

A DOLL HOUSE

By

HENRIK IBSEN

* * *

Adapted By

William Missouri Downs

* * *

From A Literal Translation By

Hans Lindstrom

Copyright (c) 2010 By William Missouri Downs

CAUTION: Professionals and Amateurs are hereby warned that performance of **A DOLL HOUSE** is subject to payment of a royalty. It is fully protected under the copyright laws of The United States of America, and of all countries covered by the International Copyright Union (including the Dominion of Canada and the rest of the British Commonwealth) and of all countries covered by the Pan-American Copyright Convention, the Universal Copyright Convention, the Berne Convention, and of all countries with which the United States has reciprocal copyright relations. All rights, including without limitation professional/amateur stage rights, motion picture, recitation, lecturing, public reading, radio broadcasting, television, video or sound recording, all other forms of mechanical, electronic and digital reproduction, transmission and distribution, such as CD, DVD, the Internet, private and file-sharing networks, information storage and retrieval systems, photocopying, and the rights of translation into foreign languages are strictly reserved. Particular emphasis is placed upon the matter of readings, permission of which must be obtained from the Author in writing.

The English language stock and amateur stage performance rights in the United States, its territories, possessions and Canada for **A DOLL HOUSE** are controlled exclusively by Next Stage Press. No professional or nonprofessional performance of the Play may be given without obtaining in advance written permission and paying the requisite fee. Inquiries concerning production rights should be addressed to licensing@nextstagepress.net

SPECIAL NOTE

Anyone receiving permission to produce **A DOLL HOUSE** is required to give credit to the Author as sole and exclusive Author of the Play on the title page of all programs distributed in connection with performances of the Play and in all instances in which the title of the Play appears for purposes of advertising, publicizing or otherwise exploiting the Play and/or a production thereof. The name of the Author must appear on a separate line, in which no other name appears, immediately beneath the title and in size of type equal to 50% of the size of the largest, most prominent letter used for the title of the Play. No person, firm, or entity may receive credit larger or more prominent than that accorded the Author.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

TORVALD HELMER.....	<i>Husband</i>
NORA HELMER.....	<i>Wife</i>
DR. RANK.....	<i>Torvald's Best Friend</i>
CHRISTINE LINDEN.....	<i>An Old Friend Of Nora's</i>
NILS KROGSTAD.....	<i>A Bank Employee</i>
ANNE.....	<i>The Children's Nurse & Maid</i>
<i>TWO CHILDREN:</i>	
IVAR.....	<i>Young Son</i>
BOBBY.....	<i>Young Son</i>

Time: 1880 - Norway

Place: A house that has been divided into several large, up-scale apartments. The Helmer's parlor.

Time:

Act One: Christmas Eve, Morning

Act Two: Christmas Day, Evening

A DOLL HOUSE

ACT ONE

(Christmas Eve – Morning. As the lights rise, a Christmas tune plays on a Victorian phonograph. NORA holds the front door for ANNA - the maid/nanny - who labors to haul in a pile of newly purchased Christmas gifts. Nora directs Anna towards the Christmas tree)

NORA. Watch your step.

ANNA. Yes, ma'am.

NORA. Table! Watch the table.

ANNA. Yes, ma'am.

NORA. To the right a bit. A bit more. Lamp! Watch the lamp.

ANNA. Yes, ma'am.

NORA. There. *(Anna drops the load in front of the tree.)* Merry Christmas! *(She gives Anna a tip.)*

ANNA. Thank you.

NORA. And now dinner.

ANNA. Yes, ma'am. What shall I prepare?

NORA. Anything my husband desires.

ANNA. Yes, ma'am. *(Anna exits. Nora hums a Christmas tune as she adjusts the gift boxes to make the tree picture perfect. Then, she checks the seams of the sofa and chairs for spare change. Next, she listens at the study door, hearing nothing; she takes from her pocket a bag of macaroons and devours them. HELMER calls out from his study.)*

HELMER. *(Offstage)* Is that my little lark singing in there?

NORA. *(Her mouth full)* It's her.

HELMER. *(Offstage)* Has my little squirrel been rummaging about again?

NORA. She has.

HELMER. *(Offstage)* When did my squirrel get home?

NORA. Just this minute. *(She quickly hides the macaroons and wipes her mouth.)* Come in, Torvald; see what I've been buying.

HELMER. *(Offstage)* Too busy. I can't be interrupted! *(Beat, he appears at the door.)* Did you say, "buying?" What! All that? Has my big spender been burning my hard earned cash again?

NORA. Oh Torvald, surely we can afford to stretch out just a bit. It's the first Christmas we haven't had to pinch.

HELMER. We can't afford to squander resources.

NORA. Oh Torvald, do let us squander just a teeny little bit! You'll soon be earning heaps of money.

HELMER. But there's a whole quarter before I get my pay raise.

NORA. In the mean time we can borrow.

HELMER. Nora!

NORA. What?

HELMER. Come. Sit. *(She sits in his lap.)* You're still my little lightweight! Now, think. Suppose I borrow a thousand today and you made it disappear like you always do during Christmas week-- are you thinking?--

and then on New Year's Eve a tile blows off the roof and knocks me silly.

NORA. Hush! How can you say such a horrid thing?

HELMER. But just suppose - what then?

NORA. If anything so dreadful happened, I wouldn't care if I were in debt or not.

HELMER. And the creditors?

NORA. They're strangers. Who cares about them?

HELMER. Nora, Nora! What a child! Seriously, concentrate now. Are you thinking? You know my principles. No debts! No borrowing! A home ceases to be free and beautiful when it is founded on credit and debt. I've held out bravely till now and I'm not going to give in.

NORA. As you please, dear husband. *(Nora mopes.)*

HELMER. Come come now, my little lark mustn't droop her wings. That's not lady-like. What? Is my little squirrel pouting? Ohhhhh, that little sad mouth. What do you think I have here? *(He takes out his wallet.)*

NORA. Legal tender!

HELMER. Of course, I do understand, special little things are needed at Christmas.

NORA. Give give give. *(She grabs the money.)* Ten... twenty... thirty... forty! Oh, thank you, thank you, Torvald! This'll go a long way.

HELMER. I should hope so.

NORA. Yes, indeed, a long way! Come. Let me show you all the things I bought. And cheap! I've been quite... quite... economical. *(She piles gifts on him.)* Look, here's a new suit for Ivar, and a toy sword. A horse with wheels and a trumpet for Bobby. And here's a little toy soldier for Junior. Very reasonable, you know how he

breaks things so quickly. And socks and bargain hankies for the servants. I really ought to've got something better for Anna.

HELMER. And what is this? (*Obviously a small box of lingerie.*)

NORA. No, Torvald, naughty man, you're not to see that until tomorrow evening.

HELMER. Oh! Ah! But now tell me, has my little miss scatterbrain bought something for herself? What did I get you?

NORA. Oh, no, I couldn't.

HELMER. Nonsense! Just tell me something sensible, functional, and useful and you shall have it.

NORA. No really, I don't want anything...

HELMER. But--.

NORA. (*Playing with his buttons*) But, If you really really want to get me something, you might... you could...

HELMER. Yes. Out with it.

NORA. You could give me more money.

HELMER. Nora!

NORA. Only what you think you could spare. Then, I could buy something later on.

HELMER. But, Nora--.

NORA. Oh, please do, dear Torvald, please! I'll hang it in pretty gold wrapping paper all over the Christmas tree. Now wouldn't that make it merry?

HELMER. What do they call those little birds that squander all their money?

NORA. Spendthrifts, spend-swifts, I know. But please do as I ask. Then, I'll have time to think about what I want most. Now isn't that sensible?

HELMER. You know, if you really kept all the money I gave you and spent it on something for yourself... But it all goes to meaningless things like housekeeping and then, I have to pay up again.

NORA. Torvald--!

HELMER. No one would believe how much it costs a man like me to house a sweet little songbird like you.

NORA. Now, that's not fair! I save as much as I can.

HELMER. (*Laughing*) Of course, as much as you can, which is precisely zero.

NORA. If you only knew, Torvald, what big expenses we little larks and squirrels have.

HELMER. You're a strange petite soul. Just like your father, always on the lookout for all the peanuts you can lay your little paws on, but the moment you find them, they slip through your little fingers, gone and you never know where you

buried them. Well, I must take you as you are. It's in the blood. Yes, that sort of thing is inherited.

NORA. I wish I'd inherited all of daddy's qualities.

HELMER. And I don't wish you anything but just as you are, my own, sweet little songbird. Except...

NORA. What?

HELMER. It strikes me you look somewhat... what shall I call it? Somewhat guilty.

NORA. Me? Guilty?

HELMER. Look at me. Has my child's sweet tooth been playing pranks today?

NORA. How can you say such a thing!

HELMER. She didn't just glance at the confectioner's window on her way home.

NORA. No, Torvald, really.

HELMER. Not even a little jellybean?

NORA. Certainly not!

HELMER. Nibbled a macaroon or two?

NORA. No, Torvald, I mean it now. I wouldn't conceive of doing what you disapprove of.

HELMER. Of course. And besides, you've given me your word, haven't you.

NORA. That's right.

HELMER. Fine, keep your little Christmas secrets to yourself, Nora darling. Tomorrow morning the Christmas tree will bring them all to light. *(Helmer unlocks and checks the mailbox.)*

NORA. Did you remember to invite Doctor Rank?

HELMER. No. But it's not necessary; he'll come, he always does. Besides, I'll ask him when he looks in today. Oh, I've ordered some rare wine... Nora, how I look forward to this.

NORA. Me too. How we children will enjoy ourselves!

HELMER. Ah, it's glorious to know that I've won us a secured position and ample means. Isn't it pleasant to think of?

NORA. Oh, it's wonderful!

HELMER. You remember last Christmas? For three whole weeks before, you locked yourself up in your bedroom, wouldn't even open the door for me, every evening till long past bed time making those silly flower-type-things for the Christmas tree and all sorts of other marvels to astonish us. I was never so bored in my life.

NORA. I didn't bore myself at all.

HELMER. But it all came to naught in the end.

NORA. Oh don't tease me about that again. How could I know the cat would break in and rip it all to pieces? You never got a chance to see it.

HELMER. My poor little Nora. You did your best to keep me happy and that's what counts. But, all the same, it's good the hard times are over. *(The doorbell rings. Anna answers it.)*

NORA. Oh, a ring! Someone's come to call. How tiresome!

HELMER. This year, I needn't sit here bored to death, all alone and you needn't tire your sweet eyes and your delicate china fingers.

NORA. No, Torvald, that's over. Oh, how amazing it is to think! *(Anna enters followed by MRS. LINDEN and DR. RANK.)*

ANNA. A lady to see you, ma'am. *(Dr. Rank sneaks up behind Anna and torment her with a tickle.)* Ahhhh! *(Dr. Rank disappears down the hall. Anna is pissed.)* And the Doctor has come for you, sir. He'll be in the study, via the icebox.

HELMER. *(Laughing)* Oh, good. *(Helmer goes into his study.)*

ANNA. Your coat Ma'am. *(Anna takes Mrs. Linden's coat and exits.)*

MRS. LINDEN. *(Hesitating)* How do you do, Nora?

NORA. Yes. How do you do?

MRS. LINDEN. You don't recognize me.

NORA. No, I'm afraid I don't-- no wait! I believe-- What? Christina! Is that you?

MRS. LINDEN. Yes.

NORA. Christina! And to think I didn't know you! But how could I-- You've changed... *(They hug.)*

MRS. LINDEN. No doubt. It's been nine/ten years.

NORA. Is it really that long? Yes, so it is. And now you've come to town? Such a long journey in mid-winter! How brave of you!

MRS. LINDEN. I arrived by steamer this morning--.

NORA. For Christmas, of course! Oh, how delightful!

MRS. LINDEN. Well, no--.

NORA. We'll have a merry Christmas. How wonderful to see your dear old face again-- you look the same as ever! Only at first glance you look a bit paler and perhaps a little thinner.

MRS. LINDEN. And much older.

NORA. Are you frozen? Here, sit by the fire. No a, you take the armchair. *(Beat.)* Oh, I'm so thoughtless! Here I sit chattering on and-- Dear, dear Christina, can you forgive me?

MRS. LINDEN. What do you mean, Nora?

NORA. I forgot you're a widow.

MRS. LINDEN. Yes, my husband died three years ago--.

NORA. I read it in the obituaries. Oh, believe me, Christina, I did mean to write but I kept pushing it off, something always came up and--.

MRS. LINDEN. Life is full of interruptions.

NORA. No, Christina, it was just my ill manners. Oh, you poor darling, how you've suffered. Did he leave you anything? Money?

MRS. LINDEN. No.

NORA. Children?

MRS. LINDEN. No.

NORA. Nothing at all?

MRS. LINDEN. Not even sadness.

NORA. My dear Christina, how is that possible?

MRS. LINDEN. It happens.

NORA. Then you're utterly alone! How dreadful. I have three lovely children! Look, I'll show you! *(She takes the locket from around her neck and shows Mrs. Linden the picture of her three children. But Mrs. Linden is not impressed. A silence falls between them.)*

MRS. LINDEN. How nice.

NORA. But now you must tell me everything.

MRS. LINDEN. No, no, you tell me--.

NORA. No! You must begin. I won't be selfish. Today, I'll think only of you--.

MRS. LINDEN. Well, three years ago--.

NORA. Oh! But I must tell you one little thing. Did you read about our great stroke of luck?

MRS. LINDEN. No.

NORA. My husband has been promoted to Executive Manager of the Joint Stock Bank.

MRS. LINDEN. Your husband. How nice.

NORA. Yes, isn't it? A lawyer's life is so unpredictable. Especially when your husband won't touch any business that's the least bit, shall we say, shady? Oh! You can't imagine how happy we are. He starts next month and then he'll have a large salary and stock and percentages and options and, and, and what was it, commissions! That's it, my favorite, and "commissions!" Tomorrow, we shall be able to live quite differently - just as we please! Oh, Christina, it's delightful to have lots of money and no worries.

MRS. LINDEN. Yes, I'm sure it is. We all need essentials.

NORA. Essentials? No no no, heaps of money. Heaps!

MRS. LINDEN. Oh Nora, you still haven't learned. Back in our school days you spent money like there was no--.

NORA. Torvald says I still do! But lately "Little Nora" hasn't had the chance to be much of a spendthrift. We both work.

MRS. LINDEN. You too?

NORA. Yes, woman's work: crochet, embroidery, things of that sort. You know, of course, that Torvald left government service when we were married. He had no chance of promotion and of course the pay was nonexistent. In the first year of our marriage, he overworked himself terribly. He had to take on all kinds of extra work. Oh, how he slaved day and night. He couldn't take it. He fell dangerously ill. The doctors said that he had to get out of dark, damp, dank Norway.

MRS. LINDEN. That's right, you sent me several postcards from sunny Italy. You spent almost a year. *(Nora shows Mrs. Linden several postcards.)*

NORA. It wasn't easy to manage, I can tell you. Ivar was just a baby. But of course we had to go. Oh, it was a delicious journey! And it saved Torvald's life. I know it did. But it cost an awful lot of money.

MRS. LINDEN. I should think so.

NORA. Over twelve hundred!

MRS. LINDEN. How lucky you had so much to spend.

NORA. We got it from my daddy.

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

NORA. Yes, just then. I couldn't leave to nurse him. I was expecting little Ivar and I had my poor sick Torvald to attend to. *(Beat)* Dear, kind old Daddy! Never saw him again.

MRS. LINDEN. And your husband's health returned?

NORA. Sound as a bell.

MRS. LINDEN. Then why the doctor?

NORA. What doctor? Oh! Doctor Rank! He doesn't count. He's our best friend and never lets a day pass without looking in. No, Torvald hasn't had an hour's illness in years. And the children are healthy and so am I. Oh, Christina, what a marvelous thing to be alive and happy! *(Beat)* Oh, I'm a horrible person. What am I doing? Here I am talking about nothing but myself. Oh, don't be angry! Now tell me, is it true that you didn't love your husband? Why did you marry him?

MRS. LINDEN. My mother was still alive at that time, bedridden. And I had my two younger brothers to support. I didn't think it would be fair to refuse his offer.

NORA. He was rich then?

MRS. LINDEN. Well off, perhaps. But his business failed. When he died, the creditors took everything.

NORA. How sad.

MRS. LINDEN. I struggled through. Opened a little shop. At night I tutored, anything to make ends meet. The last three years have been one long contest. But now it's over. My mother no longer needs me; she's gone to meet her maker. And the boys are in business for themselves, they haven't looked back.

NORA. It must be a relief!

MRS. LINDEN. No, Nora, it's bleak. I have no one to live for. That's why I couldn't bear to stay any longer. Here in the city it must be easy to find something to... to occupy one's thoughts. If I could get some small employment, perhaps office work.

NORA. But, Christina, that's such drudgery and you look worn out already. It would be so much better for you to go to some resort and rest.

MRS. LINDEN. Of course it would, but I have no Daddy to pay for it.

NORA. You're annoyed with me.

MRS. LINDEN. I'm sorry. My dear Nora, don't you be annoyed with me. The worst of a life like mine is that it makes one bitter. I have no one to live for, yet I must live. To survive is to be selfish. When I heard of the change in your fortunes, I was happy more for my own sake than for yours.

NORA. How do you mean-- Oh Of course! You think Torvald could perhaps do something for you.

MRS. LINDEN. I was hoping.

NORA. And so he shall, Christina. Just leave it to me. I'll lead up to it beautifully! I'll think of some charming scheme to put him in a good mood and then I'll spring it on him! Oh, how I should love to help you.

MRS. LINDEN. Thank you, Nora. So rare from one who knows so little of the troubles of life.

NORA. I? I know so little--?

MRS. LINDEN. Oh, well, you know woman's work: crochet, embroidery. You're like a child, Nora.

NORA. Are you patronizing me?

MRS. LINDEN. No. *(Beat)* Yes.

NORA. You're just like the rest. No one thinks I'm capable of doing anything substantial! Or that I've had no troubles in this weary world. Anna! *(Anna enters. Nora points at the toys. Pissed, Anna begins picking them up and tossing them in the toy box.)*

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

NORA. I haven't told you the truth.

MRS. LINDEN. What truth?

NORA. I know you look down at me, Christina, but you shouldn't. You're proud of having worked so hard and long to help your dying mother.

MRS. LINDEN. I'm sure I don't look down on any one, but it's true I'm pleased when I think that I was able to keep my mother's last days relatively comfortable.

NORA. And you're proud of what you've done for your brothers.

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

NORA. I have something to be proud of too.

MRS. LINDEN. Of course, your children.

NORA. My children? Oh, yes, but no. Shhhh. *(Beat. Nora can't talk with Anna present. She waits for Anna to leave.)* Torvald mustn't hear! No one must find out, Christina, no one but you.

MRS. LINDEN. Find out what?

NORA. I saved Torvald's life.

MRS. LINDEN. Saved his life? How?

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

MRS. LINDEN. Yes, your "daddy" gave you the money--.

NORA. So Torvald and every one in this town believes... but...

MRS. LINDEN. But what--?

NORA. Daddy didn't give us one red cent. I found the money.

MRS. LINDEN. You? All that money?

NORA. Over Twelve-hundred!

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

NORA. The lottery? *(Laughs)* Any one could've done that! That's not clever.

MRS. LINDEN. Then wherever did you get it?

NORA. *(Hums and smiles mysteriously)* La-la-la-la-la-la! La-la-la-la-la-la!

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

NORA. No? Why not?

MRS. LINDEN. Women aren't allowed to borrow money without their husband's signatures.

NORA. True. Except maybe a woman with a bit of business sense. One who perhaps knows how to use her intellect. *(Giggles)*

MRS. LINDEN. I don't follow.

NORA. Who said I borrowed it? There are many ways to get money. I may have a secret admirer.

MRS. LINDEN. Nora!

NORA. Men do find me desirable.

MRS. LINDEN. You're being silly.

NORA. You're dying of curiosity. Admit it, you are dying of curiosity!

MRS. LINDEN. You've done something rash!

NORA. Is it rash to save your husband's life?

MRS. LINDEN. I think it's rash of you, without his knowledge to--.

NORA. That's the point. To do it without him finding out. It would've been fatal for him to know! He wasn't even to suspect how ill he was. The doctors came to me in private and told me his life was in danger that nothing would save him but a warm winter. Do you think I didn't try a little ladylike diplomacy first? I whined. I told him how I longed to have a trip abroad, like other young wives. I turned on the tears. I begged. I performed. I told him that he ought to think of my mental health - that was a good one. And then I hinted that he could borrow the money. That made him rather angry. He said I was "frivolous" and that it was his duty as my husband not to yield to my "childish impulses," that's what he called them. Very well, I thought, then I found a way.

MRS. LINDEN. And your husband never found out that the money didn't come from your Papa?

NORA. No, never. Dear daddy died at that very time. I meant to tell him, but he was so very ill.

MRS. LINDEN. And you've never once confessed this to your husband?

NORA. Good heavens, no! He has such loathing of debt. And besides, it would be humiliating for poor Torvald's masculine self-worth to know that he owed anything to his wife! (*She giggles*) It would utterly upset the perfect balance between us. Our beautiful, happy home would cease to be, well... beautiful and happy.

MRS. LINDEN. Will you never tell him?

NORA. Maybe someday. Many years from now, when I'm not so pretty. Don't laugh! Of course I mean when Torvald is not so in love with me. When I no longer amuse him. He likes it when I dress up and dance for him. Yet, many years from now, it might be a good idea to have a little something up my sleeve. (*Beat*) Nonsense! What am I saying? That time will never come. He's too in love with me. Now, dear Christina, what do you say to my splendid secret? I am good for something after all. But this... this self-worth has cost me. It hasn't been easy to meet the loan payments. You see, in business there are these things called

installments and quarterly interest and so I've had to pinch a little here and a little there. I couldn't save much out of the housekeeping, of course Torvald had to have a perfect home and family. And I couldn't let the children go around badly dressed!

MRS. LINDEN. Poor Nora. So it had to come out of your allowance?

NORA. When Torvald gives me money for clothes or knick-knacks, I never spend more than half. I always buy the simplest and or the cheapest. Of course, everything looks good on me so I'm safe. Torvald has never suspected! But it's been very hard, Christina dear. It's nice to be beautifully dressed, isn't it?

MRS. LINDEN. It must be.

NORA. I found other ways to make money. Last winter I was lucky, I got a heap of copying to do. I locked myself in my bedroom for three weeks before Christmas and copied long into the night. Sometimes I was so tired, so worn out and yet it was splendid to earn money - just like a man. I almost felt like the head of the house.

MRS. LINDEN. How much of this loan have you been able to pay back?

NORA. Well, I'm not quite sure. It's complicated to keep business things clear. I only know that I've paid everything I could scrape together. Sometimes I really didn't know where to turn. I used to sit here and make believe that I had a rich lover.

MRS. LINDEN. Nora!

NORA. Not that kind of lover-- the dead kind. And after his funeral, when his will is read, there stands in large, bold letters are the words: "All my money, all my estate, all my love is to be paid over to that charming, pretty, sweet, little lady, Nora Helmer."

MRS. LINDEN. My dear Nora, what are you saying? *(Beat, Nora is off in her own little world for a moment.)*

NORA. ... What? Oh, it was only a daydream, a grand self-deception. But it doesn't matter now. I care nothing for him or his fat will, for my troubles are over. *(Beat. The doorbell rings.)*

MRS. LINDEN. There's a ring! I should go.

NORA. No, stay. No one comes for me. It's more business for Torvald. *(Anna answers the door.)* Oh, Christina, how glorious it is! Free from worries! I can play with the children. I can spend some time on the house, make everything pretty and proper, exactly as Torvald likes it! The spring will soon be here with its great blue sky. Perhaps we'll have a vacation. I could see the ocean again!

ANNA. Excuse me, ma'am, there's a gentleman here for Mr. Helmer. *(KROGSTAD*

enters.)

KROGSTAD. Good morning, Mrs. Helmer.

NORA. What are you doing here? What do you want with my husband?

KROGSTAD. It's a business call. *(To Mrs. Linden)* I hold a small post in the Joint Stock Bank and *(to Nora)* I'm told your husband is to be our new executive manager.

NORA. Yes.

KROGSTAD. Only dull, routine bank business, Mrs. Helmer, nothing a woman should concern herself with.

NORA. Then, you can wait for him in his study. *(She shows Krogstad the door to Helmer's study. He with nervous smile to the ladies, he exits.)*

MRS. LINDEN. Nora, who was that?

NORA. A Mr. Krogstad.

MRS. LINDEN. I thought so.

NORA. You know him?

MRS. LINDEN. Used to. Years ago. He's changed.

NORA. I heard his marriage was miserable. He's a widower too. With tons of little mouths to feed.

MRS. LINDEN. I've heard his business dealings are not exactly... aboveboard. *(Dr. Rank comes out of Helmer's study.)*

DR. RANK. *(Calling back into the study)* No, no, I'm in the way. Besides I'd rather have a chat with your lovely wife. *(Sees Mrs. Linden)* Oh, I beg your pardon. I'm in the way here too.

NORA. No, not in the least! Doctor Rank, Mrs. Linden.

DR. RANK. Oh-yes. I've often heard the Linden name in this house. We passed in the entry way as I came in.

MRS. LINDEN. Yes. So sorry, I'm slow on stairs.

DR. RANK. You're not very strong?

MRS. LINDEN. No. Only overworked.

DR. RANK. Then no doubt you've come to the big city to find rest in a round of wild, unrestrained overindulgence? *(He helps himself to one of the cigars.)*

MRS. LINDEN. No. I've come to look for employment.

DR. RANK. I didn't know that was the cure for overwork?

MRS. LINDEN. One must live, Doctor.

DR. RANK. Yes, that seems to be the general opinion. I'm not sure I agree.

NORA. You're such a tease, Doctor Rank, everyone wants to live. *(Nora listens in*

at the study door.)

DR. RANK. Yes. Isn't it strange, no matter how miserable we are, we want to prolong the suffering for as long as possible. All my patients are that way. And it's the same with people who are morally ill. At this very moment her husband is talking to one such moral incurable.

MRS. LINDEN. *(Sotto to Nora)* Told you so.

NORA. *(To Dr. Rank)* Whom do you mean?

DR. RANK No one a sweet lady like you would know. That fellow is Krogstad, corrupt to the core. But even he began with your husband by announcing, as "a matter of vast importance," that he must live.

NORA. What did he want with my husband?

DR. RANK. Bank business I guess.

NORA. I didn't know that Nils-- that this gentleman had anything to do with the Bank?

DR. RANK. Yes. He's got some position there. Been there almost a year. *(Nora looks through the keyhole into Helmer's office. Dr. Rank turns to Mrs. Linden.)* I don't know if this happens in your part of the woods but here we have men who spend their days sniffing out moral sickness and then, when they've found it, they glue themselves to it and profit from it. Men with a clean bill of health they leave out in the cold.

MRS. LINDEN. Well, I suppose the sick require the most care.

DR. RANK. It's that notion that makes our society merely an asylum for the unethical. *(Nora laughs)* Why do you laugh? Have you any idea what "society" is?

NORA. What do I care for your boring old society. I was laughing at something else... something rather amusing. Tell me, Doctor Rank, do all the employees at the bank have to answer to Torvald now?

DR. RANK. I don't see what's so funny about that.

NORA. Never mind, never mind! *(She hums)* I just find it rather amusing to think that we—that my husband-- Mr. Executive Manager has so much power over so many in this town. *(Nora takes the bag of macaroons from her pocket.)* Care for a macaroon?

DR. RANK. What-macaroons!? I thought they were contraband in this house.

NORA. They are. Christina brought them.

MRS. LINDEN. What! I?

NORA. Nothing to worry about. You couldn't possibly know that Torvald has outlawed them. He's afraid they'll rot my teeth. But one can't hurt. Open up, Doctor Rank. *(Nora pops a macaroon in his mouth.)* You too, Christina. And I suppose I'll

have one or two or maybe three. I'm so happy. There's only one thing in the world I want.

DR. RANK. What's that?

NORA. There's one thing I'd like to say to Torvald's face.

DR. RANK. Then why don't you say it?

NORA. Because "society " says I shouldn't. It would be un-lady like.

DR. RANK. In that case you'd better not. *(Beat)* But you can tell us. Isn't that right Mrs. Linden?

MRS. LINDEN. That's right, Dr. Rank.

NORA. All right, I should like to say-- "To hell with it!"

DR. RANK. Are you out of your mind!?

MRS. LINDEN. Good gracious, Nora!

NORA. That's what I'd like to say! "To hell with it!" *(The study door opens.)*

DR. RANK. Well, here he comes, say it! *(Nora, Mrs. Linden and Dr. Rank quickly chew the macaroons.)*

NORA. Sh sh sh sh sh! *(Krogstad enters from the study. They fall silent. He coldly exits. The second he is gone, Nora breaks into a laugh, but it's cut short when Helmer enters with his coat.)* Hi, dear, did you get rid of him?

HELMER. Yes, he's left.

NORA. Torvald dear, this is Christina.

HELMER. Christina? Pardon me; I don't believe we've ever met--.

NORA. Mrs. Linden... Christina Linden--.

HELMER. Oh yes! Your friend from... from...

NORA. School days.

HELMER. Right.

MRS. LINDEN. Yes, we knew each other when we were girls.

NORA. And she's come all this way to meet with you.

HELMER. Me?

MRS. LINDEN. Well, not quite--.

NORA. You see, Christina is tremendously clever at office... ah... things. And she's eager to work under a first-rate businessman, such as yourself, in order to learn still more about... filing and... and... such.

HELMER. Very sensible.

NORA. And when she heard you were appointed the bank's manager, she traveled here, at great expense, to meet you. Torvald dear, for my sake, you must find something for Christina.

HELMER. You're a widow of course?

MRS. LINDEN. Yes.

HELMER. And you have business experience?

MRS. LINDEN. Fifteen years.

HELMER. Well then, I might be able to find a small place for you.

NORA. *(To Christina)* See!

HELMER. Your timing is perfect, Mrs. Linden, I just had an opening.

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

HELMER. No need. You must excuse me now. *(Helmer starts to leave.)*

DR. RANK. Wait! I'm coming with you. *(Dr. Rank and Mrs. Linden grab their coats.)*

NORA. Don't be long, dear.

HELMER. Only an hour, not much more.

NORA. Are you going too, Christina?

MRS. LINDEN. Yes, I must look for a room.

NORA. I'm so sorry, we haven't a spare--.

MRS. LINDEN. I shouldn't think of troubling you. Goodbye Nora and thank you for all your kindness.

NORA. Goodbye for now. Of course you'll come back this evening for dinner.

And you too, Doctor Rank. *(Dr. Rank coughs out an answer.)*

NORA. Of course you'll be well enough. *(Children's voices come from outside.)*

CHILDREN. *(Screaming)* Ahhhhhhhhhhhh!

NORA. Wait! There they are! There they are! *(Suddenly, the children enter with Anna. They've been playing in the snow and are totally out of control.)* My sweet darlings! You see, Christina? Aren't they perfect?!

DR. RANK. Let's not stand here chattering in the draft!

HELMER. Come Mrs. Linden, only young mothers can stand such heat! *(Dr. Rank, Helmer and Mrs. Linden exit.)*

NORA. How bright you look! What pink cheeks you have! Like apples! No, roses. Are you having fun?

BOBBY. We took a ride on a toboggan!

IVAR. Me too.

NORA. Both at once! Why, you're quite the men. *(She takes the doll-like babe-in-arms from Anna and dances with her.)*

BOBBY. Dance with me!

NORA. Yes, yes, mother will dance with you too.

IVAR. Look look look! I made a snowball!

NORA. Did you have a snow fight? Oh, I wish I'd been there. *(She takes the*

snowball and gives it to Anna. Anna starts to take their coats off.) Let me do it. It's such fun. Go to the nursery, you look frozen. There's hot coffee on the stove.

(Nora hands off the babe-in-arms to Anne.)

ANNA. Yes, ma'am. *(Anna exits with the baby. Nora takes off the children's coats and boots.)*

BOBBY. A big dog chased me!

NORA. Did he bite you?

BOBBY. No.

NORA. That's because dogs don't bite sweet children. *(Ivar looks at the gifts.)*

NORA. No peeping!

BOBBY. Let's play!

NORA. What shall we play?

BOBBY. Hide-and-peek?

NORA. My thought exactly. Me first. Me first! Everyone hide. One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, TEN! *(The kids hide. Nora finds them in seconds.)*

NORA. Now it's Ivar's turn!

IVAR. One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, TEN! *(Bobby and Nora both exit and hide in another room. Ivar opens his eyes and sets out to find them. He exits. The stage is empty for a moment. Then, Nora backs into the room and hides under the table. Krogstad enters.)*

NORA. *(Singsong)* You can't find me! I bet you can't find me!

KROGSTAD. I beg your pardon--.

NORA. *(Jumps)* Ah!

KROGSTAD. So sorry, the outer door was ajar. Someone must've forgot to shut it.

NORA. My husband isn't home--.

KROGSTAD. I know.

NORA. What do you want?

KROGSTAD. A word with you.

NORA. With me? *(Ivar runs in.)*

IVAR. You're it!!!

NORA. Ivar, go in with Anna.

IVAR. Who's this?

NORA. No one important. Run along now! *(Ivar exits.)* It's not the first of the month. I owe nothing till the first of the month. *(Beat)* What?

KROGSTAD. Merry Christmas.

NORA. What do you want? I'm not ready today. I need more time. I have till the first of the month.

KROGSTAD. I've come about another matter. Have a minute?

NORA. Oh. I suppose, although I do have--.

KROGSTAD. Good. I was sitting in the restaurant across the street just now when I saw your husband leave...

NORA. So?

KROGSTAD. ...With a lady.

NORA. What of it?

KROGSTAD. May I ask if that lady was Mrs. Linden?

NORA. Yes.

KROGSTAD. Who has just come to town?

NORA. Yes. So?

KROGSTAD. She's an acquaintance?

NORA. She's a dear friend, but I don't understand--.

KROGSTAD. I used to know her. Oh yes, of course, you two have already gossiped about me. I thought as much. I need answers. Is Mrs. Linden to have a job at the bank?

NORA. You have no right to interrogate me, Mr. Krogstad. You're a subordinate to my husband--. But since you ask... yes, Mrs. Linden has been employed on my recommendation.

KROGSTAD. I guessed right.

NORA. I do have a wee bit of influence. Just because I'm a woman that doesn't mean I'm powerless. You see, when one has only a junior subordinate position, Mr. Krogstad, one ought to be really careful as to whom one offends--.

KROGSTAD. Influence?

NORA. Exactly.

KROGSTAD. Mrs. Helmer, would you be kind enough to use that wee bit of influence to help a lowly junior subordinate?

NORA. How do you mean?

KROGSTAD. A lowly junior subordinate whose job at your husband's bank is... how do I say... in doubt.

NORA. Who wants to take it?

KROGSTAD. Who else, your husband. Please don't feign ignorance. I understand it can't be pleasant for your friend to bump into me. But, I can also now see who's responsible for my sudden loss of employment.

NORA. I assure you--.

KROGSTAD. Oh please. This little innocent game is a waste of my time and yours. I advise you to use your "influence" to prevent my imminent departure.

NORA. Influence, I have no influence.

KROGSTAD. Just a moment ago you said--.

NORA. I know what I said, but that's not what I meant. I'm a woman. How can I have that much influence over my husband?

KROGSTAD. I know your husband from our college days. I don't think he's any more rigid than any other man when a woman is persuasive.

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

KROGSTAD. So bold for such a little lady.

NORA. I'm not afraid of you. When New Years comes, I'll make my last payment and I'll be done with the whole business.

KROGSTAD. Listen to me, lady. If need be, I'm prepared to fight for my lowly junior job as if I were fighting for my life. *(Beat)* It's not about money, I care least about money. It's more... *(Beat)* You know, like every one else in this gabby town, that some years ago I... I got into a bit of trouble. A stupid indiscretion.

NORA. I've heard some... talk. Many years ago. Nothing really.

KROGSTAD. I was never formally charged, they lacked evidence, but from that day on, I had no future. So many men are worse than me. I just got caught. *(Beat)* But now... My sons are growing up, for their sake, I must redeem my reputation. This little job at the bank was my first step towards respectability. But your husband wants to kick me off the ladder, back into the shit-- Excuse me.

NORA. *(Blushing)* Oh my. I assure you, Mr. Krogstad, it really isn't in my power.

KROGSTAD. That's because the woman lacks the will, but I can make you.

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

KROGSTAD. Suppose I did?

NORA. It would be shameful. *(Tears)* My little secret is my joy, Mr. Krogstad. That he should learn it in such an ugly, vulgar way... and from you... Please, it would involve me in all sorts of unpleasantness--.

KROGSTAD. Only unpleasantness? Just a wee bit of unpleasantness? That's all?

NORA. *(Pissed)* Fine. Do it. When my husband finds out, do you think you'll keep your job? Or any job for that matter. He'll pay you off and then we'll have nothing more to do with you. Then who will be in the... the... shit. *(Krogstad finds this amusing.)*

KROGSTAD. Oh, Mrs. Helmer, either your memory is defective or you don't have an ounce of business sense. I suppose I'll have to give you a rudimentary lesson in the subject.

NORA. How so?

KROGSTAD. When your husband was ill, you came to me to borrow twelve hundred. I promised to find the money--.

NORA. And you did--.

KROGSTAD. With certain conditions. You were in such a panic about your husband's illness, so eager that you probably didn't give much thought to, what we call, the finer print. Allow me to remind you. I promised to find you the amount in exchange for an I.O.U.--.

NORA. Which I signed.

KROGSTAD. Quite right. But then I added a few lines, requiring your father to secure the debt--.

NORA. Which he signed!

KROGSTAD. I left the date blank. Your father was to date it. Do you remember?

NORA. Yes.

KROGSTAD. Then I gave you the contract to send to your father, by post. Am I right?

NORA. Yes.

KROGSTAD. And of course you did so, for within a week you brought back the contract with your father's signature and I handed over the money.

NORA. And I've made every payment, almost always on time.

KROGSTAD. Your father was on his deathbed. Died soon after.

NORA. So.

KROGSTAD. Tell me, Mrs. Helmer, do you remember the day your father died? I mean, the date?

NORA. My father died September 29th.

KROGSTAD. That's right. I looked into it. Found the most remarkable thing. Something very strange. A small but glaring inconsistency. *(He takes out the contract.)*

KROGSTAD. Isn't it remarkable, ma'am, that your father signed this contract three days after his death.

NORA. I'm a woman; I don't have a mind for business, Mr. Krogstad--.

KROGSTAD. What is there to understand? Your father died on the 29th of September. But look, he dated it October 2nd! Isn't that incredible, Mrs. Helmer? Can you explain it? It's also interesting that the words "October 2nd" and the year are not in your father's handwriting, but in one which I believe I've seen before. But, this may be explained. Your father forgot to date his signature and somebody added it before they knew he was dead. Nothing wrong in that. Right? Yet,

everything depends on this signature. It is your father's hand isn't it, Mrs. Helmer. There's no need for me to check. Right?

NORA. *(Beat)* You'll get the money.

KROGSTAD. Why didn't you send the contract to your father? Wouldn't he sign?

NORA. He was ill. I couldn't tell him that my husband's life was in danger.

KROGSTAD. Then wouldn't it have been better to cancel the vacation?

NORA. It wasn't a "vacation!" My husband's life depended on that journey.

KROGSTAD. And so I was played the fool.

NORA. Yes, you were nothing. I endured you and your cruel regulations. The ridiculous rules you line up knowing all along that my husband was ill.

KROGSTAD. Mrs. Helmer, you evidently don't realize what you've done. You're guilty of a crime. Forgery - A small felony or a major misdemeanor, depending on the judge's point of view. But I assure you; it's nothing worse than that which made me a social outcast.

NORA. You skirted the law to save your wife's life?

KROGSTAD. The law wasn't interested in my motive.

NORA. Then the law is useless.

KROGSTAD. Useless or not, if I produce this contract in court, you'll be judged. Publicly.

NORA. I don't believe that--. Do you mean to tell me that a daughter has no right to spare her dying father anxiety... that a wife has no right to save her husband... I don't know much about the law but I'm sure you'll find, in there somewhere, a little tolerance.

KROGSTAD. Possibly. But business is business. I know the law. And if you don't believe me, then you are a silly little woman. Do as you please. But know this, if I'm flung into the "shit" a second time, you shall keep me company! *(Krogstad exits.)*

NORA. *(To herself)* He wants to frighten me. I'm not so foolish as to believe that. But-? No, it's impossible!

I did it for love! *(The children enter.)*

IVAR. Mamma, has the strange man left?

NORA. Yes, yes sweetheart. But don't tell anyone the strange man was here. Not even papa!

IVAR. Will you play with us?

NORA. Not now.

IVAR. But you promised.

NORA. I have to think. Run along, now, be a good little darling! *(The children*

exit. She tries to embroider but her mind isn't into it. So she begins dressing the tree. To herself.) Candles here. Flowers there. That horrible man! Nonsense nonsense nonsense nonsense... Of course he won't do it. Such a thing couldn't happen. It's impossible! Why, I have three little children. Nothing to be afraid of. Christmas shall be beautiful. As always. I'll do anything to please you, Torvald. I'll sing and dance. Nonsense nonsense nonsense nonsense... (*Helmer enters with a bundle of documents.*)

HELMER. (*Suspicious*) Has someone been here?

NORA. What-no.

HELMER. Strange. I saw Krogstad leaving just now.

NORA. Did you--? Oh! Yes! He stopped by for a moment.

HELMER. Of course he did. And he begged you to put in a good word for him. Out with it. I can see it on your face.

NORA. Yes.

HELMER. And you were going to pretend it was your idea. You weren't even going to tell me he stopped in. No, No, wait, not you. That was his idea, isn't it?

NORA. Yes, Torvald, I promised I would--.

HELMER. Nora, Nora! You shouldn't even speak to a man like that, let alone make him a promise. And worse, much worse, you lied to me!

NORA. What lie?

HELMER. You said that no one had been here? My little songbird must never do that again! A songbird must sing true, No false notes. Am I right?

NORA. I--.

HELMER. You know I am. Yes, I was sure of it. I'll do you a favor and say no more about it. (*He sits near the fire*) Oh, for a little quiet. Yes, warm and cozy. Like it should be. (*Beat.*)

NORA. Torvald.

HELMER. Now what?

NORA. I'm so looking forward to going upstairs to the Stenberg's' costume ball tomorrow night.

HELMER. Yes, I'm dying to see you in your costume. You'll make me proud, right? Make the other men jealous, I hope?

NORA. You want a Neapolitan fisher-girl then you shall have a Neapolitan fisher-girl.

HELMER. Neapolitan fisher-girl dancing the tarantella! That was a moment of inspiration! I can pat myself on the back for that.

NORA. But...

HELMER. What dear?

NORA. It's so silly!

HELMER. What is?

NORA. Everything seems so foolish and trivial.

HELMER. So you've found that out for yourself? *(He laughs and goes back to his work.)*

NORA. *(Beat)* Are you very busy, Torvald?

HELMER. Well, I--.

NORA. What's that?

HELMER. Bank business.

NORA. Already.

HELMER. The retiring manager asked me to make staff changes. I want to have everything straight by the New Year. *(He goes back to his work.)*

NORA. If you weren't so very busy, I would ask you a big big favor.

HELMER. Yes-what?

NORA. *(Teasing)* Nobody has your taste, your eye for beauty, and I want to look just right for you at the

costume ball. So, Torvald dear, could you take charge while I show you the costume. Course, I'd need a hand with my buttons.

HELMER. Is the little woman lost? Is she distressed?

NORA. *(Sexy)* Yes please, I can't think without your help. *(He starts to unbutton her but is interrupted when Anna enters. Anna doesn't see Nora or Helmer. She has come in only dust. Then she sees them. A beat. Knowing she isn't wanted, she leaves.)*

HELMER. I don't think now is the right time.

NORA. *(Disappointed)* Fine. *(Nora picks up two Christmas tree ornaments. Seductive.)* Like my ornaments? *(Helmer is to into his work to pay any attention.)*

HELMER. Huh.

NORA. Tell me, was it so very dreadful this trouble Krogstad got into?

HELMER. Only forgery.

NORA. Is that all.

HELMER. Have you any idea how serious that is?

NORA. Perhaps he was driven to it?

HELMER. Or perhaps he did it without thinking. I'm not so hard hearted as to condemn a man for a single fault.

NORA. I know you're not.

HELMER. A man can retrieve his character, if he admits his crime, takes his

punishment.

NORA. Punishment?

HELMER. But Krogstad never admitted to it. He evaded the law, cheated the books and... and... well, he may have got away with it but everyone knows he has few morals.

NORA. Do you think that--?

HELMER. Think of what it must be like to have that on your conscience. Always lying. Always wearing a mask. Even to those who are nearest-- his wife and children. Ah, the effect on the children, that's the dreadful part.

NORA. Oh?

HELMER. Yes. An atmosphere of lies and deceit poisons a home. The family is contaminated. Every breath the children draw contains evil germs.

NORA. Are you sure?

HELMER. My dear, I've seen it often enough. Nearly all cases of corruption can be traced to lying parents. Mothers in particular.

NORA. Why mothers?

HELMER. It generally comes from the mother's side, but of course a father's influence can change things. There have been numerous scientific studies. So my sweet little Nora, promise not to plead his case. A bargain?

NORA. I--.

HELMER. Yes, we have a bargain. I assure you, I couldn't possibly work with him. Now you have a lot to do. Cleaning, dinner, decorating while I must study these important authorizations before dinner. But I shall also find time to think about your costume for the Christmas Ball tomorrow night. Perhaps I may even find a moment to hang an ornament on the tree. Would you like that, my precious little songbird?

NORA. I--.

HELMER. I knew you would. *(He kisses her on the forehead, heads for the study.)*

NORA. Wasn't it good of me to have given in to you about the tarantella?

HELMER. Good of you! To give in to your husband? Well well, you're just a bit brash - I know you don't mean it.

NORA. Torvald?

HELMER. Yes?

NORA. If your little squirrel were to beg you for something and be so pretty...

HELMER. Well?

NORA. Would you do it?

HELMER. I must know first what it is.

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

HELMER. Come then, out with it.

NORA. Your lark would twitter from morning to night.

HELMER. Oh, that she does any way.

NORA. I'll be an elf and dance the tarantella in the moonlight for all your friends, Torvald. *(It suddenly hits him.)*

HELMER. Nora-no. No! You can't mean what I think?

NORA. Yes, Torvald, I beg you. I implore you!

HELMER. Are you going to start this again?

NORA. For my sake, you must let Krogstad keep his job at the bank.

HELMER. My dear Nora, it's his job I intend to give to Mrs. Linden.

NORA. Couldn't you dismiss another clerk?

HELMER. Well, as kind as that may seem, I can't just fire someone because you have thoughtlessly promised to put in a word for him.

NORA. It's not that, it's for your own sake. Krogstad writes letters to those shameless newspapers. You said so yourself. He could do you a great deal of harm.

HELMER. Ah, you're thinking of your father.

NORA. What-yes yes, of course. I'm only thinking of the shameful slanders wicked people used to write about daddy in the papers. They'd've got him fired if you hadn't looked into things... been kind to him... helped him.

HELMER. My little Nora, there's a world of difference between your father and me. Your father, I'm sorry to say, though a good man, was not quite as ethical as I.

NORA. No one knows what wicked men may do. We could live so quietly and happy in our cozy home, just you and us children, Torvald. That's why I beg you--.

HELMER. The more you plead his case the more impossible it is for me to keep him. It's already well known at the bank that I intend to dismiss Krogstad. Can you imagine if the employees found out that their new executive manager let his obstinate wife change his mind--.

NORA. What then?

HELMER. I'd be the laughing stock of the whole city. Take my word for it; I should soon feel the consequences. And besides there's one thing that makes it impossible for Krogstad to stay--. I mean, I could've overlooked his moral failings in a pinch--.

NORA. Yes, you could, Torvald.

HELMER. He's a good worker, accurate, on time. But the fact is... he's an old

college chum of mine. One of those reckless friendships between intoxicated fraternity boys that one always comes to regret. Now he insists on calling me by my Christian name! As if that's not tactless enough, he does it in front of my staff. He delights in putting on airs of... of familiarity. Everyone else calls me Mr. Helmer. He chirps in with a "Torvald" here and a "Torvald" there! It's, well, embarrassing. He undercuts me. Now, I cannot have that.

NORA. Torvald, surely you're not serious?

HELMER. No? Why not?

NORA. That's so... so... territorial. So petty.

HELMER. What! Petty? You consider me petty!

NORA. No, on the contrary, Torvald dear--.

HELMER. Never mind! Petty! Fine! I'll put an end to this, once and for all. Anna!
(Helmer takes out a letter and signs it.)

NORA. What're you doing? *(Anna enters.)*

HELMER. You just helped me make my decision. *(To Anna)* Here. Take this letter, give it to a messenger. See that he delivers it at once.

ANNA. Very well, sir. *(Anna exits.)*

HELMER. There, Ma'am, it's over.

NORA. Torvald, what's in that letter?

HELMER. Krogstad's dismissal.

NORA. Call it back, Torvald! There's still time. Oh, Torvald, call it back! For my sake, for your own, for the children! You don't know what that letter can do to us!

HELMER. My dear Nora, I forgive your panic, though it's anything but flattering to me. Why should you suppose that I'd be afraid of this wretched hack? But I forgive you all the same; it's proof of your great love for me. That's as it should be. Let what will happen happen. I shall have strength and courage enough to face it like a man.

NORA. What do you mean?

HELMER. I'll take on the whole burden—

NORA. That you'll never do.

HELMER. Very well, then we'll share it, as man and wife. Is that better? Are you satisfied?

NORA. I--.

HELMER. I knew you would be. Come, come, don't be an anxious dove. It's nothing, foolish fancies. Now practice the tarantella and play with your little tambourine. I'll be working in my office. I'll shut both doors, so you can make as much noise as you please. Remember, practice makes perfect. *(Helmer exits.)*

Pause.)

NORA. Impossible. Impossible. Corrupt my children! Poison my home! Nonsense, nonsense, nonsense. *(Anna enters with a dress.)*

ANNA. I've found your costume!

NORA. Oh, yes.

ANNA. But I'm afraid it's torn.

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

ANNA. Oh, no. It can easily be fixed. With a little patience--.

NORA. I'll get Mrs. Linden to help me.

ANNA. As you wish. *(Anna starts to exit.)*

NORA. Do the children ask for me?

ANNA. Of course they do.

NORA. Do you think they would forget me if I went away?

ANNA. Gracious me! What a thing to say.

NORA. Anna, how could you bring yourself to give your child up to strangers?

ANNA. I had to when I came here.

NORA. But how?

ANNA. A poor girl who got herself in trouble must take what comes.

NORA. But your daughter must've forgotten you.

ANNA. Oh, no, ma'am, she wrote to me when she was confirmed and now she is engaged. *(Nora takes Anna's hand.)*

NORA. Dear Anna, you're a good mother to me and my children.

ANNA. Thank you, ma'am.

NORA. Go to the children. I must-- well; you'll see how lovely I shall be tomorrow. *(Anna starts to leave but stops.)*

ANNA. I'm sure there'll be no one at the dress-up ball as lovely as my little Miss Nora. *(Anna exits.)*

NORA. Impossible. Impossible. Don't think. Beautiful gloves, beautiful, little gloves! Forget it. Forget it. One-two-three-four-five-six! *(Helmer enters; he notices that Nora is talking to herself.)*

HELMER. Are you talking to yourself? Is my little lark all right?

NORA. *(Attempting to upbeat)* She's fine, dear.

HELMER. Something the matter?

NORA. No no no, I'm smiling, dear. Can't you see, I'm smiling. I'm always smiling. *(But she's not smiling as the lights fade.)*

INTERMISSION

***THE PLAY IS NOT OVER!! TO SEE HOW THIS PLAY ENDS,
ORDER A HARD COPY AT
WWW.NEXTSTAGEPRESS.NET***