A Doll House

BY HENRIK IBSEN

TRANSLATED BY
Rick Davis and Brian Johnston
ORIGINAL PRODUCTION

_A Doll House_ was originally produced May 26–28, 1994 at Lawrence University, Appleton, Wisconsin under the direction of Mark Dintenfass. The cast was as follows in order of appearance:

Nora ...................................... Melinda Hein
Torvald .................................. Tim McKellips
Dr. Rank ................................. Bill Parker
Kristine ................................. Jessica Roegler
Krogstad ................................. Eric Westphal
Anne-Marie ............................ Kristine Wendland
Maid ....................................... Katra Byram
Ivar ....................................... Joey Biese
Emmy ...................................... Brittany Pahnke

CHARACTERS

Nora
Torvald
Dr. Rank
Kristine
Krogstad
Anne-Marie
Maid
Ivar
Emmy
A comfortable, tasteful but not expensively furnished room. A door to the right in the back wall leads out to the hall; another door to the left leads in to Helmer’s study. Between these doors is a piano. In the middle of the left wall, a door, and farther back, a window. Near the window a round table with armchairs and a small sofa. In the right wall, upstage, a door and, on this same side nearer the foreground, a porcelain stove with a pair of armchairs and a rocking chair. Between the stove and the door, a little table. Engravings on the walls. An etagère with porcelain figures and other small art objects; a small bookcase with books in rich bindings. Carpet on the floor; the fire burns in the stove. A winter’s day.

(A bell rings in the hallway; soon after, we hear the door being opened. Nora, cheerfully humming, enters the room; she is dressed in outdoor clothes and carries a great number of packages, which she sets down on the table, right. She lets the door to the hall stand open and we see a Porter carrying a Christmas tree and a basket, which he hands to the Maid, who had opened the door for them.)

NORA: Be sure you hide the tree, Helene. We can’t let the children see it before it’s decorated tonight. (To the Porter as she takes out her purse.) How much—? Oh yes, I know, half a krone—here’s one—no, keep the change.

(The Porter thanks her and leaves. Nora closes the door. She continues laughing softly to herself while she takes off her outdoor clothes. She takes a bag of macaroons from her pocket and eats a couple; then she walks cautiously and listens outside her husband’s door.)

He’s home, all right.

(Humming again, she goes over to the table, right.)

HELMER: (From within the study.) Do I hear a skylark singing out there?
NORA: (Busy opening some packages.) Yes you do.
HELMER: Is there by any chance a squirrel rummaging around?
NORA: Yes!
HELMER: When did the squirrel get home?
NORA: Just this second. (She puts the bag of macaroons in her pocket and wipes her mouth.) Come out here, Torvald, and look at what I’ve bought.

HELMER: Can’t be disturbed! (After a moment, he opens the door and looks in, his pen in his hand.) Did you say bought? All that? Has the little spendthrift been out wasting money again?
NORA: Oh, Torvald—this year we really ought to let ourselves go a little bit. It’s the first Christmas we haven’t had to watch our money.
HELMER: But we still can’t go around wasting it, you know.
NORA: Yes, Torvald, now we can afford to waste a little bit here and there. Isn’t that right? Just a teeny little bit. Now that you’ve got such a big salary and we’ve got heaps and heaps of money coming in?
HELMER: Yes, after New Year’s. And then it’s three whole months before the first paycheck.
NORA: Fuff! We can borrow till then.
HELMER: Nora! (Goes over to her and takes her playfully by the ear.) Is that dizzy little head of yours spinning around again?
Suppose I borrowed a thousand today, and you wasted it all on Christmas, and then on New Year's Eve I got hit in the head by a falling brick and lay there—

NORA: (Covering his mouth.) Ugh! Don't say awful things like that!

HELMER: Well, suppose it happened—what then?

NORA: If anything that awful happened, some silly loan would be the least of my worries.

HELMER: What about the people I'd borrowed from?

NORA: Them? Who cares about them! They're only strangers.

HELMER: Nora, Nora, you are such a woman! Seriously, Nora, you know what I think about these things. No debts! Never borrow! Some freedom's lost, and because of that some beauty too, from a home that's built on borrowing and debt. The two of us have managed to hold out bravely until now; and we'll stay the course for the little time remaining.

NORA: (Goes over to the stove.) All right, Torvald, whatever you want.

HELMER: (Following.) Now, now; the little songbird mustn't droop its wings. Right? Is the squirrel standing there sulking? (Taking out his wallet.) Nora, guess what I have?

NORA: (Turning quickly.) Money!

HELMER: There, see? (Handing her some bills.) For Heaven's sake, I know how much a house goes through at Christmastime.

NORA: (Counting.) Ten—twenty—thirty—forty—Oh, thank you, thank you, Torvald. This will help me no end.

HELMER: It had certainly better.

NORA: Yes, yes, I'll make sure it does. But come here so I can show you what I've bought. And so cheap! Look—new clothes for Ivar, also a sword. Here's a horse and trumpet for Bob. And for Emmy, a doll and a doll bed. They're pretty plain, but she'll just tear them to pieces anyway before you know it. And here's some dress material and some handkerchiefs for the maids—even though old Anne-Marie really deserves a little more.

HELMER: And what's in that package there?

NORA: (With a cry.) No, Torvald! Not till tonight!

HELMER: Aha! But tell me, you little spendthrift, what did you think of for yourself?

NORA: For me? Oh, I don't need anything.

HELMER: You most certainly do. Tell me what you'd like most of all—within reason.

NORA: Oh, I really don't know. Yes—listen, Torvald—

HELMER: Well?

NORA: (Fumbling with his button; not looking at him.) If you want to give me something, you could—you could—

HELMER: Well, say it.

NORA: (Quickly.) You could give me money, Torvald. Only what you can spare; then one of these days I could buy something with it.

HELMER: No, but Nora—

NORA: Yes, do it, Torvald, darling. I'm begging you. And I'll hang the money in pretty gilt paper on the tree. Wouldn't that be lovely?

HELMER: What do we call those little birds that are always spending their money?

NORA: Spendthrifts—yes, I know, I know. But let's do what I say, Torvald; then I'll have time to think about what I really need. That's pretty practical, isn't it?

HELMER: (Smiling.) Absolutely—if you could only hold on to the money I give you, and if you actually bought something for yourself with it. But it will go for the house, for a lot of things we don't need, and I'll just have to shell out again.

NORA: Oh, Torvald—
HELMER: Can’t be denied, my dear little Nora. (Puts his arm around her waist.) Spendthrifts are sweet; but they go through an awful lot of money. It’s unbelievable how expensive it is to keep a spendthrift.

NORA: Oh, fuff—how can you say that? I save absolutely everything I can.

HELMER: (Laughing.) Yes, that’s true—everything you can. But the trouble is, you can’t.

NORA: (Humming and smiling with quiet complacency.) Hmm.

You just can’t imagine what kinds of expenses larks and squirrels have, Torvald.

HELMER: You are a strange little one. Just like your father was. You’ll try anything you can think of to get hold of some money; but the moment you get some, it slips through your fingers. You never know what you’ve done with it. But you are what you are. It’s in your blood—these things are hereditary, Nora.

NORA: I wish I’d inherited a lot of Papa’s qualities.

HELMER: Well I don’t want you to be anything but what you are: my sweet little songbird. But listen—I’m getting the distinct impression—you’ve got a sort of a—what can I call it—a kind of a guilty look today.

NORA: I do?

HELMER: You certainly do. Look me straight in the eye.

NORA: (Looking at him.) Well?

HELMER: (Wagging his finger.) Our sweet tooth wouldn’t have been running wild in town today, would it?

NORA: No, what makes you think that?

HELMER: You’re sure that sweet tooth didn’t make a little stop at the bakery?

NORA: No, Torvald, I swear—

HELMER: Didn’t nibble a little candy?

NORA: No, absolutely not.
and you don’t have to torture your precious eyes and your delicate little fingers—

NORA: (Clapping her hands.) No, is that true, Torvald, I really don’t have to? How wonderful to hear that! (Takes his arm.)
Now I’ll tell you what I thought we should do—as soon as Christmas is over—(The door bell rings.) Oh, that doorbell. (Tidying up the room.) That means a visitor—what a bore!

HELMER: I’m not at home to visitors, remember that.

MAID: (In the doorway.) Madam, there’s a strange lady here to see you.

NORA: Show her in.

MAID: (To Helmer.) And the Doctor arrived at the same time.

HELMER: He went straight to my study?

MAID: Yes, sir, he did.

(Helmer goes into his room. The Maid shows Mrs. Linde, dressed in traveling clothes, into the room and closes the door after her.)

MRS. LINDE: (Timidly and somewhat hesitantly.) Good day, Nora.

NORA: (Uncertainly.) Good day—

MRS. LINDE: You don’t recognize me.

NORA: No; I don’t know—I think—(Bursting out.) Kristine! Is it really you?

MRS. LINDE: Yes it is.

NORA: Kristine! How could I not recognize you? But then how could I—? (Quieter.) You’ve changed, Kristine.

MRS. LINDE: Yes, I expect I have. In nine—ten—long years—

NORA: Is it that long? Yes, that’s right. Oh, the last eight years have been happy ones, believe me. And now you’ve come to town as well. Made the long trip in winter. That was brave.

MRS. LINDE: I just got here this morning on the steamer.
Mrs. Linde: (Smiles sadly, stroking Nora's hair.) Ah, sometimes it happens that way, Nora.

Nora: So completely alone. That must be terribly sad for you. I have three lovely children—you can't see them right now, they're out with Anne-Marie. But now you have to tell me everything.

Mrs. Linde: No, no, I'd rather hear about you.

Nora: No, you have to go first. Today I'm not going to be selfish. Today I'm only going to think about you. But I have to tell you one thing. Did you hear about the great luck we just had?

Mrs. Linde: No, what is it?

Nora: My husband has been made manager of the Bank.

Mrs. Linde: Your husband? That is lucky!

Nora: Isn't it? The law is such a chancy business, especially when you won't take the ugly cases. Torvald would never do that, of course, and I agree with him completely. So you can imagine how happy we are! He starts at the Bank right after New Year's, and then he'll be getting a huge salary and lots of commissions. From now on we'll be able to live quite differently—we can actually do what we want. Oh, Kristine, I feel so light and happy! Isn't it lovely to have lots of money, and not have to worry about anything?

Mrs. Linde: It's lovely just to have enough.

Nora: No, not just enough, but lots and lots of money!

Mrs. Linde: (Smiling.) Nora, Nora, haven't you gotten over that yet? You were such a spendthrift in school.

Nora: (Laughing softly.) Yes, Torvald still says the same thing. (Wagging her finger.) But "Nora, Nora" hasn't been as wild as you all think. We haven't exactly been in a position where I could waste any money. We've both had to work.

Mrs. Linde: You too?

Nora: Yes, odd jobs—sewing, embroidery, work like that—(Casually.) and also other things. You know Torvald left the government when we got married; he saw he'd never be promoted, and he needed to earn more money than before. In that first year he worked himself to the bone, always looking for extra income, day and night. But he couldn't keep it up, and he got deathly sick. The doctor said he absolutely had to move south.

Mrs. Linde: Didn't you stay a whole year in Italy?

Nora: That's right. It wasn't that easy to get away, as you can imagine. Ivar had just been born. But we had to go, there was no question about it. Ah, it was a wonderful trip, and it saved Torvald's life. But it was incredibly expensive.

Mrs. Linde: I believe you.

Nora: Four thousand, eight hundred kroner. That's a lot of money.

Mrs. Linde: It's just lucky you had it when the emergency came up.

Nora: Well, I can tell you, we had to get it from Papa.

Mrs. Linde: So that's how. That was about the time your father died, I think.

Nora: Yes, Kristine, it was right then. Just think, I couldn't go and be with him. I stayed right here and waited every day for little Ivar to come into the world. And I had my poor, sick Torvald to take care of. Dear, sweet Papa! I never saw him again, Kristine. That was the saddest time in my whole marriage.

Mrs. Linde: I know how much he meant to you. But then you left for Italy?

Nora: Yes, we had the money then, and the doctors insisted. So we left in a month.

Mrs. Linde: And your husband came back completely cured?

Nora: Right as rain!
MRS. LINDE: But—the doctor—?
NORA: What do you mean?
MRS. LINDE: I thought the maid said the man who came in with me was a doctor.
NORA: Yes, Doctor Rank. He's not here on a house call, he's our best friend—he comes by at least once a day. No, Torvald hasn't been sick a day since then. And the children are strong and sound and so am I. (Jumping up and clapping her hands.) Oh God, oh God, Kristine, it's so wonderful to live and be happy! But I'm being hateful here, only talking about myself. (Sits on a stool close by Kristine and lays her arms on her knees.) Please don't be mad at me! Tell me something—is it really true that you didn't love your husband? So why did you marry him?
MRS. LINDE: My mother was still alive, but she was bedridden and couldn't take care of herself; and I also had to look after my two younger brothers. I couldn't justify refusing his offer.
NORA: No, no, you were right. He was rich at the time, wasn't he?
MRS. LINDE: He was pretty well-off, I think. But the business wasn't very solid, Nora: when he died it all went to pieces, nothing was left.
NORA: And then—?
MRS. LINDE: Well, I had to do what I could for myself—a little shop, a few students, whatever else I could find. These last three years have been like one long workday without a break. But now it's over, Nora. My poor mother doesn't need me anymore, she's gone. And the boys are working now, they're on their own.
NORA: You must feel such relief—
MRS. LINDE: No, not at all. Only inexpressibly empty. Nothing more to live for. (Stands uneasily.) So I couldn't stand it any longer out in that little backwater. It's got to be easier here to find something to do, something to keep my mind working. If only I could be lucky enough to find a steady job, some office work—
NORA: But Kristine, that's so exhausting, and you're tired enough to begin with. You'd be better off if you could get away to a spa for a while.
MRS. LINDE: (Going over to window.) I don't have a Papa to send me on a trip, Nora.
NORA: (Getting up.) Oh, don't be mad at me!
MRS. LINDE: Nora, dear, don't you be mad at me. That's the worst thing about this situation of mine; it leaves you with so much bitterness. You've got nothing to work for, but you still have to watch out for every opportunity. You have to live, so you become selfish. When you told me your news, I was more excited for my own sake than yours.
NORA: Why? Oh, I see—you mean maybe Torvald can do something for you.
MRS. LINDE: That's exactly what I was thinking.
NORA: And so he will, Kristine! Leave it to me—I'll suggest it so beautifully, so beautifully—find something charming that he'll really appreciate. Oh, I can't wait to help you.
MRS. LINDE: You're so kind, Nora, to take such an interest in me—doubly kind, since you don't know much about life's hardships yourself.
NORA: I—? Don't know much—?
MRS. LINDE: (Smiling.) Well, good Lord, a little sewing and things like that—you're such a child, Nora.
NORA: (Tosses her head, walks across the room.) You shouldn't be so sure about that.
MRS. LINDE: Oh?
NORA: You're like everyone else. You all think I'm not capable of anything serious—
MRS. LINDE: Now, now—
NORA: That I've never been put to the test in the cold, hard world.
MRS. LINDE: Nora, you've just been telling me all about your troubles.
NORA: Fuff! Trifles! (Quietly.) I haven't told you the big thing.
MRS. LINDE: What big thing? What do you mean?
NORA: You look down on me an awful lot, Kristine, but you really shouldn't. You're proud that you've worked so hard for your mother all these years.
MRS. LINDE: I don't look down on anyone. But it's true that I'm proud—and happy—that I was given the chance to ease my mother's sorrow in her last days.
NORA: And when you think about what you've done for your brothers, you're proud of that as well.
MRS. LINDE: I think I'm entitled to that.
NORA: So do I. But now you'll hear, Kristine. I also have something to be proud and happy about.
MRS. LINDE: I don't doubt it. But how do you mean?
NORA: Let's talk quietly. What if Torvald heard? He mustn't, not for anything in the world. Nobody can find out about this, nobody but you.
MRS. LINDE: What is it?
NORA: Come over here. (Pulls her down on the sofa beside her.) Now then: here's what I have to be proud and happy about. I saved Torvald's life.
MRS. LINDE: Saved? How did you save?—
NORA: I told you about the trip to Italy. Torvald would never have survived if he hadn't gone down there—
MRS. LINDE: Yes, well, your father gave you all the money you needed—

NORA: (Smiling.) Yes, that's what Torvald and everyone else believe, but—
MRS. LINDE: But—?
NORA: Papa never gave anything. I got the money myself.
MRS. LINDE: You? That was a lot of money.
NORA: Four thousand, eight hundred kroner. What do you say to that?
MRS. LINDE: But Nora, how was that possible? Did you win the lottery?
NORA: (Disdainfully.) The lottery. (Snorting.) What kind of art would that have taken?
MRS. LINDE: Then where did you get it from?
NORA: (Humming and smiling secretively.) Hmm; tra la la la la!
MRS. LINDE: Because you certainly couldn't have borrowed it.
NORA: Oh? Why not?
MRS. LINDE: No, a wife can't get a loan without her husband's permission.
NORA: (Tossing her head.) Well, but a wife with a head for business, a wife who knows how to be a little clever—
MRS. LINDE: Nora, I just don't understand—
NORA: And you don't need to. Nobody said anything about borrowing the money. Maybe I got it some other way. (Throwing herself back on the sofa.) Maybe I got it from one of my admirers. When you're as alluring as I am—
MRS. LINDE: You're crazy.
NORA: I've got you really curious now, haven't I?
MRS. LINDE: Listen to me, Nora; you haven't done anything foolish, have you?
NORA: (Sitting up again.) Is it foolish to save your husband's life?
MRS. LINDE: I think it's foolish that without his knowledge you—
NORA: But that's just it—he mustn't know anything! Good Lord, can't you see that? He can never know how bad off he was. The doctors came to me to say his life was in jeopardy—that
only a trip south could save him. At first I tried to coax him into it—I told him how lovely it would be to take a trip abroad like other young wives—then I begged and cried—I said he should be kind and indulge a woman in my condition—and I hinted that he could easily take out a loan. That really set him off, Kristine. He told me I was being frivolous, and that it was his duty as a husband not to indulge my every whim and caprice—I think that's what he called them. Well, well, I thought, saved you must be and saved you shall be—and that's when I came up with my plan.

MRS. LINDE: Didn't your husband ever find out that the money wasn't your father's?

NORA: Never. Papa died right after that. I thought about letting him in on it and asking him not to say anything. But with him lying there so sick—and finally it wasn't necessary.

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

NORA: No, for heaven's sake, how can you even imagine that? He's so strict about those things. And besides, Torvald's a man—he'd be so humiliated if he knew he owed me anything. It could even spoil our relationship; it would be the end of our beautiful, happy home.

MRS. LINDE: So you'll never tell him?

NORA: (Reflectively, half-smiling.) Yes, maybe someday; years from now, when I can't count on my looks any more. Don't laugh! I mean when Torvald's not as attracted to me as he is now—when my dancing and dressing-up and reciting for him don't interest him any more. Then it'll be good to have something to fall back on. (Breaking off.) Dumb, dumb, dumb! That'll never happen. So what do you think of my big secret, Kristine? I can do things after all, can't I? But as you can imagine, it's been a big worry for me. It hasn't been that easy to make the payments on time. So I had to save a little, here and there, whenever I could. I couldn't really take any-

thing out of the housekeeping budget, because Torvald has to live in a certain style. And I couldn't scrimp on the children's clothes; I used up whatever I got for them—the angels!

MRS. LINDE: Poor Nora! So it came out of your allowance?

NORA: Yes, of course. But then it was mostly my problem. Whenever Torvald gave me money for new clothes or whatever, I'd only use half; I always bought the simplest, cheapest things. I'm lucky that everything looks good on me, so Torvald never noticed. But it made me sad sometimes, Kristine—because it's so nice to dress up now and then, isn't it?

MRS. LINDE: Yes it is.

NORA: But I found other ways to make some money too. Last winter I was lucky enough to get a big copying job to do. So I shut myself in and wrote every evening till late at night. Ah, I'd get so tired, so tired—but it was also great fun, sitting and working and earning money like that. Almost like being a man.

MRS. LINDE: How much have you managed to pay off like that?

NORA: Well, I can't really say exactly. This kind of account is very hard to keep track of. I only know that I've paid back everything I can scrape together. A lot of times I didn't know which way to turn. (Smiling.) I'd sit here and imagine that a rich old man had fallen in love with me.

MRS. LINDE: What? Which man?

NORA: Oh, come on! And that he'd just died and when they read his will, there it was in big letters: "My entire fortune is to be paid in cash, immediately, to the delightful Mrs. Nora Helmer."

MRS. LINDE: But Nora, who is he?

NORA: Good Lord, don't you get it? There never was any such person; it was just something I'd sit here and dream about when I couldn't think of any other way to get the money. But
now it doesn't matter, the old bore can go back where he came from; I don't need him or his will, because my troubles are over. Oh, God, it's so lovely to think of, Kristine! Carefree! To be carefree, completely carefree! To run around and play with the children; to make everything in the house warm and beautiful, just the way Torvald likes it! Then maybe we can travel a little. Maybe I'll get down to the ocean again. Oh yes, it is so wonderful to live and be happy!

(The bell rings in the hallway.)

MRS. LINDE: (Rising.) The bell—maybe I should go.
NORA: No, stay here. It won't be for me. It's probably for Torvald.

MAID: (From the hall doorway.) Excuse me, ma'am. There's a gentleman here to speak with the lawyer.
NORA: With the Bank Manager, you mean.
MAID: Yes, with the Bank Manager. But I didn't know if—since the Doctor's in there—
NORA: Who is the gentleman?
KROGSTAD: (From the doorway.) It's me, Mrs. Helmer.

(Mrs. Linde starts, checks herself, and turns toward the window.)

NORA: (A step towards him, tense, in a low voice.) You? What is it? What do you want to talk to my husband about?
KROGSTAD: Bank matters—more or less. I have a minor position on the bank staff, and I hear your husband is our new chief.
NORA: And so it's—
KROGSTAD: Just dry business, Mrs. Helmer. Absolutely nothing else.
NORA: Then would you please be good enough to step into his study?

(Rank nods indifferently and shuts the hallway door; then she goes and tends the stove.)

MRS. LINDE: Nora—who was that man?
NORA: That was a lawyer named Krogstad.
MRS. LINDE: So it really was him.
NORA: Do you know that man?
MRS. LINDE: I used to know him—a long time ago. He was a law clerk for a while in our area.
NORA: Yes, that's right, he was.
MRS. LINDE: He certainly has changed.
NORA: He had a very unhappy marriage.
MRS. LINDE: And now he's a widower?
NORA: With several children. There we go, now it's burning. (She closes the stove door and moves the rocking chair a little to the side.)
MRS. LINDE: He's got himself involved in all kinds of businesses, they say.
NORA: Oh yes? Probably; I really wouldn't know. But let's not think about business—it's so boring!

(Doctor Rank comes out from Helmer's study.)

RANK: (Still in the doorway.) No, no, Torvald: I don't want to be in the way; I'd just as soon go talk to your wife for a while. (Closing the door and noticing Mrs. Linde.) I'm sorry—I'm in the way here too.
NORA: You certainly are not. (Introducing him.) Doctor Rank, Mrs. Linde.
RANK: Ah ha! That's an oft-mentioned name in this house. I think I passed you on the stairs when I arrived.
MRS. LINDE: Yes, I don't handle stairs very well.
RANK: Ah ha—are you having some kind of trouble?
MRS. LINDE: Probably just overwork.
RANK: Nothing more? So you've probably come to town to catch your breath in the holiday parties.
MRS. LINDE: I'm looking for a job.
RANK: Is that the prescription for overwork?
MRS. LINDE: One has to live, Doctor.
RANK: Yes, there's general agreement on that point.
NORA: Oh, come on now, Doctor Rank, you want to live as much as anyone.
RANK: Yes, I really do. Wretched as I am, I really want to stretch my torment to the limit. All my patients feel the same way. And it's the same with the morally diseased—right now there's a terminal moral case in there with Helmer—
MRS. LINDE: (Quietly.) Ah—!
NORA: Who's that?
RANK: Oh, just a certain lawyer Krogstad, no one you'd know anything about. His character, my ladies, is rotten right down to the roots—but even he began making speeches—as if it were self-evident—that he had to live.
NORA: Oh? What did he want to talk to Torvald about?
RANK: I don't know for sure. All I heard was something about the bank.
NORA: I didn't know Krog—that this lawyer Krogstad had anything to do with the bank.
RANK: Yes, he's got some kind of position down there. (To Mrs. Linde.) I don't know if you have, in your part of the country, any of these moral detectives, these investigators who go around sniffing out moral corruption and then get their victims into a safe place where they can keep them under constant surveillance—it's a lucrative business these days. The healthy ones get left out in the cold—no room for them!
MRS. LINDE: And yet it's the sick ones who need to be brought inside.
RANK: So why can't you say it?
NORA: No, I don't dare. It's too horrible.
MRS. LINDE: Horrible?
RANK: Well, then, maybe you'd better not. But with us—can't you? What do you want to say so Torvald can hear?
NORA: I have a tremendous desire to say: To hell with everything!
RANK: Are you crazy?
MRS. LINDE: For heaven's sake, Nora.
RANK: Say it—here he is.
NORA: (Hiding the macaroons.) Shh, shh, shh!

(Helmer enters from his study, hat in hand and overcoat on his arm.)

NORA: Well, my dear, are you through with him?
HELMER: Yes, he just left.
NORA: Let me introduce you—this is Kristine, who's just come to town.
HELMER: Kristine? I'm sorry, but I don't know—
NORA: Mrs. Linde, Torvald dear, Mrs. Kristine Linde.
HELMER: Oh, I see. A childhood friend?
MRS. LINDE: Yes, we knew each other back then.
NORA: And just think, she made the long trip here just to talk to you.
MRS. LINDE: Well, actually, I didn't—
NORA: Kristine, you see, is extremely good at office work, and so she's tremendously eager to place herself under the direction of a capable man so that she can learn even more than she—
HELMER: Very sensible, Mrs. Linde.
NORA: So that when she heard you'd been made bank manager—there was a bulletin about it in all the papers—she started out as fast as she could, and—it's true, isn't it, Torvald? You could do something for Kristine for my sake, yes?
HELMER: It's not completely out of the question. You are, I suppose, a widow?
MRS. LINDE: Yes.
HELMER: And you have experience in office work?
MRS. LINDE: Yes, quite a bit.
HELMER: Well then, it's entirely possible that I can offer you a position—
NORA: (Clapping her hands.) You see, you see!
HELMER: You appeared at a lucky moment, Mrs. Linde.
MRS. LINDE: How can I thank you—
HELMER: Not at all necessary. (Puts on overcoat.) But today I'll have to ask you to excuse me—
RANK: Wait—I'll go with you.

(Rank gets his fur coat from the hall and warms it at the stove.)

NORA: Don't be out long, Torvald my dear.
HELMER: Just an hour, no more.
NORA: Are you leaving too, Kristine?
MRS. LINDE: (Putting on her outdoor things.) Yes, now I've got to find myself a room.
HELMER: Then maybe we can all walk together for a while.
NORA: (Helping her.) It's so boring that we don't have space here, but it's just impossible for us to—
MRS. LINDE: Don't even think of it! Goodbye, Nora, and thank you for everything.
NORA: Goodbye for now. But I'll see you again this evening. You too, Doctor Rank. What? If you feel well? Of course you will! Wrap yourself up nice and warm.
(They all go out together into the hall. Children's voices are heard on the stairs.)

NORA: There they are! There they are!

(She runs to open the front door. Anne-Marie, their nanny, enters with the children.)

NORA: Come in, come in! (Bends down and kisses them.)

Oh, you sweet little darlings! Look at them, Kristine, aren't they lovely!

RANK: No loitering out here in the draft!

HELMER: Let's go, Mrs. Linde; this place is unbearable now for anyone but mothers.

(Doctor Rank, Helmer, Mrs. Linde go down the stairs. The nursemaid goes into the living room with the children. Nora goes in also, after shutting the door to the hallway.)

NORA: You look so clean and healthy! Your cheeks are all red! Like apples and roses. (The children chatter away to her throughout the following.) Was it fun? That's great. Really? You pulled both Emmy and Bob on the sled? My goodness, both of them together! You're a clever boy, Ivar. Here, let me hold her for a little while, Anne-Marie. My sweet little doll-baby! (Takes the smallest child from Anne-Marie and dances with her.) Yes, yes, mommy will dance with Bob too. What? A snowball fight? Oh, I wish I was there with you! No, don't bother, I'll undress them myself, Anne-Marie. Yes, let me do it, it's so much fun. Go in for a while—you look frozen. There's warm coffee for you on the stove. (Anne-Marie goes into the room on the left. Nora takes off the children's outdoor clothes and throws them around while the children all talk at the same time.) Is that so? A great big dog came running after you? But it didn't bite? No, dogs never bite lovely little doll-babies. Stop peeking into the packages, Ivar! What is it? Oh, wouldn't you like to know? No, it's something awful! Well? Do you want to play? What'll we play? Hide-and-seek. Yes, let's play hide-and-seek. Bob, you hide first. Me? All right, I'll hide first.

(She and the children play, laughing and shouting, in the living room and the adjoining room to the right. At last Nora hides under the table; the children come storming in, searching, not finding her; then, hearing her muffled laughter, rush to the table, lift the tablecloth, and discover her. A storm of delight. Meanwhile, there has been a knocking at the front door; no one has noticed it. Now the door half-opens, and Krogstad appears. He waits a little while the game continues.)

KROGSTAD: I beg your pardon, Mrs. Helmer.

NORA: (Turns, with a stifled cry, half jumps up.) Ah! What do you want?

KROGSTAD: Excuse me. The front door was open—somebody must have forgotten to shut it.

NORA: (Rising.) My husband's not here, Mr. Krogstad.

KROGSTAD: I know that.

NORA: Well—what do you want?

KROGSTAD: A word with you.

NORA: With—? (To the children, quietly.) Go in with Anne-Marie. No, the strange man won't hurt Mama. When he's gone we can play some more. (She leads the children in to the room on the left and closes the door after them. Now, tense and nervous.) You want to speak with me?

KROGSTAD: Yes, I do.
NORA: Today—? But it's not the first of the month yet—
KROGSTAD: No, it's Christmas eve. It's up to you how much Christmas cheer you'll have.
NORA: What do you want? Today I can't possibly—
KROGSTAD: We won't talk about that right now. It's something else. I suppose you have a moment?
NORA: Well, yes; all right—though—
KROGSTAD: Good. I was sitting over at Olsen's Restaurant and I saw your husband going down the street—
NORA: Oh yes.
KROGSTAD: With a lady.
NORA: So?
KROGSTAD: I wonder if you'll allow me to ask if that lady was Mrs. Linde?
NORA: Yes.
KROGSTAD: Just arrived in town?
NORA: Yes, today.
KROGSTAD: She's a good friend of yours?
NORA: Yes, she is. But I can't see—
KROGSTAD: I also knew her at one time.
NORA: I'm aware of that.
KROGSTAD: Really? That's what I thought. Well then, let me get right to the point: Is Mrs. Linde getting a job at the bank?
NORA: Why do you think you can cross-examine me, Mr. Krogstad? You, who's just one of my husband's employees? But since you ask, you might as well know: yes, Mrs. Linde got a job. And I arranged it all for her, Mr. Krogstad. Now you know.
KROGSTAD: As I thought.
NORA: (Pacing the floor.) Oh, I should hope that one always has a little bit of influence. Just because one is a woman, it doesn't follow that—when one is in an inferior position, Mr.

KROGSTAD, one ought to be very careful with somebody who—
KROGSTAD: Who has influence?
NORA: Exactly.
KROGSTAD: (Changing tone.) Mrs. Helmer, would you be good enough to use your influence on my behalf?
NORA: What? What do you mean?
KROGSTAD: Would you be kind enough to make sure that I keep my inferior position at the bank?
NORA: What do you mean? Who's trying to take it away from you?
KROGSTAD: Oh, you don't have to play the innocent with me. I understand perfectly well that your friend doesn't want to run the risk of seeing me again; and now I also understand who to thank for being let go.
NORA: But I promise you—
KROGSTAD: Yes, yes, yes. But here's the point: there's still time, and I'd advise you to use your influence to prevent it.
NORA: But, Mr. Krogstad, I have no influence at all.
KROGSTAD: No? I thought a minute ago you said—
NORA: I didn't mean it that way. What makes you think I've got any sort of influence over my husband in things like that?
KROGSTAD: Oh, I've known your husband since we were students together—and I don't believe our Bank Manager has any more will power than any other married man.
NORA: You talk like that about my husband and I'll show you the door.
KROGSTAD: The lady has courage.
NORA: I'm not afraid of you any more. Soon after New Year's I'll be done with the whole business.
KROGSTAD: Now listen to me, Mrs. Helmer. If it becomes necessary, I'll fight to the death for my little job at the bank.
NORA: Yes, it looks that way.

KROGSTAD: And not just for the money—that’s the least of my concerns. It’s something else—well, all right—you know, of course, like everyone else, that some years ago I was guilty of an indiscretion.

NORA: I think I heard something about it.

KROGSTAD: The case never came to trial, but even so every door was closed to me. So I had to go into the sort of business you’re familiar with. I had to find something—and I think I can say that I’ve been far from the worst in that line of work. But now I want to put all of it behind me. My sons are growing up. For their sake I want to win back as much respect as I can in the community. That position in the bank was the first rung in the ladder for me. Now your husband wants to kick me right back off the ladder and into the mud again.

NORA: But for God’s sake, Mr. Krogstad, it’s just not in my power to help you.

KROGSTAD: That’s because you don’t have the will to do it—but I can force you to.

NORA: You wouldn’t tell my husband that I owe you money?

KROGSTAD: Hmm—what if I did?

NORA: That would be shameful. (Choking with tears.) That secret—my pride and my joy—if he learned about it in such a horrible way—learned it from you—. You’d put me through such an incredibly unpleasant scene—

KROGSTAD: Only unpleasant?

NORA: (Vehemently.) Just try it! It’ll only be worse for you. Because then my husband will really get to see what kind of man you are, and you’ll have no chance of keeping your job.

KROGSTAD: I asked you if all you were afraid of was this unpleasant scene here at home?

ACT ONE

NORA: If my husband finds out about it, of course he’ll pay you off immediately, and we’d have nothing more to do with you.

KROGSTAD: (A step nearer.) Listen, Mrs. Helmer: either you’ve got a terrible memory or a very shaky grasp of business. Let me get a few facts straight for you.

NORA: How do you mean?

KROGSTAD: When your husband was sick, you came to me for four thousand, eight hundred kroner.

NORA: I didn’t know where else to go.

KROGSTAD: I promised to get it for you—

NORA: And you did.

KROGSTAD: I promised to get it for you on certain conditions. At the time you were so wrapped up in your husband’s illness, that I suppose you didn’t think through all the details. Maybe I’d better remind you of them. Now: I promised to get you the money based on a note that I drafted.

NORA: Yes, which I signed.

KROGSTAD: Very good. But below your signature I added some lines to the effect that your father would guarantee the loan. Your father was to sign there.

NORA: Was to—? He signed it.

KROGSTAD: I left out the date. Your father was supposed to date his own signature. Do you remember that?

NORA: Yes, I think so—

KROGSTAD: Then I handed the note over to you so you could mail it to your father. Isn’t that the case?

NORA: Yes.

KROGSTAD: And of course you did that right away—because only about five, six days later, you brought me the note, with your father’s signature. And then you got your money.

NORA: Well? Haven’t I been meeting my payments?
Krogstad: Yes, more or less. But to return to the question: that was a difficult time for you, wasn't it, Mrs. Helmer?

Nora: Yes, it was.

Krogstad: Your father was very ill, I believe.

Nora: He was very near the end.

Krogstad: He died soon after that?

Nora: Yes.

Krogstad: Tell me, Mrs. Helmer, do you by any chance recall the date of your father's death? Which day of the month, I mean.

Nora: Papa died on the twenty-ninth of September.

Krogstad: Quite correct; I've already confirmed that. That brings us to an oddity that I simply cannot account for.

Nora: What kind of oddity? I don't understand—

Krogstad: Here's the oddity, Mrs. Helmer: your father counter-signed the note three days after his death.

Nora: How? I don't understand—

Krogstad: Your father died on the twenty-ninth of September. But look at this. Here your father has dated his signature "October 2nd." Isn't that odd, Mrs. Helmer? (Nora is silent.) Can you explain it to me? (Nora remains silent.) Here's another remarkable thing: the date "October 2nd" and the year are not written in your father's hand, but in a hand that I ought to know. Now, that could be explained; your father forgot to date his signature, and someone else did it for him, somewhat carelessly, before anyone knew of his death. Nothing wrong with that. Everything hinges on the signature. And that is genuine, isn't it, Mrs. Helmer? It really was your father himself who signed his name there?

Nora: (After a short silence, throws back her head and looks firmly at him.) No, it wasn't. I signed Papa's name.

Krogstad: Listen, Mrs. Helmer—do you understand that this is a dangerous confession?

Nora: Why? You'll get your money soon enough.
—don’t you think I know something about that? Good. Do what you want. But hear this: if I get thrown down a second time, you’re coming with me. (He bows and goes out through the hall door.)

NORA: (Stands for a moment, reflecting, then tosses her head.) Nonsense! He’s trying to frighten me! I’m not all that naive. (Starts gathering up the children’s clothes, but soon stops.) But—? No, impossible. I did it out of love.

CHILDREN: (In the doorway, left.) Mama, the strange man’s going down the street.

NORA: Yes, I know. But don’t mention the strange man to anyone. You hear? Not even Papa.

CHILDREN: No, Mama. Now can we play again?

NORA: No, no. Not now.

CHILDREN: But Mama, you promised.

NORA: Yes, but right now I can’t. Go inside; I’ve got too much to do. Go in, go in, my dear, sweet little ones. (She herds them carefully into the room and closes the door after them. She sits on the sofa, takes up her embroidery, makes some stitches, but soon stops.) Helene! Let me have the tree in here. (Goes to the table at left and opens a drawer, pauses again.) No, that’s completely impossible!

MAID: (With the spruce tree.) Where should I put it, Ma’am?

NORA: There—in the middle of the floor.

MAID: Anything else?

NORA: No, thank you. I have what I need.

(The Maid, having set the tree down, goes out.)

NORA: (Busy decorating the tree.) Candles here, flowers here—that horrible man! Talk, talk, talk. Nothing’s going to happen. The Christmas tree will be just lovely. I’ll do anything you want me to, Torvald—I’ll sing for you, dance for you—

(Helmer, with a packet of papers under his arm, comes in through the hall.)

NORA: Ah! Back already?

HELMER: Yes. Has someone been here?

NORA: Here? No.

HELMER: That’s strange. I just saw Krogstad going out the door.

NORA: Really? Oh, of course. Krogstad was here for a moment.

HELMER: Nora, I can see it in your eyes, he’s been here asking you to put in a good word for him.

NORA: Yes.

HELMER: And you were going to pretend it was your own idea. You’d pretend he’d never been here. Did he ask you to do that as well?

NORA: Yes, Torvald, but—

HELMER: Nora, Nora, you could go along with that? Do business with that sort of person, and make promises to him? And then, on top of it all, tell me a lie!

NORA: A lie?

HELMER: Didn’t you tell me no one had been here? (Wagging his finger.) My little songbird mustn’t ever do a thing like that again. A songbird needs a clean beak to chirp with. No false notes. (Takes her by the waist.) Isn’t that the way it should be? Yes, of course it is. So let’s not talk about it any more. (Sits by the stove.) Ah, it’s so snug and cozy here.

NORA: (Working on the tree; after a short pause.) Torvald!

HELMER: Yes?

NORA: I’m terribly excited about the Stenborg’s party the day after tomorrow.
HELMER: And I'm terribly curious to see what you'll surprise me with.
NORA: Oh, that stupid nonsense!
HELMER: What?
NORA: I can't find anything I like; everything seems so pointless, so idiotic.
HELMER: Is that what little Nora thinks?
NORA: (Behind his chair, her arms on its back.) Are you very busy, Torvald?
HELMER: Well—
NORA: What are those papers?
HELMER: Bank business.
NORA: Already?
HELMER: I've convinced the retiring manager to give me full authority to make changes in personnel and procedure. I'll have to use Christmas week for that. I want everything in order for the New Year.
NORA: So that's why this poor Krogstad—
HELMER: Hm.
NORA: (Still leaning on the back of his chair, stroking the hair on his neck.) If you weren't so busy, I would ask you for a terribly big favor.
HELMER: Let's hear it. What can it be?
NORA: No one has your good taste. I really want to look my best at the costume party. Torvald, couldn't you take over from me and advise me what to wear and how to design my costume?
HELMER: So our little rebel's ready for a cease-fire?
NORA: Yes, Torvald. I can't get anywhere without your help.
HELMER: All right. I'll think about it. We'll come up with something.
NORA: How sweet of you! (Goes over to the Christmas tree; pause.) These red flowers are so pretty—But tell me, was what that Krogstad did really such a crime?
HELMER: He forged people's names. Do you know what that means?
NORA: Maybe he did it out of need.
HELMER: Yes, or thoughtlessness, like so many others. And I wouldn't condemn a man categorically because of one isolated incident.
NORA: No, you wouldn't, would you, Torvald?
HELMER: Men can often redeem themselves by openly confessing their guilt and accepting their punishment.
NORA: Punishment?
HELMER: But Krogstad didn't do that. He got himself off the hook with tricks and loopholes. That's what's corrupted him.
NORA: Do you think that would—?
HELMER: Imagine what life is like for a man like that: he has to lie and dissemble and cheat everyone he meets—he has to wear a mask in front of his nearest and dearest—yes, even his wife and children. And the children—that's the most terrible part of it.
NORA: Why?
HELMER: Because an atmosphere so filled with lies brings pestilence and disease into every corner of a home. Every breath the children take carries the infection.
NORA: (Closer behind him.) Are you sure about that?
HELMER: Ah, my dear, I'm a lawyer—I've seen it often enough. Almost everyone who turns bad as a youth has had a compulsive liar for a mother.
NORA: Why just—a mother?
HELMER: Usually you can trace it to the mother, but fathers have the same effect; it's something every lawyer knows. And yet this Krogstad has been living at home, poisoning his children
with lies and deceit; that's why I call him morally corrupt. And that's why my sweet little Nora must promise me not to plead his case. Your hand on that. Now, now, what's this? Give me your hand. There. That's settled. And let me tell you, it would be impossible for me to work with him; I literally feel sick when I'm around someone like that.

NORA: (Withdraws her hand and goes over to the other side of the Christmas tree.) It's so hot in here! And I've got so much to pull together!

HELMER: (Rising and gathering his papers.) Yes, I've got to try to get through some of these before dinner. I'll also give some thought to your costume. And I might also be thinking about something to hang on the tree in gilt paper—. (Lays his hand on her head.) Oh, my sweet little songbird. (He goes into his room and closes the door.)

NORA: (Softly, after a silence.) No, no! It's not true. It's impossible. It just can't be possible.

ANNE-MARIE: (In doorway, left.) The children are asking if they can come in to Mama.

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

ANNE-MARIE: Very well, Ma'am.

NORA: (Pale with terror.) Harm my children—! Poison my home? (Short pause; she tosses her head.) It's not true. It could never be true!

**END ACT ONE**

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**ACT TWO**

The same room. In the corner by the piano stands the Christmas tree, stripped, bedraggled, with its candle-stumps all burned down. Nora's outdoor clothing lies on the sofa.

(Nora, alone, walks restlessly around the room. Finally she stands by the sofa and picks up her coat.)

NORA: (Dropping the coat again.) Somebody's coming! (Goes to the door, listens.) No, nobody there. Naturally—nobody's coming on Christmas day—or tomorrow either. But maybe— (She opens the door and looks out.) No, nothing in the mailbox—perfectly empty. (Comes forward.) Oh, nonsense! Of course he wasn't serious about it. Nothing like that could happen. After all, I have three small children.

(Anne-Marie, carrying a large carton, comes in from the room on the left.)

ANNE-MARIE: Well, I finally found the box of masquerade costumes.

NORA: Thanks. Put it on the table.

ANNE-MARIE: (Does so.) But it's a terrible mess.

NORA: Ah, I wish I could rip them into a million pieces.

ANNE-MARIE: Lord bless us—they can be fixed up again. Just have a little patience.

NORA: Yes, I'll go and get Mrs. Linde to help.

ANNE-MARIE: You're not going out again now? In this horrible weather? Mrs. Nora will catch cold—get sick.

NORA: Worse things could happen. How are the children?
ANNE-MARIE: The poor little things are playing with their Christmas presents, but—
NORA: Are they always asking for me?
ANNE-MARIE: They're so used to having their Mama with them.
NORA: Yes, Anne-Marie, but I can't be with them as much as before.
ANNE-MARIE: Well, little children get used to anything.
NORA: Do you think so? Do you think they'd forget their Mama if she were really gone?
ANNE-MARIE: Lord help us—gone?
NORA: Listen—tell me, Anne-Marie—I've wondered about this a lot—how could you ever, in your heart of hearts, stand to give your child away to strangers?
ANNE-MARIE: But I just had to when I became little Nora's wet-nurse.
NORA: Yes, but how could you actually do it?
ANNE-MARIE: When I could get such a good place? A poor girl in trouble has to jump at a chance like that. Because that slick good-for-nothing wouldn't do anything for me.
NORA: But your daughter's completely forgotten you.
ANNE-MARIE: Oh no, not really. She wrote to me when she was confirmed, and when she got married.
NORA: (Clasps her around the neck.) Dear old Anne-Marie—you were a good mother for me when I was little.
ANNE-MARIE: Poor little Nora, with me as her only mother.
NORA: And if my little ones didn't have a mother, I know that you—stupid, stupid, stupid! (Opening the carton.) Go to them. Right now I have to—tomorrow you'll see how beautiful I look.
ANNE-MARIE: Yes, Mrs. Nora will be the most beautiful woman at the party. (Anne-Marie goes into the room on the left.)
NORA: (Begins to unpack the box, but soon throws the whole thing aside.) Ah, if I had the nerve to go out. If only nobody would come. If only nothing happened here at home in the meantime. Stupid talk; nobody's coming. Just don't think. I have to brush out this muff. Beautiful gloves, beautiful gloves. Get it out, get it out! One, two, three, four, five, six, (Screams.) Oh, here they come. (Goes toward the door, but stops, irresolute. Mrs. Linde comes in from the hall where she has removed her outdoor clothes.) So it's you, Kristine.
NORA: No one else out there? I'm glad you're here.
MRS. LINDE: I heard you were asking for me.
NORA: Yes, I happened to be passing by. I need your help with something. Come sit with me by the sofa. Look at this. There's going to be a costume party tomorrow over at Consul Stenborg's, and Torvald wants me to go as a Neapolitan fisher girl and dance the tarantella—I learned it in Capri.
MRS. LINDE: Well, well—you're giving a real performance?
NORA: Yes, Torvald says I should. Look—here's my costume. Torvald had it made for me down there. But it's all torn now and I just don't know—
MRS. LINDE: We'll get that fixed up in no time; the trimmings are just coming loose here and there, that's all. Needle and thread? There, now we have what we need.
NORA: This is so nice of you.
MRS. LINDE: (Sewing.) So you're going in disguise tomorrow, Nora? You know what? I'll come by for a minute and look at you when you're all dressed up. You know I've completely forgotten to thank you for the lovely evening yesterday.
NORA: (Gets up and crosses the floor.) Oh, I don't think it was as nice yesterday as it usually is. You should have gotten here a little earlier, Kristine. Torvald really knows how to make a home charming and elegant.
MRS. LINDE: So do you, just as much, I'd say. You're not your
father's daughter for nothing. Tell me—is Doctor Rank always so depressed?

NORA: No, yesterday he was particularly low. But he's got a very serious illness—tuberculosis of the spine, poor man. You know his father was a disgusting creature who kept mistresses and things like that—that's how poor Doctor Rank got to be so sickly.

MRS. LINDE: (Dropping her sewing to her lap.) Nora, my dear, how do you know about these things?

NORA: (Walking around.) Fuff. When you've had three children you end up meeting some women who know a little about medicine, and they tell you a few things.

MRS. LINDE: (Sewing again; short silence.) Does Doctor Rank come to the house every day?

NORA: Every single day. He's Torvald's best friend ever since they were children, and he's my good friend too. Doctor Rank sort of belongs to the house.

MRS. LINDE: But tell me this—is he honest? I mean, doesn't he like to tell people what they want to hear?

NORA: No, not at all. What makes you think that?

MRS. LINDE: When you introduced us yesterday he said he'd heard my name here so often—but then I noticed that your husband didn't have any idea who I was. So how could Doctor Rank—

NORA: That's right, Kristine. Torvald is so unbelievably devoted to me—he says he wants me all to himself. When we were first married he'd get jealous if I so much as mentioned any of my old friends from back home. So, of course, I stopped. But with Doctor Rank I can talk about all those things, because he enjoys hearing about them.

MRS. LINDE: Listen to me, Nora: in many ways you're still a child. I'm quite a bit older than you and I have a little more experience. Let me tell you something: you should put an end to all this with Doctor Rank.

NORA: What should I put an end to?

MRS. LINDE: All of it, I think. Yesterday you said something about a rich admirer who was going to give you money—

NORA: Yes, but unfortunately he doesn't exist. So what?

MRS. LINDE: Is Doctor Rank rich?

NORA: Yes.

MRS. LINDE: No one to care for?

NORA: No, no one—but—

MRS. LINDE: And he comes by every day?

NORA: Yes, that's what I told you.

MRS. LINDE: How can such a cultivated man be so obvious?

NORA: I really don't understand you.

MRS. LINDE: Don't play games, Nora. Don't you think I know who lent you the money?

NORA: Are you out of your mind? How can you even think that? A good friend of ours, who comes over here every single day! That would have been horrible!

MRS. LINDE: So it really wasn't him?

NORA: No, I promise you. I would never have thought of that—anyway, he didn't have any money to lend back then—he inherited it all later.

MRS. LINDE: Well, that was just as well for you, I think.

NORA: No, I would never have thought of asking Doctor Rank. Even though I'm sure that if I did—

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

NORA: No, of course not. I can't imagine how it would be necessary. On the other hand, I'm sure that if I even mentioned it to him—

MRS. LINDE: Behind your husband's back?

NORA: I've got to get out of this other thing—that's also behind his back. I've really got to get out of that.
MRS. LINDE: Yes, that's what I said yesterday. But—
NORA: (Walking up and down.) A man can deal with these things so much better than a woman—
MRS. LINDE: Your own husband can, yes.
NORA: Nonsense. (Stopping.) When you pay back everything you owe you get your note back.
MRS. LINDE: That's right.
NORA: And you can tear it up in a hundred thousand pieces and burn it—that disgusting piece of paper!
MRS. LINDE: (Looking straight at her, putting the sewing down, rising slowly.) Nora—you're hiding something from me.
NORA: Can you see that?
MRS. LINDE: Something's happened since yesterday morning. Nora, what is it?
NORA: (Going to her.) Kristine! (Listens.) Ssh! Torvald's home. Look—go in there with the children for a while. Torvald can't stand to see people sewing. Let Anne-Marie help you.
MRS. LINDE: (Gathering some of her things.) Yes, all right, but I'm not leaving before we talk all this through. (She goes into the room at left; at the same time, Helmer comes in from the hall.)
NORA: (Goes to meet him.) Oh, I've been waiting for you, Torvald my dear.
HELMER: Was that the dressmaker?
NORA: No, it's Kristine; she's helping me with my costume. You know, I think I'm going to outdo myself this time.
HELMER: Yes, that was a pretty good idea I had, wasn't it?
NORA: Brilliant. But wasn't it also nice of me to agree to it?
HELMER: (Taking her under the chin.) Nice of you? Agreeing with your husband? All right, you crazy thing, I know you didn't mean it that way. But I don't want to disturb you; I suppose you'll want to try it on.

ACT TWO

NORA: Will you be working?
HELMER: Yes. (Shows her a bundle of papers.) See. I've been down to the bank—(He is about to go into his study.)
NORA: Torvald.
HELMER: Yes.
NORA: If your little squirrel were to beg you ever so nicely for something—?
HELMER: Well?
NORA: Would you do it?
HELMER: First, of course, I'd need to know what it is.
NORA: The squirrel would romp around and do tricks if you'd be sweet and say yes.
HELMER: Come on, what is it?
NORA: The lark would sing high and low in every room—
HELMER: So what, she does that anyway.
NORA: I'd pretend I was a fairy child and dance for you in the moonlight, Torvald.
HELMER: Nora, I hope this isn't that same business from this morning.
NORA: (Coming closer.) Yes, Torvald, please, I beg you!
HELMER: You really have the nerve to drag that up again.
NORA: Yes, yes, you've got to do what I say; you've got to let Krogstad keep his job in the bank.
HELMER: But Nora, I'm giving his job to Mrs. Linde.
NORA: That's very sweet of you; but can't you get rid of another clerk, someone besides Krogstad?
HELMER: I can't believe how stubborn you're being! Just because you went ahead and made a foolish promise to speak up for him, now I'm supposed to—
NORA: That's not why, Torvald. It's for your own sake. That man writes articles for some horrible newspapers; you've said so
yourself. He can do you an awful lot of harm. I’m scared to death of him—

HELMER: Aha—I understand. You’re frightened of the old memories.

NORA: What do you mean by that?

HELMER: You’re thinking about your father.

NORA: That’s right. Remember how those horrible people wrote about Papa in the papers and slandered him so terribly. I believe they’d have gotten him fired if the government hadn’t sent you up there to investigate and if you hadn’t been so kind and fair to him.

HELMER: My little Nora, there is a considerable difference between your father and me. Your father’s public life was not exactly beyond reproach—but mine is. And that’s how I plan to keep it for as long as I hold my position.

NORA: Oh, you can never tell what spiteful people might do. It could be so nice and quiet and happy in our home—so peaceful and carefree—you and me and the children, Torvald—

HELMER: And precisely by continuing to plead for him like this you’re making it impossible for me to keep him on. It’s already known around the bank that I’m letting Krogstad go. What if the rumor got around that the new bank manager was letting himself be overruled by his wife—

NORA: Yes, so what?

HELMER: Oh, of course—as long as our little rebel here gets her way—I should make myself look silly in front of my whole staff—make people think I can be influenced by all kinds of outside pressures—you can bet that would come back to haunt me soon enough. Besides—there’s one thing that makes it impossible to have Krogstad in the bank as long as I’m the manager.

NORA: What’s that?
A DOLL HOUSE

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dren's sake! Listen, Torvald, do it! You don't realize what can happen to all of us.

HELMER: Too late.
NORA: Yes, too late.

HELMER: Nora, I forgive you for being nervous about this, even though you're really insulting me. Yes, you are. Isn't it insulting to think that I would be afraid of what some hack journalist might do for revenge? But I forgive you, all the same, because it shows so beautifully how much you love me. That's how it should be, my own darling Nora. Come what may! When things get tough, I've got the courage—and the strength, you can believe it. I'm the kind of man who can take it all on himself.

NORA: (Terrified.) What do you mean by that?
HELMER: The whole thing, like I said.
NORA: (Resolutely.) You'll never have to do that, never.

HELMER: Good—so we'll share it, Nora, as man and wife. That's the way it should be. (Fondling her.) Happy now? Well, well, well—enough of those frightened dove’s eyes. It's nothing but empty fantasy. Now you should run through your tarantella and try the tambourine. I won't hear a thing in the office, so you can make all the noise you want. (Turning in the doorway.) And when Rank comes, tell him where he can find me. (He nods to her, goes to his study with his papers, and closes the door behind him.)

NORA: (Distracted with fear, standing as though glued to the spot, whispering.) He's really going to do it. He will do it. He'll do it in spite of everything—No, never, never in this world! Anything but that—escape! A way out— (The bell rings in the hall.) Doctor Rank! Anything but that! Whatever else happens!

(She brushes her hands over her face, pulls herself together

and goes to open the door in the hall. Doctor Rank is standing outside hanging up his fur coat. During the following, it begins to grow dark.)

NORA: Doctor Rank, I recognized your ring. But you can't see Torvald quite yet; I think he's busy.

RANK: And you?
NORA: (While he comes into the room and she closes the door after him.) Oh, as you know perfectly well, I always have an hour to spare for you.

RANK: Thanks. I shall make use of it as long as I can.
NORA: What do you mean? As long as you can?
RANK: Yes, does that worry you?
NORA: Well, it's such a strange way to talk. Is anything going to happen?

RANK: Something that I've been expecting for a long time. But I didn't think it would come so soon.

NORA: (Gripping his arm.) What have you found out? Doctor Rank, you have to tell me!

RANK: (Sitting by the stove.) It's all over. There's no point in lying to myself.

NORA: (Breathing easier.) Is it you—?
RANK: Who else? I'm the worst of all my patients, Mrs. Helmer. Over the last few days I've done a general audit of my internal account. Bankrupt. Within a month I'll probably be rotting in the churchyard.

NORA: Oh, really. What a horrible thing to say.

RANK: It is a horrible thing. But the worst of it all is the horror beforehand. There's one more examination to go; when I've done that I'll know when the disintegration will begin. There is something I want to ask you. Helmer is so sensitive; he can't stand to be around anything ugly. I won't let him come to my sickroom.
NORA: Oh, but Doctor Rank—
RANK: I won't allow him in there. Under any circumstances. I'll lock the door to him. As soon as I'm absolutely certain of the worst, I'll send you my card with a black cross on it; then you'll know that it's begun.
NORA: No, you are completely unreasonable today. And I especially wanted you to be in a really good mood.
RANK: When I hold death in my hands? And to suffer like this for someone else's guilt? Is there any justice in that? In every family—every single one—somehow this inexorable retribution is taking its course.
NORA: (Stopping her ears.) La la la la la! Cheer up! Cheer up!
RANK: Yes, finally even I can only laugh at the whole thing. My poor, innocent back has to pay for my father's career as a lascivious lieutenant.
NORA: (By the table to the left.) Was he that addicted to asparagus and pâté de foie gras?
RANK: Yes, and truffles.
NORA: Truffles, yes. And also oysters, I believe.
RANK: Yes, oysters, oysters, of course.
NORA: And port and champagne too. It's so sad that all these delicious things have to go and attack our bones.
RANK: Especially when they attack the unfortunate bones that never got the slightest pleasure from them.
NORA: Ah, yes—that's the greatest sadness of all.
RANK: (Looks searchingly at her.) Hmm—
NORA: (Shortly after.) Why did you smile?
RANK: No, no—you laughed.
NORA: No, you smiled, Doctor Rank!
RANK: (Getting up.) You're an even bigger flirt than I thought!
NORA: I'm full of crazy ideas today.
RANK: So it seems.

NORA: (With both hands on his shoulders.) Dear, dear Doctor Rank: for Torvald and me, you simply will not die.
RANK: Oh, you'll soon get over that loss. Those who go away are soon forgotten.
NORA: (Looking anxiously at him.) Do you think so?
RANK: You make new relationships, and then—
NORA: Who makes new relationships?
RANK: Both you and Helmer will, after I'm gone. You're well on your way already, I'd say. What was that Mrs. Linde doing here last night?
NORA: Come on now—you're not telling me you're jealous of poor Kristine?
RANK: Yes I am. She'll be my successor here in this house. When my time is up, I'll bet that woman will—
NORA: Ssh—don't talk so loud—she's in there.
RANK: Again today! There, you see?
NORA: She's just fixing my costume. Good Lord, you're unreasonable today. (Sits on the sofa.) Now be nice, Doctor Rank. Tomorrow you'll see how beautifully I'll dance—and you can imagine I'm doing it just for you—yes, for Torvald too, of course. (Takes various things out of a carton.) Doctor Rank, sit here. I want to show you something.
RANK: (Sitting.) What is it?
NORA: Look here. Look!
RANK: Silk stockings.
NORA: Flesh-colored. Lovely, aren't they? It's so dark in here now, but in the morning—no, no, no, only the feet. Oh, well, you might as well go ahead and look higher up.
RANK: Hmm.
NORA: What's this critical stare? Don't you think they'll fit?
RANK: I couldn't possibly have an accurate opinion on that.
NORA: (Glancing at him for a moment.) Shame on you. (Hits him
lightly on the ear with the stockings. ) That's what you get.
(Puts them away again.)
RANK: And what other splendors do I get to see?
NORA: Not a thing—you're being bad. (She hums a little and
rummages through her things.)
RANK: (After a short pause.) When I'm sitting here like this, so
close to you, I can't imagine—I can't begin to comprehend—
what would have become of me if I had never found my way
to this house.
NORA: (Smiling.) Yes, I believe you really enjoy being here with
us.
RANK: (Quietly, looking ahead.) And to have to leave it all
behind—
NORA: Nonsense, you're not leaving us behind.
RANK: (As before.) And to think that nothing remains after
you're gone—no little gesture of gratitude—hardly even a
passing regret—just a vacant place that the first person who
comes along can fill.
NORA: And what if I were to ask you now for—? No—
RANK: For what?
NORA: For a great proof of your friendship.
RANK: Yes, yes?
NORA: I mean a tremendously big favor—
RANK: Would you really let me be so happy, just this once?
NORA: You have no idea what it is.
RANK: All right—so tell me.
NORA: No, Doctor Rank, I can't. It's too big, too unreasonable.
It's advice, and help, and a great service too.
RANK: So much the better. I can't imagine what you mean. But
keep talking. Don't you have confidence in me?
NORA: Yes, in you before anyone else. You're my best and truest
friend, you know that. That's why I can tell you. All right,

Doctor Rank: there's something you've got to help me pre­
vent. You know how intensely, how indescribably deeply
Torvald loves me—he'd give his life for my sake without a
moment's thought.
RANK: (Bending toward her.) Nora—do you think he's the only
one?
NORA: (With a slight start.) Who—?
RANK: Who would gladly give his life for you?
NORA: (Heavily.) I see.
RANK: I promised myself that you'd know before the end. I'll
never find a better chance than this. Yes, Nora, now you
know. And you also know that you can trust me like nobody
else.
NORA: (Rises and speaks, evenly and calmly.) Let me through.
RANK: (Makes way for her, but remains seated.) Nora—
NORA: (In the hall doorway.) Helene, bring in the lamp. (She goes
over to the stove.) Ah, dear Doctor Rank, that was really
awful of you.
RANK: (Rising.) That I've loved you just as much as anyone? Was
that awful?
NORA: No, but that you felt you had to tell me. That was just not
necessary.
RANK: What do you mean? You mean that you knew—?

(The Maid enters with the lamp. sets it on the table, and goes
out again.)

RANK: Nora—Mrs. Helmer—I'm asking you. Did you know?
NORA: Oh, how do I know what I knew or didn't know? I can't
say. How could you be so clumsy, Doctor Rank! When
everything was so nice.
RANK: Well, in any case now you know that I'm at your service with body and soul. So please go on.
NORA: (Looking at him.) After this?
RANK: Please, please tell me what it is.
NORA: Now I can't tell you anything.
RANK: Yes, yes. Don't torment me like this. Let me do whatever is humanly possible for you.
NORA: You can't do anything for me now. In fact, I really don't need any help. You'll see—it was just my imagination. It really is. Of course! (Sits in the rocking chair, looks at him, smiling.) Well, you are a piece of work, Doctor Rank. Don't you think you should be a little ashamed, now that the lamp is here?
RANK: No, not really. But maybe I'd better go—for good?
NORA: No, you certainly will not do that. Of course you'll keep coming here just like before. You know perfectly well that Torvald can't do without you.
RANK: Yes, but what about you?
NORA: Oh, I always enjoy your visits very much.
RANK: That's exactly what set me off on the wrong track. You're an enigma to me. I've often felt you'd almost rather be with me than with Helmer.
NORA: Well, you see, there are the people you love the most, and the people you'd almost rather be with.
RANK: Ah yes, you're on to something there.
NORA: When I was at home, of course I loved Papa the most. But I always had the most fun sneaking into the maids' rooms, because they never tried to teach me anything; and they always had so much fun talking to each other.
RANK: Ah—so they're the ones that I've replaced.
NORA: (Jumping up and going to him.) Oh, dear Doctor Rank, I didn't mean that at all. But you can see that with Torvald it's a lot like it was with Papa—

(The Maid enters from the hall.)

MAID: Ma'am. (Whispers and hands Nora a card.)
NORA: (Glancing at the card.) Ah! (Puts it in her pocket.)
RANK: Something wrong?
NORA: No, no, not at all. It's just—it's about my new costume.
RANK: How could that be? Your costume's in there.
NORA: Oh, yes—that one. But this is a different one, I ordered it—Torvald can't find out—
RANK: Aha—there's our great secret.
NORA: That's right. Go on in to him. He's working in the inner room. Keep him there as long as—
RANK: Don't worry—he won't get by me. (He goes into Helmer's study.)
NORA: (To the Maid.) And he's waiting in the kitchen?
MAID: Yes, he came up the back stairs.
NORA: Did you tell him somebody was here?
MAID: I did, but that didn't help.
NORA: He won't go away?
MAID: No, he won't leave until he's talked to you.
NORA: Let him come in then; but quietly. Helene, not a word of this to anyone; it's a surprise for my husband.
MAID: Oh, yes, I understand. (She goes out.)
NORA: This terrible thing is really happening. It's coming no matter what. No, no, no. It can't happen. It must not happen.

(She goes and bolts Helmer's door. The Maid opens the hall door for Krogstad and closes it after him. He's dressed in traveling clothes, a fur coat, overshoes, and a fur cap.)
NORA: (Goes toward him.) Talk quietly—my husband’s home.

KROGSTAD: I don’t care.

NORA: What do you want from me?

KROGSTAD: Some answers.

NORA: Quick, then. What?

KROGSTAD: You know, of course, I got my notice.

NORA: I couldn’t stop it, Mr. Krogstad. I fought for you as hard as I could, but it was no use.

KROGSTAD: Does your husband really love you so little? He knows what I can do to you, and he still dares—

NORA: How can you imagine he knows about it?

KROGSTAD: No, I didn’t think he did. It’s not like my fine Torvald Helmer to show that kind of strength.

NORA: Mr. Krogstad, I demand respect for my husband.

KROGSTAD: Good Lord, of course, all due respect. But since the lady has kept all this so carefully hidden, might I ask if you’ve also come to understand a little better than yesterday what you’ve actually done?

NORA: Better than you could ever teach me.

KROGSTAD: Yes, I’m such a terrible lawyer—

NORA: What do you want with me?

KROGSTAD: Just to see how things are with you, Mrs. Helmer. I couldn’t stop thinking about you all day. A cashier, a hack journalist, a—well, a man like me also has a little of what is commonly called heart, you know.

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

KROGSTAD: Have you or your husband given any thought to mine? But that’s not the issue right now. I just wanted to tell you that you don’t need to take this business too seriously. For the time being I’m not taking any action.

NORA: Oh, that’s true, I was sure of it.

KROGSTAD: The whole thing can be settled amicably. No one else needs to know about it, just the three of us.

NORA: My husband can never find out.

KROGSTAD: How can you stop that? Can you pay off the balance?

NORA: No, not right now.

KROGSTAD: Maybe you can find a way to raise the money in a few days?

NORA: No way that I’d use.

KROGSTAD: Well, it wouldn’t do you any good anyway. Even if you were standing there with a pile of cash in your hands you still wouldn’t get your note back.

NORA: Tell me what you’re going to do with it.

KROGSTAD: Just keep it—just hold it in my custody. No one else needs to know anything about it. So if you happen to be thinking of some desperate remedy—

NORA: Which I am.

KROGSTAD: If you’re thinking of running away from home—

NORA: Which I am.

KROGSTAD: Or something worse—

NORA: How did you know?

KROGSTAD: Then give it up right now.

NORA: How could you know I was thinking of that?

KROGSTAD: Most of us think of that to begin with. I thought about it too—but I didn’t have the courage.

NORA: (Lifelessly.) I don’t either.

KROGSTAD: (Relieved.) That’s true?

NORA: I don’t have it; I don’t have it.

KROGSTAD: It’d be pretty silly anyway. As soon as the first big storm blows over—I have here in my pocket a letter to your husband—

NORA: Which tells everything?

KROGSTAD: As nicely as possible.
Nora: (Quickly.) He must never get that letter. Tear it up. I'll get the money somehow.

Krogstad: Excuse me, Mrs. Helmer, but I think I just told you—

Nora: I'm not talking about what I owe you. Just let me know how much you demand from my husband and I'll get you the money.

Krogstad: I'm not demanding any money from your husband.

Nora: So what then?

Krogstad: I'll tell you. I want to get back on my feet, Mrs. Helmer; I want to move up. And your husband is going to help me. For the last year and a half I haven't gone near anything disreputable—all the time fighting to make ends meet—but I was happy to work my way up, step by step. Now I'm being driven out again and I'm not in a very forgiving mood. I'm ready to climb, I tell you. I'll get back in the bank, and in a higher position than before. Your husband will set me up.

Nora: He'll never do that!

Krogstad: He'll do it. I know him; he won't even dare to argue. And once I'm in there with him, you'll see how it goes. In a year I'll be the manager's right-hand man. Nils Krogstad will be running that bank, not Torvald Helmer.

Nora: You'll never live to see that.

Krogstad: You think you might—

Nora: Now I have the courage.

Krogstad: Forget it—a pampered, spoiled woman like you?

Nora: You'll see—you'll see.

Krogstad: Under the ice, maybe? Down in the freezing black water? Floating up in the spring, ugly, unrecognizable, your hair falling out—

Nora: You don't frighten me.

Krogstad: You don't frighten me either. People don't do such things, Mrs. Helmer. Besides, what would be the point? I'd have him in my pocket just the same.

Nora: After—? Even when I'm no longer—?

Krogstad: Are you forgetting? In that case I'll be in charge of your reputation. (Nora stares speechless at him.) Well, I've warned you. Don't do anything stupid. When Helmer gets my letter, I'll wait for a word from him. Just keep in mind that it's your husband who has forced me back onto these old roads of mine. I'll never forgive him for that. Goodbye, Mrs. Helmer. (He goes out through the hallway.)

Nora: (Goes to the hall door, opens it a fraction, and listens.) Gone. He didn't leave the letter. No, no, no, that would be impossible! (Opening the door farther.) What? He's waiting outside. Not going downstairs. Changing his mind? Maybe he'll—?

(A letter drops into the mailbox; then Krogstad's footsteps are heard receding as he walks downstairs. Nora, with a stifled cry, runs across the room to the sofa table; short pause.)

Nora: In the mailbox. (Creeps cautiously to the hall door.) Lying there, Torvald, Torvald—no saving us now!

(Mrs. Linde enters with the costume from the room at the left.)

Mrs. Linde: Well, I think that's it for the repairs. Should we try it—

Nora: (In a low, hoarse voice.) Kristine, come here.

Mrs. Linde: (Throws the dress onto the sofa.) What's the matter—you're upset!
NORA: Come here. See that letter? There—see it, through the window in the mailbox?
MRS. LINDE: Yes, I see it.
NORA: It's from Krogstad.
MRS. LINDE: Nora—Krogstad's the one who lent you the money!
NORA: Yes. And now Torvald will know everything.
MRS. LINDE: Believe me, Nora, that's best for both of you.
NORA: There's more to it. I forged a signature.
MRS. LINDE: Oh for heaven's sake—
NORA: I'm just telling you this, Kristine, so that you can be my witness.
MRS. LINDE: What do you mean, witness? How can I—?
NORA: If I were to lose my mind—that could easily happen—
MRS. LINDE: Nora!
NORA: Or if anything else happened to me, if I couldn't be here—
MRS. LINDE: Nora, you're beside yourself!
NORA: And if someone wanted to try to take the whole thing onto himself, all the blame, you see—
MRS. LINDE: Yes, but how can you think—
NORA: You've got to swear it isn't true, Kristine. I'm in my perfect mind; I understand exactly what I'm saying; and I'm telling you: no one else knew about it. I did it all alone. Remember that.
MRS. LINDE: I will. But I don't understand any of it.
NORA: How could you understand? A wonderful thing is about to happen.
MRS. LINDE: Wonderful?
NORA: Yes, a wonderful thing. But also terrible, Kristine, and it just can't happen, not for all the world.
MRS. LINDE: I'm going to talk to Krogstad right away.
NORA: Don't: he'll only hurt you some way.

MRS. LINDE: Once upon a time he'd have gladly done anything for me.
NORA: Him?
MRS. LINDE: Where does he live?
NORA: How should I know? Wait—(Searches her pocket.) Here's his card. But what about the letter, the letter—?
HELMER: (In his study, knocking on the door.) Nora!
NORA: (Screams in panic.) What is it? What do you want?
HELMER: Now, don't be frightened. We're not coming in. The door's locked; are you trying on your costume?
NORA: Yes, I'm trying it on. I'm going to be so beautiful, Torvald.
MRS. LINDE: (Having read the card.) He lives right around the corner.
NORA: Yes, but that's no help. We're lost. The letter's in the box.
MRS. LINDE: Your husband has the key?
NORA: Always.
MRS. LINDE: Krogstad will have to ask for his letter back unopened—he'll have to find some excuse—
NORA: But this is the time when Torvald usually—
MRS. LINDE: Stall him. Go in there and stay with him. I'll get back as fast as I can. (She goes out hurriedly through the hall door. Nora goes to Helmer's door and opens it, looking in.)
NORA: Torvald!
HELMER: Well—can I finally come back into my own living room? Come on, Rank, now we'll get to see—(In the doorway.) But—?
NORA: What, Torvald my dear?
HELMER: Rank had me all set for a great dress parade.
RANK: (In the doorway.) That's what I was expecting, but I guess I was wrong.
NORA: No one gets to bask in my full glory until tomorrow.
HELMER: But Nora, you look so tired. Have you been practicing too hard?
NORA: No, I haven't practiced at all yet.
HELMER: You know it's essential—
NORA: Absolutely essential. But I can't possibly do it without your help; I've forgotten everything.
HELMER: We'll get it back quick enough.
NORA: Yes, take care of me right to the end, Torvald. Do you promise? Ah, I'm so nervous. That big party—you have to give up everything for me tonight. Not one bit of business, don't even go near your work. All right, Torvald. Promise?
HELMER: I promise. Tonight I'll be completely at your service—you helpless little thing. Hmm—just one item to take care of first—(Goes toward the hall door.)
NORA: What do you want out there?
HELMER: Just seeing if there's any mail.
NORA: No, no, Torvald, don't do that!
HELMER: What now?
NORA: Torvald, please, there's nothing there.
HELMER: Just let me have a look. (About to go; Nora, at the piano, plays the opening notes of the tarantella. Helmer stops at the door.)
NORA: I can't dance tomorrow if I don't rehearse with you.
HELMER: (Going to her.) Nora, are you really so frightened of it?
NORA: Tremendously frightened. Let's rehearse right now; there's still time before dinner. Oh, Torvald, sit down and play for me. Show me how it goes; direct me, like you always do.
HELMER: I'd be glad to, if you want.
(Nora snatches the tambourine out of the box, and also a long, multi-colored shawl which she drapes around herself; then she springs forward and calls out.)
NORA: Play for me! Now I'll dance!

(HELMER plays and Nora dances; Doctor Rank stands behind Helmer and watches.)

HELMER: (Playing.) Slower, slower—
NORA: I can't help it.
HELMER: Not so violent, Nora!
NORA: That's how it has to be.
HELMER: (Stopping.) No, no—that's not it at all.
NORA: (Laughing, swinging the tambourine.) What did I tell you?
RANK: Let me play for her.
HELMER: (Getting up.) Yes, good idea. That way I can be a better teacher.

(Rank sits at the piano and plays. Nora dances with increasing wildness. Helmer has placed himself by the stove, continually directing dancing instructions to her; she seems not to hear him; her hair loosens and falls over her shoulders; she doesn't notice, but keeps on dancing. Mrs. Linde enters.)

MRS. LINDE: (As though spellbound in the doorway.) Ah—!
NORA: (Still dancing.) See, Kristine, what fun!
HELMER: But Nora, you're dancing as if your life were at stake.
NORA: It is, it is!
HELMER: Rank, stop. This is absolute madness. Stop it!
(Rank stops playing and Nora suddenly comes to a halt.)
HELMER: (Goes to her.) I would never have believed this—you've forgotten everything I taught you.
NORA: (Throwing down the tambourine.) As you can see.
HELMER: Some extra work's in order here.
NORA: Yes, you see how important it is. You've got to keep teaching me right up to the last minute. Promise, Torvald?
HELMER: Depend on it.
NORA: You can't even think—today or tomorrow—about anything but me—don't open any letters, don't even touch the mailbox—
HELMER: Ah—you're still afraid of that man.
NORA: Yes, yes, that too.
HELMER: Nora, I can see it in your face, there's a letter from him out there.
NORA: I don't know. I think there is. But you can't read things like that now; there can't be anything horrible between us till all this is over.
RANK: (Softly to Helmer.) You shouldn't go against her.
HELMER: The child will have its way. But tomorrow night—after you've danced—
NORA: Then you're free.
MAID: (In the doorway, right.) Ma'am, dinner's on the table.
NORA: We'll have champagne, Helene.
MAID: Very good, ma'am. (Goes out.)
HELMER: Hey, hey—a whole banquet?
NORA: Yes—a champagne supper right through till dawn! (Calling out.) And some macaroons, Helene—lots of them—just this once.
HELMER: (Taking her hands.) There, there, there—not so wild, not so scared—be my little skylark again.
NORA: Oh, yes, I certainly will. But go to dinner—you too, Doctor Rank. Kristine, I need you to help me with my hair.
RANK: (Softly as they go.) There wouldn't be anything—anything on the way?
HELMER: No, my friend, not a thing; nothing more than these silly fears I've been telling you about. (They go out, right.)
NORA: Well?
MRS. LINDE: Gone to the country.

NORA: I saw it in your face.
MRS. LINDE: He gets back tomorrow night. I left him a note.
NORA: You shouldn't have done that. You can't stop it now. Behind it all there's this great joy—waiting for a wonderful thing to happen.
MRS. LINDE: What are you waiting for?
NORA: You can't understand that. Go in with them—I'll be there in a minute.

(Mrs. Linde goes into the dining room. Nora stands for a moment as if to compose herself; then she looks at her watch.)

NORA: Five. Seven hours to midnight. Then twenty-four hours to the next midnight. Then the tarantella will be done. Twenty-four plus seven—thirty-one hours to live.
HELMER: (In the doorway, right.) What happened to the skylark?
NORA: (Going to him with open arms.) Here's your skylark!

END ACT TWO
ACT THREE

Same room. The sofa-table, with chairs around it, has been moved to the middle of the room. A lamp is burning on the table. The door to the hall stands open. Dance music can be heard from the apartment above.

(Mrs. Linde is sitting by the table, desultorily turning the pages of the book; she attempts to read but seems unable to fix her attention. Once or twice she listens, tensely, for a sound at the door.)

MRS. LINDÉ: Not here yet. And it's now or never. If he'd only—
(Listens again.) Ah—there he is. (She goes out into the hall and cautiously opens the outer door; quiet footsteps are heard on the stairs. She whispers.) Come in. Nobody's here.

KROGSTAD: (In the doorway.) I found a note from you at home. What does it mean?

MRS. LINDÉ: I had to talk to you.

KROGSTAD: Oh yes? And it had to be here, in this house?

MRS. LINDÉ: My place is impossible—there's no private entrance to my room. Come in; we're all alone. The maid's asleep and the Helmers are at a party upstairs.

KROGSTAD: (Comes into the room.) Well, well, well—so the Helmers are dancing tonight. How about that?

MRS. LINDÉ: Why shouldn't they?

KROGSTAD: True enough—why shouldn't they.

MRS. LINDÉ: Well, Krogstad, let's talk.

KROGSTAD: Do the two of us have anything more to talk about?

MRS. LINDÉ: We have a lot to talk about.

KROGSTAD: I wouldn't have thought so.

MRS. LINDÉ: No, because you've never really understood me.

KROGSTAD: What was there to understand, more than the usual thing? A heartless woman sends a man packing as soon as she gets a better offer.

MRS. LINDÉ: Do you think I'm that heartless? Do you think it was easy for me to break up with you?

KROGSTAD: Wasn't it?

MRS. LINDÉ: Krogstad, did you really think that?

KROGSTAD: Then how could you have written to me that way?

MRS. LINDÉ: I couldn't do anything else. If I had to make the break, it was my duty to try to stamp out whatever feelings you had for me.

KROGSTAD: (Clenching his hands.) So that was it! And this—all this for money's sake!

MRS. LINDÉ: Don't forget that I had a helpless mother and two little brothers. We couldn't wait for you, Krogstad; your prospects were so cloudy then.

KROGSTAD: Maybe. But you had no right to abandon me for somebody else's sake.

MRS. LINDÉ: Yes—I don't know. I've asked myself over and over if I had any right to do that.

KROGSTAD: (More quietly.) When I lost you I felt the ground dissolve under my feet. Look at me: I'm a man adrift on a wreck.

MRS. LINDÉ: Help could be close by.

KROGSTAD: It was—until you appeared and blocked the way.

MRS. LINDÉ: I didn't know, Krogstad. I only learned today that I'm replacing you at the bank.

KROGSTAD: Since you say so, I believe it. But now you know—so won't you pull out?

MRS. LINDÉ: No, because that wouldn't do you the least bit of good.

KROGSTAD: Oh, who cares? I'd do it anyway.
MRS. LINDE: I’ve learned to act rationally. Life, and bitter necessity, have taught me that.
KROGSTAD: And life has taught me not to believe in empty phrases.
MRS. LINDE: Then life has taught you a very rational lesson. But you do believe in deeds, don’t you?
KROGSTAD: What do you mean?
MRS. LINDE: You said that you were like a man adrift, standing on a wreck.
KROGSTAD: I said that with good reason.
MRS. LINDE: Well I’m a woman adrift, I’m hanging on to a wreck as well.
KROGSTAD: That was your choice.
MRS. LINDE: There was no other choice at the time.
KROGSTAD: So?
MRS. LINDE: Krogstad, what if these two shipwrecks could reach across to one another?
KROGSTAD: What are you saying?
MRS. LINDE: Two on one raft stand a better chance than each one alone.
KROGSTAD: Kristine!
MRS. LINDE: Why do you suppose I came to town?
KROGSTAD: Were you really thinking about me?
MRS. LINDE: For me to go on living, I need to work. All my life, as long as I can remember, I’ve worked—it’s given me my only real joy. But now I’m completely alone in the world, completely empty and desolate. Working for yourself—well, there’s no joy in that. Krogstad: give me someone and something to work for.
KROGSTAD: I don’t believe all this. This is just some hysterical feminine urge for self-sacrifice.
MRS. LINDE: Have you ever known me to be hysterical?

KROGSTAD: Can you really mean all this? Do you know about my past—the whole story?
MRS. LINDE: Yes.
KROGSTAD: And you know what people think of me here?
MRS. LINDE: You hinted just now that you thought you could have been a different person with me.
KROGSTAD: I know that for sure.
MRS. LINDE: Couldn’t it still happen?
KROGSTAD: Kristine—you’re serious about this? Yes, you are. I can see it in you. Do you have the courage as well?
MRS. LINDE: I need someone to be a mother to, and your children need a mother. The two of us need each other. Krogstad, I have faith in you, in what’s there deep down in your heart. I could risk anything together with you.
KROGSTAD: (Seizing her hands.) Thank you, Kristine, thank you—now I know I can bring myself up in people’s eyes—ah, I forgot—
MRS. LINDE: (Listening.) The tarantella! Go, go, go!
KROGSTAD: What’s going on?
MRS. LINDE: Do you hear the music up there? When it’s over, they’ll be down.
KROGSTAD: All right, I’ll go. It’s all pointless. Of course you don’t know what I’ve done with the Helmers.
MRS. LINDE: Yes, Krogstad, I know all about it.
KROGSTAD: And you still have the courage to—
MRS. LINDE: I know very well how far despair can drive a man like you.
KROGSTAD: If I could only undo what I’ve done!
MRS. LINDE: That’s easy. Your letter’s still in the mailbox.
KROGSTAD: Are you sure?
MRS. LINDE: Absolutely. But—
KROGSTAD: (Looks searchingly at her.) Is that what this is all
about? Would you save your friend at any price? Tell me honestly, tell me straight—is that it?

MRS. LINDE: Krogstad: when you've sold yourself once for someone else's sake, you don't do it a second time.

KROGSTAD: I'll demand my letter back.

MRS. LINDE: No, no.

KROGSTAD: Yes, of course I will. I'll stay here until Helmer comes down; I'll tell him to give me back my letter—that it's only about my dismissal—that he shouldn't read it.

MRS. LINDE: No, Krogstad. Don't take back your letter.

KROGSTAD: But wasn't that exactly why you got me over here?

MRS. LINDE: Yes, in the first panic. But in the twenty-four hours between then and now, I've seen some incredible things in this house. Helmer has to learn everything; this awful secret has to come to light; those two have to come to a clear understanding—they can't go on with all this hiding, all these lies.

KROGSTAD: Well, if you're willing to take the risk—. But there's one thing I can do right away.

MRS. LINDE: (Listening.) Hurry! Go, go! The dance is over. We're not safe another second!

KROGSTAD: I'll wait for you downstairs.

MRS. LINDE: Yes, do that. You'll have to see me home.

KROGSTAD: This incredible happiness—I've never felt anything like it! (He goes out by the front door; the door between the living room and the hall stays open.)

MRS. LINDE: (Tidies the room a little and gets her outer garments ready.) What a change! What a change! People to work for, to live for—a home to make. That's something worth doing. If only they'd come soon. (Listens.) Ah—there they are. Get dressed.

(Outdoors; a key is turned and Helmer leads Nora almost forcibly into the hall. She is wearing the Italian costume with a large black shawl over it; he's in evening dress with an open black domino over it.)

NORA: (Still in the doorway, resisting.) No, no, no, not in there! I'm going up again. I don't want to leave so early!

HELMER: But Nora, my dearest—

NORA: Oh, I beg you, I implore you, from the bottom of my heart—Torvald—just one more hour!

HELMER: Not another minute, Nora my sweet. You know we had an agreement. Come on now, into the drawing room; you're catching cold out here. (He leads her gently into the drawing room against her resistance.)

MRS. LINDE: Good evening.

NORA: Kristine!

HELMER: Well, Mrs. Linde—here so late?

MRS. LINDE: Yes, forgive me. I really wanted to see Nora in her costume.

NORA: So you've been sitting here waiting for me?

MRS. LINDE: Yes, do that. You'll have to see me home.

HELMER: (Taking off Nora's shawl.) Well, get a good look at her. I think she's worth looking at. Isn't she lovely, Mrs. Linde?

MRS. LINDE: Yes, I have to say—

HELMER: Isn't she incredibly lovely? That was the general consensus at the party, too—but also incredibly stubborn, the sweet thing. What to do about that? Would you believe it, I almost had to use force to get her down here.

NORA: Ah, Torvald, you're going to regret that you didn't let me have my way just a half-hour more.
HELMER: Hear that, Mrs. Linde? She danced her tarantella to thunderous applause—well deserved applause, too—even though there was something a little too naturalistic about the whole thing—I mean, something that went beyond the strict requirements of art. But so what? The main thing is, she was a success—a tremendous success. Should I let her stay around after that? Spoil the effect? No, thank you! I took my lovely Capri girl—my capricious little Capri girl, I could say—on my arm; made a quick trip around the ballroom—a curtsy to all sides—and as they say in novels, the lovely apparition vanished. Exits are tremendously important, Mrs. Linde—they should always be effective; but that's what I can't get Nora to see. Uch, it's hot in here. (Throws his domino on a chair and opens the door to his room.)

NORA: (Whispering quickly and breathlessly.) Well?
MRS. LINDE: (Quietly.) I talked to him.
NORA: And—?
MRS. LINDE: Nora, you have to tell your husband everything.
NORA: (Dully.) I knew it.
MRS. LINDE: You've got nothing to worry about from Krogstad—but you have to speak out.
NORA: I won't do it.
MRS. LINDE: Then the letter will.
NORA: Thank you, Kristine. Now I know what I have to do. Sshh!—
HELMER: (Coming in again.) Now, Mrs. Linde—have you had a chance to admire her?
MRS. LINDE: Yes, and now I'll say good night.
HELMER: So soon? Is this yours, this knitting?
MRS. LINDE: (Taking it.) Oh yes.
HELMER: So you also knit.

MRS. HELMER: Yes.
HELMER: Know what? You should embroider instead.
MRS. HELMER: Really? Why?
HELMER: Much prettier. Want to see? You hold the embroidery like this with your left hand, and guide the needle with your right—like this—lightly, in and out, in a sweeping curve—right?
MRS. LINDE: I suppose so—
HELMER: Now knitting, on the other hand—so ugly to watch—see here, the arms jammed together, the needles going up and down—there's something Chinese about it. Ah—that was a tremendous champagne up there.
MRS. LINDE: Well, Nora, good night! And no more stubbornness!
HELMER: Well said, Mrs. Linde!
MRS. LINDE: Good night, Mr. Helmer.
HELMER: (Following her to the door.) Good night, good night. I hope you're all right getting home. I would, of course—but you don't have far to go. Good night, good night. (She leaves; he closes the door after her and comes in again.) Well, well. We finally got her out the door. What an incredible bore that woman is.
NORA: Aren't you tired, Torvald?
HELMER: No, not a bit.
NORA: Not sleepy at all?
HELMER: Absolutely not—in fact, I'm exhilarated! You, on the other hand, are looking very tired and sleepy.
NORA: Yes, I'm tired. I'll go to sleep soon.
HELMER: See, see! I was right! It was time to go home.
NORA: Oh, everything you do is right.
HELMER: (Kisses her on the brow.) Now my little lark is talking like a real person. Say—did you notice how lively Rank was tonight?
Nora: Was he? I didn't get to talk to him.

Helmer: I barely did myself, but I haven't seen him in such a good mood in a long time. (Looks at Nora a while, then comes closer to her.) Hmm—my God, it's glorious to be back in our own home again, completely alone with you—you enchanting young woman!

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

Helmer: Shouldn't I look at my most precious possession? All this magnificence, and it's mine, mine alone, completely and utterly mine!

Nora: You shouldn't talk this way to me tonight.

Helmer: (Following her.) The tarantella's still in your blood. I understand. And that makes me want you even more. Listen! Now the guests are beginning to leave. (More softly.) Nora—soon the whole house will be silent.

Nora: I hope so.

Helmer: Yes, my own darling Nora, that's right. Ah—do you know why, whenever I'm out at a party with you—do you know why I barely speak to you, why I keep my distance, hardly even shoot you a stolen glance? Do you know why I do that? Because I'm imagining you're my secret lover, my young, secret sweetheart, and that no one in the room guesses there's anything going on between us.

Nora: Oh yes, yes, yes—I know you're always thinking of me.

Helmer: And when it's time to go, and I place the shawl over your smooth young shoulders, around this wonderful curve of your neck—then I pretend you're my young bride, that we've come straight from the wedding, that I'm bringing you home for the first time, alone with you for the first time, completely alone with you, you young, trembling, delicious—ah, I've done nothing but long for you all night! When I saw you doing the tarantella—like a huntress, luring us all to your trap—my blood started to boil. I couldn't stand it any longer. That's why I got you down here so early—

Nora: Get away, Torvald! Please get away from me. I don't want all this.

Helmer: What are you saying? Still playing the lark with me, Nora? You want, you don't want? Aren't I your husband? (There's a noise outside.)

Nora: (Startled.) Did you hear that?

Helmer: (Going to the door.) Who's there?

Rank: (Outside.) Just me. May I come in for a moment?

Helmer: (Softly, irritated.) What can he possibly want now? (Aloud.) Just a second. (Goes to the door and opens it.) I'm so glad you didn't pass us by on your way out.

Rank: I thought I heard voices, and I really wanted to stop in. (Looking around.) Oh, yes—the old haunts. What a warm little nest you've got here.

Helmer: Speaking of which, you were having a pretty warm time upstairs—almost hot, I'd say.

Rank: Absolutely. And why not? You have to get the most out of life—everything you can, anyway, for as long as you can. That was excellent wine.

Helmer: And the champagne!

Rank: You thought so too? My thirst for it was amazing—even to me.

Nora: Torvald also had his share of champagne tonight.

Rank: Oh yes?

Nora: Yes, and that makes him so entertaining.

Rank: And why shouldn't you enjoy an evening like this after a productive day?

Helmer: Productive? I can't exactly say that for myself.

Rank: (Slaps him on the back.) Ah, but you see, I can!
NORA: Doctor Rank, it sounds like you’ve done some medical research today.
RANK: That’s right.
HELMER: Oh come on—here’s little Nora talking about medical research!
NORA: And may I congratulate you on the results?
RANK: Yes indeed.
NORA: Were they good?
RANK: The best kind—for doctor and patient alike—certainty.
NORA: (Quickly, inquisitively.) Certainty.
RANK: Absolute certainty. So haven’t I earned a festive night out?
NORA: Yes, Doctor Rank, you have.
HELMER: I’m all for that—as long as the morning after’s not too bad.
RANK: Well, you never get something for nothing in this world.
NORA: Doctor Rank, do you like masquerade balls?
RANK: Oh yes—especially when the disguises are good and strange—
NORA: So tell me. At the next one, how should the two of us appear?
HELMER: You little noodlehead! You’re already on to the next one?
RANK: The two of us? I can tell you that: you’ll go as Charmed Life—
HELMER: All right, but what’s the costume for that?
RANK: Your wife can go just as she always is.
HELMER: Well said. Now have you decided on something for yourself?
RANK: Yes, Helmer, my mind’s made up.
HELMER: Well?
RANK: At the next masquerade, I will be—invisible.
HELMER: That’s pretty funny.

ACT THREE

RANK: I hear there’s a hat—a huge, black hat—called the Hat of Invisibility. You put it on, and no one on earth can see you.
HELMER: (Stifling a grin.) Oh, yes, of course.
HELMER: With pleasure. (Holds out the case to him.)
RANK: Thanks. (Takes one and cuts the tip.)
NORA: Let me give you a light.
RANK: Thank you. (She holds the match as he lights the cigar.)
Now, good-bye.
HELMER: Old friend—good-bye, good-bye.
NORA: Sleep well, Doctor.
RANK: Thank you for that wish.
NORA: Now wish me the same.
RANK: Wish you?—All right, if you want—sleep well. And thanks for the light. (He exits, nodding to both of them.)
HELMER: (Quietly.) He’s drunk.
NORA: (Vaguely.) Maybe.

(Helmer takes his keys from his pocket and goes out into the hall.)

NORA: What are you doing, Torvald?
HELMER: I’ve got to empty the mailbox—it’s so full, there’s no room for the morning papers.
NORA: Are you working tonight?
HELMER: You know I’m not. What’s this? Someone’s been fiddling with the lock.
NORA: The lock?
HELMER: Yes, definitely. Who could it be? I can’t believe the maids—? Wait, here’s a broken hairpin—Nora, this is yours—
NORA: (Quickly.) Then it must be the children.
HELMER: Well you've really got to break them of that. Hmm—
there we go, finally got it open. (Takes out the contents and
shouts into the kitchen.) Helene? Helene—put out the hall
lamp. (He comes back into the room and shuts the door. He
holds the letters in his hand.) Look—see how it piled up?
(Sorts through them.) What's this?
NORA: (By the window.) The letter! No, no, Torvald!
HELMER: Two cards, from Rank.
NORA: From Doctor Rank?
HELMER: (Looking at them.) Doctor Rank, Physician and Sur-
geon. They were on top. He must have dropped them in as
he left.
NORA: Is there anything on them?
HELMER: There's a black cross over the name. Look. That's grue-
some. It's like he's announcing his own death.
NORA: That's exactly what he's doing.
HELMER: What? Did he tell you anything?
NORA: Yes. He said that when these cards arrived, it meant he's
saying goodbye to us. Now he'll shut himself in and die.
HELMER: My poor friend. Of course I knew I wouldn't have him
for long. But so soon—and now he's hiding himself away like
a wounded animal.
NORA: If it has to happen, it's best to let it happen quietly. Isn't
that right, Torvald?
HELMER: (Pacing up and down.) He'd grown to be a part of us.
I don't think I can imagine myself without him. His loneli-
ness—his suffering was like a cloudy background to our sun-
lit happiness. Well, maybe it's best this way—at least for him.
(Stands still.) And maybe for us too, Nora. Now we only
have each other. (Puts his arms around her.) Ah, you—my
darling wife. I don't think I'll ever be able to hold you close
enough. You know, Nora—so many times I've wished that
you were in some terrible danger, so I could risk my life, my
blood, everything, everything for you.
NORA: (Tears herself free and says firmly and resolutely.) Read
your mail now, Torvald.
HELMER: No, not tonight. Tonight I want to be with you—
NORA: With your friend's death on your mind?
HELMER: You're right. We're both a little shaken by this. This
ugliness has come between us—thoughts of death and decay.
We have to try to get rid of them; until then, we go our sep-
arate ways.
NORA: (Her arms around his neck.) Torvald—good night! Good
night!
HELMER: (Kissing her forehead.) Good night, little songbird.
Sleep well, Nora. Now I'll read the mail. (He goes in with the
letters, shuts the door behind him.)

(Nora, with wild eyes, fumbles around, seizes Helmer's
domino, wraps it around herself, and whispers quickly,
hoarsely, spasmodically.)

NORA: Never see him again—never, never, never. ( Throws the
shawl over her head.) Never see the children again either—
not even the children—never, never—the icy black water—
the bottomless—that—if only it weren't all over—now he
has it, he's reading it now—no, no, not yet. Torvald, good-
bye, children, goodbye—

(She starts to go into the hall; at the same moment Helmer
flings open his door and stands there, an open letter in his
hand.)

HELMER: Nora!
NORA: (Screams.) Ahh—!
HELMER: What is this? Do you know what's in this letter?
NORA: Yes. Yes I know. Let me go. Let me out!
HELMER: (Holding her back.) Where are you going?
NORA: (Trying to break loose.) Don't try to save me, Torvald!
HELMER: (Staggers back.) It's true?! What he said is the truth?
	Horrible! No—it's impossible—this can't be true.
NORA: It is true. I have loved you more than anything in the
world.
HELMER: Don't start with your silly excuses.
NORA: (Taking a step toward him.) Torvald!
HELMER: You miserable—what have you done?
NORA: Let me go. You won't have to take the blame for me.
You're not going to take it on yourself.
HELMER: No more playacting! (Locking the hall door.) You'll
stay right here and explain yourself. Do you understand
what you've done? Answer me! Do you understand?
NORA: (Looking fixedly at him, her face hardening.) Yes. Now
I'm beginning to understand everything.
HELMER: (Pacing up and down.) Ah!—what a rude awakening
for me! For eight years—my pride and joy, a hypocrite, a liar,
—even worse, a criminal! There's so much ugliness at the
bottom of all this—indescribable ugliness! Uccch! (Nora
remains silent, looking fixedly at him.) I should have seen it
coming. Every one of your father's disgusting values—
quiet—every disgusting value is coming out in you. No reli-
gion, no morals, no sense of duty—this is my punishment for
being so easy on him up there. I did it for your sake; and you
repay me like this!
NORA: Yes, like this.
HELMER: You've destroyed my happiness. My whole future—
thrown away! It's horrible when you think about it. I'm
totally at the mercy of some amoral animal who can do
whatever he wants with me—demand anything he wants,
order me around, command me however he pleases, and I
can't so much as squeak in protest. And this is how I'll go
down, right to the bottom, all for the sake of some frivolous
woman.
NORA: When I'm gone from this world, then you'll be free.
HELMER: Stop playacting! You sound like your father—he always
had one of those phrases on the tip of his tongue. How
would it help me if you were gone from this world, as you
put it? Not in the least. He can still reveal everything, and if
he does I'd be suspected of being an accomplice to your
crimes! People might think I was behind it all, that it was my
idea! And I have you to thank for all this—after I've carried
you along, taken you and led you by the hand ever since we
were married. Do you understand what you have done to
me.
NORA: (Coldly and calmly.) Yes.
HELMER: I can't grasp this—it's just unbelievable to me. But we
have to try to set things right. Take off that shawl. I said take
it off! I've got to find some way to appease him—this thing
has to be covered up, whatever it costs. As for you and me,
things will seem just like before. For public consumption
only, of course. You'll stay in the house, that's understood.
But I can't trust you to bring up the children. Oh God—to
have to say that to the one I—even now—well, that's over.
After today there's no happiness, only holding the wreckage
together, the scraps and shards— (The doorbell rings.
Helmer starts.) What's that? It's so late! Is this it? Is he going
to—? Nora, hide yourself! Say you're sick. (Nora stands
motionless. Helmer goes and opens the hall door.)
MAID: (Half dressed in the hall doorway.) A letter for Mrs.
Helmer.
HELMER: Give it here. (Takes the letter and closes the door.) Yes, it's from him. You're not getting it. I'll read it myself.

NORA: Read it.

HELMER: (By the lamp.) I hardly dare. It could be the end for both of us. I've got to know. (Tears open the letter; scans a few lines; looks at an enclosed paper and gives a cry of joy.) Nora! (Nora looks enquiringly at him.) Nora! No, let me read it again—yes, yes, it's true. I'm saved! Nora, I'm saved!

NORA: And I?

HELMER: You too, of course. We're both saved, both of us. See? He sent you back your note—he writes that he's sorry and ashamed—that a happy change in his life—oh, what does it matter what he writes? We're saved, Nora! Now no one can hurt you. Oh, Nora, Nora—no: first, let's get all this ugliness out of here. Let me see. (Glances at the note for a moment.) No, I won't look at it. It'll be nothing more than a dream I had. (He tears both letters in pieces and throws them both into the stove, watching them burn.) So, nothing left. He wrote that ever since Christmas eve—God, these must have been three terrible days for you, Nora.

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

HELMER: And suffered, not seeing any way out but—no, we won't think about this ugly thing any more. We'll just rejoice and keep telling ourselves “it's over—it's all over.” Do you hear me, Nora? It seems like you haven't quite got it yet—it's over! What's this about, this cold stare? Ah, poor little Nora, I understand—you can't bring yourself to believe I've forgiven you. But I have, Nora, I swear. I've forgiven everything. I know perfectly well that you did all this out of love for me.

NORA: That's true.

HELMER: You've loved me like a wife should love her husband. You just couldn't judge how to do it. But do you think that makes me love you any the less, because you couldn't manage by yourself? No, no—just lean on me. I'll counsel you, I'll direct you. I wouldn't be much of a man if this female helplessness didn't make you doubly attractive to me. Forget what I said in those first few terrible moments, when I thought I was going to lose everything. I've forgiven you, Nora—I swear, I've forgiven you.

NORA: Thank you for your forgiveness. (She goes out through the door on the right.)

HELMER: No, stay—(Looking in.) What are you doing?

NORA: Taking off my costume.

HELMER: (By the open door.) Yes, do that. Try to calm down, collect your thoughts, my little, shivering songbird. If you need protection, I have broad wings to shelter you with. (Walks around near the door.) Oh, Nora—our home is so snug, so cozy. This is your nest, where I can keep you like a dove that I've snatched, unharmed, from the falcon's claws; I'll bring peace and rest to your beating heart. Little by little it will happen, Nora, believe me. Tomorrow, this will all seem different to you; and soon everything will be back to normal. I won't need to keep saying I forgive you—you'll feel it, you'll know it's true. How could you ever think I could bring myself to disown you, or even punish you? You don't know how a man's heart works, Nora. There's something indescribably sweet and satisfying for a man in knowing he's forgiven his wife—forgiven her from the bottom of his heart. It's as if he possesses her doubly now—as if she were born into the world all over again—and she becomes, in a way, his wife and his child at the same time. And that's what you'll be for me from now on, you little, helpless, confused creature. Don't be frightened of anything—just open your heart to me
and I’ll be both your conscience and your will. What’s this—?
You’ve changed your dress?
NORA: Yes, Torvald, I’ve changed my dress.
HELMER: But why now, so late?
NORA: I’m not sleeping tonight.
HELMER: But Nora, dear—
NORA: (Looking at her watch.) It’s not all that late. Sit down, Torvald. We have a great deal to talk about together. (She sits at one end of the table.)
HELMER: Nora—what’s going on? That hard expression—
NORA: Sit down. This will take time. I have a lot to say to you.
HELMER: (Sits at table directly opposite her.) You’re worrying me, Nora. I don’t understand you.
NORA: No, that’s just it. You don’t understand me. And I have never understood you—not until tonight. No—no interruptions. You have to hear me out. We’re settling accounts, Torvald.
HELMER: What do you mean by that?
NORA: (After a short silence.) Doesn’t one thing strike you about the way we’re sitting here?
HELMER: What might that be?
NORA: We’ve been married for eight years. Doesn’t it strike you that this is the first time that the two of us—you and I, man and wife—have ever talked seriously?
HELMER: Well—“seriously”—what does that mean?
NORA: In eight whole years—no, longer—right from the moment we met, we haven’t exchanged one serious word on one serious subject.
HELMER: Should I constantly be involving you in problems you couldn’t possibly help me solve?
NORA: I’m not talking about problems. I’m saying that we’ve never sat down together and seriously tried to get to the bottom of anything.
HELMER: But Nora, dearest—would you have wanted that?
NORA: Yes, of course, that’s just it. You’ve never understood me. A great wrong has been done me, Torvald. First by Papa, then by you.
HELMER: What! By us—who’ve loved you more than anyone in the world.
NORA: (Shaking her head.) You’ve never loved me. You just thought it was a lot of fun to be in love with me.
HELMER: Nora, how can you say that?
NORA: It’s a fact, Torvald. When I was at home with Papa, he told me all his opinions; so of course I had the same opinions. And if I had any others, I kept them hidden, because he wouldn’t have liked that. He called me his doll-child, and he played with me like I played with my dolls. Then I came to your house—
HELMER: What kind of way is that to describe our marriage?
NORA: (Undisturbed.) I mean, I went from Papa’s hands into yours. You set up everything according to your taste; so of course I had the same taste, or I pretended to, I’m not really sure. I think it was half-and-half, one as much as the other. Now that I look back on it, I can see that I’ve lived like a beggar in this house, from hand to mouth; I’ve lived by doing tricks for you, Torvald. But that’s how you wanted it. You and Papa have committed a great sin against me. It’s your fault that I’ve become what I am.
HELMER: Nora—this is unreasonable, and it’s ungrateful! Haven’t you been happy here?
NORA: No, never. I thought so, but I never really was.
HELMER: Not—not happy!
NORA: No, just having fun. You’ve always been very nice to me.
But our home has never been anything but a playpen. I've been your doll-wife here, just like I was Papa's doll-child at home. And my children, in turn, have been my dolls. It was fun when you came and played with me, just like they had fun when I played with them. That's what our marriage has been, Torvald.

**HELMER:** There's some truth in this—as exaggerated and hysterical as it is. But from now on, things will be different. Playtime is over: now the teaching begins.

**NORA:** Who gets this teaching? Me or the children?

**HELMER:** Both you and the children, my dearest Nora.

**NORA:** Ah, Torvald: you're not the man to teach me how to be a good wife to you.

**HELMER:** You can say that!

**NORA:** And me—how can I possibly teach the children?

**HELMER:** Nora!

**NORA:** Didn't you say that yourself, not too long ago? You didn't dare trust them to me?

**HELMER:** In the heat of the moment! How can you take that seriously?

**NORA:** Yes, but you spoke the truth. I'm not equal to the task. There's another task I have to get through first. I have to try to teach myself. And you can't help me there. I've got to do it alone. And so I'm leaving you.

**HELMER:** What did you say?

**NORA:** If I'm going to find out anything about myself—about everything out there—I have to stand completely on my own. That's why I can't stay with you any longer.

**HELMER:** You're a wife and mother, first and foremost.

**NORA:** I have other duties, equally sacred.

**HELMER:** Duties to myself.

**HELMER:** You're a wife and mother, first and foremost.

**NORA:** I have other duties, equally sacred.

**HELMER:** Abandon your home, your husband, your children! Do you have any idea what people will say?

**NORA:** I can't worry about that. I only know what I have to do.

**HELMER:** It's grotesque! You're turning your back on your most sacred duties!

**NORA:** What do you think those are—my most sacred duties?

**HELMER:** I have to tell you? Aren't they to your husband and children?

**NORA:** I have to tell you? Aren't they to your husband and children?

**HELMER:** No you don't! Like what?

**NORA:** Duties to myself.

**HELMER:** You're a wife and mother, first and foremost.

**NORA:** I don't believe that any more. I believe that, first and foremost, I'm a human being—just as much as you—or at least I should try to become one. I'm aware that most people agree with you, Torvald, and that your opinion is backed up by plenty of books. But I can't be satisfied any more with what most people say, or what's written in the books. Now I've got to think these things through myself, and understand them.

**HELMER:** What don't you understand about your place in your own home? Don't you have an infallible teacher for questions like this? Don't you have your religion?

**NORA:** Oh, Torvald, I really don't know what religion is.

**HELMER:** What are you saying?
NORA: I only know what Pastor Hansen said when I was confirmed. He told me that religion was this and that and the other thing. When I get away from here, when I'm alone, I'll look into that subject too. I'll see if what Pastor Hansen said is true—or at least, if it's true for me.

HELMER: These things just aren't right for a young woman to be saying. If religion can't get through to you, let me try your conscience. You do have some moral feeling? Or—answer me—maybe not?

NORA: Well, Torvald, it's not easy to answer that. I really don't know. I'm actually quite confused about these things. I only know that my ideas are totally different from yours. I find out that the law is not what I thought it was—but I can't get it into my head that the law is right. A woman has no right to spare her dying father's feelings, or save her husband's life! I just can't believe these things.

HELMER: You're talking like a child. You don't understand the society you live in.

NORA: No, I don't. But now I'm going to find out for myself. I've got to figure out who's right—the world or me.

HELMER: You're ill, Nora—you have a fever. I almost think you're out of your mind.

NORA: I've never been so clear—and so certain—about so many things as I am tonight.

HELMER: You're clear and certain that you'll desert your husband and children?

NORA: Yes, I will.

HELMER: There's only one explanation left.

NORA: What is it?

HELMER: You no longer love me.

NORA: No. That's precisely it.

HELMER: Nora!—you can say that!

NORA: Oh, it hurts so much, Torvald. Because you've always been so kind to me. But I can't help it. I don't love you any more.

HELMER: (Struggling to control himself.) Are you also clear and certain about that?

NORA: Yes, absolutely clear and certain. That's why I can't live here any more.

HELMER: Can you tell me how I lost your love?

NORA: Yes, I can. It was this evening, when the wonderful thing didn't happen—then I saw that you weren't the man I thought you were.

HELMER: Say more—I'm not following this.

NORA: I've waited so patiently for ten years now—good Lord. I know that these wonderful things don't come along every day. Then this disaster broke over me, and I was absolutely certain: now the wonderful thing is coming. While Krogstad's letter was lying out there, I never imagined you'd give in to his terms, even for a minute. I was so certain you'd say to him: tell your story to the whole world! And when that was done—

HELMER: Yes, then what? When I'd given my wife up to shame and disgrace—!

NORA: When that was done, I was completely certain that you would step forward and take everything on yourself—you'd say "I am the guilty one."

HELMER: Nora!

NORA: You're thinking that I'd never accept such a sacrifice from you? No, of course I wouldn't. But what good would my protests be over yours? That was the wonderful thing I was hoping for, and in terror of. And to prevent it, I was willing to end my life.

HELMER: I'd work for you night and day, Nora—gladly—suffer
and sacrifice for your sake. But no one gives up his honor for
the one he loves.
NORA: That's exactly what millions of women have done.
HELMER: Oh—I You're thinking and talking like an ignorant
child.
NORA: Maybe. But you don't think—or talk—like the man I
could choose to be with. When your big fright was over—not
the danger I was in, but what might happen to you—when
that threat was past, then it was like nothing happened to
you. I was just what I was before, your little songbird, your
doll, and you'd have to take care of it twice as hard as
before, since it was so frail and fragile. In that moment, Tor­
vald, it dawned on me that I'd been living with a stranger—
that I'd borne three children with him—. Aah—I can't stand
the thought of it! I could tear myself to pieces.
HELMER: (Heavily.) I see. I see. A gulf has really opened up
between us. But Nora, can't we fill it in somehow?
NORA: The way I am now, I'm no wife for you.
HELMER: I can transform myself—I have the strength for it.
NORA: Maybe—if your doll is taken away from you.
HELMER: To live without—without you! Nora, I can't bear the
thought of it!
NORA: All the more reason it has to happen. (Having gone in to
the right, she returns with her outdoor clothes and a little
travelling bag which she sets on a chair by the table.)
HELMER: Nora, Nora, not now! Wait until tomorrow.
NORA: (Puts on her coat.) I can't spend the night in a strange
man's house.
HELMER: Can't we live here like brother and sister?
NORA: (Tying her hat.) You know very well how long that would
last. (Throws her shawl around her.) Goodbye, Torvald. I
won't see the children. They're in better hands than mine,
that much I know. The way I am now, I can't do anything for
them.
HELMER: But some day, Nora—some day—?
NORA: How do I know? I have no idea what will become of me.
HELMER: But you're my wife, right now and always, no matter
what becomes of you.
NORA: Listen, Torvald; when a wife deserts her husband's house,
as I'm doing now, I've heard that the law frees him from any
responsibility to her. And anyway, I'm freeing you. From
everything. Complete freedom on both sides. See, here's your
ring. Give me mine.
HELMER: Even that.
NORA: Even that.
HELMER: Here it is.
NORA: (Taking her travelling bag.) Oh, Torvald—not unless the
most wonderful thing of all were to happen—
HELGER: Name it—what is this most wonderful thing?

NORA: It’s—both you and I would have to transform ourselves to the point that—oh, Torvald, I don’t know if I believe in it any more—

HELGER: But I will. Name it! Transform ourselves to the point that—

NORA: That our living together could become a marriage. Good-bye. (She goes through the hall door.)

HELGER: (Sinking down into a chair by the door and burying his face in his hands.) Empty. She’s not here. (A hope flares up in him.) The most wonderful thing of all—?

(From below, the sound of a door slamming shut.)

END OF PLAY
A Doll House

by Ibsen, translated by Rick Davis and Brian Johnston

A three-act play
Cast: 9 characters, 5 females, 4 males