good-bye, you and the children—(She starts for the hall; as
she does, HELMER throws open his door and stands with an
open letter in his hand.)

NORA: (Screams.) Oh—I—

HELMER: What is this? You know what’s in this letter?
NORA: Yes, I know. Let me go! Let me out!

HELMER: (Holding her back.) Where are you going?

NORA: (Struggling to break loose.) You can’t save me, Torvald!
HELMER: (Stumping back.) True! Then it’s true what he
writes? How horrible! No, no, it’s impossible—it can’t be
true.

NORA: It is true. I’ve loved you more than all this world.

HELMER: Ah, none of your slippery tricks.
NORA: (Taking one step toward him.) Torvald—!
HELMER: What is this you’ve blundered into?
NORA: Just let me loose. You’re not going to suffer for my sake.
You’re not going to take on my guilt.

HELMER: No more playacting. (Looks the hall door.) You stay
right here and give me a reckoning. You understand what
you’ve done? Answer! You understand?

NORA: (Looking squarely at him, her face hardening.) Yes, I’m
beginning to understand everything now.

HELMER: (Striding about.) Oh, what an awful awakening! In
all these eight years—she was my pride and joy—a hy-
opocrite, a liar—worse, worse—a criminal! How infinitely dis-
gusting it all is! The shame! (NORA says nothing and goes on
looking straight at him. He stops in front of her.) I should
have suspected something of the kind. I should have known.
All your father’s flimsy values—Be still! All your father’s
flimsy values have come out in you. No religion, no morals,
no sense of duty—Oh, how I’m punished for letting him off!
I did it for your sake, and you repay me like this.

NORA: Yes, like this.

HELMER: Now you’ve wrecked all my happiness—ruined my
whole future. Oh, it’s awful to think of. I’m in a cheap little
grafters hands; he can do anything he wants with me, ask for
anything, play with me like a puppet—and I can’t breathe a
word. I’ll be swept down miserably into the depths on ac-
count of a featherbrained woman.

NORA: When I’m gone from this world, you’ll be free.
HELMER: Oh, quit posing. Your father had a mess of those
speeches too. What good would that ever do me if you were
gone from this world, as you say? Not the slightest. He can
still make the whole thing known; and if he does, I could be
falsely suspected as your accomplice. They might even think
that I was behind it—that I put you up to it. And all that I
can thank you for—you that I’ve coddled the whole of our
marriage. Can you see now what you’ve done to me?

NORA: (Fibly calm.) Yes.
HELMER: It’s so incredible, I just can’t grasp it. But we’ll have
to patch up whatever we can. Take off the shawl. I said, take
it off! I’ve got to appease him somehow or other. The thing
has to be hushed up at any cost. And as for you and me, it’s
got to seem like everything between us is just as it was—to
the outside world, that is. You’ll go right on living in this
house, of course. But you can’t be allowed to bring up the
children; I don’t dare trust you with them—Oh, to have to
tell this to someone I’ve loved so much; and that I still—!
Well, that’s done with. From now on happiness doesn’t
matter; all that matters is saving the bits and pieces, the
appearance—(The doorbell rings. HELMER starts.) What’s
that? And so late. Maybe the worst—? You think he’d—?
Hide, Nora! Say you’re sick. (NORA remains standing mo-
tionless. HELMER goes and opens the door.)

MAID: (Half dressed, in the hall.) A letter for Mrs. Helmer.
HELMER: I’ll take it. (Snatches the letter and shuts the door.)
Yes, it’s from him. You don’t get it; I’m reading it myself.
NORA: Then read it.

HELMER: (By the lamp.) I hardly dare. We may be ruined, you
and I. But—I’ve got to know. (Rips open the letter, skims
through a few lines, glances at an enclosure, then cries out joy-
fully.) Nora! (NORA looksquiringly at him.) Nora! Wait—
better check 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.
Look. He’s sent back your note. He says he’s sorry and
ashamed—that a happy development in his life—oh, who
cares what he says! Nora, we’re saved! No one can hurt you.
Oh, Nora, Nora—but first, this ugliness all has to go. Let me
see—(Takes a look at the note.) No, I don’t want to see it; I
want the whole thing to fade like a dream. (Tears the note
and both letters to pieces, throws them into the stove and
watches them burn.) There—now there’s nothing left—He
wrote that since Christmas Eve you—Oh, they must have
been three terrible days for you, Nora.

NORA: I fought a hard fight.

HELMER: And suffered pain and saw no escape but—No,
we’re not going to dwell on anything unpleasant. We’ll just
be grateful and keep on repeating: it’s over now, it’s over!
You hear me, Nora? You don’t seem to realize—it’s over.
What’s it mean—that frozen look? Oh, poor little Nora, I
understand. You can’t believe I’ve forgiven you. But I have,
Nora; I swear I have. I know that what you did, you did out
of love for me.

NORA: That’s true.

HELMER: You loved me the way a wife ought to love her hus-
band. It’s simply the means that you couldn’t judge. But you
think I love you any the less for not knowing how to handle
your affairs? No, no—just lean on me; I’ll guide you and
teach you. I wouldn’t be a man if this feminine helplessness
didn’t make you twice as attractive to me. You mustn’t mind
these sharp words I said—that was all in the first confusion
of thinking my world had collapsed. I’ve forgiven you, Nora;
I swear I’ve forgiven you.

NORA: My thanks for your forgiveness. (She goes out through
door, right.)

HELMER: No, wait—(Peers in.) What are you doing in there?
NORA: (Inside.) Getting out of my costume.

HELMER: (By the open door.) Yes, do that. Try to calm yourself
and collect your thoughts again, my frightened little song-
bird. You can rest easy now; I’ve got wide wings to shelter you
with. (Walking about close by the door.) How snug and nice
our home is, Nora. You’re safe here; I’ll keep you like a
hunted dove I’ve rescued out of a hawk’s claws. I’ll bring
peace to your poor, shuddering heart. Gradually it’ll hap-
pen, Nora; you’ll see. Tomorrow all this will look different to
you; then everything will be as it was. I won’t have to go on
repeating I forgive you; you’ll feel it for yourself. How can
you imagine I’d ever conceivably want to dishon you—or
even blame you in any way? Ah, you don’t know a man’s
HELMER: What's this? Not in bed? You've changed your dress?
NORA: Yes, Torvald, I've changed my dress.
HELMER: But why now, so late?
NORA: Tonight I'm not sleeping.
HELMER: But Nora dear—
NORA: (Looking at her watch.) It's still not so very late. Sit down, Torvald; we have a lot to talk over. (She sits at one side of the table.)
HELMER: Nora—what is this? That hard expression—
NORA: Sit down. This'll take some time. I have a lot to say.
HELMER: (Sitting at the table directly opposite her.) You worry me, Nora. And I don't understand you.
NORA: No, that's exactly it. You don't understand me. And I've never understood you either—until tonight. No, don't interrupt. You can just listen to what I say. We're closing out accounts, Torvald.
HELMER: How do you mean that?
NORA: (After a short pause.) Doesn't anything strike you about our sitting here like this?
HELMER: What's that?
NORA: We've been married now eight years. Doesn't it occur to you that this is the first time we two, you and I, man and wife, have ever talked seriously together?
HELMER: What do you mean—seriously?
NORA: In eight whole years—longer even—right from our first acquaintance, we've never exchanged a serious word on any serious thing.
HELMER: You mean I should constantly go and involve you in problems you couldn't possibly help me with?
NORA: I'm not talking of problems. I'm saying that we've never sat down seriously together and tried to get to the bottom of anything.
HELMER: But dearest, what good would that ever do you?
NORA: That's the point right there; you've never understood me. I've been wronged greatly, Torvald—first by Papa, and then by you.
HELMER: What! By us—the two people who've loved you more than anyone else?
NORA: (Shaking her head.) You never loved me. You've thought it fun to be in love with me, that's all.
HELMER: Nora, what a thing to say!
NORA: Yes, it's true now, Torvald. When I lived at home with Papa, he told me all his opinions, so I had the same ones too; or if they were different I hid them, since he wouldn't have cared for that. He used to call me his doll-child, and he played with me the way I played with my dolls. Then I came into your house—
HELMER: How can you speak of our marriage like that?
NORA: (Unperturbed.) I mean, then I went from Papa's hands into yours. You arranged everything to your own taste, and so I got the same taste as you—or I pretended to; I can't remember. I guess a little of both, first one, then the other. Now when I look back, it seems as if I'd lived here like a beggar—just from hand to mouth. I've lived by doing tricks for you, Torvald. But that's the way you wanted it. It's a great sin what you and Papa did to me. You're to blame that nothing's become of me.
HELMER: Nora, how unfair and ungrateful you are! Haven't you been happy here?
NORA: No, never. I thought so—but I never have.
HELMER: Not—not happy!
NORA: No, only lighthearted. And you've always been so kind to me. But our home's been nothing but a playpen. I've been your doll-wife here, just as at home I was Papa's doll-child. And in turn the children have been my dolls. I thought it was fun when you played with me, just as they thought it fun when I played with them. That's been our marriage, Torvald.
HELMER: There's some truth in what you're saying—under all the raving exaggeration. But it'll all be different after this. Playtime's over, now for the schooling.
NORA: Whose schooling—mine or the children's?
HELMER: Both yours and the children's, dearest.
NORA: Oh, Torvald, you're not the man to teach me to be a good wife to you.
HELMER: And you can say that?
NORA: And I—how am I equipped to bring up children?
HELMER: Nora!
NORA: Didn't you say a moment ago that that was no job to trust me with?
HELMER: In a flare of temper. Why fasten on that?
NORA: Yes, but you were so very right. I'm not up to the job. There's another job I have to do first. I have to try to educate myself. You can't help me with that. I've got to do it alone. And that's why I'm leaving you now.
HELMER: (Jumping up.) What's that?
NORA: I have to stand completely alone, if I'm ever going to discover myself and the world out there. So I can't go on living with you.
HELMER: Nora, Nora!
NORA: I want to leave right away. Kristine should put me up for the night—
HELMER: You're insane! You've no right! I forbid you!
NORA: From here on, there's no use forbidding me anything. I'll take with me whatever is mine. I don't want a thing from you, either now or later.
HELMER: What kind of madness is this?
NORA: Tomorrow I'm going home—I mean, home where I came from. It'll be easier up there to find something to do.
HELMER: Oh, you blind, incompetent child!
NORA: I must learn to be competent, Torvald.
HELMER: Abandon your home, your husband, your children! And you're not even thinking what people will say.
NORA: I can't be concerned about that. I only know how essential this is.
HELMER: Oh, it's outrageous. So you'll run out like this on your most sacred vows.
NORA: What do you think are my most sacred vows?
HELMER: And I have to tell you that! Aren't they your duties to your husband and children?
NORA: I have other duties equally sacred.
HELMER: That isn’t true. What duties are they?

NORA: Duties to myself.

HELMER: Before all else, you’re a wife and a mother.

NORA: I don’t believe in that anymore. I believe that, before all else, I’m a human being, no less than you—or anyway, I ought to try to become one. I know the majority thinks you’re right, Torvald, and plenty of books agree with you, too. But I can’t go on believing what the majority says, or what’s written in books. I have to think over these things myself and try to understand them.

HELMER: Why can’t you understand your place in your own home? On a point like that, isn’t there one everlasting guide you can turn to? Where’s your religion?

NORA: Oh, Torvald, I really not sure what religion is.

HELMER: What—?

NORA: I only know what the minister said when I was confirmed. He told me religion was this thing and that. When I get clear and away by myself, I’ll go into that problem too. I’ll see if what the minister said was right, or, in any case, if it’s right for me.

HELMER: A young woman your age shouldn’t talk like that. If religion can’t move you, I can try to rouse your conscience. You do have some moral feeling? Or, tell me—has that gone too?

NORA: It’s not easy to answer that, Torvald. I simply don’t know. I’m all confused about these things. I just know I see them so differently from you. I find out, for one thing, that the law’s not at all what I’d thought—but I can’t get it through my head that the law is fair. A woman hasn’t a right to protect her dying father or save her husband’s life; I can’t believe that.

HELMER: You talk like a child. You don’t know anything of the world you live in.

NORA: No, I don’t. But now I’ll begin to learn for myself. I’ll try to discover who’s right, the world or I.

HELMER: Nora, you’re sick; you’ve got a fever. I almost think you’re out of your head.

NORA: I’ve never felt more clearheaded and sure in my life.

HELMER: And—clearheaded and sure—you’re leaving your husband and children?

NORA: Yes.

HELMER: Then there’s only one possible reason.

NORA: What?

HELMER: You no longer love me.

NORA: No. That’s exactly it.

HELMER: Nora! You can’t be serious!

NORA: Oh, this is so hard, Torvald—you’ve been so kind to me always. But I can’t help it. I don’t love you anymore.

HELMER: (Struggling for composure.) Are you also clearheaded and sure about that?

NORA: Yes, completely. That’s why I can’t go on staying here.

HELMER: Can you tell me what I did to lose your love?

NORA: Yes, I can tell you. It was this evening when the miraculous thing didn’t come—then I knew you weren’t the man I’d imagined.

HELMER: Be more explicit; I don’t follow you.

NORA: I’ve waited now so patiently eight long years—for, my Lord, I know miracles don’t come every day. Then this crisis broke over me, and such a certainty filled me: now the miraculous event would occur. While Krogh’s letter was lying out there, I never for an instant dreamed that you could give in to his terms. I was so utterly sure you’d say to him: go on, tell your tale to the whole wide world. And when he’d done that—

HELMER: Yes, what then? When I’d delivered my own wife into shame and disgrace—I

NORA: When he’d done that, I was so utterly sure that you’d step forward, take the blame on yourself and say: I am the guilty one.

HELMER: Nora—!

NORA: You’re thinking I’d never accept such a sacrifice from you? No, of course not. But what good would my protests be against you? That was the miracle I was waiting for, in terror and hope. And to state that off, I would have taken my life.

HELMER: I’d gladly work for you day and night, Nora—and take on pain and deprivation. But there’s no one who gives up honor for love.

NORA: Millions of women have done just that.

HELMER: Oh, you think and talk like a silly child.

NORA: Perhaps. But you neither think nor talk like the man I could join myself to. When your big fright was over—and it wasn’t from any threat against me, only for what might damage you—when all the danger was past, for you it was just as if nothing had happened. I was exactly the same, your little lark, your doll, that you’d have to handle with double care now that I’d turned out so brittle and frail. (Gets up.) Torvald—in that instant it dawned on me that for eight years I’ve been living here with a stranger, and that I’d even conceived three children—oh, I can’t stand the thought of it! I could tear myself to bits.

HELMER: (Heavily.) I see. There’s a gulf that’s opened between us—that’s clear. Oh, but Nora, can’t we bridge it somehow?

NORA: The way I am now, I’m no wife for you.

HELMER: I have the strength to make myself over.

NORA: Maybe—if your doll gets taken away.

HELMER: But to part! To part from you! No, Nora, no—I can’t imagine it.

NORA: (Going out, right.) All the more reason why it has to be. (She returns with her coat and a small overnight bag, which she puts on a chair by the table.)

HELMER: Nora, Nora, not now! Wait till tomorrow.

NORA: I can’t spend the night in a strange man’s room.

HELMER: But couldn’t we live here like brother and sister—

NORA: You know very well how long that would last. (Throws her shawl about her.) Good-bye, Torvald. I won’t look in on the children. I know they’re in better hands than mine. The way I am now, I’m no use to them.

HELMER: But someday, Nora—someday—?

NORA: How can I tell? I haven’t the least idea what’ll become of me.

HELMER: But you’re my wife, now and wherever you go.

NORA: Listen, Torvald—I’ve heard that when a wife deserts her husband’s house just as I’m doing, then the law frees him from all responsibility. In any case, I’m freeing you from being responsible. Don’t feel yourself bound, any more than I will. There has to be absolute freedom for us both. Here, take your ring back. Give me mine.

HELMER: That too?

NORA: That too.

HELMER: There it is.
NORA: Good. Well, now it's all over. I'm putting the keys here. The maids know all about keeping up the house—better than I do. Tomorrow, after I've left town, Kristine will stop by to pack up everything that's mine from home. I'd like those things shipped up to me.

HELMER: Over! All over! Nora, won't you ever think about me?

NORA: I'm sure I'll think of you often, and about the children and the house here.

HELMER: May I write you?

NORA: No—never. You're not to do that.

HELMER: Oh, but let me send you—


HELMER: Or help you if you need it.

NORA: No. I accept nothing from strangers.

HELMER: Nora—can I never be more than a stranger to you?

NORA: (Picking up the overnight bag.) Ah, Torvald—it would take the greatest miracle of all—

HELMER: Tell me the greatest miracle!

NORA: You and I both would have to transform ourselves to the point that—Oh, Torvald, I've stopped believing in miracles.

HELMER: But I'll believe. Tell me! Transform ourselves to the point that—?

NORA: That our living together could be a true marriage. (She goes out down the hall.)

HELMER: (Sinks down on a chair by the door, face buried in his hands.) Nora! Nora! (Looking about and rising.) Empty. She's gone. (A sudden hope leaps in him.) The greatest miracle—?

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