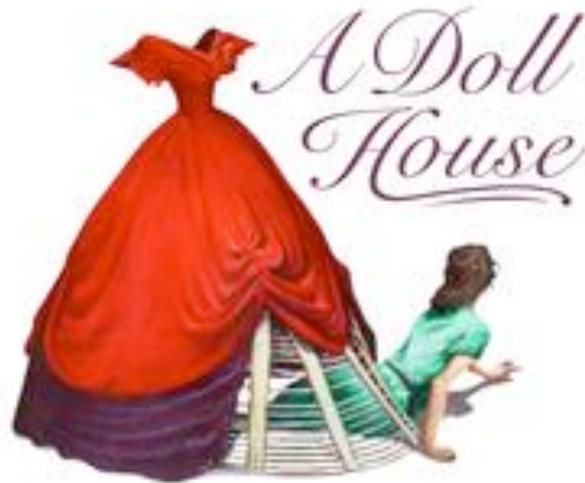
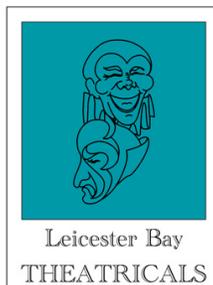


# PERUSAL SCRIPT



by  
**Henrik Ibsen**  
Translated from the Norwegian by  
**Eric Samuelsen**



**Newport, Maine**

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## **A DOLL HOUSE**

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## **Cast of Characters 3M 4F 1Teenboy 3 children**

**Torvald Helmer**, Attorney at law

**Nora Helmer**, his wife

**Doctor Rank**

**Mrs. Christina Linde**

**Nils Krogstad**

The Helmer's three small **children**

**Anne-Marie**, an elderly nanny

**Helene**, a maid

A **delivery boy**

**A DOLL HOUSE** by Henrik Ibsen. Adapted and Translated by Eric Samuelsen. (*For production by Professional Groups, College/University Groups, Community Groups*) 3M 4F 1Teenboy 3 children About 2 hours. A DOLL HOUSE examines gender roles, social constraints and the power of secrets through the seemingly happy marriage of Nora and Torvald Helmer. The play is called A DOLL HOUSE instead of the traditional A DOLL'S HOUSE. It's a more accurate translation of the Norwegian title ET DUKKEHJEM. When we buy our kids a house for them to use to play with dolls, we call it 'a doll house' – Norwegian children play with 'a dukkehjem.' Nora is Torvald's doll, in a doll house, that is not her own. **ORDER #3031**

**Eric Samuelsen** taught at Wright State University in Dayton, Ohio before joining the faculty at Brigham Young University in 1992. He became head of the Playwriting program at BYU in 1999. He has also taught as an adjunct faculty member in the Religion department. He retired from BYU in 2012.

As a playwright, Samuelsen has had twenty-seven plays professionally produced in Utah, Indiana, Louisiana, New York, and California. Some of his plays include *Gadanton*, which has seen three professional productions across the country, *A Love Affair with Electrons*, *Family*, *The Plan*, and *The Way We're Wired*. He is resident playwright at Plan B Theatre Company in Salt Lake City, who has designated their 2013-14 season a 'Season of Eric', including productions of six plays.

He is a member of the Playwrights' Circle, and the Dramatists Guild. He is three-time winner of the Annual Award in Playwriting offered by the Association for Mormon Letters (AML) and he became president of AML in 2007. In 2013 the organization awarded him the Smith Pettit Award for his lifetime work as a playwright. He has been a staff writer for the on-line satirical magazine *The Sugarbeet*. He was also featured in the book *Conversations with Mormon Authors*, edited by Chris Bigelow. He is a noted Ibsen translator, and has also published scholarly articles on 19th and 20th century Scandanavian Theatre, and more recently, on LDS drama and film. He blogs at [Mormoniconoclast.com](http://Mormoniconoclast.com).

## FIRST ACT

*(A pleasant and tastefully, but not expensively decorated living room. A door to the right in the back wall leads to the entryway; another door to the left in the back wall leads to Helmer's working study. Between the two doors is a piano. In the middle of the left wall is another door, and further along, a window. Close to the window is a round table, with an armchair and a sofa. On the side wall to the right, somewhat back, is a door, and towards the same wall, further forward, is a porcelain stove with two armchairs and a rocking chair beside it. Between the stove and side door, a small table. Copperplate engravings on the wall. An etagère with china figurines and other bric-a-brac; a small bookcase with new books, good binding. Carpet on the floor, fire burning in the stove. A winter day.)*  
*(A bell rings in the entryway, and shortly thereafter, we hear the door being unlocked. Nora comes cheerfully into the room, humming to herself. She's wearing street clothes, and carrying an armful of parcels, which she sets on the table to the right. She leaves the door to the entryway open, and we can see a delivery boy, carrying a Christmas tree and a basket, which he gives to the maid, who let him in.)*

**NORA:** Be sure to hide the tree, Helene. The children can't see it until tomorrow afternoon, when we've got it decorated.

*(To the DELIVERY BOY, reaching for her purse.)*

How much. . . ?

**DELIVERY BOY:** Fifty öre.

**NORA:** Here's a krone. No, keep the change.

*(DELIVERY BOY thanks her, and leaves. NORA closes the door. She laughs quietly to herself, while she takes off her street coat and hat. She takes a couple of macaroons from a bag in her pocket and eats them. She slips quietly over to Torvald's study, and listens at the door.)*

Yes. He's home.

*(NORA hums again, as she crosses to the table right.)*

**HELMER:** *(From the study.)* Is that my little lark I hear chirping out there?

**NORA:** *(Busy opening some of the packages.)* Yes it is.

**HELMER:** Is that my little squirrel, getting into things out there?

**NORA:** Yes!

**HELMER:** When did the squirrel come home?

**NORA:** Just now.

*(Putting the macaroon bag in her pocket and wiping her mouth.)*

Come on out, Torvald. I want you to see what I bought.

**HELMER:** Do not disturb!<sup>1</sup>

*(Almost immediately, he pokes his head out the study door, pen in hand.)*

So, shopping, huh? All this? Has my little squander-bird been out there driving me to bankruptcy again?

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<sup>1</sup>I think there's room to read the line less dismissively than maybe playfully. "Ikke forstyr" is what they put on hotel room doors, just like 'do not disturb' is used in American hotels.

**NORA:** Yes, but Torvald, we can let ourselves go a little this year, can't we? This is the first Christmas we haven't had to scrimp and save.

**HELMER:** Well, that doesn't mean we should go crazy.

**NORA:** As a matter of fact, Torvald, we should go a little crazy. Right? Have just a little fun? Now that you've got your new job, bringing in massive amounts of money?

**HELMER:** I don't start until after the New Year. And I can't expect a bonus until after the first quarter.

**NORA:** So until then, we'll charge it.

**HELMER:** Nora!

*(Taking NORA's hand and looking her in the eye.)*

You can be such a feather-brain. What if, for example, you charged a few thousand in Christmas presents, and then, New Year's Eve, a tile fell off the roof and hit me in the head, and—.

**NORA:** *(Hand on his mouth, shutting him up.)* Please, don't even talk like that. . . .

**HELMER:** Well, what if something like that happened?

**NORA:** If some kind of ridiculous, terrible accident . . . well, it wouldn't make any difference if I owed other people money or not, would it? I wouldn't care about some stupid debt.

**HELMER:** But what about the people you borrowed from?

**NORA:** Who cares about them? Total strangers wearing suits in an office somewhere.

**HELMER:** Nora, Nora. Isn't that just like a woman? But seriously, Nora, you know my views on this, darling: no debt! Never borrow! Freedom, and beauty vanish from a home burdened with debt. We've made a brave little stand against it up to now; we just have to hold out a little bit longer.

**NORA:** Whatever you say, Torvald.

**HELMER:** *(Following her.)* Come on. I don't want my little songbird's wings to droop. Okay? Don't be a sulky little squirrel.

*(Takes out his wallet.)*

Guess what I have here.

**NORA:** *(Whirls around.)* Money!

**HELMER:** See?

*(Doles out some money.)*

For heaven's sake, you think I've forgotten Christmas? Not just presents, but decorations, entertaining . . .

*(NORA counts.)*

**NORA:** Ten, twenty, thirty, forty . . . Oh, thank you, thank you, Torvald, this helps a lot, I can make do with this.

**HELMER:** Well, you're going to have to.

**NORA:** Don't worry, I will. Come here, I want to show you what I got. And everything on sale. New clothes for Ivar, and a sword. Here, a toy horse and a trumpet; those are for Bob. And a doll—look, it comes with a bed—for Emmy. They're nothing much, but she'll just break it all anyway, so it doesn't matter. And for the help, well, no sense being extravagant for them: some dress material, some handkerchiefs. I wish we had more for old Anne-Marie; she deserves it.

**HELMER:** And in that package?

**NORA:** *(With a cry.)* No, Torvald, no peeking, not 'til Christmas.

**HELMER:** Okay, okay. But tell me, my little spendthrift, what would you like . . . for you?

**NORA:** Phooey. For me? Couldn't care less.

**HELMER:** Come on, there has to be something. Tell me, something reasonably priced that you've had your eye on.

**NORA:** I honestly don't care. But, listen, Torvald. . .

**HELMER:** What?

**NORA:** *(Playing with his buttons without looking at him.)* There is something . . . just a little . . . you know . . .

**HELMER:** What is it?

**NORA:** Well . . . you could give me some money. Just a little, whatever you can spare. And then when I see something cute, you know, for me, I could get it.

**HELMER:** Wait just a second, Nora. . . .

**NORA:** Please? You can do that, can't you? And then, get this, I'll wrap the money up in some tissue, maybe with a little gold ribbon, and I'll hang it on the tree. It'll be adorable!

**HELMER:** What do we call the little bird that always spends too much?

**NORA:** Yes, all right: spendthrift. I know, I know. But let's do it anyway, Torvald, my way. Just this once. That way, I can check out those good after-Christmas sales, find just the thing I need. Come on, that's sensible, isn't it? Right?

**HELMER:** *(Smiling.)* Well, yes it would be, if you really can hang on to the money I give you, and if you really will do all that, look for something you like, sure. But I know what's going to happen. It'll be something for the house, and something else for the whatever, and before long I'll be forking out more money for who knows what else!

**NORA:** But Torvald. . . .

**HELMER:** Don't try to deny it, my dear little Nora.

*(Puts an arm around her waist.)*

My little spendy-bird is sweet tempered, but she blows through amazing amounts of money. You wouldn't believe how much it costs a man to keep one in his house.

**NORA:** Darn you. That's really not fair, you have no idea, I save every krone I can.

**HELMER:** *(Laughing.)* Yes, I think that's probably true. You save every krone *you* can. It's just that . . . you can't.

**NORA:** *(With a smile of quiet satisfaction.)* Hmmm. If you only knew how many secret expenses we songbirds and squirrels really have.

**HELMER:** You're such a strange little thing. Take after your father. Scratching and clawing for every öre you can lay a hand on, but as soon as you get some, it flows through your fingers like water, and you never have any idea where it's gone. Well, I have to take you for who you are, I guess. It's in the blood, a genetic trait.

**NORA:** Well, I wish I'd inherited a lot of Dad's characteristics.

**HELMER:** And I love you just the way you are, my sweet little songbird. But hang on. Let me just . . . I'm seeing . . . do I detect a look of . . . guilt?

**NORA:** Me?

**HELMER:** You do, you really do. Look me in the eye.

**NORA:** *(Looks at him.)* What?

**HELMER:** *(Wagging a finger at her.)* Little Miss Sweet Tooth went wild in town today, didn't she?

**NORA:** Look, I have no idea where you. . . .

**HELMER:** Really? You didn't just happen to pop into, say, a bakery? Or a candy shop?

**NORA:** I promise you, Torvald. . . .

**HELMER:** Didn't nibble on some pastries, or candy samples, or. . .

**NORA:** Of course not.

**HELMER:** Not even a macaroon or two? Or five?

**NORA:** Truly, honestly, I haven't. Seriously.

**HELMER:** All right. Fine. Really, I'm just kidding.

**NORA:** *(Goes to the table right.)* I could never go against you, Torvald.

**HELMER:** No, I know that. And you've given me your word, so . . .

*(Crosses to NORA.)*

No, keep your little Christmas secrets to yourself, Nora darling. I suppose I'll just have to wait until tonight, when we light the tree.

**NORA:** Did you remember to ask Dr. Rank?

**HELMER:** No. But it doesn't matter. Of course he'll be here; he always has dinner with us, holidays. But, yes, I will ask him; he's stopping by later today. I ordered the good wine. Nora, you can't believe how I'm looking forward to tonight.

**NORA:** Me too. And the kids, it's going to be so much fun!

**HELMER:** Ah, Nora, it's good to think about, everything we've worked for, the solid job, the big raise, salary, benefits. It's just . . . satisfying.

**NORA:** It's amazing.

**HELMER:** Remember last Christmas? Three weeks before Christmas, every night you shut yourself in 'til way past midnight, making decorations, paper flowers for the tree and wreaths and presents. Ugh. Dullest time I can ever remember.

**NORA:** It wasn't dull for me.

**HELMER:** Well, it ended up looking pretty shabby.

**NORA:** Now you're just teasing. Was it my fault the cat got in, and ripped everything to shreds?

**HELMER:** No, of course it wasn't. Poor little Nora. You just wanted us all to enjoy ourselves; you did what you could, and that's what matters. Still, I'm glad that bleak time in our lives is over. Over.

**NORA:** Yes, it is truly wonderful.

**HELMER:** Well. No more long nights, with me sitting here bored to death, while you wear out those beautiful eyes and those soft dainty hands. . . .

**NORA:** It's true, isn't it, Torvald, it's really over! We don't have to do any of that anymore. What a lovely thought. And listen, I have some ideas, some plans. We'll talk after Christmas, okay?

*(Doorbell rings.)*

There's the doorbell.

*(Goes to get it.)*

Company. What a bore!

**HELMER:** *(Heading back to his study.)* I'm not home.

**HELENE:** *(At the door.)* Ma'am, there's a stranger here, a woman.

**NORA:** Yes, let her in.

**HELENE:** The doctor's here too.

**HELMER:** Did you show him in to my study?

**HELENE:** He should be there now.

*(HELMER goes into his room. HELENE shows in MRS. LINDE, who's in traveling clothes, then she shuts the door.)*

**MRS. LINDE:** *(In a quiet and dispirited voice.)* Hello, Nora.

**NORA:** *(Uncertain.)* Hello.

**MRS. LINDE:** You don't remember me.

**NORA:** No, I don't think . . . no, but wait a sec, I think I . . .

*(An outburst.)*

Christina? Is it really you?

**MRS. LINDE:** Yes, it's me.

**NORA:** Christina! And me, I didn't even recognize you! But how could I, when . . .

*(Slowly.)*

How much you've changed, Christina.

**MRS. LINDE:** Yes, I suppose I have. In nine, no, ten years. . .

**NORA:** Has it really been that long? Yeah, I guess it has. And the last eight years have been wonderful, happy ones: well, you can just imagine. And now you've come to town too! The long trip, in the dead of winter. That's awfully brave of you.

**MRS. LINDE:** I came on the ferry this morning.

**NORA:** To enjoy Christmas, of course. How lovely. And enjoy ourselves we shall, you can count on that. But, please, take off your jacket. Unless you're cold?

*(Helping MRS. LINDE.)*

Now look, let's get comfy by the stove, and . . . no you take the easy chair, it's more comfortable, and I'll sit in the rocker.

*(Takes her hands.)*

Oh, yes, I can see that old Christina look. It was just at first that I . . . you do look a little pale, Christina, and have you lost weight?

**MRS. LINDE:** And I'm much, much older.

**NORA:** Perhaps just a little older. A tiny bit, hardly at all.

*(Stopping short, suddenly serious.)*

But I have to be the most thoughtless person, just sitting here chattering. Sweet, dear Christina, will you forgive me?

**MRS. LINDE:** What do you mean?

**NORA:** *(Slowly.)* Poor Christina. You're a widow now, aren't you?

**MRS. LINDE:** For three years.

**NORA:** See, I did know that, I read it in the papers. Christina, you have to believe me, I meant to write, I truly did. But every time I sat down to do it, something came up.

**MRS. LINDE:** My dear Nora. I understand.

**NORA:** No, it was mean of me, it really was. And you poor thing, what you must have gone through. And he didn't leave you enough to live off of?

**MRS. LINDE:** No.

**NORA:** Any children?

**MRS. LINDE:** No.

**NORA:** So just . . . nothing?

**MRS. LINDE:** Not even a sense of loss to sustain me.

**NORA:** (*Looks unbelieving at her.*) But Christina . . . really?

**MRS. LINDE:** (*Smiling wanly, rearranging her hair.*) It happens. From time to time.

**NORA:** So completely alone. That must have been so terribly hard for you. I have three children, beautiful children. You can't see them, they're out with their nanny. But now, look, you have to tell me everything. . . .

**MRS. LINDE:** No, no, no, you tell me, tell me everything.

**NORA:** No, you go first. Today, I refuse to be selfish, I want this all to be about you. That's all I'm going to think about, just you. But there's something I have to tell you first. Guess what wonderful thing has happened to us recently.

**MRS. LINDE:** No, what?

**NORA:** My husband has been named the new director of First City Bank<sup>2</sup>.

**MRS. LINDE:** Your husband? That's great, really, good for you!

**NORA:** Unbelievable! An attorney's fees can be pretty uneven, you know, especially when you're the kind who won't represent clients who aren't completely above-board and decent. And naturally, that's Torvald, that's just who he is, and I support him one hundred percent. Well, we're just so thrilled. He starts at the bank after the New Year, huge salary, benefits, bonuses. And we're going to be able to live a lot better than, well, we have been. And we plan to! Oh, Christina, I feel so light, you know, just . . . happy! It's going to be so great: money pouring in, and not a care in the world! I mean, right?

**MRS. LINDE:** Well, it surely must be wonderful to be able to afford everything you need.

**NORA:** Not just the necessities. Money: real money. Piles and piles of money.

**MRS. LINDE:** (*Smiling.*) Nora, Nora, still not very sensible, are you? I remember in school, you were quite the free spender.

**NORA:** (*Laughs quietly.*) Yes, Torvald says that too.

*(Shaking her fingers.)*

But 'Nora, Nora' may not be quite the airhead you think. We haven't really been in a position to spend freely. We've had to work, both of us.

**MRS. LINDE:** You've worked?

**NORA:** Absolutely. Odd jobs, embroidery, crocheting, all kinds of needlework. And. . . .

*(Casually.)*

Other things too. You remember that Torvald quit his civil service job when we got married? It was steady and safe, but there wasn't a chance for promotion, and at that salary, well, we could hardly make ends meet. He thought he could do better on his own, but that first year, he was killing himself trying to get his practice going. Taking on every kind of case, all those late nights, early mornings, in that tiny, freezing office. It just about killed him; I mean literally, Christina, he was working himself to death. The doctors finally told him

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<sup>2</sup>Ibsen calls the bank 'Aktiebanken.' A normal bank name in Norway, but essentially untranslatable. I created my own generic bank name for this translation.

he needed to stop, head south where it was warmer, and take it easy for awhile.

**MRS. LINDE:** So you spent a year in Italy?

**NORA:** We did. It wasn't easy to get away; it was just after Ivar was born. But we had to go. And I don't regret it; it was a wonderful trip, Christina, and it saved Torvald's life. But it cost a lot of money.

**MRS. LINDE:** I can imagine.

**NORA:** Four thousand eight hundred kroner, Christina. That's a ton of money.

**MRS. LINDE:** You were lucky to be able to come up with it.

**NORA:** Yes. As it happens, I was able to get it from my father.

**MRS. LINDE:** That's right. That was about the time when your father died.

**NORA:** Right about then. And remember, I couldn't just go home and ask him for a loan. I was on full bed rest, waiting for Ivar to be born. And when I could be up and about, I had poor Torvald to take care of, practically on his deathbed. And my poor, dear, wonderful father! I never got to see him again, never got to say goodbye. Oh, Christina, those were the hardest days of my marriage.

**MRS. LINDE:** I know how much your father meant to you. But then, you just went to Italy?

**NORA:** Well, we did have the money then, and the doctors said we needed to go, so a month later, there we were.

**MRS. LINDE:** And your husband came home completely cured?

**NORA:** Fit as a fiddle!

**MRS. LINDE:** But . . . don't you have a doctor who . . . ?

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

**MRS. LINDE:** When your girl let me in, she said something about a doctor, a gentleman, who had also just arrived.

**NORA:** Oh, sure, Dr. Rank. But he's our best friend, he's not here, you know, professionally. He stops by once a day, practically. No, Torvald hasn't been sick once since our trip. And the kids are all healthy and great, and me, I'm fine as always.

*(Jumps up and claps her hands.)*

My golly, Christina, it's so wonderful to be happy, and healthy! But, this is ridiculous of me, going on and on about my life.

*(Sits down, her hands in her lap.)*

Please, you must forgive me. Now, tell me, what did you mean, 'no sense of loss to sustain me?' It almost sounds like you, well, weren't in love? I mean, if that's . . . why did you marry him?

**MRS. LINDE:** My mother was still alive then, a bed-ridden invalid. My two younger brothers were my responsibility. I just couldn't, in good conscience, refuse his offer.

**NORA:** No, I can see that. He was a wealthy man, too.

**MRS. LINDE:** He was reasonably well off, I think. But his businesses were shakier than I thought. When he died, everything went to his creditors. There was nothing left.

**NORA:** So, what did you--?

**MRS. LINDE:** Well, I did what I could. Worked in a shop, taught some school, did whatever else I could find. I haven't had a day off in three years. And now it's over, Nora. It's just me now. My poor mother's gone. My brothers have finished school; both have good jobs, good prospects.

**NORA:** You must feel so free--.

**MRS. LINDE:** No. My life just feels terribly empty. No one to live for anymore.

*(Stands up, restless.)*

That's why I've decided not to stay there, in that village, away from everything. I think it has to be easier here to find something, keep myself occupied. If I could just get a position, maybe in an office or something.

**NORA:** Oh, but Christina, long hours in an office, and you already look exhausted. What if you went on a cruise or something instead?

**MRS. LINDE:** *(By a window.)* I don't have a father who can lend me money for a fancy trip.

**NORA:** *(Stands.)* Please don't be mad at me, Christina.

**MRS. LINDE:** *(Takes her hands.)* Oh, Nora, no. Please, don't you be angry with me. That's the worst part of my situation, the bitterness you feel, the way it builds up in your mind. You feel like you don't have anything to work for, and yet you still need to take advantage of opportunities; you are still alive. So you grow selfish. While you were telling me all about all the wonderful changes in your life, my first thoughts weren't about you, but, well, how this could be good for me.

**NORA:** But how in the world . . . oh, I get it. You hope Torvald could maybe do something for you.

**MRS. LINDE:** That's exactly what I was thinking.

**NORA:** Well, that's exactly what he'll do! You just leave it to me; I'll handle it so delicately. Find some cute outfit, something he wants to see me in, or . . . oh, Christina, I so want to help you out!

**MRS. LINDE:** It's sweet of you, Nora, to be so eager to help me, especially when you know so little about life, and how tough things can get.

**NORA:** Me? You're saying I don't know anything about --?

**MRS. LINDE:** *(Smiling at NORA.)* Nora, a little embroidery and needlework? You're so childish sometimes.

**NORA:** *(Pacing, tossing her head.)* Christina. You shouldn't act so superior.

**MRS. LINDE:** Well. . . .

**NORA:** You're just like everyone else. Acting like I've never done anything serious--.

**MRS. LINDE:** Now, come on--.

**NORA:** Or difficult, ever in my life. Like I don't know anything about how hard life--..

**MRS. LINDE:** Dearest Nora. You just told me everything, all your troubles.

**NORA:** Puh. Trivia. I haven't told you anything. I haven't told you any of the big things.

**MRS. LINDE:** Big things. What do you mean?

**NORA:** You look down on me, Christina. I know you do. But you really shouldn't. You're proud of the fact that you worked so long and hard for the sake of your mother.

**MRS. LINDE:** I don't really look down on anyone. But, yes, I am proud of the fact that I was able to make my poor mother's last days comfortable.

**NORA:** And you're also pretty proud of the fact that you provided for your brothers the way you did.

**MRS. LINDE:** I think I have a right to.

**NORA:** I think so too. But now you listen to me, Christina. I have something to be proud of too.

**MRS. LINDE:** I don't doubt it. So what do you mean?

**NORA:** Quiet! Oh, if Torvald heard any of this. He mustn't, not ever, nobody can know what I'm about to tell you except you.

**MRS. LINDE:** But what is it?

**NORA:** Come over here.

*(Sits MRS. LINDE on the sofa, NORA sits next to her; heads together.)*

Like I said, I have something to be proud of too. I'm the only one who saved Torvald's life.

**MRS. LINDE:** Well . . . yes.

**NORA:** I told you about our trip to Italy. Torvald would not have survived if we hadn't gone when we did.

**MRS. LINDE:** Right, and your father gave you the money you needed. . . .

**NORA:** Yes, that's what Torvald thinks. That's what I told people.

**MRS. LINDE:** But--

**NORA:** My father didn't give us an öre. I got the money. All of it.

**MRS. LINDE:** But . . . all that money?

**NORA:** Forty eight hundred. What do you think of that?

**MRS. LINDE:** Nora, how in the world . . . did you win the lottery?

**NORA:** The big jackpot!

*(Disdainfully.)*

No. That's luck, this was art.

**MRS. LINDE:** But then, wait, where did you get it?

**NORA:** *(Nods and smiles mysteriously.)* Oh, well, tra la la la.

**MRS. LINDE:** You couldn't possibly have borrowed it.

**NORA:** Why not?

**MRS. LINDE:** Well, with no collateral . . . and if Torvald doesn't know, he couldn't have co-signed. . . .

**NORA:** But when a wife has some business sense, a wife who knows how to manage--

**MRS. LINDE:** Nora, honestly, I don't understand. . . .

**NORA:** You don't have to understand. Anyway, what makes you think I borrowed it? Maybe I got it some other way.

*(Lays back on the sofa.)*

Maybe I got it from one of my admirers. A girl with my looks can always--

**MRS. LINDE:** You're crazy!

**NORA:** And you're dying of curiosity, aren't you Christina?

**MRS. LINDE:** Look, you didn't do something stupid, did you?

**NORA:** Is it stupid for me to try to save my husband's life?

**MRS. LINDE:** By stupid, I mean, if you were sneaking around behind his back. . . . if he knew what you were . . .

**NORA:** Oh, he can't ever know! Good heavens, don't you get it? He mustn't ever know how close he was to dying. I was the one the doctors talked to, when they said that the cold was killing him, that we had to go to the south. Oh, I used all my wiles, kept saying how lovely a trip would be, how all the other young wives we knew got to go on vacations; I cried and begged, and I pouted and kept saying he should remember my condition, how it would be good for the baby, and then I'd drop hints about how he could take out a loan. But that almost made him angry. He said I was a light-minded little airhead, and that it was his duty as a man of honor to not indulge me in my silly whims and fads and impulses; that's what he said. All right, I said to myself, I'll have to save you some other way; and that's when I saw my chance.

**MRS. LINDE:** And your father never told Torvald the money didn't come from him?

**NORA:** No, never. I mean, he died about that same time. I thought about it, letting him in on my secret and

begging him to keep it to himself. But he was so sick back then. And then, sadly, it didn't matter anymore.

**MRS. LINDE:** And you've never told your husband any of this?

**NORA:** Of course not. Don't you see? He's so proud of his integrity, so strict, so letter-of-the-law. And besides, he's a man, with that manly pride. How humiliating it would be to him if he thought that he owed me something. I mean, it would wreck our entire relationship, destroy this beautiful, happy home of ours.

**MRS. LINDE:** Won't you ever tell him?

**NORA:** (*Half smiling.*) I don't know. Maybe. Someday. Years from now, when I'm not pretty anymore. Don't laugh at me! I mean, naturally, when Torvald doesn't want me the same way he does now, when he doesn't enjoy it when I dance for him, or dress up, or . . . you know. It might be good to have a secret in reserve.

(*Breaking off.*)

Ridiculous, it's never going to happen. Anyway, what do you think of my great secret, Christina? I'm more capable than you thought, right? You can just imagine how it's hung over me. It hasn't been easy for me to make every payment on time. And in the world of big business, there's such things as quarterly interest, and what they call amortization, and those haven't been easy to manage. I've saved a little here and there, wherever I could. I couldn't take much from the household money, because of course Torvald had to live well. And I couldn't let the children run around dressed in rags; I had to use their money just for them, sweet little things.

**MRS. LINDE:** So everything had to come out of your own budget?

**NORA:** Of course. I was the one who managed it, after all. Every time Torvald gave me money for a new dress or something, I'd spend as little as I could. Look for sales, always buy the cheapest fabric, then I'd make a dress and tell him it was store bought. Luckily, Torvald seems to think I look good in everything, so he wouldn't notice. But it was awfully tough for me, Christina. It is nice to really dress up sometimes, isn't it?

**MRS. LINDE:** Absolutely.

**NORA:** Of course, I found some other ways to make money. Last winter, I got lucky, and found some work doing copying. I'd lock myself in every night, and write for hours, 'til early in the morning. I'd get so tired, utterly exhausted. But it was also kind of fun, you know, to sit and work and earn money. It was almost like I was a man.

**MRS. LINDE:** So how much have you been able to pay off?

**NORA:** It's hard to say exactly. I'm never quite sure how to read those accounts. All I know is, I've paid them everything I've been able to scrape together. Some days, I hardly knew where I could turn.

(*Smiles.*)

Those days, I'd sit here, and fantasize, about an elderly rich gentleman who'd fall madly in love with me--.

**MRS. LINDE:** Really? And his name is?

**NORA:** Imaginary! Who'd died, and when they read his will it said in great big letters, 'I hereby leave my entire huge fortune to the enchanting Mrs. Helmer, to be paid to her immediately, in cash.'

**MRS. LINDE:** But seriously, Nora, you didn't have anyone in mind?

**NORA:** No! My elderly admirer was just a wonderful fantasy, a daydream that helped pass the time, those long hours and days when I was particularly desperate, wondering where in the world I'd come up with the money. But you know, I don't need it anymore. That boring old coot can go anywhere he wants to, I couldn't care less about him or his ridiculous will. Because I'm free!

(*Jumps up.*)

**PERUSAL SCRIPT -- A Doll House** by Henrik Ibsen -- Translated and Adapted by Eric Samuelsen

My goodness, Christina, it's so wonderful to say that: I'm free! To be free, completely free, to laugh and tumble and play with the kids, to have a house with the newest, most fashionable things, just the way Torvald likes it! And think about it, soon it'll be spring, and fresh air, and blue skies. Maybe we can travel a little. See the ocean again. Oh, it's so wonderful, just to live and be happy!

*(Front doorbell.)*

**MRS. LINDE:** There's the doorbell. It's perhaps best if I leave.

**NORA:** No, stay. We're not expecting anyone; I'm sure this is for Torvald--.

**HELENE:** Excuse me, ma'am, there's a gentleman here asking for Mr. Helmer, the attorney.

**NORA:** You mean, Mr. Helmer, the bank President.

**HELENE:** Yes, the bank President . . . anyway, I didn't know, since the doctor's here. . .

**NORA:** Who is this gentleman?

**KROGSTAD:** *(In the doorway.)* It's me.

*(MRS. LINDE starts and turns away from the window.)*

**NORA:** *(Steps toward KROGSTAD, upset, with quiet intensity.)* You. What is it? What's your business with my husband?

**KROGSTAD:** Bank business . . . in a manner of speaking. I work at First City Bank, and I understand he's going to be my boss.

**NORA:** Well, I. . .

**KROGSTAD:** Just some dull bank business. Nothing more.

**NORA:** All right then. You can find his office, just there.

*(NORA shows KROGSTAD where to go, then returns to the stove.)*

**MRS. LINDE:** Nora. Who is that man?

**NORA:** A lawyer. His name's Krogstad.

**MRS. LINDE:** It really was him, then.

**NORA:** You know him?

**MRS. LINDE:** I did, some years ago. He had a small legal practice back in our town.

**NORA:** Yes, I guess he did.

**MRS. LINDE:** How he's changed.

**NORA:** I heard he had a very unhappy marriage.

**MRS. LINDE:** He's a widower now.

**NORA:** With a number of small children, I think. That'll do.

*(NORA closes the stove, moves the rocker slightly.)*

**MRS. LINDE:** He's had his hand in a number of businesses, I understand.

**NORA:** Could be. I don't really know. But let's not talk about business. So boring.

*(Dr. RANK comes out of Torvald's room.)*

**DR. RANK:** *(At the door.)* No, no, now, I'd just be intruding. I'd just as soon pop in and have a chat with your wife.

*(In the room, notices MRS. LINDE.)*

I beg your pardon, it appears I'm intruding here as well.

**NORA:** No, no, not at all.

*(Introducing them.)*

Dr. Rank, Mrs. Linde.

**DR. RANK:** Well, that's a name I hear often in this household. I believe I may have passed you on the stairs on my way in.

**MRS. LINDE:** Yes, I'm afraid I move rather slowly these days.

**DR. RANK:** Oh, my. A touch of arthritis, perhaps?

**MRS. LINDE:** No, just fatigue, I think.

**DR. RANK:** Nothing more? Then I expect you've come to town for some rest and relaxation. And not for the holiday parties?

**MRS. LINDE:** I've come to town to look for a job.

**DR. RANK:** Oh? And you consider that an effective cure for overexertion?

**MRS. LINDE:** One must live, you know, Doctor.

**DR. RANK:** Yes, that is a common enough prejudice, I understand.

**NORA:** A prejudice you share, right? You want to live as much as anyone.

**DR. RANK:** As a matter of fact, I do. As wretched as I feel, I want to extend my misery indefinitely. All my patients are the same, however desperate their condition. It even applies to what you might call moral invalids. In fact, there's a kind of moral cripple in there now with your husband.

**MRS. LINDE:** *(Quietly)* Oh!

**NORA:** Who do you mean?

**DR. RANK:** Oh, some lawyer named Krogstad. No one you'd want to know. As rotten a character as you can imagine, but there he stood, self-important wretch, proclaiming "I have to live!"

**NORA:** But, what would he want to talk to Torvald about?

**DR. RANK:** I don't have the faintest idea. All I heard was that it had something to do with First City Bank.

**NORA:** I didn't know that this Krog--whatever, Krogstad had anything to do with the bank.

**DR. RANK:** Oh, yes, I believe he has some sort of minor position there.

*(To MRS. LINDE.)*

I don't know if folks from your area have this kind of vulture. Someone who sniffs around, looking for a hint of scandal, then leeches onto their victims, waiting breathlessly for a moment of opportunity. It's best for the healthy to stay well away.

**MRS. LINDE:** But it's also the sick who most need to be taken in.

**DR. RANK:** *(Shrugs his shoulders.)* Well, there you have it. There's the concept that turns society into a morgue.

*(NORA, lost in her thoughts, gives a half laugh, and claps her hands together.)*

Why do you laugh? Do you really know what society has become?

**NORA:** Why should I care about boring old society? I was laughing about something else anyway. Something really funny, too. Dr. Rank, tell me something. Everyone who works at First City, their jobs all depend on Torvald?

**DR. RANK:** Is that what you find so funny?

**NORA:** *(Shaking her head, laughing.)* Never mind, never mind!

*(Pacing the floor.)*

That really is amusing, though, that we, Torvald, have such power over all those people's lives.

*(Takes the bag from her pocket.)*

Dr. Rank, how about a macaroon?

**DR. RANK:** Well, look at that, a macaroon. I understood that was forbidden contraband around here.

**NORA:** Well, but these are some Christina gave me.

**MRS. LINDE:** What? Me?

**NORA:** No, no, no, don't worry, this is not your fault. You couldn't possibly know that Torvald has forbidden them. See, he thinks they'll rot out my teeth. But, come on, there's no harm just this once, right Dr. Rank? Here you go.

*(Stuffs one in his mouth.)*

And you too, Christina. And I'll just have one. This little, tiny . . . or maybe just two.

*(Walking about restlessly.)*

I feel so amazingly happy today! There's just one thing on earth I want to do, something I'm dying to do.

**DR. RANK:** Oh? And what's that?

**NORA:** It's just something I have this overpowering urge to say. Where Torvald can hear it.

**DR. RANK:** Well, why can't you just say it to him?

**NORA:** Oh, I couldn't possibly, it's much too ugly.

**MRS. LINDE:** Ugly?

**DR. RANK:** Well, then, it's probably best left unsaid. But you could tell us, you know. What is this thing you have such an overpowering urge to say? Where Helmer can hear it?

**NORA:** I have this overpowering urge to look him in the eye, and say to him: Torvald, you're an asshole.

**DR. RANK:** Are you insane?

**MRS. LINDE:** Nora, for heaven's sake. . .

**DR. RANK:** Say it. There he is.

**NORA:** *(Hiding the bag of macaroons.)* Hush hush hush.

*(HELMER comes out of his office, jacket on his arm, hat in his hand.)*

**NORA:** *(Runs up to him.)* Torvald! So what happened to, uh, what's his name?

**HELMER:** Oh, he left out the side door.

**NORA:** Oh! Let me introduce you. This is Christina, who's just come to town.

**HELMER:** Christina? Excuse me, but I don't believe I'm familiar with--

**NORA:** Oh, Torvald. Christina Linde, you know my friend Mrs. Linde.

**HELMER:** Ah, yes. You're a childhood friend of my wife's, if memory serves. . .

**MRS. LINDE:** We've met. Some years ago.

**NORA:** And guess what, Torvald. Christina came all this way into the city just to talk to you.

**HELMER:** Really? What did you want to talk to me about?

**MRS. LINDE:** That's actually not--

**NORA:** She is tremendously clever when it comes to office work, and now what she wants more than anything is to find some brilliant man, a real leader, so she can study under him and learn from him. . . .

**HELMER:** That's very sensible of you.

**NORA:** And so, when she heard that you'd been named bank president--I sent her a telegram--she got herself here as quickly as she could, and . . . right? What do you say, Torvald? Don't you think, for my sake, you could do something for her? Please?

**HELMER:** Well, it's not completely impossible. You are, I understand, recently widowed?

**MRS. LINDE:** Yes.

**HELMER:** And you have business experience, working in an office environment?

**MRS. LINDE:** I do indeed.

**HELMER:** Then it's quite likely that I could offer you a position.

**NORA:** *(Claps her hands.)* I told you!

**HELMER:** Your timing is fortunate, Mrs. Linde--

**MRS. LINDE:** How can I ever thank you!

**HELMER:** That's really quite unnecessary.

*(Putting on his jacket.)*

But today I'm afraid I must ask you to excuse me--

**DR. RANK:** Wait, I'll go with you.

*(Fetches his coat, and warms it by the stove.)*

**NORA:** Don't stay out long, my dear.

**HELMER:** An hour, that's all.

**NORA:** You're leaving too, Christina?

**MRS. LINDE:** *(Putting on her coat.)* I've got to see about getting a room somewhere.

**HELMER:** I can walk with you at least part of the way.

**NORA:** *(Helping her.)* It's a shame we can't put you up. But we're so cramped here ourselves. I'm afraid we just don't have--

**MRS. LINDE:** Don't give it a thought. Goodbye, my dear Nora, and thanks so much for everything.

**NORA:** Well, goodbye for now. But, you'll come back tonight, of course. And you, Dr. Rank? What do you say? If you're well enough. And you will be, of course. Bundle up, good and warm.

*(With a buzz of small talk, they all head towards the hallway; we hear CHILDREN's voices outside.)*

Here they are, here they are!

*(NORA runs to the door; the CHILDREN enter with their nanny, ANNE-MARIE. NORA bends to kiss them.)*

Oh, you sweet, wonderful . . . do you see, Christina? Aren't they beautiful?

**RANK:** Don't loiter there in the draft.

**HELMER:** Come on, Mrs. Linde. This place will soon be unbearable for anyone but mothers.

*(Dr. RANK, MRS. LINDE and HELMER exit down the stairs. ANNE-MARIE takes the CHILDREN into the living room. NORA follows after closing the door.)*

**NORA:** You look so fresh and strong! And your cheeks are so red, like apples and roses!

*(The CHILDREN ad lib interrupting her during the following.)*

And was that fun? That's wonderful. And did you pull Emmy and Bob on the sled? And you were going how fast? Down a hill, all together? And you figured that out, did you? Pretty smart, there, Ivar. Oh, let me hold her, Anne-Marie. My sweet little doll baby!

*(Takes the BABY from ANNE-MARIE and dances with her.)*

Yes, Mamma will dance with you too, Bob, I promise. What's that? You were throwing snowballs? Oh, I wish I could have been with you! No, don't worry, I'll undress them, Anne-Marie. Yes, let me do it; I think it's fun. Go rest in the other room, you look half-frozen. There's hot coffee on the stove, help yourself.

*(ANNE-MARIE goes into the room left, while NORA takes off the CHILDREN's winter clothes,*

*tossing them every which way, while the CHILDREN chatter throughout.)*

Really? You saw a big dog? And it chased you? But it didn't bite you. No, no, no, dogs don't bite adorable little doll children. Get away from those packages Ivar, no peeking! Whhat's that? Well, wouldn't you like to know? Huh? So do you want to play? What do you want to play? Hide and seek? Yes! Let's play hide and seek! Bob, do you want to hide first? Oh, you want me to? Okay, I'll hide first.

*(Laughing and shouting, NORA and the CHILDREN play in the living room and the room to the right. Finally, NORA comes in, and hides under the table. The CHILDREN come in, can't find her, hear her muffled laughter under the table, pull up the table cloth, and find her. Wild laughter. She tries to scare them, more shouts. Meanwhile, there's a knock on the door, which no one notices. Another knock. Enter KROGSTAD. He waits, half in the doorway, while the game goes on.)*

**KROGSTAD:** Excuse me, Mrs. Helmer?

*(With a shriek, NORA whirls around, scrambles.)*

**NORA:** Aaa! What do you want?

**KROGSTAD:** I'm sorry, the door was ajar, someone must have forgotten to close it.

**NORA:** *(Rising.)* My husband is not home, Mr. Krogstad.

**KROGSTAD:** I know.

**NORA:** So . . . what do you want?

**KROGSTAD:** A word with you.

**NORA:** With . . . ?

*(Turns to the CHILDREN.)*

Go in with Anne-Marie. No, the strange man isn't going to hurt Mommy. When he's gone, we'll play some more, promise.

*(She ushers them into the room left, and closes the door after them. She turns to KROGSTAD, uneasy.)*

So, you want a word with me?

**KROGSTAD:** Yes. I do.

**NORA:** Today? Look, it's not yet the first of the month.

**KROGSTAD:** No, it's Christmas Eve. And it's going to be up to you how merry this Christmas will be.

**NORA:** What is it you want? I truly cannot give you anything today.

**KROGSTAD:** This isn't about that. Not yet. This is another matter entirely. You can spare me a few minutes, I expect?

**NORA:** Yes, yes, of course, I have time, except--

**KROGSTAD:** I was sitting there at Olsen's restaurant, and I saw your husband going down the street--

**NORA:** All right.

**KROGSTAD:** With a woman.

**NORA:** What about it?

**KROGSTAD:** I have to ask: was it Mrs. Christina Linde?

**NORA:** Yes.

**KROGSTAD:** She just came to town?

**NORA:** Yes, today.

**KROGSTAD:** And she's a good friend of yours?

**NORA:** Yes, she is. But I still don't understand—.

**KROGSTAD:** I also knew her once.

**NORA:** I know that too.

**KROGSTAD:** All right. You know about the situation. I thought you might. Now, I have to ask you something short and sweet. Is Mrs. Linde getting a job at First City bank?

**NORA:** Mr. Krogstad! How dare you question me like this? You work for my husband. He's your boss. But since you ask, I'll tell you; yes, Mrs. Linde has been offered a job. Because I recommended her, Mr. Krogstad. So now you know.

**KROGSTAD:** So I guessed right.

**NORA:** (*Pacing the floor.*) Well, I would hope that when someone has a little influence, they would try to use it . . . even if they're just a woman, don't think that means that . . . look, you're a subordinate, you need to be careful how you speak to someone who might be close enough to your boss . . . you might not want to be so pushy. Is what I'm saying.

**KROGSTAD:** Because I might be pushing someone with influence.

**NORA:** That's right. That's it, exactly.

**KROGSTAD:** (*A change of tone.*) Mrs. Helmer. Perhaps you could be persuaded to use your influence on my behalf.

**NORA:** What? What do you mean?

**KROGSTAD:** Would you be kind enough to see to it that I retain my position at the bank?

**NORA:** What do you mean? Is someone trying to take away your job?

**KROGSTAD:** Oh, don't sit there all innocent, and pretend you don't know what's going on. I know perfectly well the lengths your friend would go to to avoid me. And I know who I can thank for the fact that I've been fired.

**NORA:** I promise you—.

**KROGSTAD:** Yes, yes, yes; here's the deal, there's still time, and I strongly advise you to use your influence to stop it.

**NORA:** Mr. Krogstad, I have absolutely no influence at all.

**KROGSTAD:** Really. Because I think I just heard you say—.

**NORA:** You took me too literally. What makes you think I can influence my husband to—?

**KROGSTAD:** I've known your husband since we were students together. I don't believe the great bank manager is some paragon of integrity, any more than most married men.

**NORA:** Talk that way about my husband, and I will show you the door.

**KROGSTAD:** You're pretty brave.

**NORA:** I'm not afraid of you any more. After the New Year, I'll be out from under the whole thing.

**KROGSTAD:** Listen to me now, lady. If I have to, I will fight like my life depended on it for my job.

**NORA:** I expect that's true.

**KROGSTAD:** It's not just the income, that's the least of it. It's something else, it's . . . all right, out with it! It's this, it's this other . . . Look, like everyone else, you probably know that a few years ago I was caught doing something . . . I shouldn't have.

**NORA:** I heard something like that.

**KROGSTAD:** It never went to court. But from then on, every legitimate door was slammed in my face. So I

went into . . . a variety of businesses, some of which you know about. I had to do something, and I wasn't the worst guy out there hustling. But I can't do it anymore. My sons are growing up; for their sake, I need to get back into respectable circles, much as I can. This job at the bank was like the first rung on the ladder.

And now your husband is going to kick me off the ladder, right back into the mud.

**NORA:** But for heaven's sake, Mr. Krogstad, I can't help you. There's nothing I can do.

**KROGSTAD:** You just don't want to. Believe me, I have the means to motivate you.

**NORA:** Wait. You're not going to tell my husband I owe you money?

**KROGSTAD:** What if I did?

**NORA:** That would be the most shameful, awful thing you could do.

*(Almost in tears.)*

This secret--my joy and my pride--if he should learn of it in such an ugly and horrible way, learn of it from you. You would be exposing me to the worst kind of unpleasantness--

**KROGSTAD:** Just. . . unpleasantness?

**NORA:** But it's not just that. You'd be hurting yourself much worse than you'd be hurting me. When my husband saw what a contemptible worm you are, he'd never let you keep your job.

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

**NORA:** If my husband knew of this, he'd simply ask me how much I owed, and he'd pay you off, and that'd be the end of it.

**KROGSTAD:** *(Moving closer.)* Look, Mrs. Helmer. You either have a lousy memory, or no head at all for business. Let me remind you of a few facts.

**NORA:** What do you mean?

**KROGSTAD:** When your husband was sick, you came to me for a loan of over four thousand kroner.

**NORA:** I didn't know anyone else.

**KROGSTAD:** I said I'd secure a loan. . .

**NORA:** And you did.

**KROGSTAD:** On certain conditions. You were so caught up in your husband's illness and your plans for the trip, you may not have thought through all the details. Let me remind you. I got you the money on the strength of a note I drew up.

**NORA:** Which I signed.

**KROGSTAD:** Good, yes. But on that note, under your signature, I added space for your father's signature. You had no collateral, I required a cosigner.

**NORA:** And he signed it.

**KROGSTAD:** I left the date blank. When your father signed the note, he was also supposed to date it. Do you remember?

**NORA:** I think so, yes.

**KROGSTAD:** Then I gave you the note, to mail to your father. Right?

**NORA:** Sure.

**KROGSTAD:** And you must have sent it right off. Five, six days later, you brought me the note, properly signed by your father. And I gave you the money.

**NORA:** Yes, and I've made every payment, on time.

**KROGSTAD:** More or less. But let's get back to it; that was a difficult time for you, wasn't it?

**NORA:** It was.

**KROGSTAD:** Your father was very sick, I understand.

**NORA:** He was on his deathbed.

**KROGSTAD:** Died shortly afterwards.

**NORA:** Yes.

**KROGSTAD:** Do you remember the day he died? I mean the date, day and month.

**NORA:** He died on September 29<sup>th</sup>.

**KROGSTAD:** That's right, I even looked it up. So now, here's a puzzle. . . .

*(Pulls out a sheet of paper.)*

I just can't quite understand.

**NORA:** A puzzle? I don't know what you--.

**KROGSTAD:** The puzzle is how your father could have cosigned a loan three days after his death.

**NORA:** I don't understand.

**KROGSTAD:** Your father died September 29<sup>th</sup>. And, see? Here, he's dated his signature Oct. 2. Do you see why I find it so puzzling?

*(NORA is silent.)*

Can you explain it?

*(NORA remains silent.)*

It's also remarkable that the words 'October 2<sup>nd</sup>' and the year aren't in your father's handwriting, but someone else's, a handwriting I think I recognize. So, how to make sense of it. Maybe your father just forgot to date his signature, and someone else added it later, a little sloppily, before anyone knew of his death.

Nothing so wrong with that. It comes down to the signature. It was your father who signed this note, right?

Mrs. Helmer?

**NORA:** *(After a short silence, she throws her head back and looks KROGSTAD in the eye.)* No. He didn't. I signed the note.

**KROGSTAD:** So. That's a dangerous confession.

**NORA:** Why? You'll have all your money back in a few days.

**KROGSTAD:** One question. Why didn't you send the note to your father?

**NORA:** It was impossible. Daddy was so sick. And if I asked him to cosign, I'd have to tell him what I needed the money for. But I couldn't tell him sick as he was, that my husband's life was in danger too. Just impossible.

**KROGSTAD:** Wouldn't it have been better to just give up on your trip?

**NORA:** That wasn't possible either! The trip was to save my husband's life! I couldn't give it up.

**KROGSTAD:** And it never occurred to you that this was an act of fraud. Against me.

**NORA:** I couldn't be bothered with that sort of . . . I didn't give you a thought. I couldn't stand you anyway, with all your stupid conditions and requirements and technicalities: my husband was dying!

**KROGSTAD:** Mrs. Helmer. You clearly do not have the faintest idea what you've done. But I can tell you this; it's no worse than what I did, years ago, and that destroyed my life.

**NORA:** Really? Do you mean to tell me that what you did was something . . . brave, to save your wife's life?

**KROGSTAD:** The law isn't interested in motives.

**NORA:** Then that's a stupid law.

**KROGSTAD:** Stupid or not. When I turn in this evidence, you'll be judged according to the law.

**NORA:** I don't believe that. A daughter doesn't have the right to not bother her dying father with legal trivialities? A wife doesn't have the right to save her husband's life? I don't know anything about the law, but there's got to be something in those books where what I did is allowed! You don't know anything about it, Mr. Attorney? You must be a lousy lawyer.

**KROGSTAD:** Could be. But believe me when I say I do know business, especially the kind of low-down business we were involved with. So, do what you want to. But let me tell you something. If I'm ruined again, a vagabond, an outcast, you're gonna join me.

*(KROGSTAD bows to NORA, and goes out through the hall.)*

**NORA:** *(Pensive for a moment, and then she tosses her head.)* Ridiculous, trying to scare me like that. How naive does he think I . . .

*(Starts to pick up the children's clothes, then stops.)*

Impossible, it's just . . . I did it out of love!

**THE CHILDREN:** *(In the doorway, left.)* Mommy? That strange man went out the door.

**NORA:** Yes, I know. But listen, we're not going to talk about the strange man anymore, okay? Not to Daddy either.

**THE CHILDREN:** Okay Mommy! Can we play again?

**NORA:** No, not now.

**THE CHILDREN:** But Mommy, you promised!

**NORA:** I know, but I just can't. Go back in, I just have too much to do. Go on, sweetie, it's okay.

*(She gently herds them into the room and shuts the door after them. She sits restlessly, starts some embroidery, quickly tosses it aside.)*

No!

*(Goes to the hall door and calls out.)*

Helene! Let's put up the tree!

*(Goes to the table left, and opens the drawer. Stops.)*

No. It's just impossible.

**HELENE:** *(Bringing in the Christmas tree.)* Where do you want it?

**NORA:** Just there, middle of the floor.

**HELENE:** Should I get anything else?

**NORA:** No, thanks. I've got what I need.

*(HELENE sets the tree down, and goes out the door. NORA starts to decorate the tree.)*

So . . . lights here, and flowers here. . . that disgusting wretch. Talk talk talk, that's all his threats add up to. The tree is going to be beautiful. I'll do anything you want me to, Torvald, anything to please you. I'll sing for you, dance for you . . .

*(HELMER, with some papers under his arm, enters from out.)*

Oh! You're back!

**HELMER:** Yes. Has anyone stopped by?

**NORA:** Here? No.

**HELMER:** That's strange. I thought I saw Krogstad leaving.

**NORA:** Oh, right. Yes, Krogstad did stop by, just for a second.

**HELMER:** Nora, I can read you so well. He was here asking you to put in a good word for him.

**NORA:** Yes.

**HELMER:** And you were supposed to pretend this was your idea. Hide from me that he'd been here. Right?

**NORA:** Yes, Torvald, but--

**HELMER:** Nora, Nora, Nora. And you fell for it? Talked to someone like that, make promises? And lie to me about it.

**NORA:** Lie?

**HELMER:** Didn't you tell me that no one had been here?

*(Wagging his fingers.)*

My little songbird must never do that again. A songbird has to keep her beak clean. No false notes!

*(Puts his arm around her waist.)*

Isn't that how things should be? I think so, anyway.

*(Sits by the stove.)*

So that's the end of that.

*(Rifling through the papers.)*

Isn't it snug and cozy in here?

**NORA:** *(Continues decorating. After a moment.)* Torvald?

**HELMER:** Yes?

**NORA:** I am really looking forward to the costume party at the Stenborg's day after tomorrow.

**HELMER:** And I'm awfully curious to see what costume you surprise me with.

**NORA:** See, that's what's so silly.

**HELMER:** What?

**NORA:** I can't think of anything that works. Everything I can think of seems either ridiculous or trivial.

**HELMER:** It's a costume party, little Nora. That's hardly a revelation.

**NORA:** *(Behind his chair, with her arms on the back of the chair.)* Are you super busy, Torvald?

**HELMER:** Well . . .

**NORA:** What's with those papers?

**HELMER:** Bank business.

**NORA:** Already?

**HELMER:** I've been given full authority by the previous management to make all necessary changes in personnel and procedure. That's what my Christmas week will be spent doing. I want everything in place by the New Year.

**NORA:** Oh, so that's why that poor Mr. Krogstad--

**HELMER:** Mm hmm.

**NORA:** *(Leaning on the chair, stroking the back of HELMER'S neck.)* If you weren't so busy right now, I was going to ask you for an enormous favor, Torvald.

**HELMER:** I'm listening. What is it?

**NORA:** I just don't know anyone with taste as good as yours. And I really want to look good at that costume party. Couldn't you help me plan my costume? Or decide for me--I'll wear whatever you say.

**HELMER:** So my headstrong little girl needs me to come to her rescue?

**NORA:** Yes, Torvald. I really can't do anything without you.

**HELMER:** Well, sure, of course. I'll give it some thought, and we'll see what we come up with.

**NORA:** That's so sweet of you.

*(Goes back to the tree.)*

Aren't the red flowers pretty? Torvald, tell me. Was it really so terrible, whatever it was Krogstad did?

**HELMER:** Forgery. Do you have any idea what that means?

**NORA:** But . . . couldn't he have done it because he had to?

**HELMER:** Yes, need, or, as with so many others, just plain carelessness. I'm not so heartless as to condemn a man for a single isolated mistake.

**NORA:** No, of course you wouldn't, Torvald!

**HELMER:** Plenty of men have redeemed themselves by openly confessing, and taking their punishment.

**NORA:** Punishment?

**HELMER:** But that's not Krogstad. He used every legal loophole and technicality to get away with it, and that, that's the cause of his moral breakdown.

**NORA:** Do you really think that--?

**HELMER:** Think about it; a guilt-ridden hypocrite like him has to lie, and cheat, and pretend, and deceive, to everyone, has to wear a mask even with his wife, and his children . . . his children, Nora, that's the worst of it.

**NORA:** Why?

**HELMER:** Because that kind of atmosphere of lies infects everything in a home. Every breath those children breathe: corrupted and ugly.

**NORA:** *(Coming closer behind HELMER.)* Are you sure?

**HELMER:** Oh, my dear, the things I've seen as an attorney. Something else: usually, people who go bad early in life had a mother who was a chronic liar.

**NORA:** Why . . . the mother?

**HELMER:** Well, the mother's influence tends to be dominant. But the father's works in much the same way. Any attorney can tell you that. And still this Krogstad's been going home, year after year, poisoning his children with lies and pretense. That's why I call him morally lost.

*(Puts his arms around Nora's waist.)*

So that's why my dear little Nora must promise never to take his side. Your hand on it. No, come on now, take my hand. So there we are. All decided. I tell you, it would be impossible for me to work with someone like that; I literally feel physically ill when he's around me.

**NORA:** *(Pulls away from HELMER, and crosses to the other side of the tree.)* It's so warm in here. And I have so much to do.

**HELMER:** *(Stands, gets his papers together.)* Yes, and I have to read these through before dinner. And I'll think about your costume. And maybe those items we talked about earlier? That you were going to wrap and put on the tree?

*(Pats her on the head.)*

My dear little songbird.

*(He goes into his study, and closes the door behind.)*

**NORA:** *(Quietly, after a still moment.)* No. It can't be true. It's impossible. Completely impossible.

**ANNE-MARIE:** *(In from left.)* The children are asking so nicely if they can come in.

**PERUSAL SCRIPT -- A Doll House** by *Henrik Ibsen* -- *Translated and Adapted by Eric Samuelsen*

**NORA:** No, no, no. Not now, don't let them in. You stay with them, Anne-Marie.

**ANNE-MARIE:** All right, if you say so.

*(Closes the door again.)*

**NORA:** Corrupt my own children? Poison my home?

*(A pause, and then she tosses her head.)*

It's not true. Never. Not true now, or ever.

***End Act One***

## SECOND ACT

*(Same room. Beside the piano, the Christmas tree stands stripped of its decorations, with candle stubs on its branches. Nora's coat lies on the sofa. NORA, alone, paces restlessly. She stops by the sofa, and picks up her coat.)*

**NORA:** Someone's coming!

*(By the door, listens.)*

No.. No one. Of course not. Nobody stops by on Christmas day. Not tomorrow either. But maybe . . . .

*(Opens the door and looks out.)*

No, nothing in the mailbox. Quite empty.

*(Paces the floor.)*

Stupid. He didn't mean it seriously, of course. Nothing bad's going to happen. Impossible. After all, I have three small children.

*(ANNE-MARIE comes in with a box from the room left.)*

**ANNE-MARIE:** Well, I did finally find that box with the masquerade costumes.

**NORA:** Thanks, just put it on the table.

**ANNE-MARIE:** *(Does.)* But they're all in a jumble.

**NORA:** Oh, I'd love to toss 'em right in the fireplace!

**ANNE-MARIE:** My goodness. Easy enough to set them right. Patience, love.

**NORA:** Sorry, yes, I'll get Mrs. Linde to help me.

**ANNE-MARIE:** And now you're going out again. In this weather? You'll catch your death, dear.

**NORA:** That's not the worst that could. . . . where are the children?

**ANNE-MARIE:** Poor dears. Playing with their Christmas presents. But--

**NORA:** They're still asking for me?

**ANNE-MARIE:** They're just so used to having their Mama around.

**NORA:** All right, but . . . look, I can't be with them as much as I used to.

**ANNE-MARIE:** Well. Children can adjust to anything.

**NORA:** Do you think so? Do you think, for example, they'd forget their mother if she had to go away?

**ANNE-MARIE:** Go away? Mercy!

**NORA:** Listen, Anne-Marie. Something I've always wondered. How could you have the heart to give your daughter over to strangers?

**ANNE-MARIE:** But I had to, you know. I had to be little Nora's nurse.

**NORA:** But how could you do it?

**ANNE-MARIE:** When I could land on my feet the way I did? Poor girl from a poor family, got myself in trouble, I was glad to have anything. Couldn't expect a thing from that good-for-nothing wretch with his fancy promises.

**NORA:** But your daughter has forgotten all about you.

**ANNE-MARIE:** She certainly has not. She wrote to me, twice, when she was confirmed and when she got

married.

**NORA:** (*Hugging her.*) Oh, dear old Anne-Marie. You were a good mother to me, when I was little.

**ANNE-MARIE:** Poor little Nora. I was the only mother you had.

**NORA:** And if my babies didn't have one, I just know that you would . . . talk talk talk, idle chatter . . .

*(Opens the box.)*

Go back in with them. Now I have to . . . tomorrow, you'll get to see just how pretty I can be.

**ANNE-MARIE:** Oh, there won't be anyone at that party as beautiful as my little Nora.

*(She goes into the room left.)*

**NORA:** (*Starts to open the box, then tosses it aside.*) Oh, if I just dared go out. If only nobody would come. If only nothing would happen here while I was out. Stupid talk; no one's coming. Just don't think. This muff: needs a brush. Oh, those are nice gloves. Nice gloves. Let it go, let it go. One, two, three, four, five, six. . .

*(With a cry.)*

Someone's coming.

*(Starts to move to the door, then stops, stands irresolute. MRS. LINDE enters from the hall, where's she's taken off her outerwear.)*

Oh, it's you, Christina! Anyone with you? Good of you to stop by.

**MRS. LINDE:** I heard you came up and asked after me.

**NORA:** Well, I thought I'd stop by. There is a little something you could help me with. Come sit here on the sofa. Look. Um, there's a little costume party tomorrow evening at the Stenborg's; and Torvald, he wants me to go as a Neopolitan peasant girl, dance the tarantella; it's a dance I learned in Capri.

**MRS. LINDE:** So, you're going to give a whole performance?

**NORA:** Torvald said I should. Torvald had my costume made for me there, but it's gotten all torn and tattered, I just don't know--.

**MRS. LINDE:** Oh, this is easily mended. Some of the trim's come loose is all. Needle and thread? And here we go, everything we need.

**NORA:** It's really nice of you.

**MRS. LINDE:** So, Nora, you'll be in disguise tomorrow. Exciting. I'll have to stop by and see you in all your glory. But I also forgot to thank you for the lovely evening last night.

**NORA:** (*Stands, walking about.*) I actually didn't think yesterday was as pleasant as usual. You should have come to town earlier, Christina. Yes, Torvald sure knows how to decorate a home.

**MRS. LINDE:** You do too, if you ask me. You're certainly your father's daughter. But tell me something, is Dr. Rank always as depressed as he seemed last night?

**NORA:** No, that was pretty unusual. But he is terribly ill. Tuberculosis of the spine, poor man. You know, his father was a total sleaze, kept mistresses and had affairs, and that's why his son was sick from childhood.

**MRS. LINDE:** (*Dropping her sewing.*) Nora, my dear, how do you know about that sort of thing?

**NORA:** Well, you know, when you've had three children, you visit . . . women, midwives, practically doctors, really, and they tell you some things.

**MRS. LINDE:** (*Resumes sewing.*) Does Dr. Rank come by every day?

**NORA:** Every single day. He's Torvald's best friend from childhood, and he's my good friend too. Dr. Rank's become practically part of our furniture.

**MRS. LINDE:** But do you trust him? I mean, does he go around flattering people?

**NORA:** Just the opposite. Why do you say that?

**MRS. LINDE:** When you introduced us yesterday, he said my name was one he'd often heard in this house.

But then, when your husband met me, he clearly had no idea who I was. So I wondered how Dr. Rank--

**NORA:** It all makes perfect sense, Christina. You see, Torvald is so in love with me, he used to say he wished he could have me all to himself. And when we were first married, he'd become almost jealous when I mentioned my old friends from school. So I just quit. But with Dr. Rank, I can talk about anything or anyone. He likes it, you see?

**MRS. LINDE:** Now, listen, Nora, you are, in many respects, pretty innocent. I'm older than you, with a bit more experience. I have to tell you something: you need to end this with Dr. Rank.

**NORA:** I need to end what?

**MRS. LINDE:** Well, all of it. Yesterday, you told me about this rich admirer, who was going to leave you his money.

**NORA:** Yes, who doesn't exist. Too bad, too. What about it?

**MRS. LINDE:** Does Dr. Rank have money?

**NORA:** Sure he does.

**MRS. LINDE:** And no one else to care for?

**NORA:** No one, but look--

**MRS. LINDE:** And he comes here, to your home, every day.

**NORA:** I told you--

**MRS. LINDE:** So what I don't get is how a refined gentleman like him could charge interest, and push you to--

**NORA:** What on earth are you talking about?

**MRS. LINDE:** No more pretending, Nora. Don't you think I know who loaned you the money?

**NORA:** Oh, you are completely out of your mind! Is that what you think? A friend of ours, someone who comes here every single day? Can you imagine a more embarrassing, horrible, awkward situation?

**MRS. LINDE:** It really isn't him?

**NORA:** No, I promise you! Honestly, it never crossed my mind, not for a second, not even a . . . besides, he didn't have any money back then. He inherited it later.

**MRS. LINDE:** That was probably lucky for you, Nora.

**NORA:** No, it absolutely would never have occurred to me to ask Dr. Rank. I'm quite sure that if I had asked him--

**MRS. LINDE:** Which you wouldn't, and won't.

**NORA:** 'Course not. I can't imagine why I'd need to. Still, I am pretty sure that if I asked Dr. Rank--

**MRS. LINDE:** Behind your husband's back?

**NORA:** Well, I have to get out of this thing! That's behind his back too. I have to get out of it!

**MRS. LINDE:** Which is what I told you yesterday, but--

**NORA:** *(Walking up and down.)* A man can handle these kinds of problems better than a woman --.

**MRS. LINDE:** He handles money, she handles him.

**NORA:** Nonsense.

*(Stops.)*

When you pay something off, pay it off completely, you get your note back, right?

**MRS. LINDE:** I believe that's true.

**NORA:** And you can do anything you want with it, right? Tear it to a thousand pieces, burn it, that filthy scrap of paper.

**MRS. LINDE:** (*Looking hard at her, setting aside her sewing, rising slowly.*) Nora, you're hiding something from me.

**NORA:** You can tell just looking at me?

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

**NORA:** (*Hurrying toward her.*) Christina!  
(*Listens.*)

Torvald's home. Listen. Go in with the children. Torvald can't stand all this stitchwork. Let Anne-Marie help you.

**MRS. LINDE:** (*Gathering up her sewing.*) Okay, if you say so. But I'm not leaving until we finish our conversation.

(*MRS. LINDE goes into the room left; HELMER comes in from the hall.*)

**NORA:** (*Goes to him.*) Oh, I've missed you so much, Torvald!

**HELMER:** Was that a seamstress. . . ?

**NORA:** No, that was Christina, she was helping me get the dress ready. You know, I think it's going to turn out great.

**HELMER:** Yes, that was quite the bright idea I came up with.

**NORA:** Brilliant! But I was a good girl, too, wasn't I? Giving in to you?

**HELMER:** (*Takes her hands.*) A good girl? For following your husband's wishes? Now, now, you silly goose, I know you didn't mean it that way. But I won't bother you; you'll need to have a fitting, I expect.

**NORA:** And you have work to do?

**HELMER:** Yes.

(*Shows NORA a stack of papers.*)

Look. I was down at the bank. . . .

(*Goes into his room.*)

**NORA:** Torvald.

**HELMER:** (*Stops.*) Yes?

**NORA:** If your little squirrel asked you really really nicely for something. . . ?

**HELMER:** What?

**NORA:** Would you do it?

**HELMER:** Well, naturally, I'd first have to know what it was.

**NORA:** Your little squirrel would run and play and do all kinds of tricks if you'd just be a sweetheart and give in.

**HELMER:** Out with it, then.

**NORA:** Your little songbird would sing in every room. . . .

**HELMER:** She does that anyway.

**NORA:** I'd be a wood nymph, and dance for you in the moonlight, Torvald.

**HELMER:** Nora. This isn't the thing you asked me about yesterday, is it?

**NORA:** It is, Torvald. I'm begging, I'm pleading--.

**HELMER:** And you really have the nerve to bring that up again!

**NORA:** Yes! Please, just humor me! Let Krogstad keep his job at the bank!

**HELMER:** But, Nora. That's the job I promised to Mrs. Linde.

**NORA:** Yes, and that was so good of you! But couldn't you just, fire someone else? Instead of Krogstad?

**HELMER:** That is the most amazing pigheaded . . . just because you impulsively promised to speak on his behalf, suddenly I'm supposed to—.

**NORA:** That's not it, Torvald. This is for your sake. This . . . person writes for some of the worst newspapers, you told me that yourself. He could hurt you, do all kinds of damage. I'm scared to death of him.

**HELMER:** I understand now. It's all those old memories haunting you.

**NORA:** What do you mean?

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

**NORA:** Yes! Yes, that's it. Remember what those evil-minded liars wrote in those tabloids, slandering him so horribly. He'd have been fired from his job if the ministry hadn't hired you to investigate, and if you hadn't been so fair-minded and helpful.

**HELMER:** My dear Nora. There's a distinct difference between your father and I. He was a political figure, and his reputation was hardly unimpeachable. Mine is. And it will remain so, I expect, as long as I retain my position.

**NORA:** Oh, who knows what nasty minded gossips can come up with. Life's good now! We're happy, you, me, the children, we're safe in our peaceful, lovely home! That's why I'm begging you—.

**HELMER:** And that, right there, you pleading, that's why I can't keep him on! It's already known at the bank that I'm letting Krogstad go. If it now were to be rumored that the new bank president lets his wife change his mind—.

**NORA:** So what?

**HELMER:** Yes, of course, so long as my stubborn wife gets her way. . . . I would just be the office laughingstock! Just . . . let them know, right from the start, any decision I make, can be overridden by . . . an outside influence? You can just imagine how quickly I'd feel the effects of that! Besides . . . there are circumstances that make Krogstad impossible for me to work with, as long as I'm at the bank.

**NORA:** Like what?

**HELMER:** I suppose I could possibly overlook his moral defects if I —.

**NORA:** Of course you could!

**HELMER:** And I understand he's rather good at his job. But we were classmates, he's known me since childhood. One of those friendships you come to regret later in life. He presumes. It's 'Torvald' this and 'Torvald' that. Like we're pals. It's constant, unremitting. His voice, booming out, every meeting: "Hey, Torvald!" "Saved you a place, Torvald!" It's excruciating, you have no idea. He'll make my time at the bank intolerable.

**NORA:** Torvald, none of that matters.

**HELMER:** Oh? Why not.

**NORA:** Because that's all so petty.

**HELMER:** What? Petty? You're saying, I'm petty!

**NORA:** I'm saying you're not, Torvald dear, that's exactly why—.

**HELMER:** Never mind, you're calling my motives petty, so I must be petty too. Petty! Fine. I'm putting an end to this nonsense.

*(Goes to the hall door and shouts.)*

Helene!

**NORA:** What are you doing?

**HELMER:** *(Looking through his papers.)* Making a decision.

*(HELENE enters.)*

Here, take this letter, go down with it immediately. Find a messenger, and tell to deliver it. Immediately. It's already addressed. Here's some money.

**HELENE:** Fine.

*(HELENE takes the letter and goes.)*

**HELMER:** *(Organizing the papers again.)* There you go. Little Miss Obstinate.

**NORA:** Torvald . . . is that letter what I think it--

**HELMER:** Krogstad's dismissal.

**NORA:** Get it back, Torvald! There's still time! Oh, Torvald, get it back, for my sake, for your sake, for the sake of the children! Listen to me: do it! You have no idea what harm this can do to us all!

**HELMER:** Too late.

**NORA:** Yes. Too late.

**HELMER:** My dear Nora. I forgive you this anxiety you've given in to, because I know it comes from your concern over me. Yes, it does. Otherwise, isn't it rather insulting to think that I would be afraid of the revenge of some ambulance-chasing shyster? But I forgive you nonetheless, because it's such a sweet witness of your great love for me.

*(Takes NORA in his arms.)*

And that's how it will be, my beloved Nora. What happens will happen: when it really counts, you better believe I have the strength and courage, as a man, to take the whole load on myself.

**NORA:** *(Terrified.)* What do you mean?

**HELMER:** The whole load.

**NORA:** *(Resolutely.)* That, you will never do. Not ever.

**HELMER:** Good. Yes. We'll divide the load, Nora, as husband and wife. As it should be.

*(Fondling NORA.)*

Are you happy now? Now, now, now, not these frightened dove's eyes. All this is nothing more than your empty-headed imagination. . . . well, now, go run through your tarantella, and practice a little on your tambourine. I'll sit in the inner office and close the door tight, so I won't hear a thing; you can make all the ruckus you want.

*(Turns back at the door.)*

Oh, and when Dr. Rank comes by, be sure to tell him where he can find me.

*(He nods to NORA, gathers up his papers, and goes into his room.)*

**NORA:** *(Stands as though rooted to the spot, desperately anxious, whispers.)* He really could do it. He'll do it. He'll do it, in spite of everything. No. Not that. Anything but that. Escape. A way out. . . .

*(A ring from the hall.)*

Dr. Rank! Anything but that. Anything, whatever it might be.

*(She smooths her face with her hands, pulls herself together, opens the door to the hall. Dr. RANK is putting his coat away. Throughout the next scene, it gets increasingly dark.)*

Hello, Dr. Rank! I recognized your ring. But you're not supposed to go in to see Torvald just yet. He's in the middle of something.

**DR. RANK:** And you?

**NORA:** (*He comes into the room; she closes the door after him.*) For you, I always have time to spare; you know that.

**DR. RANK:** Thanks! I'll try to make good use of it, as long as I can.

**NORA:** As long as you can? What do you mean?

**DR. RANK:** Does that frighten you?

**NORA:** It is sort of an odd phrase. Is something about to happen?

**DR. RANK:** What will happen is something for which I've long been prepared. Though I'll admit that I didn't expect it so soon.

**NORA:** (*Gripping his arm.*) What did you find out? Dr. Rank, come on, you've got to tell me!

**DR. RANK:** It's over. There's nothing more to be done.

**NORA:** (*A breath.*) For you?

**DR. RANK:** Who else? There's no point lying to one's self. I am the most miserable of all my patients, Nora. These last few days, I've done an audit of my internal balance sheet. Bankrupt. Within a month, I'll be rotting away in some churchyard.

**NORA:** That's a horrible thing to say!

**DR. RANK:** How else should one speak of horror? But there is something worse. There's one more examination I need; when I'm done with that, I'll know more or less when the final disintegration will begin. So there's something I need to tell you. Torvald has such a sensitive nature; he doesn't do well with ugliness. I don't want him near my sickroom. . .

**NORA:** But Dr. Rank--

**DR. RANK:** I won't have him there, Nora. No way; I'll shut the door in his face. But . . . as soon as I know the worst, I'll send you a card, with a black cross on it. Then you'll know, as St. Matthew puts it, that "the abomination of desolation"<sup>3</sup> has begun.

**NORA:** Well . . . aren't you in an unreasonable mood today? Cut it out: I need you to cheer up.

**DR. RANK:** Holding death in both hands? Suffering for someone else's sins? Is there justice in that? And in every single family, somehow or other, the inexorable retribution of nature--

**NORA:** (*Hands over her ears.*) Not listening! Having fun!

**DR. RANK:** You're right! It is better just to laugh it off! My poor, innocent spine paying for my father's fun, back in his army days.

**NORA:** (*By the table, left.*) Yes, he was infatuated with asparagus, wasn't he? And paté de foie gras. Wasn't that it?

**DR. RANK:** Absolutely. And truffles.

**NORA:** Truffles, of course. And oysters, right?

**DR. RANK:** Yes, oysters, I think so.

**NORA:** All washed down, of course, by a fine port wine. And champagne. It's sad, isn't it, that all these yummy delicacies should end up affecting your spine?

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<sup>3</sup>Dr. Rank here quotes Matt. 24: 15

**DR. RANK:** Especially a poor spine that never got to have any of the fun.

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

**DR. RANK:** *(Looks searchingly at her.)* Hmm.

**NORA:** You were smiling, Dr. Rank?

**DR. RANK:** You were laughing!

**NORA:** Because you were smiling!.

**DR. RANK:** *(Stands.)* You're a much worse tease than I thought.

**NORA:** I'm just in a strange, wild, mood today.

**DR. RANK:** That's for sure.

**NORA:** *(Takes him by the shoulders.)* Dear, dear Dr. Rank. You will never die for Torvald and me.

**DR. RANK:** Oh, I expect you'll get over me pretty quick. Out of sight, out of mind.

**NORA:** *(Looks at him anxiously.)* You think so?

**DR. RANK:** People make new connections, and soon--.

**NORA:** Who makes new connections?

**DR. RANK:** You and Torvald will, as soon as I'm gone. In fact, you've already begun, haven't you? Why else did Mrs. Linde visit yesterday evening?

**NORA:** You can't possibly be jealous of poor Christina!

**DR. RANK:** A bit, yes. She'll be my successor here. When I'm six feet under, she'll probably--.

**NORA:** Not so loud, she's in the other room. . . .

**DR. RANK:** Today, too? You see?

**NORA:** Just to help sew my dress! My gosh, sometimes you're so unreasonable!

*(Sits down on the sofa.)*

If you're very nice, Dr. Rank, tomorrow you'll be able to see how beautifully I can dance, and then, you can imagine that I'm dancing only for you. . . and for Torvald, that goes without saying.

*(Taking various items from the box.)*

Now, Dr. Rank, you sit there, and I'm going to show you something.

**DR. RANK:** *(Sits.)* What is it?

**NORA:** Look at this. Look!

**DR. RANK:** New stockings.

**NORA:** Flesh colored. Pure silk. Aren't they lovely? It's awfully dark in here now, but tomorrow. . . See I fasten 'em with garters and . . . no, no, no. I don't want you thinking about my garter belt! Just focus on the stockings, I don't want you to . . . well, okay, garters too. . . .

**DR. RANK:** Hmm.

**NORA:** But you're looking so critical. You don't think they'll fit okay?

**DR. RANK:** I have no basis upon which to form an opinion . . .

**NORA:** *(Looking at him.)* Shame on you.

*(Bats RANK lightly on the ear with the stocking.)*

And that's for you.

*(Puts them away.)*

**DR. RANK:** And what other sights do I get to see?

**NORA:** You don't get to see anything else. You've been a naughty boy.

*(She hums a little, rummaging through her things.)*

**DR. RANK:** *(After a short pause.)* When I sit here, so completely comfortable with you, I don't know, no, I can't even imagine what would have happened to me if I hadn't been welcome in this house.

**NORA:** *(Smiles.)* I know you enjoy it here.

**DR. RANK:** *(Quietly, looking straight ahead.)* And now it's all going away. . .

**NORA:** Nonsense, you're not going anywhere.

**DR. RANK:** *(As before.)* . . . and not even to be able to leave behind a token of remembrance, not even a passing regret, . . . nothing more than a small vacancy, which you'll fill soon enough.

**NORA:** Well, what if I asked you for some . . . ? No.

**DR. RANK:** For what?

**NORA:** A great proof of your friendship.

**DR. RANK:** All right. . . .

**NORA:** No, I mean, an exceptionally big favor.

**DR. RANK:** Would you really, just this once, make me that happy.

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

**DR. RANK:** So tell me.

**NORA:** But I can't, Dr. Rank. It's something so big . . . it's advice, and help, and a service--.

**DR. RANK:** So much the better. I have no idea what you're getting at. But just say it. Don't you trust me?

**NORA:** Like no one else on earth. You are my truest and best friend, I know it. And that's why I can talk to you about this. Right, then: Dr. Rank, that there's something you must help me prevent. You know how deeply, how indescribably dearly Torvald loves me. He wouldn't hesitate for a second to give his life for me.

**DR. RANK:** *(Leaning towards her.)* Nora . . . do you think he's the only one?

**NORA:** *(With a slight start.)* Who. . . ?

**DR. RANK:** Who would gladly give his life for you.

**NORA:** *(Heavily.)* Oh.

**DR. RANK:** I swore to myself that you would know this before I'm gone. I'll never find a better opportunity. . . . yes, Nora, now you know. And now you also know that you can trust me like no one else.

**NORA:** *(Stands, natural and calm.)* Let me past.

**DR. RANK:** *(Letting her past, still sitting.)* Nora. . . .

**NORA:** *(Turns on a light.)* Helene, I need a glass of water.

*(Goes to the stove.)*

My dear Dr. Rank. That was very wrong of you.

**DR. RANK:** *(Stands.)* That I've loved you just as much as anyone can? That was wrong?

**NORA:** No, but then you had to go and tell me. That was completely unnecessary.

**DR. RANK:** What do you mean? You mean, you knew. . . .?

*(HELENE enters with a glass of water, gives it to NORA, who drinks.)*

Nora . . . Mrs. Helmer. I have to ask. Did you know?

**NORA:** Oh, how should I know what I knew, or what I didn't know? I can't answer that. How could you be so clumsy, Dr. Rank? Everything was going so well!

**DR. RANK:** Well, in any event, you are now aware that I'm ready to serve you, body and soul, completely. So please. Speak out.

**NORA:** After that?

**DR. RANK:** I beg you, let me know what it is!

**NORA:** Nothing I can tell you now.

**DR. RANK:** Yes you can. Please, don't punish me this way. Give me the chance to do for you, whatever is humanly possible.

**NORA:** You can do nothing for me, not now. Besides, I don't need your help. You'll see, I was probably just imagining the whole thing. Yes, that's it. That's all it is.

*(Sits in the rocker, looks at RANK and smiles.)*

You really are something, Dr. Rank. Aren't you a little bit ashamed of yourself, with the lights on?

**DR. RANK:** No, not at all. But perhaps I should leave . . . for good?

**NORA:** You will certainly do nothing of the kind. Of course not; come visit, like you always do. You know Torvald can't do without you.

**DR. RANK:** Yes, but . . . what about you?

**NORA:** Well, I think it's always wonderful fun when you're here.

**DR. RANK:** But that's just what threw me off. You're such a mystery to me. Many times, I've thought to myself, it almost seems as though you'd rather be here with me than with Torvald.

**NORA:** Well, yes, you see, there are the people you're in love with, and there are the people you'd rather spend time with.

**DR. RANK:** Yes. There's something to that.

**NORA:** When I was home, of course my father was the one I loved. But I always thought it was so fun when I could sneak away down to the maid's rooms, because they weren't always trying to improve me and tell me what to do, and it was always so amusing, hearing them talk.

**DR. RANK:** Ah, so it's their place I've filled.

**NORA:** *(Jumps up and goes to him.)* Oh, my dear Dr. Rank, that's not what I meant at all! But you can well imagine that with Torvald, it's kind of like it was with Papa.

*(HELENE comes in from the hall.)*

**HELENE:** Ma'am?

*(She whispers to NORA, and hands her a calling card.)*

**NORA:** *(Looks at the card.)* Ah.

*(Sticks it in her pocket.)*

**DR. RANK:** Is something wrong?

**NORA:** No, no, not at all; it's just something . . . it's my new dress.

**DR. RANK:** Really? Isn't that your dress over there?

**NORA:** Oh, yes, that one, but this is another one, I ordered it . . . Torvald mustn't find out. . . .

**DR. RANK:** Aha. And there we have your great secret.

**NORA:** That's it, yes, could you just go in to him, he's in his office, stall him as long as you can--.

**DR. RANK:** Don't worry. He won't get away from me!

*(RANK goes in to Helmer's room.)*

**NORA:** *(To HELENE)* And he's standing waiting in the kitchen?

**HELENE:** Yes, he came up the back stairs--.

**NORA:** But didn't you tell him someone was here?

**HELENE:** Yes, but that didn't help.

**NORA:** And he won't leave?

**HELENE:** He says he won't leave until he talks to you.

**NORA:** All right, let him in. But quietly. And, Helene, don't say anything to anybody. It's a surprise for my husband.

**HELENE:** Yes, yes, I understand.

*(She goes out.)*

**NORA:** The evil is happening. It's coming all the same. No, no, no, it can't happen, it cannot happen.

*(NORA goes and bolts Helmer's door. HELENE shows in KROGSTAD. He's dressed for travel. She goes to him.)*

Talk quietly. My husband's home.

**KROGSTAD:** Good for him.

**NORA:** What do you want?

**KROGSTAD:** To learn something.

**NORA:** So hurry, what is it?

**KROGSTAD:** You know, right? That I got fired tonight?

**NORA:** I couldn't prevent it, Mr. Krogstad. I fought for you as hard as I could. It didn't work.

**KROGSTAD:** So that's all the love your husband has for you? He knows everything I can expose you to, and still, he dares to--

**NORA:** Why do you think he knows anything about it?

**KROGSTAD:** No. I think he probably doesn't, now that I think of it. The good Mr. Torvald Helmer I know would never have the guts to--

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

**KROGSTAD:** You bet, all the respect he deserves. But since the lady's keeping everything so very secret, can I assume that you've gotten a little better handle on what it is you did?

**NORA:** More than you could possibly teach me.

**KROGSTAD:** Yeah, a lousy lawyer like me.

**NORA:** What do you want from me?

**KROGSTAD:** Just wanted to see where things stood with you, Mrs. Helmer. I've been thinking about you all day. A loan shark, a shyster, a, well, a guy like me, I also have something like a heart, me too, you know?

**NORA:** So show it, think of my little children.

**KROGSTAD:** Have you and your husband thought about mine? Well, never mind. I just wanted to tell you that you don't need to take this whole thing so seriously. For now, I'm not going to file charges.

**NORA:** No, of course. I knew it all along.

**KROGSTAD:** We can settle the whole thing friendly-like; nobody else needs to know; we'll just keep it between the three of us.

**NORA:** My husband must never know about any of this.

**KROGSTAD:** How are you going to prevent it? Can you pay off the balance?

**NORA:** Not right this second, no.

**KROGSTAD:** Do you maybe have some way to raise the money, in a day or two?

**NORA:** No way that I can make use of.

**KROGSTAD:** Wouldn't have helped you if you could. If you were standing there with both hands full of cash, it still wouldn't get you your signature back.

**NORA:** So tell me. What are you going to use it for?

**KROGSTAD:** Just hold on to it. Keep it on file. No outsiders will ever even know about it. So if you've been thinking of making some desperate move--

**NORA:** I have.

**KROGSTAD:** If you were thinking, say, of running away from home--

**NORA:** I have.

**KROGSTAD:** Or if you were thinking of doing something worse--

**NORA:** How did you know?

**KROGSTAD:** Just drop it. Okay?

**NORA:** How did you know I was considering that?

**KROGSTAD:** Most of us think about that first. I thought about it too. Turned out, I wasn't brave enough--

**NORA:** *(Tonelessly.)* Me neither.

**KROGSTAD:** *(Relieved.)* No, right? You didn't have the guts either.

**NORA:** No, I don't. I'm not really brave.

**KROGSTAD:** It also would have been incredibly stupid. After that first domestic storm blows over . . . I have in my pocket, a letter to your husband.

**NORA:** And it's all there.

**KROGSTAD:** Putting it all as gently as I possibly could.

**NORA:** *(Quickly.)* He must never get that letter. Tear it up. I'll find a way to get you your money.

**KROGSTAD:** Excuse me, ma'am, but I think I just told you--

**NORA:** I'm not talking about the money I owe you. Just let me know how much money you were planning to get from my husband, and I'll get you that.

**KROGSTAD:** I don't want any money from your husband.

**NORA:** What do you want, then?

**KROGSTAD:** I'll tell you what I want. I want to regroup. I want to move up. And your husband can help me. Over the last year and a half, I've kept my nose clean, nothing shady; struggling with crap assignments, a tough deal, but I was okay working my way up from the bottom. Now I've been shut down again, but this time, I am sick of picking myself up off the floor. I'm moving up. I want back in. . . I want a better job at the bank, your husband can set it up for me--

**NORA:** He will never--

**KROGSTAD:** He will, I know him, he won't dare protest. And when I'm in there with him, then watch what happens. Within a year, I'll be his right-hand man. It'll be Nils Krogstad, not Torvald Helmer who really runs First City Bank.

**NORA:** You'll never see the day.

**KROGSTAD:** You gonna stop me--?

**NORA:** I'm brave enough for that.

**KROGSTAD:** You don't scare me. A spoiled uppity bitch like you--

**NORA:** You'll see, you'll see.

**KROGSTAD:** Under the ice, maybe? Down in the cold, black water? Floating up in the spring, bloated ugly,

unrecognizable, hair falling out--.

**NORA:** You don't scare me.

**KROGSTAD:** You don't scare me either. People don't actually do that, Mrs. Helmer. And what good would it do? I've still got him by the short hairs.

**NORA:** Afterwards, though? When I'm gone?

**KROGSTAD:** You're forgetting: your final reputation would be what I say it is.

*(NORA stands speechless, staring at KROGSTAD.)*

Good, now I've warned you. Don't do anything stupid. When Helmer has my letter, I'll expect an answer. And just remember, it's your husband that made me do things this way. Again. I'll never forgive him for that, either. Goodbye, Mrs. Helmer.

*(KROGSTAD goes out the hall door.)*

**NORA:** *(Goes to the hall door, opens it a crack, and listens.)* He's gone. Did he leave the letter? No, no, that's impossible too!

*(Opens the door a bit more.)*

What's going on? He's just standing there. Not going down the stairs. Changing his mind? Maybe he'll--.

*(A letter falls in the mailbox. We hear Krogstad's footsteps, dying away down a flight of stairs.)*

*NORA cries out, goes to the sofa table. A pause.)*

It's in the mailbox.

*(Slips warily over to the table. Pause.)*

There it lies. Torvald, Torvald, now we're lost for good.

**MRS. LINDE:** *(Entering with the costume from the room, left.)* Well, I can't see anything more to mend.

Maybe you should try it on, and--.

**NORA:** *(Hoarsely, quietly.)* Christina, come here.

**MRS. LINDE:** *(Tosses the dress on the sofa.)* What's the matter? You look all upset.

**NORA:** Come here. Do you see that letter? Look, through the glass in the mailbox.

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

**NORA:** That letter is from Krogstad--.

**MRS. LINDE:** Nora? Krogstad, who lent you the money?

**NORA:** Yes, and now Torvald's about to learn everything.

**MRS. LINDE:** Believe me, Nora, it's best for you both.

**NORA:** There's more to this than you know. I forged a signature--.

**MRS. LINDE:** For heaven's sake--!

**NORA:** I only need to tell you about it, so you can be my witness.

**MRS. LINDE:** Why do you need a witness? What am I--.

**NORA:** In case I lose my mind. . . . it could happen, too. . . .

**MRS. LINDE:** Nora!

**NORA:** Or something else could happen to me . . . something, where I wasn't here anymore--.

**MRS. LINDE:** Nora, Nora, you're not yourself--.

**NORA:** And maybe there was someone, who wanted to take the blame, all of it on himself, and, see--

**MRS. LINDE:** All right, fine, but how can you possibly imagine--.

**NORA:** That's when you need to witness that it isn't true, Christina. I am myself, my mind is clear, and I'm

saying to you now that I did it, nobody else even knew about it, I did it all myself. Remember that!

**MRS. LINDE:** I will remember. But I don't understand.

**NORA:** Oh, how could you understand! What happens next is the great miracle.

**MRS. LINDE:** The miracle?

**NORA:** Yes, the miracle. But it's so terrible, Christina. It must never happen, never, not for any price.

**MRS. LINDE:** I'm going over right now to talk to Krogstad!

**NORA:** Don't talk to him! He'll hurt you!

**MRS. LINDE:** Listen, Nora, there was a time he would have done anything for me.

**NORA:** Krogstad?

**MRS. LINDE:** Where does he live?

**NORA:** How should I know? Oh, wait.

*(Searches her pocket.)*

His calling card. But the letter, the letter?

**HELMER:** *(In his room, knocks on the door.)* Nora?

**NORA:** *(Cries out anxiously.)* What do you want?

**HELMER:** Now, now, no reason to be frightened. We're not coming in; after all, you've locked us out. Are you trying on the. . . ?

**NORA:** Yes, I'm trying it on. It looks beautiful on me, Torvald.

**MRS. LINDE:** *(Looking at the card.)* He lives just around the corner.

**NORA:** Fine, but what's the use? We're lost. The letter's already in the box.

**MRS. LINDE:** Your husband has the key?

**NORA:** Always.

**MRS. LINDE:** We need Krogstad to ask for his letter back unread, we need him to think of some excuse--

**NORA:** But this is the time of day when Torvald usually--

**MRS. LINDE:** Stall him, keep him in here. I'll be back as soon as I can.

*(MRS. LINDE hurries out through the hall door.)*

**NORA:** *(Goes to Helmer's door, unlocks it, and peeks in.)* Torvald!

**HELMER:** *(From the study.)* Well, then, does a man finally dare set foot in his own living room? Come on, Rank, you'll want to see. . . .

*(In the door.)*

But, what's this?

**NORA:** What is it, Torvald, dear?

**HELMER:** Rank had me expecting some big fashion show.

**DR. RANK:** *(In the door.)* Well, that's what I thought, but perhaps I was mistaken.

**NORA:** No one gets to admire me in all my glory until tomorrow.

**HELMER:** Nora, my dear, you look exhausted. Have you been practicing too hard?

**NORA:** Actually, I haven't been practicing at all.

**HELMER:** You're going to have to.

**NORA:** Yes, I know I'm going to have to, Torvald. But I just can't, not without your help. I've completely forgotten everything.

**HELMER:** Oh, we'll get it back up to speed.

**NORA:** Yes, take charge, Torvald, tell me what to do. Promise? I'm so nervous! All those people . . . Drop everything else tonight, Torvald. No business, no papers, don't even pick up a pen. Please? For me, Torvald, dear?

**HELMER:** I promise. Tonight, I am completely at your service, you poor little thing. Hmm. If I can just deal with one thing first. . .

*(Goes to the hall door.)*

**NORA:** What's out there?

**HELMER:** Just thought I'd quickly check the mail.

**NORA:** No! Please, don't, Torvald!

**HELMER:** Why not?

**NORA:** Torvald, I'm asking . . . there's no mail.

**HELMER:** Just let me check.

*(NORA goes to the piano, plays the first notes of the Tarantella. He stops.)*

Aha!

**NORA:** I can't dance tomorrow if I don't practice tonight.

**HELMER:** *(Goes to her.)* Are you really so frightened?

**NORA:** Yes, terribly frightened. Let me practice a little first; we have some time before dinner. Sit down and play for me, Torvald. Direct me. Teach me, the way you always do.

**HELMER:** I'd be happy to. If that's what you want.

*(HELMER sits at the piano.)*

**NORA:** *(Grabs the tambourine from the box, then a multi-colored shawl, which she drapes around her shoulders. She leaps forward to the floor, and shouts.)* Play for me! I want to dance!

*(HELMER plays, NORA dances. Dr. RANK stands behind the piano and watches her.)*

**HELMER:** *(Playing.)* Slower, Nora, slower.

**NORA:** Can't change.

**HELMER:** Not so violent, Nora!

**NORA:** Has to be like this.

**HELMER:** *(Stops.)* No, no. That's not how it goes at all.

**NORA:** *(Laughs, swinging the tambourine.)* What did I tell you?

**DR. RANK:** Let me play for her.

**HELMER:** *(Stands.)* Yes, do that. I can teach her better.

*(RANK sits at the piano and plays. NORA dances increasingly wildly. HELMER stands by the stove and directs her, but she doesn't seem to pay him any attention. Her hair loosens and falls to her shoulders; she doesn't notice, but continues to dance. MRS. LINDE comes in.)*

**MRS. LINDE:** *(Stands dumbfounded.)* Ah!

**NORA:** *(Dancing.)* See what fun we're having, Christina.

**HELMER:** But my dearest lovely Nora, you're dancing like your life depended on it.

**NORA:** It does.

**HELMER:** Rank, hold on. This is sheer insanity. Stop!

*(RANK stops playing. NORA stops, stands.)*

I would not have believed it possible, Nora. You've forgotten everything I taught you!

**NORA:** (*Tosses her tambourine.*) You see?

**HELMER:** There's plenty of room for instruction.

**NORA:** You see how much I need it! You'll have to teach me right up to the last second! Promise me you will, Torvald!

**HELMER:** You can count on it.

**NORA:** You can't give a single thought to anything but me, the rest of today and tomorrow. You won't open a single letter, you won't even check the mailbox--.

**HELMER:** Ah. You're still worried about that person, aren't you?

**NORA:** Yes, yes, that too!

**HELMER:** I can see it in your face. There's a letter from him out there, isn't there?

**NORA:** I don't know. Maybe. But you can't read anything like that, not now. There can't be anything ugly between us before it's all over.

**DR. RANK:** (*Quietly, to HELMER.*) You'd best not deny her.

**HELMER:** (*Puts his arms around her.*) My little girl will get her wish. But tomorrow night, after you've danced--.

**NORA:** Then you are free.

**HELENE:** (*In the door to the right.*) Dinner's ready.

**NORA:** We'll also have champagne, Helene.

**HELENE:** All right, ma'am.

*(Goes.)*

**HELMER:** So, we're having a feast tonight?

**NORA:** A feast! Drinking champagne until the break of dawn!

*(Shouts out.)*

And macarons, Helene! Lots of macarons, just this once!

**HELMER:** (*Takes her hands.*) Now, now, now. No more of this crazy wildness. Be my little lark again.

**NORA:** Oh, I will. But go in to dinner, now, Torvald; you too, Dr. Rank. Christina, help me put my hair back up.

**DR. RANK:** (*Quietly, on his way out.*) Are you sure there's nothing wrong: nothing seriously wrong?

**HELMER:** Far from it. No, this isn't anything other than childish anxiety, like I told you.

*(They go out to the right.)*

**NORA:** So?

**MRS. LINDE:** Left town.

**NORA:** I could see it on your face.

**MRS. LINDE:** He'll be home tomorrow evening. I left him a note.

**NORA:** You shouldn't have bothered. You can't stop it now. Besides, there's an amazing kind of joy, sitting here, waiting for the miracle.

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

**NORA:** Something you can't understand. Go in with them; I'll be there in a second.

*(MRS. LINDE goes into the dining room. NORA stands for a moment, as though gathering herself. Then she looks at her watch.)*

Five. Seven hours before midnight. Then twenty-four hours until the next midnight. Then the tarantella's

done. Twenty-four plus seven? Thirty-one hours to live.

**HELMER:** *(At the door right.)* So where's my little lark?

**NORA:** *(Going to him with open arms.)* Your lark is here!

*End Act Two*

*15 more pages in the Third Act*