

A Doll's House

by Henrik Ibsen

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DRAMATIS PERSONAE

Torvald				Helmer.
Nora,	his			wife.
Doctor				Rank.
Mrs				Linde.
Nils				Krogstad.
Helmer's	three		young	children.
Anne,		their		nurse.
A				Housemaid.
A				Porter.

[The action takes place in Helmer's house.]

A DOLL'S HOUSE

ACT I

[SCENE.—A room furnished comfortably and tastefully, but not extravagantly. At the back, a door to the right leads to the entrance-hall, another to the left leads to Helmer's study. Between the doors stands a piano. In the middle of the left-hand wall is a door, and beyond it a window. Near the window are a round table, arm-chairs and a small sofa. In the right-hand wall, at the farther end, another door; and on the same side, nearer the footlights, a stove, two easy chairs and a rocking-chair; between the stove and the door, a small table. Engravings on the walls; a cabinet with china and other small objects; a small book-case with well-bound books. The floors are carpeted, and a fire burns in the stove. It is winter.]

A bell rings in the hall; shortly afterwards the door is heard to open. Enter NORA, humming a tune and in high spirits. She is in outdoor dress and carries a number of parcels; these she lays on the table to the right. She leaves the outer door open after her, and through it is seen a PORTER who is carrying a Christmas Tree and a basket, which he gives to the MAID who has opened the door.]

NORA.

Hide the Christmas Tree carefully, Helen. Be sure the children do not see it until this evening, when it is dressed. *[To the PORTER, taking out her purse.]* How much?

PORTER.

Sixpence.

NORA.

There is a shilling. No, keep the change. *[The PORTER thanks her, and goes out. NORA shuts the door. She is laughing to herself, as she takes off her hat and coat. She takes a packet of macaroons from her pocket and eats one or two; then goes cautiously to her husband's door and listens.]* Yes, he is in. *[Still humming, she goes to the table on the right.]*

HELMER.

[calls out from his room]. Is that my little lark twittering out there?

NORA.

[busy opening some of the parcels]. Yes, it is!

HELMER.

Is it my little squirrel bustling about?

NORA.

Yes!

HELMER.

When did my squirrel come home?

NORA.

Just now. [*Puts the bag of macaroons into her pocket and wipes her mouth.*] Come in here, Torvald, and see what I have bought.

HELMER.

Don't disturb me. [*A little later, he opens the door and looks into the room, pen in hand.*] Bought, did you say? All these things? Has my little spendthrift been wasting money again?

NORA.

Yes but, Torvald, this year we really can let ourselves go a little. This is the first Christmas that we have not needed to economise.

HELMER.

Still, you know, we can't spend money recklessly.

NORA.

Yes, Torvald, we may be a wee bit more reckless now, mayn't we? Just a tiny wee bit! You are going to have a big salary and earn lots and lots of money.

HELMER.

Yes, after the New Year; but then it will be a whole quarter before the salary is due.

NORA.

Pooh! we can borrow until then.

HELMER.

Nora! [*Goes up to her and takes her playfully by the ear.*] The same little featherhead! Suppose, now, that I borrowed fifty pounds today, and you spent it all in the Christmas week, and then on New Year's Eve a slate fell on my head and killed me, and—

NORA.

[*putting her hands over his mouth*]. Oh! don't say such horrid things.

HELMER.

Still, suppose that happened,—what then?

NORA.

If that were to happen, I don't suppose I should care whether I owed money or not.

HELMER.

Yes, but what about the people who had lent it?

NORA.

They? Who would bother about them? I should not know who they were.

HELMER.

That is like a woman! But seriously, Nora, you know what I think about that. No debt, no borrowing. There can be no freedom or beauty about a home life that depends on

borrowing and debt. We two have kept bravely on the straight road so far, and we will go on the same way for the short time longer that there need be any struggle.

NORA.

[moving towards the stove]. As you please, Torvald.

HELMER.

[following her]. Come, come, my little skylark must not droop her wings. What is this! Is my little squirrel out of temper? *[Taking out his purse.]* Nora, what do you think I have got here?

NORA.

[turning round quickly]. Money!

HELMER.

There you are. *[Gives her some money.]* Do you think I don't know what a lot is wanted for housekeeping at Christmas-time?

NORA.

[counting]. Ten shillings—a pound—two pounds! Thank you, thank you, Torvald; that will keep me going for a long time.

HELMER.

Indeed it must.

NORA.

Yes, yes, it will. But come here and let me show you what I have bought. And all so cheap! Look, here is a new suit for Ivar, and a sword; and a horse and a trumpet for Bob; and a doll and dolly's bedstead for Emmy,—they are very plain, but anyway she will soon break them in pieces. And here are dress-lengths and handkerchiefs for the maids; old Anne ought really to have something better.

HELMER.

And what is in this parcel?

NORA.

[crying out]. No, no! you mustn't see that until this evening.

HELMER.

Very well. But now tell me, you extravagant little person, what would you like for yourself?

NORA.

For myself? Oh, I am sure I don't want anything.

HELMER.

Yes, but you must. Tell me something reasonable that you would particularly like to have.

NORA.

No, I really can't think of anything—unless, Torvald—

HELMER.

Well?

NORA.

[playing with his coat buttons, and without raising her eyes to his]. If you really want to give me something, you might—you might—

HELMER.

Well, out with it!

NORA.

[speaking quickly]. You might give me money, Torvald. Only just as much as you can afford; and then one of these days I will buy something with it.

HELMER.

But, Nora—

NORA.

Oh, do! dear Torvald; please, please do! Then I will wrap it up in beautiful gilt paper and hang it on the Christmas Tree. Wouldn't that be fun?

HELMER.

What are little people called that are always wasting money?

NORA.

Spendthrifts—I know. Let us do as you suggest, Torvald, and then I shall have time to think what I am most in want of. That is a very sensible plan, isn't it?

HELMER.

[smiling]. Indeed it is—that is to say, if you were really to save out of the money I give you, and then really buy something for yourself. But if you spend it all on the housekeeping and any number of unnecessary things, then I merely have to pay up again.

NORA.

Oh but, Torvald—

HELMER.

You can't deny it, my dear little Nora. *[Puts his arm round her waist.]* It's a sweet little spendthrift, but she uses up a deal of money. One would hardly believe how expensive such little persons are!

NORA.

It's a shame to say that. I do really save all I can.

HELMER.

[laughing]. That's very true,—all you can. But you can't save anything!

NORA.

[smiling quietly and happily]. You haven't any idea how many expenses we skylarks and squirrels have, Torvald.

HELMER.

You are an odd little soul. Very like your father. You always find some new way of wheedling money out of me, and, as soon as you have got it, it seems to melt in your hands. You never know where it has gone. Still, one must take you as you are. It is in the blood; for indeed it is true that you can inherit these things, Nora.

NORA.

Ah, I wish I had inherited many of papa's qualities.

HELMER.

And I would not wish you to be anything but just what you are, my sweet little skylark. But, do you know, it strikes me that you are looking rather—what shall I say—rather uneasy today?

NORA.

Do I?

HELMER.

You do, really. Look straight at me.

NORA.

[looks at him]. Well?

HELMER.

[wagging his finger at her]. Hasn't Miss Sweet Tooth been breaking rules in town today?

NORA.

No; what makes you think that?

HELMER.

Hasn't she paid a visit to the confectioner's?

NORA.

No, I assure you, Torvald—

HELMER.

Not been nibbling sweets?

NORA.

No, certainly not.

HELMER.

Not even taken a bite at a macaroon or two?

NORA.

No, Torvald, I assure you really—

HELMER.

There, there, of course I was only joking.

NORA.

[going to the table on the right]. I should not think of going against your wishes.

HELMER.

No, I am sure of that; besides, you gave me your word— *[Going up to her.]* Keep your little Christmas secrets to yourself, my darling. They will all be revealed tonight when the Christmas Tree is lit, no doubt.

NORA.

Did you remember to invite Doctor Rank?

HELMER.

No. But there is no need; as a matter of course he will come to dinner with us. However, I will ask him when he comes in this morning. I have ordered some good wine. Nora, you can't think how I am looking forward to this evening.

NORA.

So am I! And how the children will enjoy themselves, Torvald!

HELMER.

It is splendid to feel that one has a perfectly safe appointment, and a big enough income. It's delightful to think of, isn't it?

NORA.

It's wonderful!

HELMER.

Do you remember last Christmas? For a full three weeks beforehand you shut yourself up every evening until long after midnight, making ornaments for the Christmas Tree, and all the other fine things that were to be a surprise to us. It was the dullest three weeks I ever spent!

NORA.

I didn't find it dull.

HELMER.

[smiling]. But there was precious little result, Nora.

NORA.

Oh, you shouldn't tease me about that again. How could I help the cat's going in and tearing everything to pieces?

HELMER.

Of course you couldn't, poor little girl. You had the best of intentions to please us all, and that's the main thing. But it is a good thing that our hard times are over.

NORA.

Yes, it is really wonderful.

HELMER.

This time I needn't sit here and be dull all alone, and you needn't ruin your dear eyes and your pretty little hands—

NORA.

[clapping her hands]. No, Torvald, I needn't any longer, need I! It's wonderfully lovely to hear you say so! *[Taking his arm.]* Now I will tell you how I have been thinking we ought to arrange things, Torvald. As soon as Christmas is over—*[A bell rings in the hall.]* There's the bell. *[She tidies the room a little.]* There's some one at the door. What a nuisance!

HELMER.

If it is a caller, remember I am not at home.

MAID.

[in the doorway]. A lady to see you, ma'am,—a stranger.

NORA.

Ask her to come in.

MAID.

[to HELMER]. The doctor came at the same time, sir.

HELMER.

Did he go straight into my room?

MAID.

Yes, sir.

[HELMER goes into his room. The MAID ushers in Mrs Linde, who is in travelling dress, and shuts the door.]

MRS

LINDE.

[in a dejected and timid voice]. How do you do, Nora?

NORA.

[doubtfully]. How do you do—

MRS
You don't recognise me, I suppose.

LINDE.

NORA.
No, I don't know—yes, to be sure, I seem to—*[Suddenly.]* Yes! Christine! Is it really you?

MRS
Yes, it is I.

LINDE.

NORA.
Christine! To think of my not recognising you! And yet how could I—*[In a gentle voice.]* How you have altered, Christine!

MRS
Yes, I have indeed. In nine, ten long years—

LINDE.

NORA.
Is it so long since we met? I suppose it is. The last eight years have been a happy time for me, I can tell you. And so now you have come into the town, and have taken this long journey in winter—that was plucky of you.

MRS
I arrived by steamer this morning.

LINDE.

NORA.
To have some fun at Christmas-time, of course. How delightful! We will have such fun together! But take off your things. You are not cold, I hope. *[Helps her.]* Now we will sit down by the stove, and be cosy. No, take this armchair; I will sit here in the rocking-chair. *[Takes her hands.]* Now you look like your old self again; it was only the first moment—You are a little paler, Christine, and perhaps a little thinner.

MRS
And much, much older, Nora.

LINDE.

NORA.
Perhaps a little older; very, very little; certainly not much. *[Stops suddenly and speaks seriously.]* What a thoughtless creature I am, chattering away like this. My poor, dear Christine, do forgive me.

MRS
What do you mean, Nora?

LINDE.

NORA.
[gently.] Poor Christine, you are a widow.

MRS
Yes; it is three years ago now.

LINDE.

NORA.

Yes, I knew; I saw it in the papers. I assure you, Christine, I meant ever so often to write to you at the time, but I always put it off and something always prevented me.

MRS

LINDE.

I quite understand, dear.

NORA.

It was very bad of me, Christine. Poor thing, how you must have suffered. And he left you nothing?

MRS

LINDE.

No.

NORA.

And no children?

MRS

LINDE.

No.

NORA.

Nothing at all, then.

MRS

LINDE.

Not even any sorrow or grief to live upon.

NORA.

[looking incredulously at her]. But, Christine, is that possible?

MRS

LINDE.

[smiles sadly and strokes her hair]. It sometimes happens, Nora.

NORA.

So you are quite alone. How dreadfully sad that must be. I have three lovely children. You can't see them just now, for they are out with their nurse. But now you must tell me all about it.

MRS

LINDE.

No, no; I want to hear about you.

NORA.

No, you must begin. I mustn't be selfish today; today I must only think of your affairs. But there is one thing I must tell you. Do you know we have just had a great piece of good luck?

MRS

LINDE.

No, what is it?

NORA.

Just fancy, my husband has been made manager of the Bank!

MRS

LINDE.

Your husband? What good luck!

NORA.

Yes, tremendous! A barrister's profession is such an uncertain thing, especially if he won't undertake unsavoury cases; and naturally Torvald has never been willing to do that, and I quite agree with him. You may imagine how pleased we are! He is to take up his work in the Bank at the New Year, and then he will have a big salary and lots of commissions. For the future we can live quite differently—we can do just as we like. I feel so relieved and so happy, Christine! It will be splendid to have heaps of money and not need to have any anxiety, won't it?

MRS

LINDE.

Yes, anyhow I think it would be delightful to have what one needs.

NORA.

No, not only what one needs, but heaps and heaps of money.

MRS

LINDE.

[smiling]. Nora, Nora, haven't you learned sense yet? In our schooldays you were a great spendthrift.

NORA.

[laughing]. Yes, that is what Torvald says now. *[Wags her finger at her.]* But "Nora, Nora" is not so silly as you think. We have not been in a position for me to waste money. We have both had to work.

MRS

LINDE.

You too?

NORA.

Yes; odds and ends, needlework, crotchet-work, embroidery, and that kind of thing. *[Dropping her voice.]* And other things as well. You know Torvald left his office when we were married? There was no prospect of promotion there, and he had to try and earn more than before. But during the first year he over-worked himself dreadfully. You see, he had to make money every way he could, and he worked early and late; but he couldn't stand it, and fell dreadfully ill, and the doctors said it was necessary for him to go south.

MRS

LINDE.

You spent a whole year in Italy, didn't you?

NORA.

Yes. It was no easy matter to get away, I can tell you. It was just after Ivar was born; but naturally we had to go. It was a wonderfully beautiful journey, and it saved Torvald's life. But it cost a tremendous lot of money, Christine.

MRS
So I should think. LINDE.

NORA.
It cost about two hundred and fifty pounds. That's a lot, isn't it?

MRS
Yes, and in emergencies like that it is lucky to have the money. LINDE.

NORA.
I ought to tell you that we had it from papa.

MRS
Oh, I see. It was just about that time that he died, wasn't it? LINDE.

NORA.
Yes; and, just think of it, I couldn't go and nurse him. I was expecting little Ivar's birth every day and I had my poor sick Torvald to look after. My dear, kind father—I never saw him again, Christine. That was the saddest time I have known since our marriage.

MRS
I know how fond you were of him. And then you went off to Italy? LINDE.

NORA.
Yes; you see we had money then, and the doctors insisted on our going, so we started a month later.

MRS
And your husband came back quite well? LINDE.

NORA.
As sound as a bell!

MRS
But—the doctor? LINDE.

NORA.
What doctor?

MRS
I thought your maid said the gentleman who arrived here just as I did, was the doctor? LINDE.

NORA.
Yes, that was Doctor Rank, but he doesn't come here professionally. He is our greatest friend, and comes in at least once every day. No, Torvald has not had an hour's illness since then, and our children are strong and healthy and so am I. [*Jumps up and claps her hands.*] Christine! Christine! it's good to be alive and happy!—But how horrid of me; I am talking of nothing but my own affairs. [*Sits on a stool near her, and rests her*

arms on her knees.] You mustn't be angry with me. Tell me, is it really true that you did not love your husband? Why did you marry him?

MRS LINDE.
My mother was alive then, and was bedridden and helpless, and I had to provide for my two younger brothers; so I did not think I was justified in refusing his offer.

NORA.
No, perhaps you were quite right. He was rich at that time, then?

MRS LINDE.
I believe he was quite well off. But his business was a precarious one; and, when he died, it all went to pieces and there was nothing left.

NORA.
And then?—

MRS LINDE.
Well, I had to turn my hand to anything I could find—first a small shop, then a small school, and so on. The last three years have seemed like one long working-day, with no rest. Now it is at an end, Nora. My poor mother needs me no more, for she is gone; and the boys do not need me either; they have got situations and can shift for themselves.

NORA.
What a relief you must feel if—

MRS LINDE.
No, indeed; I only feel my life unspeakably empty. No one to live for anymore. [*Gets up restlessly.*] That was why I could not stand the life in my little backwater any longer. I hope it may be easier here to find something which will busy me and occupy my thoughts. If only I could have the good luck to get some regular work—office work of some kind—

NORA.
But, Christine, that is so frightfully tiring, and you look tired out now. You had far better go away to some watering-place.

MRS LINDE.
[*walking to the window*]. I have no father to give me money for a journey, Nora.

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

MRS LINDE.
[*going up to her*]. It is you that must not be angry with me, dear. The worst of a position like mine is that it makes one so bitter. No one to work for, and yet obliged to be always on the lookout for chances. One must live, and so one becomes selfish. When you told

me of the happy turn your fortunes have taken—you will hardly believe it—I was delighted not so much on your account as on my own.

NORA.

How do you mean?—Oh, I understand. You mean that perhaps Torvald could get you something to do.

MRS

LINDE.

Yes, that was what I was thinking of.

NORA.

He must, Christine. Just leave it to me; I will broach the subject very cleverly—I will think of something that will please him very much. It will make me so happy to be of some use to you.

MRS

LINDE.

How kind you are, Nora, to be so anxious to help me! It is doubly kind in you, for you know so little of the burdens and troubles of life.

NORA.

I—? I know so little of them?

MRS

LINDE.

[smiling]. My dear! Small household cares and that sort of thing!—You are a child, Nora.

NORA.

[tosses her head and crosses the stage]. You ought not to be so superior.

MRS

LINDE.

No?

NORA.

You are just like the others. They all think that I am incapable of anything really serious—

MRS

LINDE.

Come, come—

NORA.

—that I have gone through nothing in this world of cares.

MRS

LINDE.

But, my dear Nora, you have just told me all your troubles.

NORA.

Pooh!—those were trifles. *[Lowering her voice.]* I have not told you the important thing.

MRS
The important thing? What do you mean? LINDE.

NORA.
You look down upon me altogether, Christine—but you ought not to. You are proud, aren't you, of having worked so hard and so long for your mother?

MRS
Indeed, I don't look down on anyone. But it is true that I am both proud and glad to think that I was privileged to make the end of my mother's life almost free from care. LINDE.

NORA.
And you are proud to think of what you have done for your brothers?

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

NORA.
I think so, too. But now, listen to this; I too have something to be proud and glad of.

MRS
I have no doubt you have. But what do you refer to? LINDE.

NORA.
Speak low. Suppose Torvald were to hear! He mustn't on any account—no one in the world must know, Christine, except you.

MRS
But what is it? LINDE.

NORA.
Come here. [*Pulls her down on the sofa beside her.*] Now I will show you that I too have something to be proud and glad of. It was I who saved Torvald's life.

MRS
“Saved”? How? LINDE.

NORA.
I told you about our trip to Italy. Torvald would never have recovered if he had not gone there—

MRS
Yes, but your father gave you the necessary funds. LINDE.

NORA.
[*smiling*]. Yes, that is what Torvald and all the others think, but—

MRS
But— LINDE.

NORA.

Papa didn't give us a shilling. It was I who procured the money.

MRS

LINDE.

You? All that large sum?

NORA.

Two hundred and fifty pounds. What do you think of that?

MRS

LINDE.

But, Nora, how could you possibly do it? Did you win a prize in the Lottery?

NORA.

[contemptuously]. In the Lottery? There would have been no credit in that.

MRS

LINDE.

But where did you get it from, then? Nora *[humming and smiling with an air of mystery]*. Hm, hm! Aha!

MRS

LINDE.

Because you couldn't have borrowed it.

NORA.

Couldn't I? Why not?

MRS

LINDE.

No, a wife cannot borrow without her husband's consent.

NORA.

[tossing her head]. Oh, if it is a wife who has any head for business—a wife who has the wit to be a little bit clever—

MRS

LINDE.

I don't understand it at all, Nora.

NORA.

There is no need you should. I never said I had borrowed the money. I may have got it some other way. *[Lies back on the sofa.]* Perhaps I got it from some other admirer. When anyone is as attractive as I am—

MRS

LINDE.

You are a mad creature.

NORA.

Now, you know you're full of curiosity, Christine.

MRS

LINDE.

Listen to me, Nora dear. Haven't you been a little bit imprudent?

NORA.

[sits up straight]. Is it imprudent to save your husband's life?

MRS

LINDE.

It seems to me imprudent, without his knowledge, to—

NORA.

But it was absolutely necessary that he should not know! My goodness, can't you understand that? It was necessary he should have no idea what a dangerous condition he was in. It was to me that the doctors came and said that his life was in danger, and that the only thing to save him was to live in the south. Do you suppose I didn't try, first of all, to get what I wanted as if it were for myself? I told him how much I should love to travel abroad like other young wives; I tried tears and entreaties with him; I told him that he ought to remember the condition I was in, and that he ought to be kind and indulgent to me; I even hinted that he might raise a loan. That nearly made him angry, Christine. He said I was thoughtless, and that it was his duty as my husband not to indulge me in my whims and caprices—as I believe he called them. Very well, I thought, you must be saved—and that was how I came to devise a way out of the difficulty—

MRS

LINDE.

And did your husband never get to know from your father that the money had not come from him?

NORA.

No, never. Papa died just at that time. I had meant to let him into the secret and beg him never to reveal it. But he was so ill then—alas, there never was any need to tell him.

MRS

LINDE.

And since then have you never told your secret to your husband?

NORA.

Good Heavens, no! How could you think so? A man who has such strong opinions about these things! And besides, how painful and humiliating it would be for Torvald, with his manly independence, to know that he owed me anything! It would upset our mutual relations altogether; our beautiful happy home would no longer be what it is now.

MRS

LINDE.

Do you mean never to tell him about it?

NORA.

[meditatively, and with a half smile]. Yes—someday, perhaps, after many years, when I am no longer as nice-looking as I am now. Don't laugh at me! I mean, of course, when Torvald is no longer as devoted to me as he is now; when my dancing and dressing-up and reciting have palled on him; then it may be a good thing to have something in

reserve—*[Breaking off.]* What nonsense! That time will never come. Now, what do you think of my great secret, Christine? Do you still think I am of no use? I can tell you, too, that this affair has caused me a lot of worry. It has been by no means easy for me to meet my engagements punctually. I may tell you that there is something that is called, in business, quarterly interest, and another thing called payment in installments, and it is always so dreadfully difficult to manage them. I have had to save a little here and there, where I could, you understand. I have not been able to put aside much from my housekeeping money, for Torvald must have a good table. I couldn't let my children be shabbily dressed; I have felt obliged to use up all he gave me for them, the sweet little darlings!

MRS

LINDE.

So it has all had to come out of your own necessities of life, poor Nora?

NORA.

Of course. Besides, I was the one responsible for it. Whenever Torvald has given me money for new dresses and such things, I have never spent more than half of it; I have always bought the simplest and cheapest things. Thank Heaven, any clothes look well on me, and so Torvald has never noticed it. But it was often very hard on me, Christine—because it is delightful to be really well dressed, isn't it?

MRS

LINDE.

Quite so.

NORA.

Well, then I have found other ways of earning money. Last winter I was lucky enough to get a lot of copying to do; so I locked myself up and sat writing every evening until quite late at night. Many a time I was desperately tired; but all the same it was a tremendous pleasure to sit there working and earning money. It was like being a man.

MRS

LINDE.

How much have you been able to pay off in that way?

NORA.

I can't tell you exactly. You see, it is very difficult to keep an account of a business matter of that kind. I only know that I have paid every penny that I could scrape together. Many a time I was at my wits' end. *[Smiles.]* Then I used to sit here and imagine that a rich old gentleman had fallen in love with me—

MRS

LINDE.

What! Who was it?

NORA.

Be quiet!—that he had died; and that when his will was opened it contained, written in big letters, the instruction: "The lovely Mrs Nora Helmer is to have all I possess paid over to her at once in cash."

MRS

LINDE.

But, my dear Nora—who could the man be?

NORA.

Good gracious, can't you understand? There was no old gentleman at all; it was only something that I used to sit here and imagine, when I couldn't think of any way of procuring money. But it's all the same now; the tiresome old person can stay where he is, as far as I am concerned; I don't care about him or his will either, for I am free from care now. [*Jumps up.*] My goodness, it's delightful to think of, Christine! Free from care! To be able to be free from care, quite free from care; to be able to play and romp with the children; to be able to keep the house beautifully and have everything just as Torvald likes it! And, think of it, soon the spring will come and the big blue sky! Perhaps we shall be able to take a little trip—perhaps I shall see the sea again! Oh, it's a wonderful thing to be alive and be happy. [*A bell is heard in the hall.*]

MRS

LINDE.

[*rising*]. There is the bell; perhaps I had better go.

NORA.

No, don't go; no one will come in here; it is sure to be for Torvald.

SERVANT.

[*at the hall door*]. Excuse me, ma'am—there is a gentleman to see the master, and as the doctor is with him—

NORA.

Who is it?

KROGSTAD.

[*at the door*]. It is I, Mrs Helmer. [*Mrs LINDE starts, trembles, and turns to the window.*]

NORA.

[*takes a step towards him, and speaks in a strained, low voice*]. You? What is it? What do you want to see my husband about?

KROGSTAD.

Bank business—in a way. I have a small post in the Bank, and I hear your husband is to be our chief now—

NORA.

Then it is—

KROGSTAD.

Nothing but dry business matters, Mrs Helmer; absolutely nothing else.

NORA.

Be so good as to go into the study, then. *[She bows indifferently to him and shuts the door into the hall; then comes back and makes up the fire in the stove.]*

MRS

LINDE.

Nora—who was that man?

NORA.

A lawyer, of the name of Krogstad.

MRS

LINDE.

Then it really was he.

NORA.

Do you know the man?

MRS

LINDE.

I used to—many years ago. At one time he was a solicitor's clerk in our town.

NORA.

Yes, he was.

MRS

LINDE.

He is greatly altered.

NORA.

He made a very unhappy marriage.

MRS

LINDE.

He is a widower now, isn't he?

NORA.

With several children. There now, it is burning up. *[Shuts the door of the stove and moves the rocking-chair aside.]*

MRS

LINDE.

They say he carries on various kinds of business.

NORA.

Really! Perhaps he does; I don't know anything about it. But don't let us think of business; it is so tiresome.

DOCTOR

RANK.

[comes out of HELMER'S study. Before he shuts the door he calls to him]. No, my dear fellow, I won't disturb you; I would rather go in to your wife for a little while. *[Shuts the door and sees Mrs LINDE.]* I beg your pardon; I am afraid I am disturbing you too.

NORA.

No, not at all. *[Introducing him]*. Doctor Rank, Mrs Linde.

RANK.

I have often heard Mrs Linde's name mentioned here. I think I passed you on the stairs when I arrived, Mrs Linde?

MRS

LINDE.

Yes, I go up very slowly; I can't manage stairs well.

RANK.

Ah! some slight internal weakness?

MRS

LINDE.

No, the fact is I have been overworking myself.

RANK.

Nothing more than that? Then I suppose you have come to town to amuse yourself with our entertainments?

MRS

LINDE.

I have come to look for work.

RANK.

Is that a good cure for overwork?

MRS

LINDE.

One must live, Doctor Rank.

RANK.

Yes, the general opinion seems to be that it is necessary.

NORA.

Look here, Doctor Rank—you know you want to live.

RANK.

Certainly. However wretched I may feel, I want to prolong the agony as long as possible. All my patients are like that. And so are those who are morally diseased; one of them, and a bad case too, is at this very moment with Helmer—

MRS

LINDE.

[sadly]. Ah!

NORA.

Whom do you mean?

RANK.

A lawyer of the name of Krogstad, a fellow you don't know at all. He suffers from a diseased moral character, Mrs Helmer; but even he began talking of its being highly important that he should live.

NORA.

Did he? What did he want to speak to Torvald about?

RANK.

I have no idea; I only heard that it was something about the Bank.

NORA.

I didn't know this—what's his name—Krogstad had anything to do with the Bank.

RANK.

Yes, he has some sort of appointment there. *[To Mrs Linde.]* I don't know whether you find also in your part of the world that there are certain people who go zealously snuffing about to smell out moral corruption, and, as soon as they have found some, put the person concerned into some lucrative position where they can keep their eye on him. Healthy natures are left out in the cold.

MRS

LINDE.

Still I think the sick are those who most need taking care of.

RANK.

[shrugging his shoulders]. Yes, there you are. That is the sentiment that is turning Society into a sick-house.

[NORA, who has been absorbed in her thoughts, breaks out into smothered laughter and claps her hands.]

RANK.

Why do you laugh at that? Have you any notion what Society really is?

NORA.

What do I care about tiresome Society? I am laughing at something quite different, something extremely amusing. Tell me, Doctor Rank, are all the people who are employed in the Bank dependent on Torvald now?

RANK.

Is that what you find so extremely amusing?

NORA.

[smiling and humming]. That's my affair! *[Walking about the room.]* It's perfectly glorious to think that we have—that Torvald has so much power over so many people. *[Takes the packet from her pocket.]* Doctor Rank, what do you say to a macaroon?

RANK.

What, macaroons? I thought they were forbidden here.

NORA.

Yes, but these are some Christine gave me.

MRS

LINDE.

What! I?—

NORA.

Oh, well, don't be alarmed! You couldn't know that Torvald had forbidden them. I must tell you that he is afraid they will spoil my teeth. But, bah!—once in a way—That's so, isn't it, Doctor Rank? By your leave! *[Puts a macaroon into his mouth.]* You must have one too, Christine. And I shall have one, just a little one—or at most two. *[Walking about.]* I am tremendously happy. There is just one thing in the world now that I should dearly love to do.

RANK.

Well, what is that?

NORA.

It's something I should dearly love to say, if Torvald could hear me.

RANK.

Well, why can't you say it?

NORA.

No, I daren't; it's so shocking.

MRS

LINDE.

Shocking?

RANK.

Well, I should not advise you to say it. Still, with us you might. What is it you would so much like to say if Torvald could hear you?

NORA.

I should just love to say—Well, I'm damned!

RANK.

Are you mad?

MRS

LINDE.

Nora, dear—!

RANK.

Say it, here he is!

NORA.

[hiding the packet]. Hush! Hush! Hush! *[HELMER comes out of his room, with his coat over his arm and his hat in his hand.]*

NORA.

Well, Torvald dear, have you got rid of him?

HELMER.

Yes, he has just gone.

NORA.

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

HELMER.

Christine—? Excuse me, but I don't know—

NORA.

Mrs Linde, dear; Christine Linde.

HELMER.

Of course. A school friend of my wife's, I presume?

MRS

LINDE.

Yes, we have known each other since then.

NORA.

And just think, she has taken a long journey in order to see you.

HELMER.

What do you mean?

MRS

LINDE.

No, really, I—

NORA.

Christine is tremendously clever at book-keeping, and she is frightfully anxious to work under some clever man, so as to perfect herself—

HELMER.

Very sensible, Mrs Linde.

NORA.

And when she heard you had been appointed manager of the Bank—the news was telegraphed, you know—she travelled here as quick as she could. Torvald, I am sure you will be able to do something for Christine, for my sake, won't you?

HELMER.

Well, it is not altogether impossible. I presume you are a widow, Mrs Linde?

MRS

LINDE.

Yes.

HELMER.

And have had some experience of book-keeping?

MRS

LINDE.

Yes, a fair amount.

HELMER.

Ah! well, it's very likely I may be able to find something for you—

NORA.

[clapping her hands]. What did I tell you? What did I tell you?

HELMER.

You have just come at a fortunate moment, Mrs Linde.

MRS

LINDE.

How am I to thank you?

HELMER.

There is no need. *[Puts on his coat.]* But today you must excuse me—

RANK.

Wait a minute; I will come with you. *[Brings his fur coat from the hall and warms it at the fire.]*

NORA.

Don't be long away, Torvald dear.

HELMER.

About an hour, not more.

NORA.

Are you going too, Christine?

MRS

LINDE.

[putting on her cloak]. Yes, I must go and look for a room.

HELMER.

Oh, well then, we can walk down the street together.

NORA.

[helping her]. What a pity it is we are so short of space here; I am afraid it is impossible for us—

MRS

LINDE.

Please don't think of it! Goodbye, Nora dear, and many thanks.

NORA.

Goodbye for the present. Of course you will come back this evening. And you too, Dr. Rank. What do you say? If you are well enough? Oh, you must be! Wrap yourself up well. *[They go to the door all talking together. Children's voices are heard on the staircase.]*

NORA.

There they are! There they are! *[She runs to open the door. The NURSE comes in with the children.]* Come in! Come in! *[Stoops and kisses them.]* Oh, you sweet blessings! Look at them, Christine! Aren't they darlings?

RANK.

Don't let us stand here in the draught.

HELMER.

Come along, Mrs Linde; the place will only be bearable for a mother now!

[RANK, HELMER, and Mrs Linde go downstairs. The NURSE comes forward with the children; NORA shuts the hall door.]

NORA.

How fresh and well you look! Such red cheeks like apples and roses. *[The children all talk at once while she speaks to them.]* Have you had great fun? That's splendid! What, you pulled both Emmy and Bob along on the sledge? —both at once?—that was good. You are a clever boy, Ivar. Let me take her for a little, Anne. My sweet little baby doll! *[Takes the baby from the MAID and dances it up and down.]* Yes, yes, mother will dance with Bob too. What! Have you been snowballing? I wish I had been there too! No, no, I will take their things off, Anne; please let me do it, it is such fun. Go in now, you look half frozen. There is some hot coffee for you on the stove.

[The NURSE goes into the room on the left. NORA takes off the children's things and throws them about, while they all talk to her at once.]

NORA.

Really! Did a big dog run after you? But it didn't bite you? No, dogs don't bite nice little dolly children. You mustn't look at the parcels, Ivar. What are they? Ah, I daresay you would like to know. No, no—it's something nasty! Come, let us have a game! What shall we play at? Hide and Seek? Yes, we'll play Hide and Seek. Bob shall hide first. Must I hide? Very well, I'll hide first. *[She and the children laugh and shout, and romp in and out of the room; at last NORA hides under the table, the children rush in and out for her, but do not see her; they hear her smothered laughter, run to the table, lift up the cloth and find her. Shouts of laughter. She crawls forward and pretends to frighten them. Fresh laughter. Meanwhile there has been a knock at the hall door, but none of them has noticed it. The door is half opened, and KROGSTAD appears, he waits a little; the game goes on.]*

KROGSTAD.

Excuse me, Mrs Helmer.

NORA.

[with a stifled cry, turns round and gets up on to her knees]. Ah! what do you want?

KROGSTAD.

Excuse me, the outer door was ajar; I suppose someone forgot to shut it.

NORA.

[rising]. My husband is out, Mr. Krogstad.

KROGSTAD.

I know that.

NORA.

What do you want here, then?

KROGSTAD.

A word with you.

NORA.

With me?—*[To the children, gently.]* Go in to nurse. What? No, the strange man won't do mother any harm. When he has gone we will have another game. *[She takes the children into the room on the left, and shuts the door after them.]* You want to speak to me?

KROGSTAD.

Yes, I do.

NORA.

Today? It is not the first of the month yet.

KROGSTAD.

No, it is Christmas Eve, and it will depend on yourself what sort of a Christmas you will spend.

NORA.

What do you mean? Today it is absolutely impossible for me—

KROGSTAD.

We won't talk about that until later on. This is something different. I presume you can give me a moment?

NORA.

Yes—yes, I can—although—

KROGSTAD.

Good. I was in Olsen's Restaurant and saw your husband going down the street—

NORA.

Yes?

KROGSTAD.

With a lady.

NORA.

What then?

KROGSTAD.

May I make so bold as to ask if it was a Mrs Linde?

NORA.

It was.

KROGSTAD.

Just arrived in town?

NORA.

Yes, today.

KROGSTAD.

She is a great friend of yours, isn't she?

NORA.

She is. But I don't see—

KROGSTAD.

I knew her too, once upon a time.

NORA.

I am aware of that.

KROGSTAD.

Are you? So you know all about it; I thought as much. Then I can ask you, without beating about the bush—is Mrs Linde to have an appointment in the Bank?

NORA.

What right have you to question me, Mr. Krogstad?—You, one of my husband's subordinates! But since you ask, you shall know. Yes, Mrs Linde is to have an appointment. And it was I who pleaded her cause, Mr. Krogstad, let me tell you that.

KROGSTAD.

I was right in what I thought, then.

NORA.

[walking up and down the stage]. Sometimes one has a tiny little bit of influence, I should hope. Because one is a woman, it does not necessarily follow that—. When anyone is in a subordinate position, Mr. Krogstad, they should really be careful to avoid offending anyone who—who—

KROGSTAD.

Who has influence?

NORA.

Exactly.

KROGSTAD.

[changing his tone]. Mrs Helmer, you will be so good as to use your influence on my behalf.

NORA.

What? What do you mean?

KROGSTAD.

You will be so kind as to see that I am allowed to keep my subordinate position in the Bank.

NORA.

What do you mean by that? Who proposes to take your post away from you?

KROGSTAD.

Oh, there is no necessity to keep up the pretence of ignorance. I can quite understand that your friend is not very anxious to expose herself to the chance of rubbing shoulders with me; and I quite understand, too, whom I have to thank for being turned off.

NORA.

But I assure you—

KROGSTAD.

Very likely; but, to come to the point, the time has come when I should advise you to use your influence to prevent that.

NORA.

But, Mr. Krogstad, I have no influence.

KROGSTAD.

Haven't you? I thought you said yourself just now—

NORA.

Naturally I did not mean you to put that construction on it. I! What should make you think I have any influence of that kind with my husband?

KROGSTAD.

Oh, I have known your husband from our student days. I don't suppose he is any more unassailable than other husbands.

NORA.

If you speak slightly of my husband, I shall turn you out of the house.

KROGSTAD.

You are bold, Mrs Helmer.

NORA.

I am not afraid of you any longer. As soon as the New Year comes, I shall in a very short time be free of the whole thing.

KROGSTAD.

[controlling himself]. Listen to me, Mrs Helmer. If necessary, I am prepared to fight for my small post in the Bank as if I were fighting for my life.

NORA.

So it seems.

KROGSTAD.

It is not only for the sake of the money; indeed, that weighs least with me in the matter. There is another reason—well, I may as well tell you. My position is this. I daresay you know, like everybody else, that once, many years ago, I was guilty of an indiscretion.

NORA.

I think I have heard something of the kind.

KROGSTAD.

The matter never came into court; but every way seemed to be closed to me after that. So I took to the business that you know of. I had to do something; and, honestly, I don't think I've been one of the worst. But now I must cut myself free from all that. My sons are growing up; for their sake I must try and win back as much respect as I can in the town. This post in the Bank was like the first step up for me—and now your husband is going to kick me downstairs again into the mud.

NORA.

But you must believe me, Mr. Krogstad; it is not in my power to help you at all.

KROGSTAD.

Then it is because you haven't the will; but I have means to compel you.

NORA.

You don't mean that you will tell my husband that I owe you money?

KROGSTAD.

Hm!—suppose I were to tell him?

NORA.

It would be perfectly infamous of you. [*Sobbing.*] To think of his learning my secret, which has been my joy and pride, in such an ugly, clumsy way—that he should learn it from you! And it would put me in a horribly disagreeable position—

KROGSTAD.

Only disagreeable?

NORA.

[*Impetuously*]. Well, do it, then!—and it will be the worse for you. My husband will see for himself what a blackguard you are, and you certainly won't keep your post then.

KROGSTAD.

I asked you if it was only a disagreeable scene at home that you were afraid of?

NORA.

If my husband does get to know of it, of course he will at once pay you what is still owing, and we shall have nothing more to do with you.

KROGSTAD.

[coming a step nearer]. Listen to me, Mrs Helmer. Either you have a very bad memory or you know very little of business. I shall be obliged to remind you of a few details.

NORA.

What do you mean?

KROGSTAD.

When your husband was ill, you came to me to borrow two hundred and fifty pounds.

NORA.

I didn't know anyone else to go to.

KROGSTAD.

I promised to get you that amount—

NORA.

Yes, and you did so.

KROGSTAD.

I promised to get you that amount, on certain conditions. Your mind was so taken up with your husband's illness, and you were so anxious to get the money for your journey, that you seem to have paid no attention to the conditions of our bargain. Therefore it will not be amiss if I remind you of them. Now, I promised to get the money on the security of a bond which I drew up.

NORA.

Yes, and which I signed.

KROGSTAD.

Good. But below your signature there were a few lines constituting your father a surety for the money; those lines your father should have signed.

NORA.

Should? He did sign them.

KROGSTAD.

I had left the date blank; that is to say, your father should himself have inserted the date on which he signed the paper. Do you remember that?

NORA.

Yes, I think I remember—

KROGSTAD.

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

NORA.

Yes.

KROGSTAD.

And you naturally did so at once, because five or six days afterwards you brought me the bond with your father's signature. And then I gave you the money.

NORA.

Well, haven't I been paying it off regularly?

KROGSTAD.

Fairly so, yes. But—to come back to the matter in hand—that must have been a very trying time for you, Mrs Helmer?

NORA.

It was, indeed.

KROGSTAD.

Your father was very ill, wasn't he?

NORA.

He was very near his end.

KROGSTAD.

And died soon afterwards?

NORA.

Yes.

KROGSTAD.

Tell me, Mrs Helmer, can you by any chance remember what day your father died?—on what day of the month, I mean.

NORA.

Papa died on the 29th of September.

KROGSTAD.

That is correct; I have ascertained it for myself. And, as that is so, there is a discrepancy [*taking a paper from his pocket*] which I cannot account for.

NORA.

What discrepancy? I don't know—

KROGSTAD.

The discrepancy consists, Mrs Helmer, in the fact that your father signed this bond three days after his death.

NORA.

What do you mean? I don't understand—

KROGSTAD.

Your father died on the 29th of September. But, look here; your father has dated his signature the 2nd of October. It is a discrepancy, isn't it? [*NORA is silent.*] Can you

explain it to me? [*NORA is still silent.*] It is a remarkable thing, too, that the words “2nd of October,” as well as the year, are not written in your father’s handwriting but in one that I think I know. Well, of course it can be explained; your father may have forgotten to date his signature, and someone else may have dated it haphazard before they knew of his death. There is no harm in that. It all depends on the signature of the name; and that is genuine, I suppose, Mrs Helmer? It was your father himself who signed his name here?

NORA.

[*after a short pause, throws her head up and looks defiantly at him*]. No, it was not. It was I that wrote papa’s name.

KROGSTAD.

Are you aware that is a dangerous confession?

NORA.

In what way? You shall have your money soon.

KROGSTAD.

Let me ask you a question; why did you not send the paper to your father?

NORA.

It was impossible; papa was so ill. If I had asked him for his signature, I should have had to tell him what the money was to be used for; and when he was so ill himself I couldn’t tell him that my husband’s life was in danger—it was impossible.

KROGSTAD.

It would have been better for you if you had given up your trip abroad.

NORA.

No, that was impossible. That trip was to save my husband’s life; I couldn’t give that up.

KROGSTAD.

But did it never occur to you that you were committing a fraud on me?

NORA.

I couldn’t take that into account; I didn’t trouble myself about you at all. I couldn’t bear you, because you put so many heartless difficulties in my way, although you knew what a dangerous condition my husband was in.

KROGSTAD.

Mrs Helmer, you evidently do not realise clearly what it is that you have been guilty of. But I can assure you that my one false step, which lost me all my reputation, was nothing more or nothing worse than what you have done.

NORA.

You? Do you ask me to believe that you were brave enough to run a risk to save your wife's life?

KROGSTAD.

The law cares nothing about motives.

NORA.

Then it must be a very foolish law.

KROGSTAD.

Foolish or not, it is the law by which you will be judged, if I produce this paper in court.

NORA.

I don't believe it. Is a daughter not to be allowed to spare her dying father anxiety and care? Is a wife not to be allowed to save her husband's life? I don't know much about law; but I am certain that there must be laws permitting such things as that. Have you no knowledge of such laws—you who are a lawyer? You must be a very poor lawyer, Mr. Krogstad.

KROGSTAD.

Maybe. But matters of business—such business as you and I have had together—do you think I don't understand that? Very well. Do as you please. But let me tell you this—if I lose my position a second time, you shall lose yours with me. [*He bows, and goes out through the hall.*]

NORA.

[*appears buried in thought for a short time, then tosses her head*]. Nonsense! Trying to frighten me like that!—I am not so silly as he thinks. [*Begins to busy herself putting the children's things in order.*] And yet—? No, it's impossible! I did it for love's sake.

THE

CHILDREN.

[*in the doorway on the left*]. Mother, the stranger man has gone out through the gate.

NORA.

Yes, dears, I know. But, don't tell anyone about the stranger man. Do you hear? Not even papa.

CHILDREN.

No, mother; but will you come and play again?

NORA.

No, no,—not now.

CHILDREN.

But, mother, you promised us.

NORA.

Yes, but I can't now. Run away in; I have such a lot to do. Run away in, my sweet little

darlings. *[She gets them into the room by degrees and shuts the door on them; then sits down on the sofa, takes up a piece of needlework and sews a few stitches, but soon stops.]* No! *[Throws down the work, gets up, goes to the hall door and calls out.]* Helen! bring the Tree in. *[Goes to the table on the left, opens a drawer, and stops again.]* No, no! it is quite impossible!

MAID.

[coming in with the Tree]. Where shall I put it, ma'am?

NORA.

Here, in the middle of the floor.

MAID.

Shall I get you anything else?

NORA.

No, thank you. I have all I want. *[Exit MAID.]*

NORA.

[begins dressing the tree]. A candle here-and flowers here—The horrible man! It's all nonsense—there's nothing wrong. The tree shall be splendid! I will do everything I can think of to please you, Torvald!—I will sing for you, dance for you—*[HELMER comes in with some papers under his arm.]* Oh! are you back already?

HELMER.

Yes. Has anyone been here?

NORA.

Here? No.

HELMER.

That is strange. I saw Krogstad going out of the gate.

NORA.

Did you? Oh yes, I forgot, Krogstad was here for a moment.

HELMER.

Nora, I can see from your manner that he has been here begging you to say a good word for him.

NORA.

Yes.

HELMER.

And you were to appear to do it of your own accord; you were to conceal from me the fact of his having been here; didn't he beg that of you too?

NORA.

Yes, Torvald, but—

HELMER.

Nora, Nora, and you would be a party to that sort of thing? To have any talk with a man like that, and give him any sort of promise? And to tell me a lie into the bargain?

NORA.

A lie—?

HELMER.

Didn't you tell me no one had been here? *[Shakes his finger at her.]* My little songbird must never do that again. A songbird must have a clean beak to chirp with—no false notes! *[Puts his arm round her waist.]* That is so, isn't it? Yes, I am sure it is. *[Lets her go.]* We will say no more about it. *[Sits down by the stove.]* How warm and snug it is here! *[Turns over his papers.]*

NORA.

[after a short pause, during which she busies herself with the Christmas Tree.] Torvald!

HELMER.

Yes.

NORA.

I am looking forward tremendously to the fancy-dress ball at the Stenborgs' the day after tomorrow.

HELMER.

And I am tremendously curious to see what you are going to surprise me with.

NORA.

It was very silly of me to want to do that.

HELMER.

What do you mean?

NORA.

I can't hit upon anything that will do; everything I think of seems so silly and insignificant.

HELMER.

Does my little Nora acknowledge that at last?

NORA.

[standing behind his chair with her arms on the back of it]. Are you very busy, Torvald?

HELMER.

Well—

NORA.

What are all those papers?

HELMER.
Bank business.

NORA.
Already?

HELMER.
I have got authority from the retiring manager to undertake the necessary changes in the staff and in the rearrangement of the work; and I must make use of the Christmas week for that, so as to have everything in order for the new year.

NORA.
Then that was why this poor Krogstad—

HELMER.
Hm!

NORA.
[leans against the back of his chair and strokes his hair]. If you hadn't been so busy I should have asked you a tremendously big favour, Torvald.

HELMER.
What is that? Tell me.

NORA.
There is no one has such good taste as you. And I do so want to look nice at the fancy-dress ball. Torvald, couldn't you take me in hand and decide what I shall go as, and what sort of a dress I shall wear?

HELMER.
Aha! so my obstinate little woman is obliged to get someone to come to her rescue?

NORA.
Yes, Torvald, I can't get along a bit without your help.

HELMER.
Very well, I will think it over, we shall manage to hit upon something.

NORA.
That is nice of you. *[Goes to the Christmas Tree. A short pause.]* How pretty the red flowers look—. But, tell me, was it really something very bad that this Krogstad was guilty of?

HELMER.
He forged someone's name. Have you any idea what that means?

NORA.
Isn't it possible that he was driven to do it by necessity?

HELMER.

Yes; or, as in so many cases, by imprudence. I am not so heartless as to condemn a man altogether because of a single false step of that kind.

NORA.

No, you wouldn't, would you, Torvald?

HELMER.

Many a man has been able to retrieve his character, if he has openly confessed his fault and taken his punishment.

NORA.

Punishment—?

HELMER.

But Krogstad did nothing of that sort; he got himself out of it by a cunning trick, and that is why he has gone under altogether.

NORA.

But do you think it would—?

HELMER.

Just think how a guilty man like that has to lie and play the hypocrite with every one, how he has to wear a mask in the presence of those near and dear to him, even before his own wife and children. And about the children—that is the most terrible part of it all, Nora.

NORA.

How?

HELMER.

Because such an atmosphere of lies infects and poisons the whole life of a home. Each breath the children take in such a house is full of the germs of evil.

NORA.

[coming nearer him]. Are you sure of that?

HELMER.

My dear, I have often seen it in the course of my life as a lawyer. Almost everyone who has gone to the bad early in life has had a deceitful mother.

NORA.

Why do you only say—mother?

HELMER.

It seems most commonly to be the mother's influence, though naturally a bad father's would have the same result. Every lawyer is familiar with the fact. This Krogstad, now, has been persistently poisoning his own children with lies and dissimulation; that is why I say he has lost all moral character. *[Holds out his hands to her.]* That is why my sweet

little Nora must promise me not to plead his cause. Give me your hand on it. Come, come, what is this? Give me your hand. There now, that's settled. I assure you it would be quite impossible for me to work with him; I literally feel physically ill when I am in the company of such people.

NORA.

[takes her hand out of his and goes to the opposite side of the Christmas Tree]. How hot it is in here; and I have such a lot to do.

HELMER.

[getting up and putting his papers in order]. Yes, and I must try and read through some of these before dinner; and I must think about your costume, too. And it is just possible I may have something ready in gold paper to hang up on the Tree. *[Puts his hand on her head.]* My precious little singing-bird! *[He goes into his room and shuts the door after him.]*

NORA.

[after a pause, whispers]. No, no—it isn't true. It's impossible; it must be impossible.

[The NURSE opens the door on the left.]

NURSE.

The little ones are begging so hard to be allowed to come in to mamma.

NORA.

No, no, no! Don't let them come in to me! You stay with them, Anne.

NURSE.

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

NORA.

[pale with terror]. Deprave my little children? Poison my home? *[A short pause. Then she tosses her head.]* It's not true. It can't possibly be true.

ACT II

[THE SAME SCENE.—THE Christmas Tree is in the corner by the piano, stripped of its ornaments and with burnt-down candle-ends on its dishevelled branches. NORA'S cloak and hat are lying on the sofa. She is alone in the room, walking about uneasily. She stops by the sofa and takes up her cloak.]

NORA.

[drops her cloak]. Someone is coming now! *[Goes to the door and listens.]* No—it is no one. Of course, no one will come today, Christmas Day—nor tomorrow either. But, perhaps—*[opens the door and looks out].* No, nothing in the letterbox; it is quite

empty. *[Comes forward.]* What rubbish! of course he can't be in earnest about it. Such a thing couldn't happen; it is impossible—I have three little children.

[Enter the NURSE from the room on the left, carrying a big cardboard box.]

NURSE.

At last I have found the box with the fancy dress.

NORA.

Thanks; put it on the table.

NURSE.

[doing so]. But it is very much in want of mending.

NORA.

I should like to tear it into a hundred thousand pieces.

NURSE.

What an idea! It can easily be put in order—just a little patience.

NORA.

Yes, I will go and get Mrs Linde to come and help me with it.

NURSE.

What, out again? In this horrible weather? You will catch cold, ma'am, and make yourself ill.

NORA.

Well, worse than that might happen. How are the children?

NURSE.

The poor little souls are playing with their Christmas presents, but—

NORA.

Do they ask much for me?

NURSE.

You see, they are so accustomed to have their mamma with them.

NORA.

Yes, but, nurse, I shall not be able to be so much with them now as I was before.

NURSE.

Oh well, young children easily get accustomed to anything.

NORA.

Do you think so? Do you think they would forget their mother if she went away altogether?

NURSE.

Good heavens!—went away altogether?

NORA.

Nurse, I want you to tell me something I have often wondered about—how could you have the heart to put your own child out among strangers?

NURSE.

I was obliged to, if I wanted to be little Nora's nurse.

NORA.

Yes, but how could you be willing to do it?

NURSE.

What, when I was going to get such a good place by it? A poor girl who has got into trouble should be glad to. Besides, that wicked man didn't do a single thing for me.

NORA.

But I suppose your daughter has quite forgotten you.

NURSE.

No, indeed she hasn't. She wrote to me when she was confirmed, and when she was married.

NORA.

[Putting her arms round her neck]. Dear old Anne, you were a good mother to me when I was little.

NURSE.

Little Nora, poor dear, had no other mother but me.

NORA.

And if my little ones had no other mother, I am sure you would—What nonsense I am talking! *[Opens the box.]* Go in to them. Now I must—. You will see tomorrow how charming I shall look.

NURSE.

I am sure there will be no one at the ball so charming as you, ma'am. *[Goes into the room on the left.]*

NORA.

[begins to unpack the box, but soon pushes it away from her]. If only I dared go out. If only no one would come. If only I could be sure nothing would happen here in the meantime. Stuff and nonsense! No one will come. Only I mustn't think about it. I will brush my muff. What lovely, lovely gloves! Out of my thoughts, out of my thoughts! One, two, three, four, five, six— *[Screams.]* Ah! there is someone coming—. *[Makes a movement towards the door, but stands irresolute.]*

[Enter Mrs Linde from the hall, where she has taken off her cloak and hat.]

NORA.

Oh, it's you, Christine. There is no one else out there, is there? How good of you to come!

MRS

LINDE.

I heard you were up asking for me.

NORA.

Yes, I was passing by. As a matter of fact, it is something you could help me with. Let us sit down here on the sofa. Look here. Tomorrow evening there is to be a fancy-dress ball at the Stenborgs', who live above us; and Torvald wants me to go as a Neapolitan fisher-girl, and dance the Tarantella that I learned at Capri.

MRS

LINDE.

I see; you are going to keep up the character.

NORA.

Yes, Torvald wants me to. Look, here is the dress; Torvald had it made for me there, but now it is all so torn, and I haven't any idea—

MRS

LINDE.

We will easily put that right. It is only some of the trimming come unsewn here and there. Needle and thread? Now then, that's all we want.

NORA.

It is nice of you.

MRS

LINDE.

[sewing]. So you are going to be dressed up tomorrow Nora. I will tell you what—I shall come in for a moment and see you in your fine feathers. But I have completely forgotten to thank you for a delightful evening yesterday.

NORA.

[gets up, and crosses the stage]. Well, I don't think yesterday was as pleasant as usual. You ought to have come to town a little earlier, Christine. Certainly Torvald does understand how to make a house dainty and attractive.

MRS

LINDE.

And so do you, it seems to me; you are not your father's daughter for nothing. But tell me, is Doctor Rank always as depressed as he was yesterday?

NORA.

No; yesterday it was very noticeable. I must tell you that he suffers from a very dangerous disease. He has consumption of the spine, poor creature. His father was a horrible man who committed all sorts of excesses; and that is why his son was sickly from childhood, do you understand?

MRS

LINDE.

[dropping her sewing]. But, my dearest Nora, how do you know anything about such things?

NORA.

[walking about]. Pooh! When you have three children, you get visits now and then from—from married women, who know something of medical matters, and they talk about one thing and another.

MRS

LINDE.

[goes on sewing. A short silence]. Does Doctor Rank come here everyday?

NORA.

Everyday regularly. He is Torvald's most intimate friend, and a great friend of mine too. He is just like one of the family.

MRS

LINDE.

But tell me this—is he perfectly sincere? I mean, isn't he the kind of man that is very anxious to make himself agreeable?

NORA.

Not in the least. What makes you think that?

MRS

LINDE.

When you introduced him to me yesterday, he declared he had often heard my name mentioned in this house; but afterwards I noticed that your husband hadn't the slightest idea who I was. So how could Doctor Rank—?

NORA.

That is quite right, Christine. Torvald is so absurdly fond of me that he wants me absolutely to himself, as he says. At first he used to seem almost jealous if I mentioned any of the dear folk at home, so naturally I gave up doing so. But I often talk about such things with Doctor Rank, because he likes hearing about them.

MRS

LINDE.

Listen to me, Nora. You are still very like a child in many things, and I am older than you in many ways and have a little more experience. Let me tell you this—you ought to make an end of it with Doctor Rank.

NORA.

What ought I to make an end of?

MRS

LINDE.

Of two things, I think. Yesterday you talked some nonsense about a rich admirer who was to leave you money—

NORA.

An admirer who doesn't exist, unfortunately! But what then?

MRS
Is Doctor Rank a man of means? LINDE.

NORA.
Yes, he is.

MRS
And has no one to provide for? LINDE.

NORA.
No, no one; but—

MRS
And comes here everyday? LINDE.

NORA.
Yes, I told you so.

MRS
But how can this well-bred man be so tactless? LINDE.

NORA.
I don't understand you at all.

MRS
Don't prevaricate, Nora. Do you suppose I don't guess who lent you the two hundred and fifty pounds? LINDE.

NORA.
Are you out of your senses? How can you think of such a thing! A friend of ours, who comes here everyday! Do you realise what a horribly painful position that would be?

MRS
Then it really isn't he? LINDE.

NORA.
No, certainly not. It would never have entered into my head for a moment. Besides, he had no money to lend then; he came into his money afterwards.

MRS
Well, I think that was lucky for you, my dear Nora. LINDE.

NORA.
No, it would never have come into my head to ask Doctor Rank. Although I am quite sure that if I had asked him—

MRS
But of course you won't. LINDE.

NORA.

Of course not. I have no reason to think it could possibly be necessary. But I am quite sure that if I told Doctor Rank—

MRS

LINDE.

Behind your husband's back?

NORA.

I must make an end of it with the other one, and that will be behind his back too. I must make an end of it with him.

MRS

LINDE.

Yes, that is what I told you yesterday, but—

NORA.

[walking up and down]. A man can put a thing like that straight much easier than a woman—

MRS

LINDE.

One's husband, yes.

NORA.

Nonsense! *[Standing still.]* When you pay off a debt you get your bond back, don't you?

MRS

LINDE.

Yes, as a matter of course.

NORA.

And can tear it into a hundred thousand pieces, and burn it up—the nasty dirty paper!

MRS

LINDE.

[looks hard at her, lays down her sewing and gets up slowly]. Nora, you are concealing something from me.

NORA.

Do I look as if I were?

MRS

LINDE.

Something has happened to you since yesterday morning. Nora, what is it?

NORA.

[going nearer to her]. Christine! *[Listens.]* Hush! there's Torvald come home. Do you mind going in to the children for the present? Torvald can't bear to see dressmaking going on. Let Anne help you.

MRS

LINDE.

[gathering some of the things together]. Certainly—but I am not going away from here

until we have had it out with one another. [*She goes into the room on the left, as HELMER comes in from the hall.*]

NORA.

[*going up to HELMER*]. I have wanted you so much, Torvald dear.

HELMER.

Was that the dressmaker?

NORA.

No, it was Christine; she is helping me to put my dress in order. You will see I shall look quite smart.

HELMER.

Wasn't that a happy thought of mine, now?

NORA.

Splendid! But don't you think it is nice of me, too, to do as you wish?

HELMER.

Nice?—because you do as your husband wishes? Well, well, you little rogue, I am sure you did not mean it in that way. But I am not going to disturb you; you will want to be trying on your dress, I expect.

NORA.

I suppose you are going to work.

HELMER.

Yes. [*Shows her a bundle of papers.*] Look at that. I have just been into the bank. [*Turns to go into his room.*]

NORA.

Torvald.

HELMER.

Yes.

NORA.

If your little squirrel were to ask you for something very, very prettily—?

HELMER.

What then?

NORA.

Would you do it?

HELMER.

I should like to hear what it is, first.

NORA.

Your squirrel would run about and do all her tricks if you would be nice, and do what she wants.

HELMER.

Speak plainly.

NORA.

Your skylark would chirp about in every room, with her song rising and falling—

HELMER.

Well, my skylark does that anyhow.

NORA.

I would play the fairy and dance for you in the moonlight, Torvald.

HELMER.

Nora—you surely don't mean that request you made to me this morning?

NORA.

[going near him]. Yes, Torvald, I beg you so earnestly—

HELMER.

Have you really the courage to open up that question again?

NORA.

Yes, dear, you must do as I ask; you must let Krogstad keep his post in the bank.

HELMER.

My dear Nora, it is his post that I have arranged Mrs Linde shall have.

NORA.

Yes, you have been awfully kind about that; but you could just as well dismiss some other clerk instead of Krogstad.

HELMER.

This is simply incredible obstinacy! Because you chose to give him a thoughtless promise that you would speak for him, I am expected to—

NORA.

That isn't the reason, Torvald. It is for your own sake. This fellow writes in the most scurrilous newspapers; you have told me so yourself. He can do you an unspeakable amount of harm. I am frightened to death of him—

HELMER.

Ah, I understand; it is recollections of the past that scare you.

NORA.

What do you mean?

HELMER.

Naturally you are thinking of your father.

NORA.

Yes—yes, of course. Just recall to your mind what these malicious creatures wrote in the papers about papa, and how horribly they slandered him. I believe they would have procured his dismissal if the Department had not sent you over to inquire into it, and if you had not been so kindly disposed and helpful to him.

HELMER.

My little Nora, there is an important difference between your father and me. Your father's reputation as a public official was not above suspicion. Mine is, and I hope it will continue to be so, as long as I hold my office.

NORA.

You never can tell what mischief these men may contrive. We ought to be so well off, so snug and happy here in our peaceful home, and have no cares—you and I and the children, Torvald! That is why I beg you so earnestly—

HELMER.

And it is just by interceding for him that you make it impossible for me to keep him. It is already known at the Bank that I mean to dismiss Krogstad. Is it to get about now that the new manager has changed his mind at his wife's bidding—

NORA.

And what if it did?

HELMER.

Of course!—if only this obstinate little person can get her way! Do you suppose I am going to make myself ridiculous before my whole staff, to let people think that I am a man to be swayed by all sorts of outside influence? I should very soon feel the consequences of it, I can tell you! And besides, there is one thing that makes it quite impossible for me to have Krogstad in the Bank as long as I am manager.

NORA.

Whatever is that?

HELMER.

His moral failings I might perhaps have overlooked, if necessary—

NORA.

Yes, you could—couldn't you?

HELMER.

And I hear he is a good worker, too. But I knew him when we were boys. It was one of those rash friendships that so often prove an incubus in afterlife. I may as well tell you plainly, we were once on very intimate terms with one another. But this tactless fellow

lays no restraint on himself when other people are present. On the contrary, he thinks it gives him the right to adopt a familiar tone with me, and every minute it is “I say, Helmer, old fellow!” and that sort of thing. I assure you it is extremely painful for me. He would make my position in the Bank intolerable.

NORA.

Torvald, I don’t believe you mean that.

HELMER.

Don’t you? Why not?

NORA.

Because it is such a narrow-minded way of looking at things.

HELMER.

What are you saying? Narrow-minded? Do you think I am narrow-minded?

NORA.

No, just the opposite, dear—and it is exactly for that reason.

HELMER.

It’s the same thing. You say my point of view is narrow-minded, so I must be so too. Narrow-minded! Very well—I must put an end to this. [*Goes to the hall door and calls.*] Helen!

NORA.

What are you going to do?

HELMER.

[*looking among his papers*]. Settle it. [*Enter MAID.*] Look here; take this letter and go downstairs with it at once. Find a messenger and tell him to deliver it, and be quick. The address is on it, and here is the money.

MAID.

Very well, sir. [*Exit with the letter.*]

HELMER.

[*putting his papers together*]. Now then, little Miss Obstinate.

NORA.

[*breathlessly*]. Torvald—what was that letter?

HELMER.

Krogstad’s dismissal.

NORA.

Call her back, Torvald! There is still time. Oh Torvald, call her back! Do it for my sake—for your own sake—for the children’s sake! Do you hear me, Torvald? Call her back! You don’t know what that letter can bring upon us.

HELMER.

It's too late.

NORA.

Yes, it's too late.

HELMER.

My dear Nora, I can forgive the anxiety you are in, although really it is an insult to me. It is, indeed. Isn't it an insult to think that I should be afraid of a starving quill-driver's vengeance? But I forgive you nevertheless, because it is such eloquent witness to your great love for me. *[Takes her in his arms.]* And that is as it should be, my own darling Nora. Come what will, you may be sure I shall have both courage and strength if they be needed. You will see I am man enough to take everything upon myself.

NORA.

[in a horror-stricken voice]. What do you mean by that?

HELMER.

Everything, I say—

NORA.

[recovering herself]. You will never have to do that.

HELMER.

That's right. Well, we will share it, Nora, as man and wife should. That is how it shall be. *[Caressing her.]* Are you content now? There! There!—not these frightened dove's eyes! The whole thing is only the wildest fancy!—Now, you must go and play through the Tarantella and practise with your tambourine. I shall go into the inner office and shut the door, and I shall hear nothing; you can make as much noise as you please. *[Turns back at the door.]* And when Rank comes, tell him where he will find me. *[Nods to her, takes his papers and goes into his room, and shuts the door after him.]*

NORA.

[bewildered with anxiety, stands as if rooted to the spot, and whispers]. He was capable of doing it. He will do it. He will do it in spite of everything.—No, not that! Never, never! Anything rather than that! Oh, for some help, some way out of it! *[The door-bell rings.]* Doctor Rank! Anything rather than that—anything, whatever it is! *[She puts her hands over her face, pulls herself together, goes to the door and opens it. RANK is standing without, hanging up his coat. During the following dialogue it begins to grow dark.]*

NORA.

Good day, Doctor Rank. I knew your ring. But you mustn't go in to Torvald now; I think he is busy with something.

RANK.

And you?

NORA.

[brings him in and shuts the door after him]. Oh, you know very well I always have time for you.

RANK.

Thank you. I shall make use of as much of it as I can.

NORA.

What do you mean by that? As much of it as you can?

RANK.

Well, does that alarm you?

NORA.

It was such a strange way of putting it. Is anything likely to happen?

RANK.

Nothing but what I have long been prepared for. But I certainly didn't expect it to happen so soon.

NORA.

[gripping him by the arm]. What have you found out? Doctor Rank, you must tell me.

RANK.

[sitting down by the stove]. It is all up with me. And it can't be helped.

NORA.

[with a sigh of relief]. Is it about yourself?

RANK.

Who else? It is no use lying to one's self. I am the most wretched of all my patients, Mrs Helmer. Lately I have been taking stock of my internal economy. Bankrupt! Probably within a month I shall lie rotting in the churchyard.

NORA.

What an ugly thing to say!

RANK.

The thing itself is cursedly ugly, and the worst of it is that I shall have to face so much more that is ugly before that. I shall only make one more examination of myself; when I have done that, I shall know pretty certainly when it will be that the horrors of dissolution will begin. There is something I want to tell you. Helmer's refined nature gives him an unconquerable disgust at everything that is ugly; I won't have him in my sick-room.

NORA.

Oh, but, Doctor Rank—

RANK.

I won't have him there. Not on any account. I bar my door to him. As soon as I am quite certain that the worst has come, I shall send you my card with a black cross on it, and then you will know that the loathsome end has begun.

NORA.

You are quite absurd today. And I wanted you so much to be in a really good humour.

RANK.

With death stalking beside me?—To have to pay this penalty for another man's sin? Is there any justice in that? And in every single family, in one way or another, some such inexorable retribution is being exacted—

NORA.

[putting her hands over her ears]. Rubbish! Do talk of something cheerful.

RANK.

Oh, it's a mere laughing matter, the whole thing. My poor innocent spine has to suffer for my father's youthful amusements.

NORA.

[sitting at the table on the left]. I suppose you mean that he was too partial to asparagus and pate de foie gras, don't you?

RANK.

Yes, and to truffles.

NORA.

Truffles, yes. And oysters too, I suppose?

RANK.

Oysters, of course, that goes without saying.

NORA.

And heaps of port and champagne. It is sad that all these nice things should take their revenge on our bones.

RANK.

Especially that they should revenge themselves on the unlucky bones of those who have not had the satisfaction of enjoying them.

NORA.

Yes, that's the saddest part of it all.

RANK.

[with a searching look at her]. Hm!—

NORA.

[after a short pause]. Why did you smile?

RANK.

No, it was you that laughed.

NORA.

No, it was you that smiled, Doctor Rank!

RANK.

[rising]. You are a greater rascal than I thought.

NORA.

I am in a silly mood today.

RANK.

So it seems.

NORA.

[putting her hands on his shoulders]. Dear, dear Doctor Rank, death mustn't take you away from Torvald and me.

RANK.

It is a loss you would easily recover from. Those who are gone are soon forgotten.

NORA.

[looking at him anxiously]. Do you believe that?

RANK.

People form new ties, and then—

NORA.

Who will form new ties?

RANK.

Both you and Helmer, when I am gone. You yourself are already on the high road to it, I think. What did that Mrs Linde want here last night?

NORA.

Oho!—you don't mean to say you are jealous of poor Christine?

RANK.

Yes, I am. She will be my successor in this house. When I am done for, this woman will—

NORA.

Hush! don't speak so loud. She is in that room.

RANK.

Today again. There, you see.

NORA.

She has only come to sew my dress for me. Bless my soul, how unreasonable you are! *[Sits down on the sofa.]* Be nice now, Doctor Rank, and tomorrow you will see how beautifully I shall dance, and you can imagine I am doing it all for you—and for Torvald too, of course. *[Takes various things out of the box.]* Doctor Rank, come and sit down here, and I will show you something.

RANK.

[sit