of saying Hedda Gabler?

HEDDA [*going on turning over the pages*]. Yes, you must. And I think you'd better practise it in good time. The sooner the better, I should say.

LÖVBORG [*with resentment in his voice*]. Hedda Gabler married? And married to – Jörgen Tesman.

HEDDA. Yes. That's what happened.

LÖVBORG. Oh, Hedda, Hedda, how could you throw yourself away like that?

HEDDA [*looking sharply at him*]. Now! None of that, please.

LÖVBORG. None of what?

[*Tesman comes in and goes towards the sofa.*]

HEDDA [*hearing him coming, and speaking indifferently*]. And this one, Mr Lövborg, is from the Vale of Ampezzo. Just look at the mountain peaks there. [*Looking affectionately up at Tesman.*] What is it these queer peaks are called, my dear?

TESMAN. Let me see. Oh, those are the Dolomites.

HEDDA. Oh, of course! Those are the Dolomites, Mr Lövborg.

TESMAN. Hedda, dear, I just wanted to ask if we shouldn't bring you a little punch? For you, at any rate. Eh?

HEDDA. Well, yes; thank you. And a few cakes, perhaps.

TESMAN. No cigarettes?

HEDDA. No, thanks.

TESMAN. Right.

[*He goes into the inner room and out to the right. Brack stays sitting in the inner room, with an eye on Hedda and Lövborg from time to time.*]

LÖVBORG [*in a low voice, as before*]. Answer me, now, Hedda my dear. How could you go and do this?

HEDDA [*apparently intent on the album*]. If you go on saying 'dear' to me, I won't talk to you.

LÖVBORG. Mayn't I even do it when we are alone?

HEDDA. No. You can think it if you like. But you mustn't say it.

LÖVBORG. Ah, I understand. It offends ... your love for Jörgen Tesman.

HEDDA [*glancing at him and smiling*]. Love? That's good!

LÖVBORG. Isn't it love, then?

HEDDA. There isn't going to be any kind of disloyalty, anyhow. I won't have that sort of thing.

LÖVBORG. Hedda, answer me just one thing –

HEDDA. Hush!

[*Tesman, with a tray, comes from the inner room.*]

TESMAN. Look at the good things we've got here. [*He puts the tray on the table.*]

HEDDA. Why are you bringing it yourself?

TESMAN [*filling the glasses*]. Why, because I think it's so jolly waiting on you, Hedda.

HEDDA. Oh, but you've filled both glasses now. And Mr Lövborg won't have any.

TESMAN. No, but Mrs Elvsted will be here soon.

HEDDA. Oh, of course; Mrs Elvsted –

TESMAN. Had you forgotten her? Eh?

HEDDA. We've got so absorbed in this. [*Showing him a picture.*] Do you remember that little village?

TESMAN. Ah, that's the one below the Brenner Pass! It was there we stayed the night –

HEDDA. – And met all those jolly tourists.

TESMAN. That's it. It was there. Just think, if we could have had you with us, Ejler! Well, well!

[*He goes in again and sits down with Brack.*]

LÖVBORG. Answer me just this one thing, Hedda.

HEDDA. Well?

LÖVBORG. Was there no love in your feeling for me either? Not a touch – not a flicker of love in that either?

HEDDA. I wonder if there actually was? To me it seems as if we were two good comrades. Two real, close friends.

[*Smiling.*] You, especially, were absolutely frank.

LÖVBORG. It was you who wanted that.

HEDDA. When I look back at it, there really was something fine, something enthralling. There was a kind of courage

about it, about this hidden intimacy, this comradeship that not a living soul so much as guessed at.

LÖVBORG. Yes, there was, Hedda! Wasn't there? When I came up to see your father in the afternoons. ... And the General used to sit right over by the window reading the papers, with his back to us ...

HEDDA. And we used to sit on the corner sofa.

LÖVBORG. Always with the same illustrated paper in front of us.

HEDDA. Yes, for lack of an album.

LÖVBORG. Yes, Hedda; and when I used to confess to you! Told you things about myself that no one else knew in those days. Sat there and owned up to going about whole days and nights blind drunk. Days and nights on end. Oh, Hedda, what sort of power in you was it – that forced me to confess things like that?

HEDDA. Do you think it was some power in me?

LÖVBORG. Yes, how else can I account for it? And all these – these questions you used to put to me ... indirectly.

HEDDA. And that you understood so perfectly well.

LÖVBORG. To think you could sit and ask questions like that! Quite frankly.

HEDDA. Indirectly, mind you.

LÖVBORG. Yes, but frankly, all the same. Cross-question me about ... about all that kind of thing.

HEDDA. And to think that you could answer, Mr Lövborg.

LÖVBORG. Yes, that's just what I can't understand, looking back. But tell me now, Hedda, wasn't it love that was at the bottom of that relationship? Wasn't it, on your side, as though you wanted to purify and absolve me, when I made you my confessor? Wasn't it that?

HEDDA. No, not quite.

LÖVBORG. What made you do it, then?

HEDDA. Do you find it so impossible to understand,

that a young girl, when there's an opportunity ... in secret ...

LÖVBORG. Well?

HEDDA. That one should want to have a glimpse of a world that ...

LÖVBORG. That ... ?

HEDDA. That one isn't allowed to know about?

LÖVBORG. So that was it, then?

HEDDA. That ... that as well, I rather think.

LÖVBORG. The bond of our common hunger for life. But why couldn't that have gone on, in any case?

HEDDA. That was your own fault.

LÖVBORG. It was you who broke it off.

HEDDA. Yes, when there was imminent danger of our relationship becoming serious. You ought to be ashamed of yourself, Ejlert Lövborg. How could you take advantage of – your unsuspecting comrade!

LÖVBORG [*clenching his hands*]. Oh, why didn't you make a job of it! Why didn't you shoot me down when you threatened to!

HEDDA. Yes ... I'm as terrified of scandal as all that.

LÖVBORG. Yes, Hedda; you are a coward at bottom.

HEDDA. An awful coward. [*Changing her tone.*] But it was lucky enough for you. And now you have consoled yourself so delightfully up at the Elvsteds'.

LÖVBORG. I know what Thea has told you.

HEDDA. And you have told her something about us two?

LÖVBORG. Not a word. She's too stupid to understand a thing like that.

HEDDA. Stupid?

LÖVBORG. She is stupid about that sort of thing.

HEDDA. And I'm a coward. [*She leans nearer to him, without meeting his eyes, and says more softly*]. But now I will confess something to you.

LÖVBORG [*eagerly*]. Well?

HEDDA. That, my not daring to shoot you down –

LÖVBORG. Yes?

HEDDA. That wasn't my worst piece of cowardice ... that night.

LÖVBORG [*looks at her a moment, understands and whispers passionately*]. Ah, Hedda! Hedda Gabler! Now I see a glimpse of the hidden foundation of our comradeship. You and I! Then it *was* your passion for life –

HEDDA [*quietly, with a sharp, angry glance*]. Take care! Don't assume anything like that.

[*It has begun to get dark. The hall door is opened from outside by Berte.*]

HEDDA [*shutting the album with a snap and calling out with a smile*]. There you are at last, Thea darling! Come along in!

[*Mrs Elvsted comes in from the hall, dressed for the evening. The door is closed behind her.*]

HEDDA [*on the sofa, stretching her arms towards her*]. My precious Thea – you can't think how I've been longing for you to come!

[*Mrs Elvsted, in the meanwhile, exchanges slight greetings with the men in the inner room and then comes across to the table holding her hand out to Hedda. Ejlert Lövborg has got up. He and Mrs Elvsted greet each other with a silent nod.*]

MRS ELVSTED. Oughtn't I to go in and say a word or two to your husband?

HEDDA. Not a bit of it! Let them be. They're going out directly.

MRS ELVSTED. Are they going out?

HEDDA. Yes, they're going to make a night of it.

MRS ELVSTED [*quickly, to Lövborg*]. You're not, are you?

LÖVBORG. No.

HEDDA. Mr Lövborg – is staying here with us.

MRS ELVSTED [*takes a chair and is going to sit beside him*].

Oh, it is nice to be here!

HEDDA. No, no, Thea my child! Not there. You're coming over here, right beside me. I want to be in the middle.

MRS ELVSTED. All right; just as you like. [*She goes round the table and sits on the sofa on Hedda's right. Lövborg sits down on his chair again.*]

LÖVBORG [*to Hedda, after a little pause*]. Isn't she lovely, just to look at?

HEDDA [*stroking her hair lightly*]. Only to look at?

LÖVBORG. Yes. Because *we* two – she and I – we really *are* comrades. We trust each other absolutely. That's how it is we can sit and talk to each other quite frankly.

HEDDA. Nothing indirect about it, Mr Lövborg?

LÖVBORG. Oh well ...

MRS ELVSTED [*softly, leaning close to Hedda*]. Oh, Hedda, I am so happy! Just think, he says I have inspired him, too!

HEDDA [*looking at her with a smile*]. He says that, does he?

LÖVBORG. And then she has the courage that leads to action, Mrs Tesman.

MRS ELVSTED. Good gracious! *Me?* Courage?

LÖVBORG. Immense – when her comrade is concerned.

HEDDA. Ah, courage. Yes. If one only had that.

LÖVBORG. What do you mean?

HEDDA. Then perhaps one could even *live* at last. [*Changing her tone suddenly.*] But now, Thea, my dear, you must have a nice glass of cold punch.

MRS ELVSTED. No, thank you. I never drink anything like that.

HEDDA. Well you, then, Mr Lövborg.

LÖVBORG. Thank you, I don't either.

MRS ELVSTED. No, he doesn't either.

HEDDA [*looking at him steadily*]. But suppose I want you to?

LÖVBORG. That wouldn't alter it.

HEDDA [*laughing*]. So I, poor thing, have no power over you at all?

LÖVBORG. Not where that's concerned.

HEDDA. But, joking apart, I think you ought to, all the same. For your own sake.

MRS ELVSTED. Oh, but, Hedda!

LÖVBORG. How do you mean?

HEDDA. Or, rather, on account of other people.

LÖVBORG. Really?

HEDDA. Otherwise people might easily get the idea that you didn't feel absolutely secure. Not really sure of yourself.

MRS ELVSTED [*softly*]. Oh no, Hedda!

LÖVBORG. People may think what they like, for the present.

MRS ELVSTED [*happily*]. Exactly!

HEDDA. I saw it so plainly with Judge Brack just this minute.

LÖVBORG. What did you see?

HEDDA. That contemptuous smile of his when you were afraid to go in there with them.

LÖVBORG. Afraid! Naturally I preferred to stay here and talk to you.

MRS ELVSTED. That was quite understandable, Hedda!

HEDDA. But Judge Brack couldn't be expected to guess that. And I noticed too that he smiled and glanced at my husband when you were afraid to go to this harmless little party with them either.

LÖVBORG. Afraid! Did you say I was afraid?

HEDDA. I don't. But that's how Judge Brack understood it.

LÖVBORG. Let him, then.

HEDDA. So you're not going with them?

LÖVBORG. I am staying here with you and Thea.

MRS ELVSTED. Why, yes, Hedda; of course.

HEDDA [*smiling and nodding approvingly at Lövborg*]. There!

Quite immovable. A man of unshaken principles, always. You know, that's what a man should be. [*Turning to Mrs Elvsted and patting her.*] Now, wasn't that what I said, when you came in here this morning in such a state of distraction –

LÖVBORG [*with surprise*]. Distraction?

MRS ELVSTED [*in terror*]. Hedda! Oh, Hedda!

HEDDA. Now you see for yourself! There's not the slightest need for you to go about in this deadly anxiety – [*Breaking off.*] There! Now we can all three be cheerful.

LÖVBORG [*who has made a startled gesture*]. What on earth is all this, Mrs Tesman?

MRS ELVSTED. Oh heavens, heavens, Hedda! What are you saying? What are you doing?

HEDDA. Keep quiet. That detestable Judge Brack has got his eye on you.

LÖVBORG. So it was deadly anxiety ... on my behalf.

MRS ELVSTED [*softly and in misery*]. Oh, Hedda! How could you!

LÖVBORG [*looking intently at her for a moment, his face haggard*]. So that was my comrade's absolute faith in me.

MRS ELVSTED [*beseeking*]. Oh, my dear, my dear – you must listen to me before –

LÖVBORG [*takes one of the filled glasses, lifts it and says softly in a strained voice*]: Your health, Thea! [*He empties his glass, puts it down and takes the other.*]

MRS ELVSTED [*softly*]. Oh, Hedda, Hedda! Did you want this to happen?

HEDDA. Want it? I? Are you crazy?

LÖVBORG. And a health to you too, Mrs Tesman. Thank you for the truth. Here's to it. [*He drains his glass and is about to fill it again.*]

HEDDA [*laying a hand on his arm*]. Now, then. No more for the moment. Remember you're going to a party.

MRS ELVSTED. No, no, no!

HEDDA. Hush! They're looking at you.

LÖVBORG [*putting down his glass*]. Now, Thea, my dear, tell the truth!

MRS ELVSTED. Yes!

LÖVBORG. Did your husband know that you had followed me?

MRS ELVSTED [*wringing her hands*]. Oh, Hedda! You hear what he's asking me?

LÖVBORG. Was it an understanding between you and him, that you should come to town and spy on me? Perhaps it was he himself who made you do it? Ah yes, no doubt he wanted me in the office again! Or did he miss me at the card-table?

MRS ELVSTED [*softly, with a moan*]. Oh, Ejlert, Ejlert!

LÖVBORG [*seizing a glass and about to fill it*]. A health to the old District Magistrate, too!

HEDDA [*checking him*]. No more now. Remember, you're going out to read your book to my husband.

LÖVBORG [*calmly, putting down the glass*]. It was stupid of me, Thea, all this. To take it like that, I mean. And don't be angry with me, dear old friend. You shall see, you and the others, that even if I came to grief once, yet ...

Now I'm on my feet again. Thanks to your help, Thea!

MRS ELVSTED [*radiant with joy*]. Thank heaven!

[*Brack, in the meantime, has looked at his watch. He and Tesman get up and come into the drawing-room.*]

BRACK [*getting his hat and overcoat*]. Well, Mrs Tesman, our time's up now.

HEDDA. I expect it is.

LÖVBORG [*getting up*]. Mine too, Mr Brack.

MRS ELVSTED [*softly, and imploring*]. Oh, Ejlert, don't!

HEDDA [*pinching her arm*]. They can hear what you're saying.

MRS ELVSTED [*with a faint cry*]. Oh!

LÖVBORG [*to Brack*]. You were so kind as to ask me to join you.

BRACK. Oh, are you coming, after all?

LÖVBORG. Yes, thank you very much.

BRACK. I'm delighted.

LÖVBORG [*putting his parcel in his pocket and speaking to Tesman*]. Because I should like to show you one or two things before I hand it in.

TESMAN. Fancy! That will be jolly. But, Hedda dear, how are you going to get Mrs Elvsted home, eh?

HEDDA. We'll manage that somehow.

LÖVBORG [*looking towards the women*]. Mrs Elvsted? I'll come back again and fetch her, of course. [*Coming nearer.*] Round about ten o'clock, Mrs Tesman? Will that do?

HEDDA. Certainly. That will do beautifully.

TESMAN. Oh well, everything's all right, then. But you mustn't expect me as early as that, Hedda.

HEDDA. My dear, stay – as long as ever you like.

MRS ELVSTED [*in suppressed anxiety*]. I shall wait here, then, Mr Lövborg, till you come.

LÖVBORG [*with his hat in his hand*]. All right, Mrs Elvsted.

BRACK. And so the procession starts, gentlemen. I hope we shall have a gay time, as a certain charming lady puts it.

HEDDA. Ah, if only that charming lady could be there, invisible –

BRACK. Why invisible?

HEDDA. So as to hear a little of your gaiety – uncensored, Mr Brack.

BRACK [*laughing*]. I shouldn't advise the charming lady to try!

TESMAN [*laughing, too*]. Oh, Hedda, you're simply priceless! Just think!

BRACK. Well, good-bye, good-bye, ladies.

LÖVBORG [*taking leave with a bow*]. About ten o'clock, then. [*Brack, Lövborg and Tesman go out by the hall door. At the same time Berte comes in from the inner room with a lighted lamp, which she puts on the drawing-room table. She goes out again the same way.*]

MRS ELVSTED [*who has got up and is wandering restlessly about the room*]. Hedda, Hedda, where is all this going to end?

HEDDA. Ten o'clock – then he will come. I can see him.

With vineleaves in his hair. Flushed and confident.

MRS ELVSTED. Yes, if only it would be like that.

HEDDA. And then, you see, then he'll have got control of himself again. Then he will be a free man for the rest of his days.

MRS ELVSTED. Heavens, yes. If only he would come like that. As you see him.

HEDDA. He'll come like that – 'so and no otherwise'. [*Getting up and going nearer.*] Go on doubting him as long as you like. I believe in him. And now we'll try ...

MRS ELVSTED. There's something behind all this, Hedda.

HEDDA. True; there is. I want, for once in my life, to have power over a human being's fate.

MRS ELVSTED. But haven't you got that?

HEDDA. I have not. And never have had.

MRS ELVSTED. Not over your husband's?

HEDDA. That *would* be worth having, wouldn't it? Ah, if you could only realize how poor I am. And here are you, offered such riches! [*Throwing her arms passionately round her.*] I think I shall burn your hair off, after all.

MRS ELVSTED. Let go! Let go! I'm frightened of you, Hedda!

BERTE [*in the doorway between the rooms*]. Tea's laid in the dining-room, ma'am.

HEDDA. Good. We're coming.

MRS ELVSTED. No, no, no! I'd rather go home alone. At once!

HEDDA. Nonsense! You must have tea first, you little goose. And then, at ten o'clock, Ejlert Lövborg will come – with vineleaves in his hair.

[*She pulls Mrs Elvsted, almost by force, towards the doorway.*]

ACT THREE

— * —

[*The room at the Tesmans'. The curtains across the middle doorway are closed and so are those in front of the glass door. The lamp, with its shade on, is burning, turned half-down, on the table. The door of the stove is open and there has been a fire in it, which is now nearly out.*

Mrs Elvsted, wrapped up in a large shawl with her feet on a footstool, is close to the stove, lying sunk in the easy-chair. Hedda is lying asleep on the sofa with her clothes on and a rug over her.

After a pause, Mrs Elvsted sits up quickly in her chair and listens intently. Then she sinks back wearily again, crying softly.]

MRS ELVSTED. Not yet! Oh, heavens, heavens! Not yet!
[*Berte comes stealing in cautiously by the hall door. She has a letter in her hand.*]

MRS ELVSTED [*turning and whispering eagerly*]. Well? Has anyone come?

BERTE. Yes. A girl's just been with this letter.

MRS ELVSTED [*quickly, holding out her hand*]. A letter! Give it to me!

BERTE. No, ma'am, it's for the Doctor.

MRS ELVSTED. Oh.

BERTE. It was Miss Tesman's maid who came with it. I'll put it here on the table.

MRS ELVSTED. Yes, do.

BERTE [*putting down the letter*]. I think I'd better put the lamp out. It's smoking.

MRS ELVSTED. Yes, put it out. It'll very soon be light now.
BERTE [*putting it out*]. It's quite light, ma'am.

MRS ELVSTED. Why, it's broad daylight! And still not back!

BERTE. Lord bless you, ma'am, I thought this was how it would be.

MRS ELVSTED. You thought so?

BERTE. Yes. When I saw that a certain person had come back to town again, well ... And when he went off with them ... One's heard enough about that gentleman before today.

MRS ELVSTED. Don't speak so loud. You'll wake Mrs Tesman.

BERTE [*looking towards the sofa and sighing*]. Gracious, yes; let her sleep, poor thing. Shall I put a bit more on the fire?

MRS ELVSTED. No, thank you; not for me.

BERTE. Very good. [*She goes out quietly by the hall door.*]

HEDDA [*waking as the door shuts and looking up*]. What's that?

MRS ELVSTED. It was only the maid.

HEDDA [*looking round her*]. In here? Oh yes, I remember now. [*She sits up on the sofa, stretches and rubs her eyes.*]
What's the time, Thea?

MRS ELVSTED [*looking at her watch*]. It's past seven.

HEDDA. What time did my husband come back?

MRS ELVSTED. He isn't back.

HEDDA. He hasn't come home yet?

MRS ELVSTED [*getting up*]. No one's come back at all.

HEDDA. And we sat here and kept ourselves awake, waiting up for them till nearly four o'clock!

MRS ELVSTED [*wringing her hands*]. And how I waited for him!

HEDDA [*yawning and speaking with her hand in front of her*]

mouth]. Ah, well, we might have saved ourselves that trouble.

MRS ELVSTED. Did you get a little sleep afterwards?

HEDDA. Oh yes. I slept quite well, I think. Didn't you?

MRS ELVSTED. Not a wink! I couldn't, Hedda! It was absolutely impossible.

HEDDA [*getting up and going across to her*]. There, there, there! There's nothing to worry about. I can see perfectly well what's happened.

MRS ELVSTED. Why, what do you think then? Tell me! Please!

HEDDA. Well, of course they kept things up frightfully late at the Judge's.

MRS ELVSTED. Heavens, yes. They must have done. But, all the same –

HEDDA. And then, you see, my husband didn't like to come home and disturb us by ringing in the middle of the night. [*Laughing.*] Perhaps he didn't much care to show himself either – not straight after making a gay night of it.

MRS ELVSTED. But, Hedda dear, where would he have gone?

HEDDA. He's gone up to his aunts', of course, and slept there. They keep his old room ready.

MRS ELVSTED. No, he can't be with them. Because a letter came for him a little while ago from Miss Tesman. There it is.

HEDDA. Really? [*Looking at the address.*] Yes. That's certainly from Aunt Julle; it's her handwriting. Well, then, he's stayed on at the Judge's place. And Ejlert Lövborg, he's sitting reading to him – with vineleaves in his hair.

MRS ELVSTED. Oh, Hedda, you're just saying things you don't believe yourself.

HEDDA. You really are a little goose, Thea.

MRS ELVSTED. Well, I suppose I am – worse luck.

HEDDA. And you look simply tired to death.

MRS ELVSTED. Yes, I am tired to death.

HEDDA. Well then, you're going to do as I tell you. You're going into my room and you're going to lie down on the bed for a little while.

MRS ELVSTED. Oh no. I shan't sleep, anyway.

HEDDA. Yes, you are to.

MRS ELVSTED. Yes, but surely your husband must be home soon. And then I must find out at once ...

HEDDA. I'll let you know all right when he comes.

MRS ELVSTED. Well; you promise me, Hedda?

HEDDA. Yes, you can be sure I will. You just go in and go to sleep in the meantime.

MRS ELVSTED. Thank you. I'll try to, then. [*She goes out through the inner room.*]

[*Hedda goes over to the glass door and pulls back the curtains. Broad daylight pours into the room. She takes a small hand-mirror from the writing-table, looks at herself in it and tidies her hair. Then she crosses to the hall door and presses the bell. After a moment Berte comes to the door.*]

BERTE. Is there anything you want, ma'am?

HEDDA. Yes, will you make up the fire? I'm simply freezing here.

BERTE. Bless us! I'll have it warm in no time.

[*She rakes the remains of the fire together and puts some wood on.*]

BERTE [*stopping to listen*]. There was a ring at the front door, ma'am.

HEDDA. You go and answer it, then. I'll see to the fire myself.

BERTE. It'll soon burn up. [*She goes out by the hall door.*]

[*Hedda kneels on the footstool and puts some more wood into the*

stove. After a short pause, Jørgen Tesman comes in from the hall. He looks tired and rather grave. He steals towards the middle doorway on tiptoe and is about to slip through the curtains.]

HEDDA [*at the stove, without looking up*]. Good morning.

TESMAN [*turning*]. Hedda! [*Coming towards her.*] But what on earth! You up as early as this! Eh?

HEDDA. Yes, I got up very early today.

TESMAN. And I was so certain you were lying asleep still! Just fancy, Hedda!

HEDDA. Don't speak so loudly. Mrs Elvsted is lying down in my room.

TESMAN. Did Mrs Elvsted stay the night here?

HEDDA. Of course. Nobody came to fetch her.

TESMAN. That's true; nobody did.

HEDDA [*shutting the door of the stove and getting up*]. Well, did you have a good time at the Judge's?

TESMAN. Have you been worrying about me, eh?

HEDDA. No, that would never occur to me. I was just asking whether you had a good time.

TESMAN. Not bad. It was rather jolly for once. Mostly at the beginning, as far as I was concerned. Because then Ejlert read me some of his book. We got there more than an hour too soon. Just fancy! And Brack had so much to see to. But then Ejlert read to me.

HEDDA [*sitting down on the right-hand side of the table*]. Well now, tell me about it.

TESMAN [*sitting down on a footstool by the stove*]. My goodness, Hedda! You can't think what a book that's going to be! I should think it's one of the most remarkable things that's ever been written. Just think!

HEDDA. No doubt. That doesn't interest me.

TESMAN. I must admit one thing, Hedda. When he had read it, a perfectly detestable feeling came over me.

HEDDA. Detestable?

TESMAN. There I was *envying* Ejlert for having been able to write a thing like that! Just think, Hedda!

HEDDA. Yes, yes. I am.

TESMAN. And then to know that he, with the gifts he has ... Yet he's quite irreclaimable. What a tragedy!

HEDDA. You mean, I suppose, that he has more spirit than other people.

TESMAN. Oh no. The point is – there's no moderation in him.

HEDDA. And what happened, then, in the end?

TESMAN. Well, I really think the best way to describe it is an orgy, Hedda.

HEDDA. Did he have vineleaves in his hair?

TESMAN. Vineleaves? No, I didn't notice any. But he made a long, wandering speech in honour of the woman who had inspired him in his work. Well, that was how he put it.

HEDDA. Did he say who she was?

TESMAN. No, he didn't do that. But I can't imagine it could be anybody but Mrs Elvsted. You watch!

HEDDA. Oh, well. ... Where did you part from him, then?

TESMAN. On the way back. We broke up – the last of us – at the same time. And Brack came along with us to get a breath of fresh air. And so, you see, we agreed to see Ejlert home. Because, to tell the truth, he'd had far more than he could carry.

HEDDA. I can quite imagine that.

TESMAN. But here's the extraordinary part of it, Hedda.

Or rather, the sad part of it, I ought to say. I – I'm almost ashamed to tell you, for Ejlert's sake.

HEDDA. Oh, go on! So – ?

TESMAN. Well, as we were on the way back, you see, I happened to be a little behind the others. Only for a minute or two. You see?

HEDDA. Yes, yes. But what then?

TESMAN. And then, as I was hurrying to catch them up, what do you think I found by the roadside. Eh?

HEDDA. No, how could I know?

TESMAN. Don't say anything about it to anyone, Hedda.

You understand. Promise me, for Ejlert's sake. [*Taking a paper parcel out of his coat pocket.*] Just think! I found this.

HEDDA. Isn't that the parcel he had with him yesterday?

TESMAN. It is. It's the whole of that precious, irreplaceable manuscript of his. And that's what he'd gone and lost, without noticing it. Just think, Hedda! Such a sad –

HEDDA. But why didn't you give the packet back to him at once, then?

TESMAN. Well, I didn't dare to. Not in the state he was in.

HEDDA. Didn't you tell any of the others you'd found it, either?

TESMAN. Certainly not. I didn't want to do that for Ejlert's sake, you know.

HEDDA. Then there's no one who knows you've got Ejlert Lövborg's manuscript?

TESMAN. No. And no one must find out, either.

HEDDA. What did you talk to him about afterwards, then?

TESMAN. I didn't get a chance to talk to him again, you see. Because when we got into the streets, he and two or three others got away from us. Just think!

HEDDA. Oh? They must have seen him home, then.

TESMAN. Yes, it looks as if they had. And Brack went off, too.

HEDDA. And where ever have you been since?

TESMAN. Well, I and some of the others went on home with one of the gay lads and had morning coffee at his place. Or night coffee, it would be better to call it. Eh? But as soon as I've had a moment's rest – and when I think Ejlert's slept it off, poor fellow – I must go over to him with this.

HEDDA [*holding out her hand for the package*]. No, don't give it up! Not directly, I mean. Let me read it first.

TESMAN. Oh, Hedda, my dear, I couldn't do that. I really couldn't.

HEDDA. You couldn't?

TESMAN. No. You can just imagine how frantic he will be when he wakes up and misses the manuscript. Because he's got no copy of it, you realize! He said so himself.

HEDDA [*looking searchingly at him*]. Can't a thing like that be written again, then? Re-written?

TESMAN. No, I don't think that would ever work. It's a matter of inspiration, you know.

HEDDA. Yes, of course. I suppose that's it. [*Casually.*] Oh, by the way, there's a letter for you here.

TESMAN. Really?

HEDDA [*passing it to him*]. It came early this morning.

TESMAN. Why, it's from Aunt Julle! [*He puts down the paper package on the other footstool, opens the letter, runs through it and jumps up.*] Oh, Hedda! She says poor Aunt Rina's dying.

HEDDA. Well, that was to be expected.

TESMAN. And that if I want to see her again I must be quick. I'll run across there at once.

HEDDA [*checking a smile*]. Run?

TESMAN. Oh, Hedda dear, if only you could bring yourself to come along, too! Just think!

HEDDA [*getting up and dismissing the matter wearily*]. No, no. Don't ask me to do things like that. I don't want to think of illness or death. You mustn't ask me to have anything to do with ugly things.

TESMAN. Oh well, then. [*Bustling about.*] My hat? My overcoat? Oh yes; in the hall. Oh, I do so hope I'm not going to be too late, Hedda! Eh?

[*Berte comes to the hall door.*]

BERTE. Judge Brack's outside, asking can he come in?

TESMAN. At this moment! No, I really can't see him now.

HEDDA. But I can. [*To Berte.*] Ask the Judge to come in.

[*Berte goes out.*]

HEDDA [*quickly, in a whisper*]. The parcel! [*She snatches it from the stool.*]

TESMAN. Yes, give it to me!

HEDDA. No, no. I'll keep it for you till you get back.

[*She crosses to the writing-table and puts it in the bookcase. Tesman is in such a hurry that he cannot get his gloves on. Brack comes in from the hall.*]

HEDDA [*nodding to him*]. Well, you are an early bird.

BRACK. Yes, don't you think so? [*To Tesman.*] Are you going out, too?

TESMAN. Yes, I simply must go and see the Aunts. Just think, the invalid one, she's dying, poor thing.

BRACK. Dear, dear! Is she? Then you certainly mustn't let me keep you. At such a serious moment –

TESMAN. Yes, I really must be off. Good-bye, good-bye! [*He hurries out through the hall door.*]

HEDDA [*coming nearer to Brack*]. It seems to have been rather more than 'gay' at your place last night, Mr Brack.

BRACK. So much so that I haven't had my clothes off, Madam Hedda.

HEDDA. Not you either?

BRACK. No, as you see. Well, what has Tesman been telling you about the night's adventures?

HEDDA. Oh, just a dull story. That they'd gone and had coffee somewhere.

BRACK. I know all about that coffee-party. Ejlert Lövborg wasn't with them, I think?

HEDDA. No, they'd seen him home before that.

BRACK. Tesman, too?

HEDDA. No; but some of the others, he said.

BRACK [*smiling*]. Jörgen Tesman really is a simple soul, Madam Hedda.

HEDDA. Heaven knows he is. Is there something behind this, then?

BRACK. Yes. It's no good denying ...

HEDDA. Well, then let's sit down, my friend. Then you can tell your story.

[*She sits down on the left of the table, with Brack at the long side, near her.*]

HEDDA. Well, now?

BRACK. I had good reasons for keeping track of my guests last night – or rather, of some of my guests.

HEDDA. And I suppose Ejlert Lövborg was one of them.

BRACK. I must admit he was.

HEDDA. Now you are making me really curious.

BRACK. Do you know where he and a few others spent the rest of the night, Madam Hedda?

HEDDA. If it's the sort of thing that can be told, tell me.

BRACK. Oh yes, it can be told all right. Well, they fetched up at an extremely lively party.

HEDDA. Of the 'gay' kind?

BRACK. Of the very gayest.

HEDDA. Go on, please. I want to hear some more.

BRACK. Lövborg had had an invitation beforehand as well. I knew all about that. But he'd refused to go then,

because he's turned over a new leaf now – as you know.

HEDDA. Up at the Elvsteds'. Yes. But he went, then, all the same?

BRACK. Yes. You see, Madam Hedda, unfortunately the inspiration took him at my place last night.

HEDDA. Yes, I gather he found inspiration there.

BRACK. Pretty violent inspiration. Anyway, he changed his mind, I imagine. For we men are unfortunately not always so firm in our principles as we ought to be.

HEDDA. Oh, I am sure you are an exception, Mr Brack.

But what about Lövborg?

BRACK. Well, to be brief, the end of it was that he fetched up at Mademoiselle Diana's rooms.

HEDDA. Mademoiselle Diana's?

BRACK. It was Mademoiselle Diana who was giving the party. For a select circle of her lady friends and admirers.

HEDDA. Is she a red-haired woman?

BRACK. Precisely.

HEDDA. Some kind of a – singer?

BRACK. Yes, among other things. And, moreover, a mighty huntress – of men, Madam Hedda. You must have heard her spoken of. Ejlert Lövborg was one of her warmest supporters, in his hey-day.

HEDDA. And how did all this end?

BRACK. On a less friendly note, it would appear. Mademoiselle Diana seems to have changed from a most tender reception to downright violence.

HEDDA. To Lövborg?

BRACK. Yes. He accused her or her friends of having robbed him. He declared his pocket-book had gone. And other things, too. In fact, he seems to have made an appalling scene.

HEDDA. And what was the result?

BRACK. The result was a general fight, in which both the ladies and the gentlemen were involved. Luckily the police arrived in the end.

HEDDA. The police, too?

BRACK. Yes. But it looks like being a costly game for Ejlert Lövborg, the crazy fool.

HEDDA. Really?

BRACK. He appears to have put up a violent resistance, and hit one of the constables on the head and torn his coat to pieces. So he had to go to the police station too.

HEDDA. How do you know all this?

BRACK. From the police themselves.

HEDDA [*gazing in front of her*]. So that's how it was? Then he had no vineleaves in his hair.

BRACK. Vineleaves, Madam Hedda?

HEDDA [*changing her tone*]. But tell me, now. What's your real reason for following up Ejlert Lövborg's movements like this?

BRACK. Well, it obviously can't be a matter of complete indifference to me, if it comes out at the trial that he had come straight from my place.

HEDDA. Will there be a trial too, then?

BRACK. Of course. However, that might pass. ... But, as a friend of the house, I felt bound to give you and Tesman a full account of his night's exploits.

HEDDA. And why, Mr Brack?

BRACK. Well, because I have a shrewd misgiving that he means to use you as a kind of screen.

HEDDA. Why, how can you imagine such a thing?

BRACK. Good Lord, we're not blind, Madam Hedda! You watch. This Mrs Elvsted, she won't be leaving town again in a hurry.

HEDDA. Well, even supposing there is something between them, there must be plenty of other places where they can meet.

BRACK. No other home. Every decent house will be closed again to Ejlert Lövborg from now onwards.

HEDDA. And so ought mine to be, you mean?

BRACK. Yes. I admit it would be extremely unpleasant to me if this man were on a firm footing here. If he were to force his way in, superfluous and an intruder, into –

HEDDA. Into the triangle?

BRACK. Precisely. It would simply amount to my finding myself without a home.

HEDDA [*looking at him with a smile*]. Ah yes. The only cock in the yard. That's your idea.

BRACK [*nodding slowly and dropping his voice*]. Yes, that is my idea. And I'll fight for that idea with all the means at my command.

HEDDA [*her smile dying away*]. You are really a dangerous person, when it comes to the point.

BRACK. Do you think so?

HEDDA. Yes, I am beginning to think so now. I'm heartily thankful you've no hold or power over me – and I hope you never will.

BRACK [*laughing equivocally*]. Well, well, Madam Hedda. You may be right there. Who knows what I mightn't prove capable of in that case?

HEDDA. Now look here, Mr Brack. That sounds almost as though you were threatening me.

BRACK [*getting up*]. Oh, far from it! The triangle, you see, is best formed and maintained by free consent.

HEDDA. That's what I think, too.

BRACK. Yes. Well, now I've said what I wanted to and I must see about getting home again. Good-bye, Madam Hedda. [*He goes towards the glass door.*]

HEDDA [*getting up*]. Are you going through the garden?

BRACK. Yes, it's shorter for me.

HEDDA. Yes, and what's more, it's a back way.

BRACK. Quite true. I have nothing against back ways. They can be quite attractive at times.

HEDDA. When someone's practising shooting, do you mean?

BRACK [*at the door, laughing to her*]. Oh, I don't think people shoot their farmyard cocks.

HEDDA [*laughing, too*]. No, not when one has only the one. [*They nod good-bye to each other, laughing. He goes out. She shuts the door after him.*]

Hedda stands a moment, serious now, and looks out. Then she

goes across and peeps in through the curtains over the middle doorway and then goes to the writing-table, takes the packet out of the bookcase and is just going to look through it when Berte's voice is heard, speaking loudly, in the hall. Hedda turns and listens, then quickly locks the package in the drawer and puts the key on the inkstand.

Ejlert Lövborg, with his overcoat on and his hat in his hand, flings open the hall door. He looks disturbed and excited.]

LÖVBORG [*speaking towards the hall*]. And I tell you I must go in and I will. There now!

[He shuts the door, turns, sees Hedda, controls himself at once and bows.]

HEDDA [*at the writing-table*]. Well, Mr Lövborg, it's rather late to come and fetch Thea.

LÖVBORG. Or rather early to come and call on you. I apologize.

HEDDA. How do you know that she is still with me?

LÖVBORG. They said at her lodgings that she had been out all night.

HEDDA [*going to the centre table*]. Did you notice anything about the people, when they said that?

LÖVBORG [*looking at her inquiringly*]. Notice anything about them?

HEDDA. I mean, did it look as if they were drawing their own conclusions?

LÖVBORG [*understanding suddenly*]. Oh yes, of course; that's true. I am dragging her down with me. Actually, though, I didn't notice anything. Tesman isn't up yet?

HEDDA. No, I don't think so.

LÖVBORG. When did he get home?

HEDDA. Pretty late.

LÖVBORG. Did he tell you anything?

HEDDA. Yes, I gathered that things had been very merry at Judge Brack's.

LÖVBORG. Nothing more?

HEDDA. No, I don't think so. But anyhow, I was so terribly sleepy –

[*Mrs Elvsted comes in through the curtains in the middle doorway.*]

MRS ELVSTED [*going towards him*]. Oh, Ejlert! At last!

LÖVBORG. Yes, at last. And too late.

MRS ELVSTED [*looking anxiously at him*]. What is too late?

LÖVBORG. Everything's too late now. It's all up with me.

MRS ELVSTED. No, no! Don't say that!

LÖVBORG. You'll say so yourself when you hear.

MRS ELVSTED. I won't hear anything.

HEDDA. Perhaps you'd rather talk to her alone? If so, I'll go.

LÖVBORG. No, you stay too, please. I beg you to.

MRS ELVSTED. Yes, but I won't hear anything, I tell you.

LÖVBORG. It's not last night's escapades I want to talk about.

MRS ELVSTED. What is it, then?

LÖVBORG. Just this: our ways must part now.

MRS ELVSTED. Part?

HEDDA [*involuntarily*]. I knew it!

LÖVBORG. Because I don't need you any more, Thea.

MRS ELVSTED. And you can stand here and say that! Not need me any more! I can still help you, can't I, as I did before? Surely we are going on working together?

LÖVBORG. I don't propose to work in future.

MRS ELVSTED [*in despair*]. What shall I do with my life, then?

LÖVBORG. You must try to go on living as though you had never known me.

MRS ELVSTED. But I *can't* do that!

LÖVBORG. Try to, Thea. You must go home again –

MRS ELVSTED [*protesting fiercely*]. Never in this life! Where

you are, there will I be too. I won't let myself be driven away like this. I will stay here and be with you when the book comes out.

HEDDA [*half audibly, in suspense*]. Ah, the book, of course!

LÖVBORG [*looking at her*]. My book and Thea's. For that is what it is.

MRS ELVSTED. Yes, that's what I feel it is. And that's why I have the right to be with you when it comes out. I want to see respect and honour showered on you again. And the joy – I want to share the joy with you.

LÖVBORG. Thea, our book will never come out.

HEDDA. Ah!

MRS ELVSTED. Never come out!

LÖVBORG. *Can't* ever come out.

MRS ELVSTED [*in agonized foreboding*]. Ejlert, what have you done with the manuscript?

HEDDA [*looking intently at him*]. Yes, the manuscript?

MRS ELVSTED. Where is it?

LÖVBORG. You'd better not ask me, Thea.

MRS ELVSTED. But I want to know. I've a right to know, at once.

LÖVBORG. The manuscript ... oh well, then ... I have torn the manuscript into a thousand pieces.

MRS ELVSTED [*shrieking*]. Oh no, no!

HEDDA [*involuntarily*]. But that's not –!

LÖVBORG [*looking at her*]. Not true, you think?

HEDDA [*controlling herself*]. I suppose it is, of course. If you say so yourself. ... But it sounded so fantastic.

LÖVBORG. True, all the same.

MRS ELVSTED [*wringing her hands*]. Oh, heavens, heavens, Hedda! Torn his own work to pieces!

LÖVBORG. I have torn my own life to pieces. So I might as well tear up my life's work, too.

MRS ELVSTED. And you did it last night, then?

LÖVBORG. Yes, I tell you. Into a thousand pieces. And scattered them out in the fjord. Far out. There at least there is clean sea water. Let them drift in it. Drift with the wind and the tides. And, after a time, they will sink. Deeper and deeper. As I shall, Thea.

MRS ELVSTED. Do you know, Ejlert, this, what you have done to the book – all my life, it will seem to me as if you had killed a little child.

LÖVBORG. You are right. It is like murdering a child.

MRS ELVSTED. But how could you? After all, I had a share in the child, too.

HEDDA [*scarcely audible*]. Ah, the child. ...

MRS ELVSTED [*with a gasp*]. It's all over, then. Well, well. I'll go now, Hedda.

HEDDA. But you're not going to leave town?

MRS ELVSTED. Oh, I don't know myself what I'm going to do. Everything is dark ahead of me now.

[*She goes out by the hall door.*]

HEDDA [*standing and waiting for a moment*]. So you are not going to see her home, Mr Lövborg?

LÖVBORG. I? Through the streets? Suppose people were to see her walking with me?

HEDDA. Of course, I don't know what else happened to you last night. But is it something so absolutely irreparable?

LÖVBORG. It won't stop at last night only. I know that well enough. But, the point is, I don't *want* to live that kind of life. I don't want to start again, any more, now. It is the courage to live, and to challenge life, that she has broken in me.

HEDDA [*looking straight before her*]. That pretty little fool has played her part in a human being's fate. [*Looking at him.*] Still, how could you treat her so callously, all the same?

LÖVBORG. Oh, don't say it was callous!

HEDDA. To go and destroy what has filled her soul all this long, long time! You don't call that callous?

LÖVBORG. I can tell you the truth, Hedda.

HEDDA. The truth?

LÖVBORG. Promise me first, give me your word, that Thea shall never know what I tell you.

HEDDA. You have my word for it.

LÖVBORG. Good. Then I will tell you that that was not the truth – the story I told you just now.

HEDDA. About the manuscript?

LÖVBORG. Yes. I didn't tear it to pieces. Nor throw it into the fjord, either.

HEDDA. Well, but – where is it, then?

LÖVBORG. I have destroyed it just the same. Utterly and completely, Hedda.

HEDDA. I don't understand all this.

LÖVBORG. Thea said that what I had done was as good as child-murder to her.

HEDDA. Yes. That's what she said.

LÖVBORG. But that – killing his child – is not the worst thing a father can do to it.

HEDDA. *That's* not the worst?

LÖVBORG. No. It was that worst thing that I wanted to save Thea from hearing.

HEDDA. And what is that worst thing, then?

LÖVBORG. Suppose now, Hedda, that a man, along towards morning, say, after a wild, riotous night, came home to his child's mother and said: Look here. I have been here and there, in such-and-such places. And I took the child with me. In such-and-such places. And I lost the child. Lost it completely. The devil knows what hands it's fallen into, who's got it in his clutches.

HEDDA. Oh but, when all's said and done, this – well, this was only a book.

LÖVBORG. Thea's whole soul was in that book.

HEDDA. Yes, I understand that.

LÖVBORG. And so you understand also that there is no future before us, her and me.

HEDDA. And what are you going to do, then?

LÖVBORG. Nothing. Only make an end of the whole business. The sooner the better.

HEDDA [*a step nearer*]. Ejler Lövborg, listen to me. Could you not see to it that — that it is done beautifully?

LÖVBORG. Beautifully? [*Smiling.*] With vineleaves in the hair, as you used to imagine once upon a time —

HEDDA. Ah, not vineleaves. I don't believe in that any more. But beautifully, nevertheless. For once. Good-bye.

You must go now, and not come here again.

LÖVBORG. Good-bye, Madam. Remember me to Jörgen Tesman. [*About to go.*]

HEDDA. Wait a minute. You shall have a souvenir to take with you.

[*She goes to the writing-table and opens the drawer and the pistol-case. She comes back to Lövborg again with one of the pistols.*]

LÖVBORG [*looking at her*]. Is that the souvenir?

HEDDA [*nodding slowly*]. Do you recognize it? It was aimed at you once.

LÖVBORG. You should have used it then.

HEDDA. There it is. Use it yourself now.

LÖVBORG [*putting the pistol in his breast pocket*]. Thanks.

HEDDA. And beautifully, Ejler Lövborg. Promise me that.

LÖVBORG. Good-bye, Hedda Gabler. [*He goes out by the hall door.*]

[*Hedda listens a moment at the door. Then she goes across to the writing-table and takes out the manuscript in its package. She glances inside the wrapper, pulls some of the sheets half out and looks at them. Then she goes across and sits down in the easy-*

chair by the stove with the packet in her lap. After a moment, she opens the stove-door and then the packet.]

HEDDA [*throwing some of the leaves into the fire and whispering to herself*]. Now I am burning your child, Thea. You, with your curly hair. [*Throwing a few more leaves into the stove.*] Your child and Ejler Lövborg's. [*Throwing in the rest.*] I'm burning it — burning your child.

ACT FOUR

*

[The same rooms at the Tesmans' house. Evening. The drawing-room is in darkness. The inner room is lighted by the hanging lamp over the table. The curtains are drawn across the glass door.]

Hedda, dressed in black, is walking to and fro in the dark room. Then she goes into the inner room and away to the left side. A few chords on the piano are heard. Then she comes back again and into the drawing-room.

Berte comes in from the right through the inner room with a lighted lamp, which she puts on the table in front of the corner sofa in the drawing-room. Her eyes are red with crying and she has black ribbons in her cap. She goes quietly and discreetly out to the right. Hedda goes across to the glass door, draws the curtain aside a little and looks out into the darkness.

Soon after, Miss Tesman comes in from the hall door, dressed in mourning, with a hat and veil. Hedda goes towards her and holds out her hand.]

MISS TESMAN. Yes, Hedda, here I am dressed in mourning. Because now my poor sister's trials are over at last.

HEDDA. I have heard already, as you see. My husband sent a note out to me.

MISS TESMAN. Yes, he promised he would. But I thought all the same, that to Hedda – here, in the house of the living – I ought myself to bring the news of her death.

HEDDA. It was very kind of you.

MISS TESMAN. Ah, Rina should not have died at such a moment. Hedda's home ought not to be sad just now.

HEDDA [*changing the subject*]. She died very peacefully, didn't she, Miss Tesman?

MISS TESMAN. Ah, it was such a beautiful, peaceful release! And then she had the unspeakable happiness of seeing Jörgen once more, so that she was really able to say good-bye to him. Perhaps he hasn't come back yet?

HEDDA. No. He wrote that I mustn't expect him just yet. But do sit down.

MISS TESMAN. No, thank you, my dear, precious Hedda. I should like to, but I have so little time. She must be prepared and made ready as well as I can. She shall go into her grave looking beautiful.

HEDDA. Can't I help you with anything?

MISS TESMAN. Oh, don't think of that! Hedda Tesman mustn't do that kind of thing. Nor dwell on the thought, either. Not at such a time. Certainly not.

HEDDA. Ah, thoughts ... they are not so easily mastered.

MISS TESMAN [*going on*]. Well, bless us. That's how things go in this world. At home we shall be sewing for Rina. And there will be sewing to be done here too, I think, soon. But that will be a different kind, thank God!

[*Jörgen Tesman comes in by the hall door.*]

HEDDA. Ah, it's a good thing you're back at last.

TESMAN. Are you here, Aunt Julle? With Hedda? Fancy!

MISS TESMAN. I was just going again, dear boy. Well, did you see to all those things you promised to do?

TESMAN. No, I'm really afraid I've forgotten half of them, you know. I must run in and see you again tomorrow. My head is so muddled today. I can't keep my ideas together.

MISS TESMAN. But, my dear Jörgen. You mustn't take it like this.

TESMAN. No? How, then ... do you think?

MISS TESMAN. You must be glad in your grief. Glad of what has happened. As I am.

TESMAN. Oh yes, yes. You are thinking of Aunt Rina, of course.

HEDDA. It will be lonely for you now, Miss Tesman.

MISS TESMAN. Just at first, yes. But that won't last very long, I hope. Dear Rina's little room won't stand empty, I know.

TESMAN. Really? Who do you want to take it? Eh?

MISS TESMAN. Oh, there is always some poor sick person or other who needs care and attention, unfortunately.

HEDDA. Do you really want to take a burden like that on you again?

MISS TESMAN. Burden! God forgive you, my child. It has never been a burden to me.

HEDDA. But if a strange person is going to come, why –

MISS TESMAN. Oh, one soon makes friends with sick folk. And I sadly need someone to live for – I, too. Well, thank God there may be things here, too, of one sort and another, that an old aunt can lend a hand with.

HEDDA. Oh, don't bother about things here –

TESMAN. Just think how happy we three could be together, if –

HEDDA. If – ?

TESMAN [*uneasily*]. Oh, nothing. It'll all come right. Let's hope so. Eh?

MISS TESMAN. Well, well. You two have plenty to talk to each other about, I expect. [*Smiling.*] And perhaps Hedda has something to tell you too, Jörgen. Good-bye. Now I must go home to Rina. [*Turning at the door.*] Dear, dear, how strange it is to think of! Now Rina is with me and with our dear Jochum, too.

TESMAN. Yes, to think of it, Aunt Julle! Eh?
[*Miss Tesman goes out by the hall door.*]

HEDDA [*her eyes, cold and searching, following Tesman*]. I almost think the death has affected you more than it has her.

TESMAN. Oh, it's not only Aunt Rina's death. It's Ejlert; I'm so worried about him.

HEDDA [*quickly*]. Has anything fresh happened to him?

TESMAN. I meant to have run over to him this afternoon and told him that his manuscript was in safe keeping.

HEDDA. Well, didn't you find him, then?

TESMAN. No, he wasn't at home. But afterwards I met Mrs Elvsted, and she told me he had been here early this morning.

HEDDA. Yes, directly you'd gone.

TESMAN. And he seems to have said that he had torn up the manuscript. Eh?

HEDDA. Yes, he insisted he had.

TESMAN. But, good heavens, he must have been absolutely off his head! And so, of course, you didn't dare give it back to him, Hedda?

HEDDA. No, he didn't take it.

TESMAN. But you told him, all right, that we had it?

HEDDA. No. [*Quickly.*] Did you tell Mrs Elvsted we had?

TESMAN. No, I didn't quite like to do that. But you ought to have told him himself. Suppose he goes off in despair and does himself some injury? Let me have the manuscript, Hedda. I will dash over to him with it at once. Where is the parcel?

HEDDA [*cold and immovable, leaning against the easy-chair*]. I haven't got it any longer.

TESMAN. You haven't got it. What on earth do you mean by that?

HEDDA. I have burnt it. Every scrap of it.

TESMAN [*with a start of terror*]. Burnt it! Burnt Ejlert Lövborg's manuscript!

HEDDA. Don't scream like that. The maid might hear you.

TESMAN. Burnt! But, good God! No, no, no! This is simply impossible!

HEDDA. Well, it's true, all the same.

TESMAN. But do you realize what you have done, Hedda? It's against the law, to treat lost property like that! Think of it! You just ask Judge Brack and he'll tell you.

HEDDA. I shouldn't advise you to talk about it either to the Judge or to anyone else.

TESMAN. But how could you go and do anything so unheard of? How could such an idea come into your head? How could it come over you? Tell me that. Eh?

HEDDA [*suppressing a scarcely perceptible smile*]. I did it for your sake, Jörgen.

TESMAN. For my sake!

HEDDA. When you came home in the morning and told me that he'd been reading to you -

TESMAN. Yes, yes, what about it?

HEDDA. You admitted then that you envied him his work.

TESMAN. Good heavens, I didn't mean it literally!

HEDDA. All the same, I couldn't bear the thought of someone else throwing you into the shade.

TESMAN [*in an outburst of mingled doubt and joy*]. Hedda! Is it true what you're saying? Yes, but ... but ... I've never known you show your affection in this sort of way before.

HEDDA. Oh well, you'd better know, then, that - just at present - [*Breaking off, violently*]. No, you can go and ask Aunt Julle. She'll tell you all about it.

TESMAN. Ah, I rather think I understand, Hedda! [*Clasping his hands together*]. Good heavens! Can it be possible? Eh?

HEDDA. Don't shout so. The maid might hear you.

TESMAN [*laughing, beside himself with joy*]. The maid! No,

you really are priceless, Hedda! 'The maid'! Why, it's only Berte! I'll go out and tell Berte myself.

HEDDA [*clenching her hands in desperation*]. Oh, it'll be the death of me. It'll be the death of me, all this!

TESMAN. What will, Hedda? Eh?

HEDDA [*cold and controlled*]. All this grotesque nonsense, Jörgen.

TESMAN. Nonsense! That I'm so delighted? But, all the same ... perhaps I had better not say anything to Berte.

HEDDA. Oh yes, why not that, too?

TESMAN. No, no, not yet. But Aunt Julle must certainly know about it. And then, too, that you are beginning to call me Jörgen! Think of it! Oh, Aunt Julle *will* be so glad! So glad!

HEDDA. When she hears that I have burnt Ejlert Lövborg's manuscript, for your sake?

TESMAN. No, that reminds me. That business with the manuscript - no one must get to know about that, of course. But that you feel like this towards me, Hedda, Aunt Julle must certainly hear that! Still, my dear, I should like to know myself whether this kind of thing is usual with young wives. Eh?

HEDDA. You'd better ask Aunt Julle about that, too, I think.

TESMAN. Yes, I certainly will some time. [*Looking worried and dubious again*]. But ... but that manuscript. Oh heavens, it's dreadful to think of poor Ejlert, all the same!

[*Mrs Elvsted, dressed as on her first visit, with her hat and outdoor clothes, comes in by the hall door.*]

MRS ELVSTED [*greeting them quickly and speaking in agitation*]. Oh, Hedda, dear, I hope you won't mind my coming again?

HEDDA. What's the matter, Thea?

TESMAN. Is it something to do with Ejlert Lövborg again?
Eh?

MRS ELVSTED. Yes, I'm so terribly afraid some accident
has happened to him.

HEDDA [*seizing her by the arm*]. Ah – do you think so?

TESMAN. Bless me, whatever makes you think that, Mrs
Elvsted?

MRS ELVSTED. Why, because I heard them talking about
him at the boarding-house, just as I came in. Oh, there
are the most incredible rumours about him in town
today!

TESMAN. Yes, do you know, I heard that too. Yet I could
swear that he went straight home to bed. Just fancy!

HEDDA. Well, what did they say at the boarding-house?

MRS ELVSTED. I didn't gather anything definite. Either
they didn't know very much or ... They stopped talking
when they saw me. And as for asking – I didn't dare do
that.

TESMAN [*walking about restlessly*]. We'll hope – we'll hope
you misunderstood them, Mrs Elvsted.

MRS ELVSTED. No, no, I am certain it was he they were
talking about. And, as I heard it, they said something
about the hospital, or –

TESMAN. The hospital!

HEDDA. No! That can't be true.

MRS ELVSTED. Oh, I was so dreadfully frightened about
him. So I went to his lodgings and asked for him there.

HEDDA. Could you bring yourself to do that, Thea?

MRS ELVSTED. Yes, what else was I to do? I didn't feel as
if I could bear the uncertainty any longer.

TESMAN. But you didn't find him either, did you? Eh?

MRS ELVSTED. No. And the people didn't know anything
about him. They said he hadn't been home since yester-
day afternoon.

TESMAN. Yesterday! Fancy their saying that!

MRS ELVSTED. Oh, I think there's only one explanation –
something dreadful must have happened to him!

TESMAN. Hedda, my dear, suppose I were to go in and
make some inquiries?

HEDDA. No. Don't mix yourself up in this business.

[*Brack, with his hat in his hand, comes in by the hall door,
which Berte opens and shuts after him. He looks grave and bows
silently.*]

TESMAN. Oh, it's you, my dear Judge? Eh?

BRACK. Yes, it was imperative for me to see you this
evening.

TESMAN. I can see that you have had Aunt Julle's news.

BRACK. Yes, I have heard that, too.

TESMAN. Isn't it sad? Eh?

BRACK. Well, my dear Tesman, it depends how you look
at it.

TESMAN [*looking doubtfully at him*]. Has anything else
happened?

BRACK. Yes, something else.

HEDDA [*in suspense*]. Anything sad, Mr Brack?

BRACK. That, too, depends on how you look at it, Mrs
Tesman.

MRS ELVSTED [*breaking out, involuntarily*]. Oh, it's some-
thing about Ejlert Lövborg!

BRACK [*glancing at her*]. What makes you think that,
Madam? Do you happen to know anything already?

MRS ELVSTED [*confused*]. No, no; not at all! But –

TESMAN. But, good heavens, man, tell us!

BRACK [*shrugging his shoulders*]. Well, I'm sorry to say
Ejlert Lövborg has been taken to the hospital. As a
matter of fact, he's dying.

MRS ELVSTED [*crying out*]. My God! My God!

TESMAN. In hospital? And dying?

HEDDA [*involuntarily*]. So quickly, then!

MRS ELVSTED [*wailing*]. And we parted in anger, Hedda!

HEDDA [*whispering*]. Come now, Thea! *Thea!*

MRS ELVSTED [*without taking any notice*]. I must go to him!

I must see him alive!

BRACK. It won't be any use, my dear lady. Nobody's allowed to see him.

MRS ELVSTED. Well, at least tell me what's happened to him. What is the matter?

TESMAN. Why, surely he never did it himself! Eh?

HEDDA. I'm sure he *did*.

TESMAN. Hedda, how can you?

BRACK [*with his eyes fixed steadily on her*]. Unfortunately, you have guessed quite right, Mrs Tesman.

MRS ELVSTED. Oh, how terrible!

TESMAN. So he did it himself! Think of it!

HEDDA. Shot himself!

BRACK. Rightly guessed again, Mrs Tesman.

MRS ELVSTED [*trying to control herself*]. When did it happen, Mr Brack?

BRACK. This afternoon. Between three and four.

TESMAN. But, dear, dear – where did he do it, then? Eh?

BRACK [*a little uncertainly*]. Where? Why, I suppose at his lodgings.

MRS ELVSTED. No, that can't be right. Because I was there between six and seven.

BRACK. Well, somewhere else, then. I don't exactly know; I only know that he was found. ... He had shot himself in the chest.

MRS ELVSTED. Oh, how dreadful to think of! That he should end like this.

HEDDA [*to Brack*]. Was it in the chest?

BRACK. Yes, as I said.

HEDDA. Not in the temple, then?

BRACK. In the chest, Mrs Tesman.

HEDDA. Yes, well ... the chest is a good place, too.

BRACK. How do you mean, Mrs Tesman?

HEDDA [*evasively*]. Oh, nothing – nothing.

TESMAN. And the wound is dangerous, you say? Eh?

BRACK. The wound is absolutely fatal. Most likely it's all over already.

MRS ELVSTED. Yes, yes, I feel sure it is. It is all over! All over! Oh, Hedda!

TESMAN. But tell me, how did you find out all this?

BRACK [*shortly*]. From one of the police. Whom I had occasion to speak to.

HEDDA [*in a ringing voice*]. Something done, at last!

TESMAN [*horrified*]. Good heavens! What are you saying, Hedda?

HEDDA. That there is an element of beauty in this.

BRACK. Hm. Mrs Tesman –

TESMAN. Of beauty! Fancy that!

MRS ELVSTED. Oh, Hedda, how can you talk of beauty in a thing like that!

HEDDA. Ejler Lövborg has balanced his account with himself. He has had the courage to do ... what had to be done.

MRS ELVSTED. No, don't ever believe that it happened in that way. What he has done was done in a moment of madness.

TESMAN. Done in despair.

HEDDA. It was not. Of that I am certain.

MRS ELVSTED. Yes, it was. In a moment of madness. Just as when he tore up our manuscript.

BRACK [*in surprise*]. Manuscript? The book, do you mean? Has he torn that up?

MRS ELVSTED. Yes, he did it last night.

TESMAN [*whispering softly*]. Oh, Hedda, we shall never get clear of this business.

BRACK. Hm. That was odd.

TESMAN [*walking about the room*]. Fancy Ejlert going out of the world like that! And not even leaving behind him the book that would have made his name immortal.

MRS ELVSTED. Oh, if only it could be put together again!

TESMAN. Yes, just think if it could! I don't know what I wouldn't give –

MRS ELVSTED. Perhaps it can, Mr Tesman.

TESMAN. What do you mean?

MRS ELVSTED [*looking in her handbag*]. Look here. I have kept the loose notes that he used for dictating from.

HEDDA [*a step nearer*]. Ah!

TESMAN. You've kept them, Mrs Elvsted! Eh?

MRS ELVSTED. Yes, I have them here. I took them with me when I came away, and here they've been, lying in my handbag.

TESMAN. Just let me see them!

MRS ELVSTED [*passes him a stack of small sheets*]. But they're in such a muddle. All mixed up together.

TESMAN. Fancy, if we could get it straight, though! Perhaps if we help each other –

MRS ELVSTED. Oh yes! Let's try, at any rate!

TESMAN. It *shall* be done! It *must*! I will give my life to this.

HEDDA. You, Jörgen? Your life?

TESMAN. Yes. Or, rather, all my spare time. My own stuff must wait for the present. You understand, Hedda? Eh? It's something I owe to Ejlert's memory.

HEDDA. Perhaps it is.

TESMAN. And so, my dear Mrs Elvsted, we will pull ourselves together. Heaven knows, it's no use brooding over what's done. Eh? We must try to make our minds as calm as possible, and –

MRS ELVSTED. Yes, yes, Mr Tesman. I will do the best I can.

TESMAN. Well, come along. We must look over the notes

at once. Where shall we sit? Here? No, in there in the back room. Excuse me, my dear Judge. Now come with me, Mrs Elvsted.

MRS ELVSTED. Dear God! If only it could be done!

[*Tesman and Mrs Elvsted go into the inner room. She takes off her hat and overcoat. They both sit down at the table under the hanging lamp and become absorbed in concentrated examination of the papers. Hedda goes across to the stove and sits in the easy-chair. Shortly afterwards Brack goes across to her.*]

HEDDA [*half-aloud*]. Ah, Mr Brack, what a feeling of release it gives one, this business with Ejlert Lövborg.

BRACK. Release, Madam Hedda? Well, it certainly is a release for him –

HEDDA. I mean for me. A feeling of release, in knowing that there really can be such a thing in the world as free and fearless action. Something irradiated with spontaneous beauty.

BRACK [*smiling*]. Hm. My dear Madam Hedda –

HEDDA. Oh yes. I know what you are going to say. Because you're a professional man too, in your way, like ... Oh well!

BRACK [*looking steadily at her*]. Ejlert Lövborg meant more to you than you are perhaps willing to admit to yourself. Or am I wrong there?

HEDDA. I don't answer that kind of question. I only know that Ejlert Lövborg had the courage to live life in his own way. And now – this great deed, with all its beauty? That he had the strength and will to break away from the feast of life ... and so early.

BRACK. I am very sorry, Madam Hedda, but I must deprive you of your pretty illusion.

HEDDA. Illusion?

BRACK. Which you would have been deprived of soon, in any case.

HEDDA. And what is it?

BRACK. He did not shoot himself intentionally.

HEDDA. Not intentionally?

BRACK. No. This affair of Ejlert Lövborg did not happen quite as I described it.

HEDDA [*in suspense*]. Have you been keeping something back? What is it?

BRACK. For poor Mrs Elvsted's sake I did make one or two slight modifications.

HEDDA. What were they?

BRACK. In the first place, he is actually dead already.

HEDDA. In hospital?

BRACK. Yes, and without regaining consciousness.

HEDDA. What else did you keep back?

BRACK. The fact that the thing didn't happen at his lodgings.

HEDDA. Well, that doesn't really make much difference.

BRACK. It does, rather. For I must tell you Ejlert Lövborg was found shot in – in Mademoiselle Diana's boudoir.

HEDDA [*half gets up, but sinks back again*]. That's impossible, Mr Brack. He can't have been *there* again today!

BRACK. He was there this afternoon. He came to demand something that, he said, they had taken away from him. Talked wildly about a child that had been lost –

HEDDA. Ah! So that was why ...

BRACK. I thought perhaps it might have been his manuscript. But I gather that he destroyed that himself. So it must have been his wallet.

HEDDA. It must have been. And it was there, then, that he was found?

BRACK. Yes, there. With a discharged pistol that had gone off in his breast-pocket. The shot had wounded him fatally.

HEDDA. In the chest – yes.

BRACK. No. It hit him in the stomach.

HEDDA [*looking up at him with an expression of disgust*]. That too! The ridiculous and the sordid lies like a curse on everything I so much as touch.

BRACK. There is something more, Madam Hedda. Something that can also be classed as 'sordid'.

HEDDA. What is that?

BRACK. The pistol that he had on him –

HEDDA [*breathless*]. Well! What about it?

BRACK. He must have stolen it.

HEDDA [*jumping up*]. Stolen! That's not true! That he did not!

BRACK. No other explanation is possible. He *must* have stolen it. ... Hush!

[*Tesman and Mrs Elvsted have got up from the table in the inner room and come into the drawing-room.*]

TESMAN [*with papers in both hands*]. Look here, Hedda, it's hardly possible for me to see in there under the hanging lamp. Just think!

HEDDA. Yes. I am.

TESMAN. I wonder if you would mind our sitting at your writing-table for a little while. Eh?

HEDDA. I don't mind. [*Quickly.*] Wait a minute! Let me tidy it up first.

TESMAN. Oh, you needn't do that, Hedda. There's plenty of room.

HEDDA. No, no. Just let me tidy it, I tell you. I'll take all this in and put it on the piano for the time being. There!

[*She has pulled out something covered with music paper from under the bookshelf, puts some more sheets on it and carries it all in to the left in the inner room. Tesman puts the loose papers on the writing-table and moves the lamp there from the corner table. He and Mrs Elvsted sit down and settle to work again. Hedda comes back.*]

HEDDA [*behind Mrs Elvsted's chair, ruffling her hair gently*].

Well, my precious Thea, how is Ejlert Lövborg's memorial getting on?

MRS ELVSTED [*looking up dispiritedly*]. Oh dear! It looks as if it's going to be terribly difficult to straighten out.

TESMAN. It *must* be done. There is nothing else for it. And this – getting another man's papers in order – it's just the job for me.

[*Hedda goes over to the stove and sits on one of the footstools. Brack stands over her, leaning against the easy-chair.*]

HEDDA [*whispers*]. What was it you said about the pistol?

BRACK [*softly*]. That he must have stolen it.

HEDDA. Why, precisely, stolen?

BRACK. Because any other explanation ought to be impossible, Madam Hedda.

HEDDA. Really?

BRACK [*glancing at her*]. Of course, Ejlert Lövborg was here this morning. Wasn't he?

HEDDA. Yes.

BRACK. Were you alone with him?

HEDDA. Yes, for a time.

BRACK. Didn't you go out of the room while he was here?

HEDDA. No.

BRACK. Think it over. Were you never out of it for a moment?

HEDDA. Well, perhaps just for a moment – out in the hall.

BRACK. And where was your pistol-case in the meantime?

HEDDA. I kept that in ... I had it locked in ...

BRACK. Well, Madam Hedda?

HEDDA. The case was there on the writing-table.

BRACK. Have you looked since to see whether both pistols are there?

HEDDA. No.

BRACK. Well, there's no need. I saw the pistol Lövborg had

on him. And I knew it again at once, from yesterday. And from longer ago too.

HEDDA. Have you got it?

BRACK. No, the police have it.

HEDDA. What will the police do with the pistol?

BRACK. See if they can trace the owner.

HEDDA. Do you think they can find out?

BRACK [*bending over her and whispering*]. No, Hedda Gabler.

Not so long as I keep silence.

HEDDA [*looking askance at him*]. And if you do *not* keep silence – what then?

BRACK [*shrugging his shoulders*]. There is always the other way out: the pistol was stolen.

HEDDA [*firmlly*]. Rather death!

BRACK [*smiling*]. That is the kind of thing one *says*. One doesn't *do* it.

HEDDA [*without answering*]. And suppose, now, the pistol isn't stolen. And the owner is discovered. Then what happens?

BRACK. Well, Hedda, what happens then is a scandal.

HEDDA. Scandal!

BRACK. Scandal. Yes! The thing you have such a deadly fear of. Of course you will have to appear in court. Both you and Mademoiselle Diana. She will have to explain how the thing happened. Whether it was accident or homicide. ... Did he try to pull the pistol out of his pocket to threaten her? And is that how it went off? Or did she snatch the pistol out of his hand, shoot him and put it back in his pocket again? She's quite equal to that. She's a hefty young woman, that same Mademoiselle Diana.

HEDDA. But all these repulsive details don't concern me.

BRACK. No. But you will have to answer the question: Why did you give Ejlert Lövborg the pistol? And what

conclusions will people draw from the fact that you did give it him?

HEDDA [*drooping her head*]. That's true. I didn't think of that.

BRACK. Well, fortunately there is no danger, so long as I say nothing.

HEDDA [*looking up at him*]. So I am in your power, Mr Brack. From now on, you have a hold over me.

BRACK [*whispering softly*]. My dearest Hedda, believe me I shall not abuse the position.

HEDDA. In your power, all the same. At the mercy of your will and demands. And so a slave! A slave! [*Getting up impatiently.*] No! That thought I cannot tolerate. Never!

BRACK [*looking at her half mockingly*]. And yet one usually manages to tolerate the inevitable.

HEDDA [*returning his look*]. Yes, possibly. [*She goes across to the writing-table.*]

HEDDA [*suppressing an involuntary smile and imitating Tesman's intonation*]. Well, is it getting on all right, Jørgen? Eh?

TESMAN. The Lord only knows, my dear. In any case, there's months of work here.

HEDDA [*as before*]. Well, fancy that! [*Letting her hands stray gently through Mrs Elvsted's hair.*] Doesn't it feel strange to you, Thea? Here you are sitting with Jørgen Tesman just as you once sat with Ejlert Lövborg.

MRS ELVSTED. Well, if only I could inspire your husband too -

HEDDA. Oh, that will come all right - in time.

TESMAN. Yes, do you know, Hedda, I really think I am beginning to feel something of the kind. But you go back and sit down with Judge Brack again.

HEDDA. Is there nothing here I can help you two with?

TESMAN. Not a thing in the world. [*Turning his head.*]

Would you be so kind as to keep Hedda company for the time being, Judge Brack?

BRACK [*with a glance at Hedda*]. It will give me the very greatest pleasure.

HEDDA. Thanks. But I'm tired tonight. I will lie down for a little while on the sofa in there.

TESMAN. Yes do, my dear. Eh?

[*Hedda goes into the inner room and draws the curtains after her. There is a short pause. Suddenly she is heard playing a wild dance tune on the piano.*]

MRS ELVSTED [*jumping up from her chair*]. Oh! What is that?

TESMAN [*running to the doorway*]. But, Hedda, my dearest - don't play dance music this evening. Think of Aunt Rina! And of Ejlert, too!

HEDDA [*putting out her head between the hangings*]. And of Aunt Julle. And of all the rest of them. I will be quiet in future. [*She pulls the curtains to again after her.*]

TESMAN [*at the writing-table*]. It upsets her to see us at this sad task, of course. I tell you what, Mrs Elvsted. You shall move into Aunt Julle's and I'll come over in the evenings. And then we can sit and work there. Eh?

MRS ELVSTED. Yes, perhaps that would be the best plan -

HEDDA [*in the inner room*]. I can hear perfectly well what you are saying. But how am I going to get through the evenings out here?

TESMAN [*turning over the papers*]. Oh, I'm sure Judge Brack will be kind enough to come out and see you.

BRACK [*in the easy-chair, calling gaily*]. Willingly! Every single evening, Mrs Tesman. We shall have a very pleasant time together here, you and I.

HEDDA [*clearly and distinctly*]. Yes, that is what you are looking forward to, isn't it, Mr Brack? You, as the only cock in the yard.

[A shot is heard within. Tesman, Mrs Elvsted, and Brack jump up.]

TESMAN. Ah! Now she's playing with the pistols again.

[He pulls the curtains aside and runs in. So does Mrs Elvsted. Hedda is lying lifeless, stretched out on the sofa. Confusion and cries. Berte comes in distractedly from the right.]

TESMAN [shrieking to Brack]. Shot herself! Shot herself in the temple! Think of it!

BRACK [half-collapsed in the easy-chair]. But, merciful God! One doesn't do that kind of thing!

CURTAIN

NOTES

I HAVE thought it advisable to add notes on some half-dozen passages, so that readers who are interested in the treatment of the original may see the kinds of reasons that have led to my renderings and modifications. I have not written a note on every case that deserved it, but only one or two, to serve as illustration, on each kind of problem that arose.

The Pillars of the Community

(Pp. 25, stage directions; 31, 32.) I have translated 'bue' as 'toy gun' because a 'cross-bow' would be meaningless to modern readers, and to call it a 'bow' would make some confusion later, when Hilmar talks about there being a 'shot' in it. The cross-bow, which was common in 1877 and is still, I am told, used by children in country districts in Norway, could be restored to the text in production, and Olaf would have one as a property in this scene.

(Pp. 28, 50.) The Fallen Sisters have given translators a great deal of trouble. The original is 'Disse moralsk fordaervede', which could be rendered literally as 'These morally depraved'. A modern euphemism must be found, such as a modern Rörlund would use. 'Lapsed and lost' was a brilliant rendering in the 1890s, but I doubt whether its overtones would be recognized today. I am not altogether satisfied that even our Rörlunds today talk about 'fallen sisters'; but the advance of the social sciences has made it unlikely that we produce any Rörlunds. The trouble becomes worse when Lona, in Act III, says that she has been up in the market-place and met 'et par af de moralske', 'a few of the moral ones'. If we have not kept 'moralsk' in