Reading Texts for Literary Criticism

Engl 3365

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Acknowledgment

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Literary Criticism II

Course Description

Literary Criticism II is a multipurpose course. It aims at raising the students’ awareness of the ways in which texts are constructed in the light of modern Critical Theory; therefore, the focus of the course will be on the interface between texts and critical theory. The theories to be discussed are: New Criticism, Deconstruction, Feminism, New Historicism, Ethical Criticism, Reader-response, and Psycho Analysis. Furthermore, overlapping literary movements such as Realism, Modernism, and Postmodernism will be considered.

Course Objectives

a) To acquaint the students with the dialectics of Modern Critical Theory.

b) To Train the students to read texts in the light of Critical Theory.

c) The course aims at sharpening the students’ interpretive skills via enriching their literary and critical competence.

d) To equip the students with the various tools, techniques and strategies of interpretation.

e) To reinforce the students' analytical and evaluative skills.

Expected Output

a) At the end of the course, the students will have enhanced their knowledge of the different critical assumptions inherent in different theories.

b) The students will have gained practical experience in reading texts in the light of theory.

c) The students' analytical and evaluative skills will have been reinforced.

d) The students' scholarly skills will have been enhanced.

e) The students will have developed an independent critical persona.

f) The students will have acquired the skills of looking at the same text from different perspectives.
### Course Topics

| Week One       | • Introductory lecture: Setting the scene.  
|                | • New Criticism.  |
| Week Two       | • Keats' "Ode to the Nightingale."  
|                | • Shelly’s "Ode to the West Wind."  |
| Week Three     | • The Russian Formalism: Chekhov's "The Lament."  
|                | • Craig's A Martian sends a Postcard Home.  |
| Week Four      | • Reading and Discussing pages 1-27 of Introduction to Literature and Criticism (The beginning, Readers and reading, the Author).  |
| Week Five and Six | • Feminism: Reading as a Woman, *Ibsen’s A Doll’s House*  |
| Week Seven     | • Reading and Discussing pages 28-52 of Introduction to Literature and Criticism (The text and the world, The uncanny, and The Monument).  |
| Week Eight     | • Reader-response Criticism, Poe's "The Fall of the House of Usher"  |
| Week Nine      | • Reading and Discussing pages 53-76 of Introduction to Literature and Criticism (Narrative, Character, Voice).  
|                | • Mid-Term Exam.  |
| Week Ten       | • Deconstruction: Wordsworth poems "My Heart Leaps Up When I Behold a Rainbow" and" After Thought."  |
| Week Eleven    | • Reading and Discussing pages 77-123- of Introduction to Literature and Criticism (The Figures of Speech, Creative Writing, The tragic, and History).  |
| Week Twelve    | • Psycho Analysis, The Divided Self, Hawthorne's "Young Goodman Brown," and Gilman's "The Yellow Wall Paper."  |
| Week Thirteen  | • Ethical Criticism, King Lear  |
| Week Fourteen  | • Reading and Discussing pages 123-77- of Introduction to Literature and Criticism (Ghosts, Sexual Difference and Ideology).  |
Methods of Teaching

- Lecturing, Seminars,
- Group presentation and discussion.
- Weekly response on Webct.

Teaching Aids

Board, Computer, OHP

Assessment

10 Marks → Reflection on two texts
10 Marks → Attendance and participation
10 Marks → Weekly response
10 Marks → Short Presentation
20 Marks → Midterm exam
50 Marks → Final exam

Books

- Bressler, Charles E. - Literary Criticism: An Introduction to Theory and Practice
- Ibsen’s A doll’s House (Text Book)
- Andrew Bennet and Nicholas Royle. An Introduction to Literature, Criticism and Theory 2004 (Third edition)
- Compiled Texts

References:

1) E. Terry, 1983 Literary Theory, Oxford
2) R. A. Carter, 1991 ed. Language and Literature
4) Davis, Todd F. and Kenneth Womack.2001,ed.. Mapping the Ethical Turn .
5) Articles on Reserve.
Ode to a Nightingale

John Keats

1. My heart aches, and a drowsy numbness pains
2. My sense, as though of hemlock I had drunk,
3. Or emptied some dull opiate to the drains
4. One minute past, and Lethe-wards had sunk:
5. 'Tis not through envy of thy happy lot,
6. But being too happy in thine happiness—
7. That thou, light-wingéd Dryad of the trees,
8. In some melodious plot
9. Of beechen green, and shadows numberless,
10. Singest of summer in full-throated ease.

11. O, for a draught of vintage! that hath been
12. Cool'd a long age in the deep-delvéd earth,
13. Tasting of Flora and the country green,
14. Dance, and Provencal song, and sunburnt mirth!
15. for a beaker full of the warm south,
16. Full of the true, the blushful Hippocrene,
17. With beaded bubbles winking at the brim,
18. And purple-stainèd mouth;
19. That I might drink, and leave the world unseen,
20. And with thee fade away into the forest dim—

21. Fade far away, dissolve, and quite forget
22. What thou among the leaves hast never known,
23. The weariness, the fever, and the fret
24. Here, where men sit and hear each other groan;
25. Where palsy shakes a few, sad, last gray hairs,
26. Where youth grows pale, and spectre-thin, and dies;
27. Where but to think is to be full of sorrow
28. And leaden-eyed despairs,
29. Where Beauty cannot keep her lustrous eyes,
30. Or new Love pine at them beyond to-morrow.
31. Away! away! for I will fly to thee,
32. Not charioted by Bacchus and his pards,
33. But on the viewless wings of Poesy,
34. Though the dull brain perplexes and retards.
35. Already with thee! tender is the night,
36. And haply the Queen-Moon is on her throne,
37. Cluster'd around by all her starry Fays;
38. But here there is no light,
39. Save what from heaven is with the breezes blown
40. Through verdurous glooms and winding mossy ways.

41. I cannot see what flowers are at my feet,
42. Nor what soft incense hangs upon the boughs,
43. But, in embalmèd darkness, guess each sweet
44. Wherewith the seasonable month endows
45. The grass, the thicket, and the fruit-tree wild;
46. White hawthorn, and the pastoral eglantine;
47. Fast fading violets cover'd up in leaves;
48. And mid-May's eldest child,
49. The coming musk-rose, full of dewy wine,
50. The murmurous haunt of flies on summer eves.

51. Darkling I listen; and, for many a time
52. I have been half in love with easeful Death,
53. Call'd him soft names in many a musèd rhyme,
54. To take into the air my quiet breath;
55. Now more than ever seems it rich to die,
56. To cease upon the midnight with no pain,
57. While thou art pouring forth thy soul abroad
58. In such an ecstasy!
59. Still wouldst thou sing, and I have ears in vain—
60. To thy high requiem become a sod.
61. Thou wast not born for death, immortal Bird!
62. No hungry generations tread thee down;
63. The voice I hear this passing night was heard
64. In ancient days by emperor and clown:
65. Perhaps the self-same song that found a path
66. Through the sad heart of Ruth, when, sick for home,
67. She stood in tears amid the alien corn;
68. The same that oft-times hath
69. Charm'd magic casements, opening on the foam
70. Of perilous seas, in faery lands forlorn.

71. Forlorn! the very word is like a bell
72. To toll me back from thee to my sole self!
73. Adieu! the fancy cannot cheat so well
74. As she is fam'd to do, deceiving elf.
75. Adieu! adieu! thy plaintive anthem fades
76. Past the near meadows, over the still stream,
77. Up the hill-side; and now 'tis buried deep
78. In the next valley-glades:
79. Was it a vision, or a waking dream?
80. Fled is that music—Do I wake or sleep?
Ode to the West Wind

Percy Bysshe Shelley (1792-1822)

I

1. wild West Wind, thou breath of Autumn's being,
2. Thou, from whose unseen presence the leaves dead
3. Are driven, like ghosts from an enchanter fleeing,
4. Yellow, and black, and pale, and hectic red,
5. Pestilence-stricken multitudes: O thou,
6. Who charioteest to their dark wintry bed
7. The winged seeds, where they lie cold and low,
8. Each like a corpse within its grave, until
9. Thine azure sister of the Spring shall blow
10. Her clarion o'er the dreaming earth, and fill
11. Driving sweet buds like flocks to feed in air
12. With living hues and odours plain and hill:
13. Wild Spirit, which art moving everywhere;
14. Destroyer and preserver; hear, oh hear!

II

15. Thou on whose stream, mid the steep sky's commotion,
16. Loose clouds like earth's decaying leaves are shed,
17. Shook from the tangled boughs of Heaven and Ocean,
18. Angels of rain and lightning: there are spread
19. On the blue surface of thine aëry surge,
20. Like the bright hair uplifted from the head
21. Of some fierce Maenad, even from the dim verge
22. Of the horizon to the zenith's height,
23. The locks of the approaching storm. Thou dirge
24. Of the dying year, to which this closing night
25. Will be the dome of a vast sepulchre,
26. Vaulted with all thy congregated might

27. Of vapours, from whose solid atmosphere
28. Black rain, and fire, and hail will burst: oh hear!

III

29. Thou who didst waken from his summer dreams
30. The blue Mediterranean, where he lay,
31. Lull'd by the coil of his crystaline streams,

32. Beside a pumice isle in Baiae's bay,
33. And saw in sleep old palaces and towers
34. Quivering within the wave's intenser day,

35. All overgrown with azure moss and flowers
36. So sweet, the sense faints picturing them! Thou
37. For whose path the Atlantic's level powers

38. Cleave themselves into chasms, while far below
39. The sea-blooms and the oozy woods which wear
40. The sapless foliage of the ocean, know

41. Thy voice, and suddenly grow gray with fear,
42. And tremble and despoil themselves: oh hear!

IV

43. If I were a dead leaf thou mightest bear;
44. If I were a swift cloud to fly with thee;
45. A wave to pant beneath thy power, and share

46. The impulse of thy strength, only less free
47. Than thou, O uncontrollable! If even
48. I were as in my boyhood, and could be
49. The comrade of thy wanderings over Heaven,
50. As then, when to outstrip thy skiey speed
51. Scarce seem'd a vision; I would ne'er have striven

52. As thus with thee in prayer in my sore need.
53. Oh, lift me as a wave, a leaf, a cloud!
54. I fall upon the thorns of life! I bleed!

55. A heavy weight of hours has chain'd and bow'd
56. One too like thee: tameless, and swift, and proud.

V
57. Make me thy lyre, even as the forest is:
58. What if my leaves are falling like its own!
59. The tumult of thy mighty harmonies

60. Will take from both a deep, autumnal tone,
61. Sweet though in sadness. Be thou, Spirit fierce,
62. My spirit! Be thou me, impetuous one!

63. Drive my dead thoughts over the universe
64. Like wither'd leaves to quicken a new birth!
65. And, by the incantation of this verse,

66. Scatter, as from an unextinguish'd hearth
67. Ashes and sparks, my words among mankind!
68. Be through my lips to unawaken'd earth

69. The trumpet of a prophecy! O Wind,
70. If Winter comes, can Spring be far behind?
Chekov's "The Lament"

THE twilight of evening. Big flakes of wet snow are whirling lazily about the street lamps, which have just been lighted, and lying in a thin soft layer on roofs, horses' backs, shoulders, caps. Iona Potapov, the sledge-driver, is all white like a ghost. He sits on the box without stirring, bent as double as the living body can be bent. If a regular snowdrift fell on him it seems as though even then he would not think it necessary to shake it off. . . . His little mare is white and motionless too. Her stillness, the angularity of her lines, and the stick-like straightness of her legs make her look like a halfpenny gingerbread horse. She is probably lost in thought. Anyone who has been torn away from the plough, from the familiar gray landscapes, and cast into this slough, full of monstrous lights, of unceasing uproar and hurrying people, is bound to think.

It is a long time since Iona and his nag have budged. They came out of the yard before dinnertime and not a single fare yet. But now the shades of evening are falling on the town. The pale light of the street lamps changes to a vivid color, and the bustle of the street grows noisier.

"Sledge to Vyborgskaya!" Iona hears. "Sledge"!

Iona starts, and through his snow-plastered eyelashes sees an officer in a military overcoat with a hood over his head.

"To Vyborgskaya," repeats the officer. "Are you asleep? To Vyborgskaya"!

In token of assent Iona gives a tug at the reins which sends cakes of snow flying from the horse's back and shoulders. The officer gets into the sledge. The sledge-driver clicks to the horse, cranes his neck like a swan, rises in his seat, and more from habit than necessity brandishes his whip. The mare cranes her neck, too, crooks her stick-like legs, and hesitatingly sets of . . . .

"Where are you shoving, you devil?" Iona immediately hears shouts from the dark mass shifting to and fro before him. "Where the devil are you going? Keep to the r-right"!

"You don't know how to drive! Keep to the right," says the officer angrily.
A coachman driving a carriage swears at him; a pedestrian crossing the road and brushing the horse's nose with his shoulder looks at him angrily and shakes the snow off his sleeve. Iona fidgets on the box as though he were sitting on thorns, jerks his elbows, and turns his eyes about like one possessed as though he did not know where he was or why he was there.

"What rascals they all are!" says the officer jocosely. "They are simply doing their best to run up against you or fall under the horse's feet. They must be doing it on purpose."

Iona looks at his fare and moves his lips. . . . Apparently he means to say something, but nothing comes but a sniff.

"What?" inquires the officer.

Iona gives a wry smile, and straining his throat, brings out huskily: "My son . . . er . . . my son died this week, sir."

"H'm! What did he die of?"

Iona turns his whole body round to his fare, and says:

"Who can tell! It must have been from fever. . . . He lay three days in the hospital and then he died. . . . God's will."

"Turn round, you devil!" comes out of the darkness. "Have you gone cracked, you old dog? Look where you are going!"

"Drive on! drive on! . . ." says the officer. "We shan't get there till to-morrow going on like this. Hurry up!"

The sledge-driver cranes his neck again, rises in his seat, and with heavy grace swings his whip. Several times he looks round at the officer, but the latter keeps his eyes shut and is apparently disinclined to listen. Putting his fare down at Vyborgskaya, Iona stops by a restaurant, and again sits huddled up on the box. . . . Again the wet snow paints him and his horse white. One hour passes, and then another . . .

Three young men, two tall and thin, one short and hunchbacked, come up, railing at each other and loudly stamping on the pavement with their goloshes.
"Cabby, to the Police Bridge!" the hunchback cries in a cracked voice. "The three of us, . . . twenty kopecks"!

Iona tugs at the reins and clicks to his horse. Twenty kopecks is not a fair price, but he has no thoughts for that. Whether it is a rouble or whether it is five kopecks does not matter to him now so long as he has a fare. . . . The three young men, shoving each other and using bad language, go up to the sledge, and all three try to sit down at once. The question remains to be settled: Which are to sit down and which one is to stand? After a long altercation, ill-temper, and abuse, they come to the conclusion that the hunchback must stand because he is the shortest.

"Well, drive on," says the hunchback in his cracked voice, settling himself and breathing down Iona's neck. "Cut along! What a cap you've got, my friend! You wouldn't find a worse one in all Petersburg" . . . .

"He-he! . . . he-he! . . ." laughs Iona. "It's nothing to boast of"!

"Well, then, nothing to boast of, drive on! Are you going to drive like this all the way? Eh? Shall I give you one in the neck"?

"My head aches," says one of the tall ones. "At the Dukmasovs' yesterday Vaska and I drank four bottles of brandy between us".

"I can't make out why you talk such stuff," says the other tall one angrily. "You lie like a brute".

"Strike me dead, it's the truth" . . . !

"It's about as true as that a louse coughs".

"He-he!" grins Iona. "Me-er-ry gentlemen"!

"Tfoo! the devil take you!" cries the hunchback indignantly. "Will you get on, you old plague, or won't you? Is that the way to drive? Give her one with the whip. Hang it all, give it her well".

Iona feels behind his back the jolting person and quivering voice of the hunchback. He hears abuse addressed to him, he sees people, and the feeling of loneliness begins little by little to be
less heavy on his heart. The hunchback swears at him, till he chokes over some elaborately whimsical string of epithets and is overpowered by his cough. His tall companions begin talking of a certain Nadyezhda Petrovna. Iona looks round at them. Waiting till there is a brief pause, he looks round once more and says:

"This week... er... my... er... son died!"

"We shall all die, ..." says the hunchback with a sigh, wiping his lips after coughing. "Come, drive on! drive on! My friends, I simply cannot stand crawling like this! When will he get us there?"

"Well, you give him a little encouragement... one in the neck!"

"Do you hear, you old plague? I'll make you smart. If one stands on ceremony with fellows like you one may as well walk. Do you hear, you old dragon? Or don't you care a hang what we say?"

And Iona hears rather than feels a slap on the back of his neck.

"He-he!... " he laughs. "Merry gentlemen... God give you health!"

"Cabman, are you married?" asks one of the tall ones.

"I? He he! Me-er-ry gentlemen. The only wife for me now is the damp earth... He-ho-ho!... The grave that is!... Here my son's dead and I am alive... It's a strange thing, death has come in at the wrong door... Instead of coming for me it went for my son...."

And Iona turns round to tell them how his son died, but at that point the hunchback gives a faint sigh and announces that, thank God! they have arrived at last. After taking his twenty kopecks, Iona gazes for a long while after the revelers, who disappear into a dark entry. Again he is alone and again there is silence for him... The misery which has been for a brief space eased comes back again and tears his heart more cruelly than ever. With a look of anxiety and suffering Iona's eyes stray restlessly among the crowds moving to and fro on both sides of the street: can he not find among those thousands someone who will listen to him? But the crowds flit by heedless of him and his misery... His misery is immense, beyond all bounds. If Iona's heart were to burst and his misery to flow out, it would flood the whole world, it seems, but yet
it is not seen. It has found a hiding-place in such an insignificant shell that one would not have found it with a candle by daylight . . . .

Iona sees a house-porter with a parcel and makes up his mind to address him.

"What time will it be, friend?" he asks.

"Going on for ten. . . . Why have you stopped here? Drive on!"

Iona drives a few paces away, bends himself double, and gives himself up to his misery. He feels it is no good to appeal to people. But before five minutes have passed he draws himself up, shakes his head as though he feels a sharp pain, and tugs at the reins. . . . He can bear it no longer.

"Back to the yard!" he thinks. "To the yard!"

And his little mare, as though she knew his thoughts, falls to trotting. An hour and a half later Iona is sitting by a big dirty stove. On the stove, on the floor, and on the benches are people snoring. The air is full of smells and stuffiness. Iona looks at the sleeping figures, scratches himself, and regrets that he has come home so early . . . .

"I have not earned enough to pay for the oats, even," he thinks. "That's why I am so miserable. A man who knows how to do his work, . . . who has had enough to eat, and whose horse has had enough to eat, is always at ease" . . . .

In one of the corners a young cabman gets up, clears his throat sleepily, and makes for the water-bucket.

"Want a drink?" Iona asks him.

"Seems so . . . ."

"May it do you good. . . . But my son is dead, mate. . . . Do you hear? This week in the hospital. . . . It's a queer business" . . . .

Iona looks to see the effect produced by his words, but he sees nothing. The young man has covered his head over and is already asleep. The old man sighs and scratches himself. . . . Just as the young man had been thirsty for water, he thirsts for speech. His son will soon have been
dead a week, and he has not really talked to anybody yet . . . He wants to talk of it properly, with deliberation. . . . He wants to tell how his son was taken ill, how he suffered, what he said before he died, how he died. . . . He wants to describe the funeral, and how he went to the hospital to get his son's clothes. He still has his daughter Anisya in the country. . . . And he wants to talk about her too. . . . Yes, he has plenty to talk about now. His listener ought to sigh and exclaim and lament. . . . It would be even better to talk to women. Though they are silly creatures, they blubber at the first word.

"Let's go out and have a look at the mare," Iona thinks. "There is always time for sleep. . . . You'll have sleep enough, no fear " . . .

He puts on his coat and goes into the stables where his mare is standing. He thinks about oats, about hay, about the weather. . . . He cannot think about his son when he is alone. . . . To talk about him with someone is possible, but to think of him and picture him is insufferable anguish . . . .

"Are you munching?" Iona asks his mare, seeing her shining eyes. "There, munch away, munch away. . . . Since we have not earned enough for oats, we will eat hay. . . . Yes, . . . I have grown too old to drive. . . . My son ought to be driving, not I. . . . He was a real cabman. . . . He ought to have lived " . . .

Iona is silent for a while, and then he goes on:

"That's how it is, old girl. . . . Kuzma Ionitch is gone. . . . He said good-by to me. . . . He went and died for no reason. . . . Now, suppose you had a little colt, and you were own mother to that little colt. . . . And all at once that same little colt went and died. . . . You'd be sorry, wouldn't you " . . . ?

The little mare munches, listens, and breathes on her master's hands. Iona is carried away and tells her all about it.
A Doll’s House, by Henrik Ibsen

Act 1

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

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

Nora. Hide the Christmas Tree carefully, Helen. Be sure the children do not see it till this evening, when it is dressed. (To the PORTER, taking out her purse.) How much?

Porter. Sixpence.

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

Helmer (calls out from his room). Is that my little lark twittering out there?

Nora (busy opening some of the parcels). Yes, it is!

Helmer. Is it my little squirrel bustling about?

Nora. Yes!

Helmer. When did my squirrel come home?

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

Helmer. Don’t disturb me. (A little later, he opens the door and looks into the room, pen in hand.) Bought, did you say? All these things? Has my little spendthrift been wasting money again?
Nora. Yes, but, Torvald, this year we really can let ourselves go a little. This is the first Christmas that we have not needed to economize.

Helmer. Still, you know, we can’t spend money recklessly.

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

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

Nora. Pooh! we can borrow till then.

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

Nora (putting her hands over his mouth). Oh! don’t say such horrid things.

Helmer. Still, suppose that happened, — what then?

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

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

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

Helmer. That is like a woman! But seriously, Nora, you know what I think about that. No debt, no borrowing. There can be no freedom or beauty about a home life that depends on borrowing and debt. We two have kept bravely on the straight road so far, and we will go on the same way for the short time longer that there need be any struggle.

Nora (moving towards the stove). As you please, Torvald.

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

Nora (turning round quickly). Money!

Helmer. There you are. (Gives her some money.) Do you think I don’t know what a lot is wanted for housekeeping at Christmas-time?

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

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

Helmer. And what is in this parcel?

Nora (crying out). No, no! you mustn’t see that till this evening.

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

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

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

Nora. No, I really can’t think of anything — unless, Torvald —

Helmer. Well?

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

Helmer. Well, out with it!

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

Helmer. But, Nora —

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

Helmer. What are little people called that are always wasting money?

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

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

Nora. Oh but, Torvald —
Helmer. You can’t deny it, my dear, little Nora. (Puts his arm round her waist.) It’s a sweet little spendthrift, but she uses up a deal of money. One would hardly believe how expensive such little persons are!

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

Helmer (laughing). That’s very true,— all you can. But you can’t save anything!

Nora (smiling quietly and happily). You haven’t any idea how many expenses we skylarks and squirrels have, Torvald.

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

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

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

Nora. Do I?

Helmer. You do, really. Look straight at me.

Nora (looks at him). Well?

Helmer (wagging his finger at her). Hasn’t Miss Sweet-Tooth been breaking rules in town today?

Nora. No; what makes you think that?

Helmer. Hasn’t she paid a visit to the confectioner’s?

Nora. No, I assure you, Torvald —

Helmer. Not been nibbling sweets?

Nora. No, certainly not.

Helmer. Not even taken a bite at a macaroon or two?

Nora. No, Torvald, I assure you really —

Helmer. There, there, of course I was only joking.
Nora (going to the table on the right). I should not think of going against your wishes.

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

Nora. Did you remember to invite Doctor Rank?

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

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

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

Nora. It’s wonderful!

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

Nora. I didn’t find it dull.

Helmer (smiling). But there was precious little result, Nora.

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

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

Nora. Yes, it is really wonderful.

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

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

Helmer. If it is a caller, remember I am not at home.
Maid (in the doorway). A lady to see you, ma’am,— a stranger.

Nora. Ask her to come in.

Maid (to HELMER). The doctor came at the same time, sir.

Helmer. Did he go straight into my room?

Maid. Yes, sir.

(HELMER goes into his room. The MAID ushers in MRS. LINDE, who is in traveling dress, and shuts the door.)

Mrs Linde (in a dejected and timid voice). How do you do, Nora?

Nora (doubtfully). How do you do —

Mrs. Linde. You don’t recognize me, I suppose.

Nora No, I don’t know — yes, to be sure, I seem to —(Suddenly.) Yes! Christine! Is it really you?

Mrs. Linde. Yes, it is I.

Nora. Christine! To think of my not recognising you! And yet how could I—(In a gentle voice.) How you have altered, Christine!

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

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

Mrs. Linde. I arrived by steamer this morning.

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

Mrs. Linde. And much, much older, Nora.

Nora. Perhaps a little older; very, very little; certainly not much. (Stops suddenly and speaks seriously.) What a thoughtless creature I am, chattering away like this. My poor, dear Christine, do forgive me.
Mrs. Linde. What do you mean, Nora?

Nora (gently). Poor Christine, you are a widow.

Mrs. Linde. Yes; it is three years ago now.

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

Mrs. Linde. I quite understand, dear.

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

Mrs. Linde. No.

Nora. And no children?

Mrs. Linde. No.

Nora. Nothing at all, then?

Mrs. Linde. Not even any sorrow or grief to live upon.

Nora (looking incredulously at her). But, Christine, is that possible?

Mrs. Linde (smiles sadly and strokes her hair). It sometimes happens, Nora.

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

Mrs. Linde. No, no; I want to hear about you.

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

Mrs. Linde. No, what is it?

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

Mrs. Linde. Your husband? What good luck!

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

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

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

Mrs. Linde (smiling). Nora, Nora, haven’t you learnt sense yet? In our schooldays you were a great spendthrift.

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

Mrs. Linde. You too?

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

Mrs. Linde. You spent a whole year in Italy, didn’t you?

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

Mrs. Linde. So I should think.

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

Mrs. Linde. Yes, and in emergencies like that it is lucky to have the money.

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

Mrs. Linde. Oh, I see. It was just about that time that he died, wasn’t it?

Nora. Yes; and, just think of it, I couldn’t go and nurse him. I was expecting little Ivar’s birth every day and I had my poor sick Torvald to look after. My dear, kind father — I never saw him again, Christine. That was the saddest time I have known since our marriage.
Mrs. Linde. I know how fond you were of him. And then you went off to Italy?

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

Mrs. Linde. And your husband came back quite well?

Nora. As sound as a bell!

Mrs Linde. But — the doctor?

Nora. What doctor?

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

Nora. Yes, that was Doctor Rank, but he doesn’t come here professionally. He is our greatest friend, and comes in at least once every day. No, Torvald has not had an hour’s illness since then, and our children are strong and healthy and so am I. (Jumps up and claps her hands.) Christine! Christine! it’s good to be alive and happy!— But how horrid of me; I am talking of nothing but my own affairs. (Sits on a stool near her, and rests her arms on her knees.) You mustn’t be angry with me. Tell me, is it really true that you did not love your husband? Why did you marry him?

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

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

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

Nora. And then?—

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

Nora. What a relief you must feel it —

Mrs. Linde. No, indeed; I only feel my life unspeakably empty. No one to live for any more. (Gets up restlessly.) That is why I could not stand the life in my little backwater any longer. I hope it may be easier here to find something which will busy me and occupy my thoughts. If only I could have the good luck to get some regular work — office work of some kind —
Nora. But, Christine, that is so frightfully tiring, and you look tired out now. You had far better go away to some watering-place.

Mrs. Linde (walking to the window). I have no father to give me money for a journey, Nora.

Nora (rising). Oh, don’t be angry with me.

Mrs. Linde (going up to her). It is you that must not be angry with me, dear. The worst of a position like mine is that it makes one so bitter. No one to work for, and yet obliged to be always on the look-out for chances. One must live, and so one becomes selfish. When you told me of the happy turn your fortunes have taken — you will hardly believe it — I was delighted not so much on your account as on my own.

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

Mrs. Linde. Yes, that was what I was thinking of.

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

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

Nora. I—? I know so little of them?

Mrs Linde (smiling). My dear! Small household cares and that sort of thing!— You are a child, Nora.

Nora (tosses her head and crosses the stage). You ought not to be so superior.

Mrs. Linde. No?

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

Mrs. Linde. Come, come —

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

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

Nora. Pooh!— those were trifles. (Lowering her voice.) I have not told you the important thing.

Mrs. Linde. The important thing? What do you mean?
Nora. You look down upon me altogether, Christine — but you ought not to. You are proud, aren’t you, of having-worked so hard and so long for your mother?

Mrs. Linde. Indeed, I don’t look down on any one. But it is true that I am both proud and glad to think that I was privileged to make the end of my mother’s life almost free from care.

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

Mrs. Linde. I think I have the right to be.

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

Mrs. Linde. I have no doubt you have. But what do you refer to?

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

Mrs. Linde. But what is it?

Nora. Come here. (Pulls her down on the sofa beside her.) Now I will show you that I too have something to be proud and glad of. It was I who saved Torvald’s life.

Mrs. Linde. “Saved”? How?

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

Mrs. Linde. Yes, but your father gave you the necessary funds.

Nora (smiling). Yes, that is what Torvald and all the others think, but —

Mrs. Linde. But.—

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

Mrs. Linde. You? All that large sum?

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

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

Nora (contemptuously). In the Lottery? There would have been no credit in that.

Mrs. Linde. But where did you get it from, then?

Nora (humming and smiling with an air of mystery). Hm, hu! Aha!
Mrs. Linde. Because you couldn’t have borrowed it.

Nora. Couldn’t I? Why not?

Mrs. Linde. No, a wife cannot borrow without her husband’s consent.

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

Mrs. Linde. I don’t understand it at all, Nora.

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

Mrs. Linde. You are a mad creature.

Nora. Now, you know you’re full of curiosity, Christine.

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

Nora (sits up straight). Is it imprudent to save your husband’s life?

Mrs. Linde. It seems to me imprudent, without his knowledge, to —

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

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

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

Mrs. Linde. And since then have you never told your secret to your husband?
Nora. Good Heavens, no! How could you think so? A man who has such strong opinions about these things! And besides, how painful and humiliating it would be for Torvald, with his manly independence, to know that he owed me anything! It would upset our mutual relations altogether; our beautiful happy home would no longer be what it is now.

Mrs. Linde. Do you mean never to tell him about it?

Nora (meditatively, and with a half smile.) Yes — some day, perhaps, after many years, when I am no longer as nice-looking as I am now. Don’t laugh at me! I mean, of course, when Torvald is no longer as devoted to me as he is now; when my dancing and dressing-up and reciting have palled on him; then it may be a good thing to have something in reserve — (Breaking off.) What nonsense! That time will never come. Now, what do you think of my great secret, Christine? Do you still think I am of no use? I can tell you, too, that this affair has caused me a lot of worry. It has been by no means easy for me to meet my engagements punctually. I may tell you that there is something that is called, in business, quarterly interest, and another thing called payment in instalments, and it is always so dreadfully difficult to manage them. I have had to save a little here and there, where I could, you understand. I have not been able to put aside much from my housekeeping money, for Torvald must have a good table. I couldn’t let my children be shabbily dressed; I have felt obliged to use up all he gave me for them, the sweet little darlings!

Mrs. Linde. So it has all had to come out of your own necessaries of life, poor Nora?

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

Mrs. Linde. Quite so.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Mrs. Linde (rising). There is the bell; perhaps I had better go.

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

Servant (at the hall door). Excuse me, ma’am — there is a gentleman to see the master, and as the doctor is with him —

Nora. Who is it?

Krogstad (at the door). It is I, Mrs. Helmer. (Mrs. LINDE starts, trembles, and turns to the window.)

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

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

Nora. Then it is —

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

Nora. Be so good as to go into the study then. (She bows indifferently to him and shuts the door into the hall; then comes back and makes up the fire in the stove.)

Mrs. Linde. Nora — who was that man?

Nora. A lawyer, of the name of Krogstad.
Mrs. Linde. Then it really was he.

Nora. Do you know the man?

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

Nora. Yes, he was.

Mrs. Linde. He is greatly altered.

Nora. He made a very unhappy marriage.

Mrs. Linde. He is a widower now, isn’t he?

Nora. With several children. There now, it is burning up. (Shuts the door of the stove and moves the rocking-chair aside.)

Mrs. Linde. They say he carries on various kinds of business.

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

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

Nora. No, not at all. (Introducing him.) Doctor Rank, Mrs. Linde.

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

Mrs. Linde. Yes, I go up very slowly; I can’t manage stairs well.

Rank. Ah! some slight internal weakness?

Mrs. Linde. No, the fact is I have been overworking myself.

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

Mrs. Linde. I have come to look for work.

Rank. Is that a good cure for overwork?

Mrs. Linde. One must live, Doctor Rank.
Rank. Yes, the general opinion seems to be that it is necessary.

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

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

Mrs. Linde (sadly). Ah!

Nora. Whom do you mean?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Rank. Is that what you find so extremely amusing?
Nora (smiling and humming). That’s my affair! (Walking about the room.) It’s perfectly glorious to think that we have — that Torvald has so much power over so many people. (Takes the packet from her pocket.) Doctor Rank, what do you say to a macaroon?

Rank. What, macaroons? I thought they were forbidden here.

Nora. Yes, but these are some Christine gave me.

Mrs. Linde. What! I?—

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

Rank. Well, what is that?

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

Rank. Well, why can’t you say it?

Nora. No, I daren’t; it’s so shocking.

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

Nora. I should just love to say — Well, I’m damned!

Rank. Are you mad?

Mrs. Linde. Nora, dear —!

Rank. Say it, here he is!

Nora (hiding the packet). Hush! Hush! Hush! (HELMER comes out of his room, with his coat over his arm and his hat in his hand.)

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

Helmer. Yes, he has just gone.

Nora. Let me introduce you — this is Christine, who has come to town.
Helmer. Christine —? Excuse me, but I don’t know —

Nora. Mrs. Linde, dear; Christine Linde.

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

Mrs. Linde. Yes, we have known each other since then.

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

Helmer. What do you mean?

Mrs. Linde. No, really, I —

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

Helmer. Very sensible, Mrs. Linde.

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

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

Mrs. Linde. Yes.

Helmer. And have had some experience of bookkeeping?

Mrs. Linde. Yes, a fair amount.

Helmer. Ah! well it’s very likely I may be able to find something for you —

Nora (clapping her hands). What did I tell you? What did I tell you?

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

Mrs. Linde. How am I to thank you?

Helmer. There is no need. (Puts on his coat.) But today you must excuse me —

Rand. Wait a minute; I will come with you. (Brings his fur coat from the hall and warms it at the fire.)

Nora. Don’t be long away, Torvald dear.
Helmer. About an hour, not more.

Nora. Are you going too, Christine?

Mrs. Linde (putting on her cloak). Yes, I must go and look for a room.

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

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

Mrs. Linde. Please don’t think of it! Good-bye, Nora dear, and many thanks.

Nora. Good-bye for the present. Of course you will come back this evening. And you too, Dr. Rank. What do you say? If you are well enough? Oh, you must be! Wrap yourself up well. (They go to the door all talking together. Children’s voices are heard on the staircase.)

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

Rank. Don’t let us stand here in the draught.

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

(RANK, HELMER, and MRS. LINDE go downstairs. The NURSE comes forward with the children; NORA shuts the hall door.)

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

(The NURSE goes into the room on the left. Nora takes off the children’s things and throws them about, while they all talk to her at once.)

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

Krogstad. Excuse me, Mrs. Helmer.

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

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

Nora (rising). My husband is out, Mr. Krogstad.

Krogstad. I know that.

Nora. What do you want here, then?

Krogstad. A word with you.

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

Krogstad. Yes, I do.

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

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

Nora. What do you want? Today it is absolutely impossible for me —

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

Nora. Yes — yes, I can — although —

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

Nora. Yes?

Krogstad. With a lady.

Nora. What then?
Krogstad. May I make so bold as to ask if it was a Mrs. Linde?

Nora. It was.

Krogstad. Just arrived in town?

Nora. Yes, today.

Krogstad. She is a great friend of yours, isn’t she?

Nora: She is. But I don’t see —

Krogstad. I knew her too, once upon a time.

Nora. I am aware of that.

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

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

Krogstad. I was right in what I thought, then.

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

Krogstad. Who has influence?

Nora. Exactly.

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

Nora. What? What do you mean?

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

Nora. What do you mean by that? Who proposes to take your post away from you?
Krogstad. Oh, there is no necessity to keep up the pretence of ignorance. I can quite understand that your friend is not very anxious to expose herself to the chance of rubbing shoulders with me; and I quite understand, too, whom I have to thank for being turned off.

Nora. But I assure you —

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

Nora. But, Mr. Krogstad, I have no influence.

Krogstad. Haven’t you? I thought you said yourself just now —

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

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

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

Krogstad. You are bold, Mrs. Helmer.

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

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

Nora. So it seems.

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

Nora. I think I have heard something of the kind.

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

Nora. But you must believe me, Mr. Krogstad; it is not in my power to help you at all.
"Krogstad. Then it is because you haven’t the will; but I have means to compel you.

Nora. You don’t mean that you will tell my husband that I owe you money?

Krogstad. Hm!— suppose I were to tell him?

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

Krogstad. Only disagreeable?

Nora (impetuously). Well, do it, then! — and it will be the worse for you. My husband will see for himself what a blackguard you are, and you certainly won’t keep your post then.

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

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

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

Nora. What do you mean?

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

Nora. I didn’t know any one else to go to.

Krogstad. I promised to get you that amount —

Nora. Yes, and you did so.

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

Nora. Yes, and which I signed.

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

Nora. Should? He did sign them.
Krogstad. I had left the date blank; that is to say your father should himself have inserted the date on which he signed the paper. Do you remember that?

Nora. Yes, I think I remember —

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

Nora. Yes.

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

Nora. Well, haven’t I been paying it off regularly?

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

Nora. It was, indeed.

Krogstad. Your father was very ill, wasn’t he?

Nora. He was very near his end.

Krogstad. And died soon afterwards?

Nora. Yes.

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

Nora. Papa died on the 29th of September.

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

Nora. What discrepancy? I don’t know —

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

Nora. What do you mean? I don’t understand —

Krogstad. Your father died on the 29th of September. But, look here; your father dated his signature the 2nd of October. It is a discrepancy, isn’t it? (NORA is silent.) Can you explain it to me? (NORA is still silent.) It is a remarkable thing, too, that the words “2nd of October,” as well as the year, are not written in your father’s handwriting but in one that I think I know.
Well, of course it can be explained; your father may have forgotten to date his signature, and someone else may have dated it haphazard before they knew of his death. There is no harm in that. It all depends on the signature of the name; and that is genuine, I suppose, Mrs. Helmer? It was your father himself who signed his name here?

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

Krogstad. Are you aware that is a dangerous confession?

Nora. In what way? You shall have your money soon.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Krogstad. The law cares nothing about motives.

Nora. Then it must be a very foolish law.

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

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

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

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

The Children (in the doorway on the left.) Mother, the stranger man has gone out through the gate.

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

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

Nora. No no,— not now.

Children. But, mother, you promised us.

Nora. Yes, but I can’t now. Run away in; I have such a lot to do. Run away in, sweet little darlings. (She gets them into the room by degrees and shuts the door on them; then sits down on the sofa, takes up a piece of needlework and sews a few stitches, but soon stops.) No! (Throws down the work, gets up, goes to the hall door and calls out.) Helen, bring the Tree in. (Goes to the table on the left, opens a drawer, and stops again.) No, no! it is quite impossible!

Maid (coming in with the Tree). Where shall I put it, ma’am?

Nora. Here, in the middle of the floor.

Maid. Shall I get you anything else?

Nora. No, thank you. I have all I want.

[Exit MAID]

Nora (begins dressing the tree). A candle here — and flowers here —. The horrible man! It’s all nonsense — there’s nothing wrong. The Tree shall be splendid! I will do everything I can think of to please you, Torvald!— I will sing for you, dance for you —(HELMER comes in with some papers under his arm.) Oh! are you back already?
Helmer. Yes. Has anyone been here?

Nora. Here? No.

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

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

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

Nora. Yes.

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

Nora. Yes, Torvald, but —

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

Nora. A lie —?

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

Nora (after a short pause, during which she busies herself with the Christmas Tree). Torvald!

Helmer. Yes.

Nora: I am looking forward tremendously to the fancy dress ball at the Stensborgs’ the day after tomorrow.

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

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

Helmer. What do you mean?

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

Helmer. Does my little Nora acknowledge that at last?
Nora (standing behind his chair with her arms on the back of it). Are you very busy, Torvald?

Helmer. Well —

Nora. What are all those papers?


Nora. Already?

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

Nora. Then that was why this poor Krogstad —

Helmer. Hm!

Nora (leans against the back of his chair and strokes his hair). If you hadn’t been so busy I should have asked you a tremendously big favour, Torvald.

Helmer. What is that? Tell me.

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

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

Nora. Yes, Torvald, I can’t get along a bit without your help.

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

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

Helmer. He forged someone’s name. Have you any idea what that means?

Nora. Isn’t it possible that he was driven to do it by necessity?

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

Nora. No you wouldn’t, would you, Torvald?
Helmer. Many a man has been able to retrieve his character, if he has openly confessed his fault and taken his punishment.

Nora. Punishment —?

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

Nora. But do you think it would —?

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

Nora. How?

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

Nora (coming nearer him). Are you sure of that?

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

Nora. Why do you only say — mother?

Helmer. It seems most commonly to be the mother’s influence, though naturally a bad father’s would have the same result. Every lawyer is familiar with the fact. This Krogstad, now, has been persistently poisoning his own children with lies and dissimulation; that is why I say he has lost all moral character. (Holds out his hands to her.) That is why my sweet little Nora must promise me not to plead his cause. Give me your hand on it. Come, come, what is this? Give me your hand. There now, that’s settled. I assure you it would be quite impossible for me to work with him; I literally feel physically ill when I am in the company of such people.

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

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

Nora (after a pause, whispers). No, no — it isn’t true. It’s impossible; it must be impossible.

(The NURSE opens the door on the left.)
Nurse. The little ones are begging so hard to be allowed to come in to mamma.

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

Nurse. Very well, ma’am. (Shuts the door.)

Nora (pale with terror). Deprave my little children? Poison my home? (A short pause. Then she tosses her head.) It’s not true. It can’t possibly be true.

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**Act 2**

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

Nora (drops the cloak). Someone is coming now! (Goes to the door and listens.) No — it is no one. Of course, no one will come today, Christmas Day — nor tomorrow either. But, perhaps —(opens the door and looks out.) No, nothing in the letter-box; it is quite empty. (Comes forward.) What rubbish! of course he can’t be in earnest about it. Such a thing couldn’t happen; it is impossible — I have three little children.

(Enter the NURSE from the room on the left, carrying a big cardboard box.)

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

Nora. Thanks; put it on the table.

Nurse (doing so). But it is very much in want of mending.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Nora. Do they ask much for me?
Nurse. You see, they are so accustomed to have their mamma with them.

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

Nurse. Oh well, young children easily get accustomed to anything.

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

Nurse. Good heavens!— went away altogether?

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

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

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

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

Nora. But I suppose your daughter has quite forgotten you.

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

Nora (putting her arms round her neck). Dear old Anne, you were a good mother to me when I was little.

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

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

Nurse. I am sure there will be no one at the ball so charming as you, ma’am. (Goes into the room on the left.)

Nora (begins to unpack the box, but soon pushes it away from her). If only I dared go out. If only no one would come. If only I could be sure nothing would happen here in the meantime. Stuff and nonsense! No one will come. Only I mustn’t think about it. I will brush my muff. What lovely, lovely gloves! Out of my thoughts, out of my thoughts! One, two, three, four, five, six —(Screams.) Ah! there is someone coming —. (Makes a movement towards the door, but stands irresolute.)
(Enter MRS. LINDE from the hall, where she has taken off her cloak and hat.)

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

Mrs. Linde. I heard you were up asking for me.

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

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

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

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

Nora. It is nice of you.

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

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

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

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

Mrs. Linde (dropping her sewing). But, my dearest Nora, how do you know anything about such things?

Nora (walking about). Pooh! When you have three children, you get visits now and then from — from married women, who know something of medical matters, and they talk about one thing and another.
Mrs. Linde (goes on sewing. A short silence). Does Doctor Rank come here every day?

Nora. Every day regularly. He is Torvald’s most intimate friend, and a great friend of mine too. He is just like one of the family.

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

Nora. Not in the least. What makes you think that?

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

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

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

Nora. What ought I to make an end of?

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

Nora. An admirer who doesn’t exist, unfortunately! But what then?

Mrs. Linde. Is Doctor Rank a man of means?

Nora. Yes, he is.

Mrs. Linde. And has no one to provide for?

Nora. No, no one; but —

Mrs. Linde. And comes here every day?

Nora. Yes, I told you so.

Mrs. Linde. But how can this well-bred man be so tactless?

Nora. I don’t understand you at all.
Mrs. Linde. Don’t prevaricate, Nora. Do you suppose I don’t guess who lent you the two hundred and fifty pounds.

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

Mrs. Linde. Then it really isn’t he?

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

Mrs. Linde. Well, I think that was lucky for you, my dear Nora.

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

Mrs. Linde. But of course you won’t.

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

Mrs. Linde. Behind your husband’s back?

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

Mrs. Linde. Yes, that is what I told you yesterday, but —

Nora (walking up and down). A man can put a thing like that straight much easier than a woman —

Mrs. Linde. One’s husband, yes.

Nora. Nonsense! (Standing still.) When you pay off a debt you get your bond back, don’t you?

Mrs. Linde. Yes, as a matter of course.

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

Mrs. Linde (looks hard at her, lays down her sewing and gets up slowly). Nora, you are concealing something from me.

Nora. Do I look as if I were?

Mrs. Linde. Something has happened to you since yesterday morning. Nora, what is it?
Nora (going nearer to her). Christine! (Listens.) Hush! there’s Torvald come home. Do you mind going in to the children for the present? Torvald can’t bear to see dressmaking going on. Let Anne help you.

Mrs. Linde (gathering some of the things together). Certainly — but I am not going away from here till we have had it out with one another. (She goes into the room, on the left, as Helmer comes in from, the hall.)

Nora (going up to HELMAR). I have wanted you so much, Torvald dear.

Helmer. Was that the dressmaker?

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

Helmer. Wasn’t that a happy thought of mine, now?

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

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

Nora. I suppose you are going to work.

Helmer. Yes. (Shows her a bundle of papers.) Look at that. I have just been into the bank. (Turns to go into his room.)

Nora. Torvald.

Helmer. Yes.

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

Helmer. What then?

Nora. Would you do it?

Helmer. I should like to hear what it is, first.

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

Helmer. Speak plainly.

Nora. Your skylark would chirp about in every room, with her song rising and falling —
Helmer. Well, my skylark does that anyhow.

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

Helmer. Nora — you surely don’t mean that request you made of me this morning?

Nora (going near him). Yes, Torvald, I beg you so earnestly —

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Nora. What do you mean?

Helmer. Naturally you are thinking of your father.

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

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

Nora. You never can tell what mischief these men may contrive. We ought to be so well off, so snug and happy here in our peaceful home, and have no cares — you and I and the children, Torvald! That is why I beg you so earnestly —
Helmer. And it is just by interceding for him that you make it impossible for me to keep him. It is already known at the Bank that I mean to dismiss Krogstad. Is it to get about now that the new manager has changed his mind at his wife’s bidding —

Nora. And what if it did?

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

Nora. Whatever is that?

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

Nora. Yes, you could — couldn’t you?

Helmer. And, I hear he is a good worker, too. But I knew him when we were boys. It was one of those rash friendships that so often prove an incubus in after life. I may as well tell you plainly, we were once on very intimate terms with one another. But this tactless fellow lays no restraint upon himself when other people are present. On the contrary, he thinks it gives him the right to adopt a familiar tone with me, and every minute it is “I say, Helmer, old fellow!” and that sort of thing. I assure you it is extremely painful to me. He would make my position in the bank intolerable.

Nora. Torvald, I don’t believe you mean that.

Helmer. Don’t you? Why not?

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

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

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

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

Nora. What are you going to do?

Helmer (looking among his papers). Settle it. (Enter MAID.) Look here; take this letter and go downstairs with it at once. Find a messenger and tell him to deliver it, and be quick. The address is on it, and here is the money.
Maid. Very well, sir. (Exit with the letter.)

Helmer (putting his papers together). Now, then, little Miss Obstinate.

Nora (breathlessly). Torvald — what was that letter?

Helmer. Krogstad’s dismissal.

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

Helmer. It’s too late.

Nora. Yes, it’s too late.

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

Nora (in a horror-stricken voice). What do you mean by that?

Helmer. Everything I say —

Nora (recovering herself). You will never have to do that.

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

Nora (bewildered with anxiety, stands as if rooted to the spot, and whispers). He was capable of doing it. He will do it. He will do it in spite of everything.— No, not that! Never, never! Anything rather than that! Oh, for some help, some way out of it. (The door-bell rings.) Doctor Rank! Anything rather than that — anything, whatever it is! (She puts her hands over her face, pulls herself together, goes to the door and opens it. RANK is standing without, hanging up his coat. During the following dialogue it begins to grow dark.)
Nora. Good-day, Doctor Rank. I knew your ring. But you mustn’t go into Torvald now; I think he is busy with something.

Rank. And you?

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

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

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

Rank. Well, does that alarm you?

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

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

Nora (gripping him by the arm). What have you found out? Doctor Rank, you must tell me.

Rank (sitting down by the stove). It is all up with me. And it can’t be helped.

Nora (with a sigh of relief). Is it about yourself?

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

Nora. What an ugly thing to say!

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

Nora. Oh, but, Doctor Rank —

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

Nora. You are quite absurd to-day. And I wanted you so much to be in a really good humour.
Rank. With death stalking beside me?—To have to pay this penalty for another man’s sin! Is there any justice in that? And in every single family, in one way or another, some such inexorable retribution is being exacted—

Nora (putting her hands over her ears). Rubbish! Do talk of something cheerful.

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

Nora (sitting at the table on the left). I suppose you mean that he was too partial to asparagus and pate de foie gras, don’t you?

Rank. Yes, and to truffles.

Nora. Truffles, yes. And oysters too, I suppose?

Rank. Oysters, of course, that goes without saying.

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

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

Nora. Yes, that’s the saddest part of it all.

Rank (with a searching look at her). Hm!—

Nora (after a short pause). Why did you smile?

Rand. No, it was you that laughed.

Nora. No, it was you that smiled, Doctor Rank!

Rank (rising). You are a greater rascal than I thought.

Nora. I am in a silly mood today.

Rank. So it seems.

Nora (putting her hands on his shoulders). Dear, dear Doctor Rank, death mustn’t take you away from Torvald and me.

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

Nora (looking at him anxiously). Do you believe that?
Rank. People form new ties, and then —

Nora. Who will form new ties?

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

Nora. Oho!— you don’t mean to say you are jealous of poor Christine?

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

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

Rank. To-day again. There, you see.

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

Rank (sitting down). What is it?

Nora. Just look at those.

Rank. Silk stockings.

Nora. Flesh-coloured. Aren’t they lovely? It is so dark here now, but to-morrow —. No, no, no! you must only look at the feet. Oh, well, you may have leave to look at the legs too.

Rank. Hm!—

Nora. Why are you looking so critical? Don’t you think they will fit me?

Rank. I have no means of forming an opinion about that.

Nora (looks at him for a moment). For shame! (Hits him lightly on the ear with the stockings.) That’s to punish you. (Folds them up again.)

Rank. And what other nice things am I to be allowed to see?

Nora. Not a single thing more, for being so naughty. (She looks among the things, humming to herself.)
Rank (after a short silence). When I am sitting here, talking to you as intimately as this, I cannot imagine for a moment what would have become of me if I had never come into this house.

Nora (smiling). I believe you do feel thoroughly at home with us.

Rank (in a lower voice, looking straight in front of him). And to be obliged to leave it all —

Nora. Nonsense, you are not going to leave it.

Rank (as before). And not be able to leave behind one the slightest token of one’s gratitude, scarcely even a fleeting regret — nothing but an empty place which the first comer can fill as well as any other.

Nora. And if I asked you now for a —? No!

Rank. For what?

Nora. For a big proof of your friendship —

Rank. Yes, yes.

Nora. I mean a tremendously big favour —

Rank. Would you really make me so happy for once?

Nora. Ah, but you don’t know what it is yet.

Rank. No — but tell me.

Nora. I really can’t, Doctor Rank. It is something out of all reason; it means advice, and help, and a favour —

Rank. The bigger a thing it is the better. I can’t conceive what it is you mean. Do tell me. Haven’t I your confidence?

Nora. More than anyone else. I know you are my truest and best friend, and so I will tell you what it is. Well, Doctor Rank, it is something you must help me to prevent. You know how devotedly, how inexpressibly deeply Torvald loves me; he would never for a moment hesitate to give his life for me.

Rank (leaning toward her). Nora — do you think he is the only one —?

Nora (with a slight start). The only one —?

Rank. The only one who would gladly give his life for your sake.
Nora (sadly). Is that it?

Rank. I was determined you should know it before I went away, and there will never be a better opportunity than this. Now you know it, Nora. And now you know, too, that you can trust me as you would trust no one else.

Nora (rises deliberately and quietly). Let me pass.

Rank (makes room for her to pass him, but sits still). Nora!

Nora (at the hall door). Helen, bring in the lamp. (Goes over to the stove.) Dear Doctor Rank, that was really horrid of you.

Rank. To have loved you as much as anyone else does? Was that horrid?

Nora. No, but to go and tell me so. There was really no need —

Rank. What do you mean? Did you know —? (MAID enters with lamp, puts it down on the table, and goes out.) Nora — Mrs. Helmer — tell me, had you any idea of this?

Nora. Oh, how do I know whether I had or whether I hadn’t. I really can’t tell you — To think you could be so clumsy, Doctor Rank! We were getting on so nicely.

Bank. Well, at all events you know now that you can command me, body and soul. So won’t you speak out?

Nora (looking at him). After what happened?

Rank. I beg you to let me know what it is.

Nora. I can’t tell you anything now.

Rank. Yes, yes. You mustn’t punish me in that way. Let me have permission to do for you whatever a man may do.

Nora. You can do nothing for me now. Besides, I really don’t need any help at all. You will find that the whole thing is merely fancy on my part. It really is so — of course it is! (Sits down in the rocking-chair, and looks at him with a smile.) You are a nice sort of man, Doctor Rank!— don’t you feel ashamed of yourself, now the lamp has come?

Rank. Not a bit. But perhaps I had better go — forever?

Nora. No, indeed, you shall not. Of course you must come here just as before. You know very well Torvald can’t do without you.

Rank. Yes, but you?
Nora. Oh, I am always tremendously pleased when you come.

Rank. It is just that, that put me on the wrong track. You are a riddle to me. I have often thought that you would almost as soon be in my company as in Helmer’s.

Nora. Yes — you see there are some people one loves best, and others whom one would almost always rather have as companions.

Rank. Yes, there is something in that.

Nora. When I was at home, of course I loved papa best. But I always thought it tremendous fun if I could steal down into the maids’ room, because they never moralized at all, and talked to each other about such entertaining things.

Rank. I see — it is their place I have taken.

Nora (jumping-up and going to him). Oh, dear, nice Doctor Rank, I never meant that at all. But surely you can understand that being with Torvald is a little like being with papa — (Enter MAID from the hall.)

Maid. If you please, ma’am. (Whispers and hands her a card.)

Nora (glancing at the card). Oh! (Puts it in her pocket.)

Rank. Is there anything wrong?

Nora. No, no, not in the least. It is only something — It is my new dress —

Rank. What? Your dress is lying there.

Nora. Oh, yes, that one; but this is another. I ordered it. Torvald mustn’t know about it —

Rank. Oho! Then that was the great secret.

Nora. Of course. Just go in to him; he is sitting in the inner room. Keep him as long as —

Rank. Make your mind easy; I won’t let him escape. (Goes into HELMER’S room.)

Nora (to the MAID). And he is standing waiting in the kitchen?

Maid. Yes; he came up the back stairs.

Nora. But didn’t you tell him no one was in?

Maid. Yes, but it was no good.
Nora. He won’t go away?

Maid. No; he says he won’t until he has seen you, ma’am.

Nora. Well, let him come in — but quietly. Helen, you mustn’t say anything about it to any one. It is a surprise for my husband.

Maid. Yes, ma’am, I quite understand. (Exit.)

Nora. This dreadful thing is going to happen. It will happen in spite of me! No, no, no, it can’t happen — it shan’t happen! (She bolts the door of HELMER’S room. The MAID opens the hall door for KROGSTAD and shuts it after him. He is wearing a fur coat, high boots and a fur cap.)

Nora (advancing towards him). Speak low — my husband is at home.

Krogstad. No matter about that.

Nora. What do you want of me?

Krogstad. An explanation of something.

Nora. Make haste then. What is it?

Krogstad. You know, I suppose, that I have got my dismissal.

Nora. I couldn’t prevent it, Mr. Krogstad. I fought as hard as I could on your side, but it was no good.

Krogstad. Does your husband love you so little, then? He knows what I can expose you to, and yet he ventures —

Nora. How can you suppose that he has any knowledge of the sort?

Krogstad. I didn’t suppose so at all. It would not be the least like our dear Torvald Helmer to show so much courage —

Nora. Mr. Krogstad, a little respect for my husband, please.

Krogstad. Certainly — all the respect he deserves. But since you have kept the matter so carefully to yourself, I make bold to suppose that you have a little clearer idea than you had yesterday, of what it actually is that you have done?

Nora. More than you could ever teach me.

Krogstad. Yes, such a bad lawyer as I am.
Nora. What is it you want of me?

Krogstad. Only to see how you were, Mrs. Helmer. I have been thinking about you all day long. A mere cashier — a quill-driver, a — well, a man like me — even he has a little of what is called feeling, you know.

Nora. Show it, then; think of my little children.

Krogstad. Have you and your husband thought of mine? But never mind about that. I only wanted to tell you that you need not take this matter too seriously. In the first place there will be no accusation made on my part.

Nora. No, of course not; I was sure of that.

Krogstad. The whole thing can be arranged amicably; there is no reason why anyone should know anything about it. It will remain a secret between us three.

Nora. My husband must never get to know anything about it.

Krogstad. How will you be able to prevent it? Am I to understand that you can pay the balance that is owing?

Nora. No, not just at present.

Krogstad. Or perhaps that you have some expedient for raising the money soon?

Nora. No expedient that I mean to make use of.

Krogstad. Well, in any case, it would have been of no use to you now. If you stood there with ever so much money in your hand, I would never part with your bond.

Nora. Tell me what purpose you mean to put it to.

Krogstad. I shall only preserve it — keep it in my possession. No one who is not concerned in the matter shall have the slightest hint of it. So that if the thought of it has driven you to any desperate resolution —

Nora. It has.

Krogstad. If you had it in your mind to run away from your home —

Nora. I had.

Krogstad. Or even something worse —

Nora. How could you know that?
Krogstad. Give up the idea.

Nora. How did you know I had thought of that?

Krogstad. Most of us think of that at first. I did, too — but I hadn’t the courage.

Nora (faintly). No more had I.

Krogstad (in a tone of relief). No, that’s it, isn’t it — you hadn’t the courage either?

Nora. No, I haven’t — I haven’t.

Krogstad. Besides, it would have been a great piece of folly. Once the first storm at home is over — I have a letter for your husband in my pocket.

Nora. Telling him everything?

Krogstad. In as lenient a manner as I possibly could.

Nora (quickly). He mustn’t get the letter. Tear it up. I will find some means of getting money.

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

Nora. I am not speaking of what I owe you. Tell me what sum you are asking my husband for, and I will get the money.

Krogstad. I am not asking your husband for a penny.

Nora. What do you want, then?

Krogstad. I will tell you. I want to rehabilitate myself, Mrs. Helmer; I want to get on; and in that your husband must help me. For the last year and a half I have not had a hand in anything dishonourable, and all that time I have been struggling in most restricted circumstances. I was content to work my way up step by step. Now I am turned out, and I am not going to be satisfied with merely being taken into favour again. I want to get on, I tell you. I want to get into the Bank again, in a higher position. Your husband must make a place for me —

Nora. That he will never do!

Krogstad. He will; I know him; he dare not protest. And as soon as I am in there again with him, then you will see! Within a year I shall be the manager’s right hand. It will be Nils Krogstad and not Torvald Helmer who manages the Bank.

Nora. That’s a thing you will never see!

Krogstad. Do you mean that you will —?
Nora. I have courage enough for it now.

Krogstad. Oh, you can’t frighten me. A fine, spoilt lady like you —

Nora. You will see, you will see.

Krogstad. Under the ice, perhaps? Down into the cold, coal-black water? And then, in the spring, to float up to the surface, all horrible and unrecognizable, with your hair fallen out —

Nora. You can’t frighten me.

Krogstad. Nor you me. People don’t do such things, Mrs. Helmer. Besides, what use would it be? I should have him completely in my power all the same.

Nora. Afterwards? When I am no longer —

Krogstad. Have you forgot that it is I who have the keeping of your reputation? (Nora stands speechlessly looking at him.) Well, now, I have warned you. Do not do anything foolish. When Helmer has had my letter, I shall expect a message from him. And be sure you remember that it is your husband himself who has forced me into such ways as this again. I will never forgive him for that. Good-bye, Mrs. Helmer. (Exit through the hall.)

Nora (goes to the hall door, opens it slightly and listens). He is going. He is not putting the letter in the box. Oh, no, no, that’s impossible! (Opens the door by degrees.) What is that? He is hesitating? Can he —? (A letter drops into the box; then KROGSTAD’S footsteps are heard, till they die away as he goes downstairs. NORA utters a stifled cry, and runs across the room to the table by the sofa. A short pause.)

Nora. In the letter-box. (Steals across to the hall-door.) There it lies — Torvald, Torvald, there is no hope for us now!

(MRS. LINDE comes in from the room on the left, carrying the dress.)

Mrs. Linde. There, I can’t see anything more to mend now. Would you like to try it on —?

Nora (in a hoarse whisper). Christine, come here.

Mrs. Linde (throwing the dress down on the sofa). What is the matter with you? You look so agitated!

Nora. Come here. Do you see that letter? There, look — you can see it through the glass in the letter-box.

Mrs. Linde. Yes, I see it.
Nora. That letter is from Krogstad.

Mrs. Linde. Nora — it was Krogstad who lent you the money!

Nora. Yes, and now Torvald will know all about it.

Mrs. Linde. Believe me, Nora, that’s the best thing for both of you.

Nora. You don’t know all. I forged a name.

Mrs. Linde. Good heavens —!

Nora. I only want to say this to you, Christine — you must be my witness.

Mrs. Linde. Your witness! What do you mean? What am I to —?

Nora. If I should go out of my mind — and it might easily happen —

Mrs. Linde. Nora!

Nora. Or if anything else should happen to me — anything, for instance, that might prevent my being here —

Mrs. Linde. Nora! Nora! you are quite out of your mind.

Nora. And if it should happen that there were someone who wanted to take all the responsibility, all the blame, you understand —

Mrs. Linde. Yes, yes — but how can you suppose —?

Nora. Then you must be my witness, that it is not true, Christine. I am not out of my mind at all; I am in my right senses now, and I tell you no one else has known anything about it; I and I alone, did the whole thing. Remember that.

Mrs. Linde. I will, indeed. But I don’t understand all this.

Nora. How should you understand it? A wonderful thing is going to happen.

Mrs. Linde. A wonderful thing?

Nora. Yes, a wonderful thing!— But it is so terrible, Christine; it mustn’t happen, not for all the world.

Mrs. Linde. I will go at once and see Krogstad.

Nora. Don’t go to him; he will do you some harm.
Mrs. Linde. There was a time when he would gladly do anything for my sake.

Nora. He?

Mrs. Linde. Where does he live?

Nora. How should I know —? Yes (feeling in her pocket) here is his card. But the letter, the letter —!

Helmer (calls from his room, knocking at the door). Nora.

Nora (cries out anxiously). Oh, what’s that? What do you want?

Helmer. Don’t be so frightened. We are not coming in; you have locked the door. Are you trying on your dress?

Nora. Yes, that’s it. I look so nice, Torvald.

Mrs. Linde (who has read the card) I see he lives at the corner here.

Nora. Yes, but it’s no use. It is hopeless. The letter is lying there in the box.

Mrs. Linde. And your husband keeps the key?

Nora. Yes, always.

Mrs. Linde. Krogstad must ask for his letter back unread, he must find some pretence —

Nora. But it is just at this time that Torvald generally —

Mrs. Linde. You must delay him. Go in to him in the meantime. I will come back as soon as I can. (She goes out hurriedly through the hall door.)

Nora (goes to HELMER’S door, opens it and peeps in). Torvald!

Helmer (from the inner room). Well? May I venture at last to come into my own room again? Come along, Rank, now you will see —( Halting in the doorway.) But what is this?

Nora. What is what, dear?

Helmer. Rank led me to expect a splendid transformation.

Rank (in the doorway). I understood so, but evidently I was mistaken.

Nora. Yes, nobody is to have the chance of admiring me in my dress until to-morrow.
Helmer. But, my dear Nora, you look so worn out. Have you been practising too much?

Nora. No, I have not practised at all.

Helmer. But you will need to —

Nora. Yes, indeed I shall, Torvald. But I can’t get on a bit without you to help me; I have absolutely forgotten the whole thing.

Helmer. Oh, we will soon work it up again.

Nora. Yes, help me, Torvald. Promise that you will! I am so nervous about it — all the people —. You must give yourself up to me entirely this evening. Not the tiniest bit of business — you mustn’t even take a pen in your hand. Will you promise, Torvald dear?

Helmer. I promise. This evening I will be wholly and absolutely at your service, you helpless little mortal. Ah, by the way, first of all I will just — (Goes toward the hall-door.)

Nora. What are you going to do there?

Helmer. Only see if any letters have come.

Nora. No, no! don’t do that, Torvald!

Helmer. Why not?

Nora. Torvald, please don’t. There is nothing there.

Helmer. Well, let me look. (Turns to go to the letter-box. NORA, at the piano, plays the first bars of the Tarantella. HELMER stops in the doorway.) Aha!

Nora. I can’t dance to-morrow if I don’t practise with you.

Helmer (going up to her). Are you really so afraid of it, dear?

Nora. Yes, so dreadfully afraid of it. Let me practise at once; there is time now, before we go to dinner. Sit down and play for me, Torvald dear; criticise me, and correct me as you play.

Helmer. With great pleasure, if you wish me to. (Sits down at the piano.)

Nora (takes out of the box a tambourine and a long variegated shawl. She hastily drapes the shawl round her. Then she springs to the front of the stage and calls out). Now play for me! I am going to dance!

(HELMER plays and NORA dances. RANK stands by the piano behind HELMER, and looks on.)
Helmer (as he plays). Slower, slower!

Nora. I can’t do it any other way.

Helmer. Not so violently, Nora!

Nora. This is the way.

Helmer (stops playing). No, no — that is not a bit right.

Nora (laughing and swinging the tambourine). Didn’t I tell you so?

Rank. Let me play for her.

Helmer (getting up). Yes, do. I can correct her better then.

(RANK sits down at the piano and plays. Nora dances more and more wildly. HELMER has taken up a position beside the stove, and during her dance gives her frequent instructions. She does not seem to hear him; her hair comes down and falls over her shoulders; she pays no attention to it, but goes on dancing. Enter MRS. LINDE.)

Mrs. Linde (standing as if spell-bound in the doorway). Oh!—

Nora (as she dances). Such fun, Christine!

Helmer. My dear darling Nora, you are dancing as if your life depended on it.

Nora. So it does.

Helmer. Stop, Rank; this is sheer madness. Stop, I tell you. (RANK stops playing, and, NORA suddenly stands still. HELMER goes up to her.) I could never have believed it. You have forgotten everything I taught you.

Nora (throwing away the tambourine). There, you see.

Helmer. You will want a lot of coaching.

Nora. Yes, you see how much I need it. You must coach me up to the last minute. Promise me that, Torvald!

Helmer. You can depend on me.

Nora. You must not think of anything but me, either to-day or to-morrow; you mustn’t open a single letter — not even open the letter-box —

Helmer. Ah, you are still afraid of that fellow ——
Nora. Yes, indeed I am.

Helmer. Nora, I can tell from your looks that there is a letter from him lying there.

Nora. I don’t know; I think there is; but you must not read anything of that kind now. Nothing horrid must come between us till this is all over.

Rank (whispers to HELMER). You mustn’t contradict her.

Helmer (taking her in his arms). The child shall have her way. But to-morrow night, after you have danced —

Nora. Then you will be free. (The MAID appears in the doorway to the right.)

Maid. Dinner is served, ma’am.

Nora. We will have champagne, Helen.

Maid. Very good, ma’am.

Helmer. Hullo!— are we going to have a banquet? (Exit.)

Nora. Yes, a champagne banquet till the small hours. (Calls out.) And a few macaroons, Helen — lots, just for once!

Helmer. Come, come, don’t be so wild and nervous. Be my own little skylark, as you used.

Nora. Yes, dear, I will. But go in now and you too, Doctor Rank. Christine, you must, help me to do up my hair.

Rank (whispers to HELMER as they go out). I suppose there is nothing — she is not expecting anything?

Helmer. Far from it, my dear fellow; it is simply nothing more than this childish nervousness I was telling you of. (They go into the right-hand room.)

Nora. Well!

Mrs. Linde. Gone out of town.

Nora. I could tell from your face.

Mrs. Linde. He is coming home tomorrow evening. I wrote a note for him.

Nora. You should have let it alone; you must prevent nothing. After all, it is splendid to be waiting for a wonderful thing to happen.
Mrs. Linde. What is it that you are waiting for?

Nora, Oh, you wouldn’t understand. Go in to them. I will come in a moment. (MRS. LINDE goes into the dining-room. NORA stands still for a little while, as if to compose herself. Then she looks at her watch.) Five o’clock. Seven hours till midnight; and then four-and-twenty hours till the next midnight. Then the Tarantella will be over. Twenty-four and seven? Thirty-one hours to live.

Helmer (from the doorway on the right). Where’s my little skylark?

Nora (going to him with her arms out-stretched). Here she is!

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Act 3

(THE SAME SCENE— The table has been placed in the middle of the stage, with chairs around it. A lamp is burning on the table. The door into the hall stands open. Dance music is heard in the room above. MRS. LINDE is sitting at the table idly turning over the leaves of a book; she tries to read, but does not seem able to collect her thoughts. Every now and then she listens intently for a sound at the outer door.)

Mrs. Linde (looking at her watch). Not yet — and the time is nearly up. If only he does not —. (Listens again.) Ah, there he is. (Goes into the hall and opens the outer door carefully. Light footsteps are heard on the stairs. She whispers.) Come in. There is no one here.

Krogstad (in the doorway). I found a note from you at home. What does this mean?

Mrs. Linde. It is absolutely necessary that I should have a talk with you.

Krogstad. Really? And is it absolutely necessary that it should be here?

Mrs. Linde. It is impossible where I live; there is no private entrance to my rooms. Come in; we are quite alone. The maid is asleep, and the Helmers are at the dance upstairs.

Krogstad (coming into the room). Are the Helmers really at a dance tonight?

Mrs. Linde. Yes, why not?

Krogstad. Certainly — why not?

Mrs. Linde. Now, Nils, let us have a talk.

Krogstad. Can we two have anything to talk about?

Mrs. Linde. We have a great deal to talk about.
Krogstad. I shouldn’t have thought so.

Mrs. Linde. No, you have never properly understood me.

Krogstad. Was there anything else to understand except what was obvious to all the world — a heartless woman jilts a man when a more lucrative chance turns up.

Mrs. Linde. Do you believe I am as absolutely heartless as all that? And do you believe that I did it with a light heart?

Krogstad. Didn’t you?

Mrs. Linde. Nils, did you really think that?

Krogstad. If it were as you say, why did you write to me as you did at the time?

Mrs. Linde. I could do nothing else. As I had to break with you, it was my duty also to put an end to all that you felt for me.

Krogstad (wringing his hands). So that was it. And all this — only for the sake of money.

Mrs. Linde. You must not forget that I had a helpless mother and two little brothers. We couldn’t wait for you, Nils; your prospects seemed hopeless then.

Krogstad. That may be so, but you had no right to throw me over for any one else’s sake.

Mrs. Linde. Indeed I don’t know. Many a time did I ask myself if I had a right to do it.

Krogstad (more gently). When I lost you, it was as if all the solid ground went from under my feet. Look at me now — I am a shipwrecked man clinging to a bit of wreckage.

Mrs. Linde. But help may be near.

Krogstad. It was near; but then you came and stood in my way.

Mrs. Linde. Unintentionally, Nils. It was only today that I learnt it was your place I was going to take in the bank.

Krogstad. I believe you, if you say so. But now that you know it, are you not going to give it up to me?

Mrs. Linde. No, because that would not benefit you in the least.

Krogstad. Oh, benefit, benefit — I would have done it whether or no.

Mrs. Linde. I have learnt to act prudently. Life, and hard, bitter necessity have taught me that.
Krogstad. And life has taught me not to believe in fine speeches.

Mrs. Linde. Then life has taught you something very reasonable. But deeds you must believe in?

Krogstad. What do you mean by that?

Mrs. Linde. You said you were like a shipwrecked man clinging to some wreckage.

Krogstad. I had good reason to say so.

Mrs. Linde. Well, I am like a shipwrecked woman clinging to some wreckage — no one to mourn for, no one to care for.

Krogstad. It was your own choice.

Mrs. Linde. There was no other choice, then.

Krogstad. Well, what now?

Mrs. Linde. Nils, how would it be if we two shipwrecked people could join forces?

Krogstad. What are you saying?

Mrs. Linde. Two on the same piece of wreckage would stand a better chance than each on their own.

Krogstad. Christine!

Mrs. Linde. What do you suppose brought me to town?

Krogstad. Do you mean that you gave me a thought?

Mrs. Linde. I could not endure life without work. All my life, as long as I can remember, I have worked, and it has been my greatest and only pleasure. But now I am quite alone in the world — my life is so dreadfully empty and I feel so forsaken. There is not the least pleasure in working for one’s self. Nils, give me someone and something to work for.

Krogstad. I don’t trust that. It is nothing but a woman’s overstrained sense of generosity that prompts you to make such an offer of your self.

Mrs. Linde. Have you ever noticed anything of the sort in me?

Krogstad. Could you really do it? Tell me — do you know all about my past life?

Mrs. Linde. Yes.
Krogstad. And do you know what they think of me here?

Mrs. Linde. You seemed to me to imply that with me you might have been quite another man.

Krogstad. I am certain of it.

Mrs. Linde. Is it too late now?

Krogstad. Christine, are you saying this deliberately? Yes, I am sure you are. I see it in your face. Have you really the courage, then —?

Mrs. Linde. I want to be a mother to someone, and your children need a mother. We two need each other. Nils, I have faith in your real character — I can dare anything together with you.

Krogstad (grasps her hands). Thanks, thanks, Christine! Now I shall find a way to clear myself in the eyes of the world. Ah, but I forgot —

Mrs. Linde (listening). Hush! The Tarantella! Go, go!

Krogstad. Why? What is it?

Mrs. Linde. Do you hear them up there? When that is over, we may expect them back.

Krogstad. Yes, yes — I will go. But it is all no use. Of course you are not aware what steps I have taken in the matter of the Helmers.

Mrs. Linde. Yes, I know all about that.

Krogstad. And in spite of that have you the courage to —?

Mrs. Linde. I understand very well to what lengths a man like you might be driven by despair.

Krogstad. If I could only undo what I have done!

Mrs. Linde. You cannot. Your letter is lying in the letter-box now.

Krogstad. Are you sure of that?

Mrs. Linde. Quite sure, but —

Krogstad (with a searching look at her). Is that what it all means? — that you want to save your friend at any cost? Tell me frankly. Is that it?

Mrs. Linde. Nils, a woman who has once sold herself for another’s sake, doesn’t do it a second time.
Krogstad. I will ask for my letter back.

Mrs. Linde. No, no.

Krogstad. Yes, of course I will. I will wait here till Helmer comes; I will tell him he must give me my letter back — that it only concerns my dismissal — that he is not to read it —

Mrs. Linde. No, Nils, you must not recall your letter.

Krogstad. But, tell me, wasn’t it for that very purpose that you asked me to meet you here?

Mrs. Linde. In my first moment of fright, it was. But twenty-four hours have elapsed since then, and in that time I have witnessed incredible things in this house. Helmer must know all about it. This unhappy secret must be enclosed; they must have a complete understanding between them, which is impossible with all this concealment and falsehood going on.

Krogstad. Very well, if you will take the responsibility. But there is one thing I can do in any case, and I shall do it at once.

Mrs. Linde (listening). You must be quick and go! The dance is over; we are not safe a moment longer.

Krogstad. I will wait for you below.

Mrs. Linde. Yes, do. You must see me back to my door.

Krogstad. I have never had such an amazing piece of good fortune in my life! (Goes out through the outer door. The door between the room and the hall remains open.)

Mrs. Linde (tidying up the room and laying her hat and cloak ready). What a difference! What a difference! Someone to work for and live for — a home to bring comfort into. That I will do, indeed. I wish they would be quick and come. (Listens.) Ah, there they are now. I must put on my things. (Takes up her hat and cloak. HELMER’S and NORA’S voices are heard outside; a key is turned, and HELMER brings NORA almost by force into the hall. She is in an Italian costume with a large black shawl round her; he is in evening dress, and a black domino which is flying open.)

Nora (hanging back in the doorway, and struggling with him). No, no, no!— don’t take me in. I want to go upstairs again; I don’t want to leave so early.

Helmer. But, my dearest Nora —

Nora. Please, Torvald dear — please, please — only an hour more.
Helmer. Not a single minute, my sweet Nora. You know that was our agreement. Come along into the room; you are catching cold standing there. (He brings her gently into the room, in spite of her resistance.)

Mrs. Linde. Good evening.

Nora. Christine!

Helmer. You here, so late, Mrs. Linde?

Mrs. Linde. Yes, you must excuse me; I was so anxious to see Nora in her dress.

Nora. Have you been sitting here waiting for me?

Mrs. Linde. Yes, unfortunately I came too late, you had already gone upstairs; and I thought I couldn’t go away again without having seen you.

Helmer (taking off NORA’S shawl). Yes, take a good look at her. I think she is worth looking at. Isn’t she charming, Mrs. Linde?

Mrs. Linde. Yes, indeed she is.

Helmer. Doesn’t she look remarkably pretty? Everyone thought so at the dance. But she is terribly self-willed, this sweet little person. What are we to do with her? You will hardly believe that I had almost to bring her away by force.

Nora. Torvald, you will repent not having let me stay, even if it were only for half an hour.

Helmer. Listen to her, Mrs. Linde! She had danced her Tarantella, and it had been a tremendous success, as it deserved — although possibly the performance was a trifle too realistic — little more so, I mean, than was strictly compatible with the limitations of art. But never mind about that! The chief thing is, she had made a success — she had made a tremendous success. Do you think I was going to let her remain there after that, and spoil the effect? No, indeed! I took my charming little Capri maiden — my capricious little Capri maiden, I should say — on my arm; took one quick turn round the room; a curtsey on either side, and, as they say in novels, the beautiful apparition disappeared. An exit ought always to be effective, Mrs. Linde; but that is what I cannot make Nora understand. Pooh! this room is hot. (Throws his domino on a chair, and opens the door of his room.) Hullo! it’s all dark in here. Oh, of course — excuse me —. (He goes in, and lights some candles.)

Nora (in a hurried and breathless whisper). Well?

Mrs. Linde. (in a low voice). I have had a talk with him.

Nora. Yes, and —
Mrs. Linde. Nora, you must tell your husband all about it.

Nora (in an expressionless voice). I knew it.

Mrs. Linde. You have nothing to be afraid of as far as Krogstad is concerned; but you must tell him.

Nora. I won’t tell him.

Mrs. Linde. Then the letter will.

Nora. Thank you, Christine. Now I know what I must do. Hush —!

Helmer (coming in again). Well, Mrs. Linde, have you admired her?

Mrs. Linde. Yes, and now I will say good-night.

Helmer. What, already? Is this yours, this knitting?

Mrs. Linde (taking it). Yes, thank you, I had very nearly forgotten it.

Helmer. So you knit?

Mrs. Linde. Of course.

Helmer. Do you know, you ought to embroider?

Mrs. Linde. Really? Why?

Helmer. Yes, it’s far more becoming. Let me show you. You hold the embroidery thus in your left hand, and use the needle with the right — like this — with a long, easy sweep. Do you see?

Mrs. Linde. Yes, perhaps —

Helmer. But in the case of knitting — that can never be anything but ungraceful; look here — the arms close together, the knitting-needles going up and down — it has a sort of Chinese effect —. That was really excellent champagne they gave us.

Mrs. Linde. Well,— good-night, Nora, and don’t be self-willed any more.

Helmer. That’s right, Mrs. Linde.

Mrs. Linde. Good-night, Mr. Helmer.

Helmer (accompanying her to the door). Good-night, good-night. I hope you will get home all right. I should be very happy to — but you haven’t any great distance to go. Good-night, good-
night. (She goes out; he shuts the door after her and comes in again.) Ah!— at last we have got rid of her. She is a frightful bore, that woman.

Nora. Aren’t you very tired, Torvald?

Helmer. No, not in the least.

Nora. Nor sleepy?

Helmer. Not a bit. On the contrary, I feel extraordinarily lively. And you?— you really look both tired and sleepy.

Nora. Yes, I am very tired. I want to go to sleep at once.

Helmer. There, you see it was quite right of me not to let you stay there any longer.

Nora. Everything you do is quite right, Torvald.

Helmer (kissing her on the forehead). Now my little skylark is speaking reasonably. Did you notice what good spirits Rank was in this evening?

Nora. Really? Was he? I didn’t speak to him at all.

Helmer. And I very little, but I have not for a long time seen him in such good form. (Looks for a while at her and then goes nearer to her.) It is delightful to be at home by ourselves again, to be all alone with you — you fascinating, charming little darling!

Nora. Don’t look at me like that, Torvald.

Helmer. Why shouldn’t I look at my dearest treasure?— at all the beauty that is mine, all my very own?

Nora (going to the other side of the table). You mustn’t say things like that to me tonight.

Helmer (following her). You have still got the Tarantella in your blood, I see. And it makes you more captivating than ever. Listen — the guests are beginning to go now. (In a lower voice.) Nora — soon the whole house will be quiet.

Nora. Yes, I hope so.

Helmer. Yes, my own darling Nora. Do you know, when I am out at a party with you like this, why I speak so little to you, keep away from you, and only send a stolen glance in your direction now and then?— do you know why I do that? It is because I make believe to myself that we are secretly in love, and you are my secretly promised bride, and that no one suspects there is anything between us.
Nora. Yes, yes — I know very well your thoughts are with me all the time.

Helmer. And when we are leaving, and I am putting the shawl over your beautiful young shoulders — on your lovely neck — then I imagine that you are my young bride and that we have just come from the wedding, and I am bringing you for the first time into our home — to be alone with you for the first time — quite alone with my shy little darling! All this evening I have longed for nothing but you. When I watched the seductive figures of the Tarantella, my blood was on fire; I could endure it no longer, and that was why I brought you down so early —

Nora. Go away, Torvald! You must let me go. I won’t —

Helmer. What’s that? You’re joking, my little Nora! You won’t — you won’t? Am I not your husband —? (A knock is heard at the outer door.)

Nora (starting). Did you hear —?

Helmer (going into the hall). Who is it?

Rank (outside). It is I. May I come in for a moment?

Helmer (in a fretful whisper). Oh, what does he want now? (Aloud.) Wait a minute? (Unlocks the door.) Come, that’s kind of you not to pass by our door.

Rank. I thought I heard your voice, and felt as if I should like to look in. (With a swift glance round.) Ah, yes!— these dear familiar rooms. You are very happy and cosy in here, you two.

Helmer. It seems to me that you looked after yourself pretty well upstairs too.

Rank. Excellently. Why shouldn’t I? Why shouldn’t one enjoy everything in this world?— at any rate as much as one can, and as long as one can. The wine was capital —

Helmer. Especially the champagne.

Rank. So you noticed that too? It is almost incredible how much I managed to put away!

Nora. Torvald drank a great deal of champagne tonight, too.

Rank. Did he?

Nora. Yes, and he is always in such good spirits afterwards.

Rank. Well, why should one not enjoy a merry evening after a well-spent day?

Helmer. Well spent? I am afraid I can’t take credit for that.
Rank (clapping him on the back). But I can, you know!

Nora. Doctor Rank, you must have been occupied with some scientific investigation today.

Rank. Exactly.

Helmer. Just listen!— little Nora talking about scientific investigations!

Nora. And may I congratulate you on the result?

Rank. Indeed you may.

Nora. Was it favourable, then.

Rank. The best possible, for both doctor and patient — certainty.

Nora (quickly and searchingly). Certainty?

Rank. Absolute certainty. So wasn’t I entitled to make a merry evening of it after that?

Nora. Yes, you certainly were, Doctor Rank.

Helmer. I think so too, so long as you don’t have to pay for it in the morning.

Rank. Oh well, one can’t have anything in this life without paying for it.

Nora. Doctor Rank — are you fond of fancy-dress balls?

Rank. Yes, if there is a fine lot of pretty costumes.

Nora. Tell me — what shall we two wear at the next?

Helmer. Little featherbrain!— are you thinking of the next already?

Rank. We two? Yes, I can tell you. You shall go as a good fairy —

Helmer. Yes, but what do you suggest as an appropriate costume for that?

Rank. Let your wife go dressed just as she is in every-day life.

Helmer. That was really very prettily turned. But can’t you tell us what you will be?

Rank. Yes, my dear friend, I have quite made up my mind about that.

Helmer. Well?
Rank. At the next fancy-dress ball I shall be invisible.

Helmer That’s a good joke!

Rank. There is a big black hat — have you never heard of hats that make you invisible? If you put one on, no one can see you.

Helmer (suppressing a smile). Yes, you are quite right.

Rank. But I am clean forgetting what I came for. Helmer, give me a cigar — one of the dark Havanas.

Helmer. With the greatest pleasure. (Offers him his case.)

Rank (takes a cigar and cuts off the end). Thanks.

Nora (striking a match). Let me give you a light.

Rank. Thank you. (She holds the match for him to light his cigar.) And now good-bye!

Helmer. Good-bye, good-bye, dear old man!

Nora. Sleep well, Doctor Rank.

Rank. Thank you for that wish.

Nora. Wish me the same.

Rank. You? Well, if you want me to sleep well! And thanks for the light. (He nods to them both and goes out.)

Helmer (in a subdued voice). He has drunk more than he ought.

Nora (absently). Maybe. (HELMER takes a bunch of keys out of his pocket and goes into the hall.) Torvald! what are you going to do there?

Helmer. Empty the letter-box; it is quite full; there will be no room to put the newspaper in to-morrow morning.

Nora. Are you going to work to-night?

Helmer. You know quite well I’m not. What is this? Some one has been at the lock.

Nora. At the lock?
Helmer. Yes, someone has. What can it mean? I should never have thought the maid —. Here is a broken hairpin. Nora, it is one of yours.

Nora (quickly). Then it must have been the children —

Helmer. Then you must get them out of those ways. There, at last I have got it open. (Takes out the contents of the letter-box, and calls to the kitchen.) Helen!— Helen, put out the light over the front door. (Goes back into the room and shuts the door into the hall. He holds out his hand full of letters.) Look at that — look what a heap of them there are. (Turning them over.) What on earth is that?

Nora (at the window). The letter — No! Torvald, no!

Helmer. Two cards — of Rank’s.

Nora. Of Doctor Rank’s?

Helmer (looking at them). Doctor Rank. They were on the top. He must have put them in when he went out.

Nora. Is there anything written on them?

Helmer. There is a black cross over the name. Look there — what an uncomfortable idea! It looks as if he were announcing his own death.

Nora. It is just what he is doing.

Helmer. What? Do you know anything about it? Has he said anything to you?

Nora. Yes. He told me that when the cards came it would be his leave-taking from us. He means to shut himself up and die.

Helmer. My poor old friend. Certainly I knew we should not have him very long with us. But so soon! And so he hides himself away like a wounded animal.

Nora. If it has to happen, it is best it should be without a word — don’t you think so, Torvald?

Helmer (walking up and down). He has so grown into our lives. I can’t think of him as having gone out of them. He, with his sufferings and his loneliness, was like a cloudy background to our sunlit happiness. Well, perhaps it is best so. For him, anyway. (Standing still.) And perhaps for us too, Nora. We two are thrown quite upon each other now. (Puts his arms around her.) My darling wife, I don’t feel as if I could hold you tight enough. Do you know, Nora, I have often wished that you might be threatened by some great danger, so that I might risk my life’s blood, and everything, for your sake.
Nora (disengages herself, and says firmly and decidedly). Now you must read your letters, Torvald.

Helmer. No, no; not tonight. I want to be with you, my darling wife.

Nora. With the thought of your friend’s death —

Helmer. You are right, it has affected us both. Something ugly has come between us — the thought of the horrors of death. We must try and rid our minds of that. Until then — we will each go to our own room.

Nora (hanging on his neck). Good-night, Torvald — Good-night!

Helmer (kissing her on the forehead). Good-night, my little singing-bird. Sleep sound, Nora. Now I will read my letters through. (He takes his letters and goes into his room, shutting the door after him.)

Nora (gropes distractedly about, seizes HELMER’S domino, throws it round her, while she says in quick, hoarse, spasmodic whispers). Never to see him again. Never! Never! (Puts her shawl over her head.) Never to see my children again either — never again. Never! Never!— Ah! the icy, black water — the unfathomable depths — If only it were over! He has got it now — now he is reading it. Good-bye, Torvald and my children! (She is about to rush out through the hall, when HELMER opens his door hurriedly and stands with an open letter in his hand.)

Helmer. Nora!

Nora. Ah!—

Helmer. What is this? Do you know what is in this letter?

Nora. Yes, I know. Let me go! Let me get out!

Helmer (holding her back). Where are you going?

Nora (trying to get free). You shan’t save me, Torvald!

Helmer (reeling). True? Is this true, that I read here? Horrible! No, no — it is impossible that it can be true.

Nora. It is true. I have loved you above everything else in the world.

Helmer. Oh, don’t let us have any silly excuses.

Nora (taking a step towards him). Torvald —!

Helmer. Miserable creature — what have you done?
Nora. Let me go. You shall not suffer for my sake. You shall not take it upon yourself.

Helmer. No tragedy airs, please. (Locks the hall door.) Here you shall stay and give me an explanation. Do you understand what you have done? Answer me? Do you understand what you have done?

Nora (looks steadily at him and says with a growing look of coldness in her face). Yes, now I am beginning to understand thoroughly.

Helmer (walking about the room). What a horrible awakening! All these eight years — she who was my joy and pride — a hypocrite, a liar — worse, worse — a criminal! The unutterable ugliness of it all!— For shame! For shame! (NORA is silent and looks steadily at him. He stops in front of her.) I ought to have suspected that something of the sort would happen. I ought to have foreseen it. All your father’s want of principle — be silent!— all your father’s want of principle has come out in you. No religion, no morality, no sense of duty — How I am punished for having winked at what he did! I did it for your sake, and this is how you repay me.

Nora. Yes, that’s just it.

Helmer. Now you have destroyed all my happiness. You have ruined all my future. It is horrible to think of! I am in the power of an unscrupulous man; he can do what he likes with me, ask anything he likes of me, give me any orders he pleases — I dare not refuse. And I must sink to such miserable depths because of a thoughtless woman!

Nora. When I am out of the way, you will be free.

Helmer. No fine speeches, please. Your father had always plenty of those ready, too. What good would it be to me if you were out of the way, as you say? Not the slightest. He can make the affair known everywhere; and if he does, I may be falsely suspected of having been a party to your criminal action. Very likely people will think I was behind it all — that it was I who prompted you! And I have to thank you for all this — you whom I have cherished during the whole of our married life. Do you understand now what it is you have done for me?

Nora (coldly and quietly). Yes.

Helmer. It is so incredible that I can’t take it in. But we must come to some understanding. Take off that shawl. Take it off, I tell you. I must try and appease him some way or another. The matter must be hushed up at any cost. And as for you and me, it must appear as if everything between us were as before — but naturally only in the eyes of the world. You will still remain in my house, that is a matter of course. But I shall not allow you to bring up the children; I dare not trust them to you. To think that I should be obliged to say so to one whom I have loved so dearly, and whom I still —. No, that is all over. From this moment happiness is not the question; all that concerns us is to save the remains, the fragments, the appearance —
(A ring is heard at the front-door bell.)

Helmer (with a start). What is that? So late! Can the worst —? Can he —? Hide yourself, Nora. Say you are ill.

(NORA stands motionless. HELMER goes and unlocks the hall door.)

Maid (half-dressed, comes to the door). A letter for the mistress.

Helmer. Give it to me. (Takes the letter, and shuts the door.) Yes, it is from him. You shall not have it; I will read it myself.

Nora. Yes, read it.

Helmer (standing by the lamp). I scarcely have the courage to do it. It may mean ruin for both of us. No, I must know. (Tears open the letter, runs his eye over a few lines, looks at a paper enclosed, and gives a shout of joy.) Nora! (She looks at him, questioningly.) Nora! No, I must read it once again —. Yes, it is true! I am saved! Nora, I am saved!

Nora. And I?

Helmer. You too, of course; we are both saved, both saved, both you and I. Look, he sends you your bond back. He says he regrets and repents — that a happy change in his life — never mind what he says! We are saved, Nora! No one can do anything to you. Oh, Nora, Nora!— no, first I must destroy these hateful things. Let me see —. (Takes a look at the bond.) No, no, I won’t look at it. The whole thing shall be nothing but a bad dream to me. (Tears up the bond and both letters, throws them all into the stove, and watches them burn.) There — now it doesn’t exist any longer. He says that since Christmas Eve you —. These must have been three dreadful days for you, Nora.

Nora. I have fought a hard fight these three days.

Helmer. And suffered agonies, and seen no way out but —. No, we won’t call any of the horrors to mind. We will only shout with joy, and keep saying, “It’s all over! It’s all over!” Listen to me, Nora. You don’t seem to realise that it is all over. What is this?— such a cold, set face! My poor little Nora, I quite understand; you don’t feel as if you could believe that I have forgiven you. But it is true, Nora, I swear it; I have forgiven you everything. I know that what you did, you did out of love for me.

Nora. That is true.

Helmer. You have loved me as a wife ought to love her husband. Only you had not sufficient knowledge to judge of the means you used. But do you suppose you are any the less dear to me, because you don’t understand how to act on your own responsibility? No, no; only lean on me; I will advise you and direct you. I should not be a man if this womanly helplessness did
not just give you a double attractiveness in my eyes. You must not think any more about the hard things I said in my first moment of consternation, when I thought everything was going to overwhelm me. I have forgiven you, Nora; I swear to you I have forgiven you.

Nora. Thank you for your forgiveness. (She goes out through the door to the right.)

Helmer. No, don’t go —. (Looks in.) What are you doing in there?

Nora (from within). Taking off my fancy dress.

Helmer (standing at the open door). Yes, do. Try and calm yourself, and make your mind easy again, my frightened little singing-bird. Be at rest, and feel secure; I have broad wings to shelter you under. (Walks up and down by the door.) How warm and cosy our home is, Nora. Here is shelter for you; here I will protect you like a hunted dove that I have saved from a hawk’s claws; I will bring peace to your poor beating heart. It will come, little by little, Nora, believe me. To-morrow morning you will look upon it all quite differently; soon everything will be just as it was before. Very soon you won’t need me to assure you that I have forgiven you; you will yourself feel the certainty that I have done so. Can you suppose I should ever think of such a thing as repudiating you, or even reproaching you? You have no idea what a true man’s heart is like, Nora. There is something so indescribably sweet and satisfying, to a man, in the knowledge that he has forgiven his wife — forgiven her freely, and with all his heart. It seems as if that had made her, as it were, doubly his own; he has given her a new life, so to speak; and she is in a way become both wife and child to him. So you shall be for me after this, my little scared, helpless darling. Have no anxiety about anything, Nora; only be frank and open with me, and I will serve as will and conscience both to you —. What is this? Not gone to bed? Have you changed your things?

Nora (in everyday dress). Yes, Torvald, I have changed my things now.

Helmer. But what for?— so late as this.

Nora. I shall not sleep tonight.

Helmer. But, my dear Nora —

Nora (looking at her watch). It is not so very late. Sit down here, Torvald. You and I have much to say to one another. (She sits down at one side of the table.)

Helmer. Nora — what is this?— this cold, set face?

Nora. Sit down. It will take some time; I have a lot to talk over with you.

Helmer (sits down at the opposite side of the table). You alarm me, Nora!— and I don’t understand you.
Nora. No, that is just it. You don’t understand me, and I have never understood you either — before tonight. No, you mustn’t interrupt me. You must simply listen to what I say. Torvald, this is a settling of accounts.

Helmer. What do you mean by that?

Nora (after a short silence). Isn’t there one thing that strikes you as strange in our sitting here like this?

Helmer. What is that?

Nora. We have been married now eight years. Does it not occur to you that this is the first time we two, you and I, husband and wife, have had a serious conversation?

Helmer. What do you mean by serious?

Nora. In all these eight years — longer than that — from the very beginning of our acquaintance, we have never exchanged a word on any serious subject.

Helmer. Was it likely that I would be continually and forever telling you about worries that you could not help me to bear?

Nora. I am not speaking about business matters. I say that we have never sat down in earnest together to try and get at the bottom of anything.

Helmer. But, dearest Nora, would it have been any good to you?

Nora. That is just it; you have never understood me. I have been greatly wronged, Torvald — first by papa and then by you.

Helmer. What! By us two — by us two, who have loved you better than anyone else in in the world?

Nora (shaking her head). You have never loved me. You have only thought it pleasant to be in love with me.

Helmer. Nora, what do I hear you saying?

Nora. It is perfectly true, Torvald. When I was at home with papa, he told me his opinion about everything, and so I had the same opinions; and if I differed from him I concealed the fact, because he would not have liked it. He called me his doll-child, and he played with me just as I used to play with my dolls. And when I came to live with you —

Helmer. What sort of an expression is that to use about our marriage?
Nora (undisturbed). I mean that I was simply transferred from papa’s hands into yours. You arranged everything according to your own taste, and so I got the same tastes as you — or else I pretended to, I am really not quite sure which — I think sometimes the one and sometimes the other. When I look back on it, it seems to me as if I had been living here like a poor woman — just from hand to mouth. I have existed merely to perform tricks for you, Torvald. But you would have it so. You and papa have committed a great sin against me. It is your fault that I have made nothing of my life.

Helmer. How unreasonable and how ungrateful you are, Nora! Have you not been happy here?

Nora. No, I have never been happy. I thought I was, but it has never really been so.

Helmer. Not — not happy!

Nora. No, only merry. And you have always been so kind to me. But our home has been nothing but a playroom. I have been your doll-wife, just as at home I was papa’s doll-child; and here the children have been my dolls. I thought it great fun when you played with me, just as they thought it great fun when I played with them. That is what our marriage has been, Torvald.

Helmer. There is some truth in what you say — exaggerated and strained as your view of it is. But for the future it shall be different. Playtime shall be over, and lesson-time shall begin.

Nora. Whose lessons? Mine, or the children’s?

Helmer. Both yours and the children’s, my darling Nora.

Nora. Alas, Torvald, you are not the man to educate me into being a proper wife for you.

Helmer. And you can say that!

Nora. And I — how am I fitted to bring up the children?

Helmer. Nora!

Nora. Didn’t you say so yourself a little while ago — that you dare not trust me to bring them up?

Helmer. In a moment of anger! Why do you pay any heed to that?

Nora. Indeed, you were perfectly right. I am not fit for the task. There is another task I must undertake first. I must try and educate myself — you are not the man to help me in that. I must do that for myself. And that is why I am going to leave you now.

Helmer (springing up). What do you say?
Nora. I must stand quite alone, if I am to understand myself and everything about me. It is for that reason that I cannot remain with you any longer.

Helmer. Nora, Nora!

Nora. I am going away from here now, at once. I am sure Christine will take me in for the night —

Helmer. You are out of your mind! I won’t allow it! I forbid you!

Nora. It is no use forbidding me anything any longer. I will take with me what belongs to myself. I will take nothing from you, either now or later.

Helmer. What sort of madness is this!

Nora. Tomorrow I shall go home — I mean to my old home. It will be easiest for me to find something to do there.

Helmer. You blind, foolish woman!

Nora. I must try and get some sense, Torvald.

Helmer. To desert your home, your husband and your children! And you don’t consider what people will say!

Nora. I cannot consider that at all. I only know that it is necessary for me.

Helmer. It’s shocking. This is how you would neglect your most sacred duties.

Nora. What do you consider my most sacred duties?

Helmer. Do I need to tell you that? Are they not your duties to your husband and your children?

Nora. I have other duties just as sacred.

Helmer. That you have not. What duties could those be?

Nora. Duties to myself.

Helmer. Before all else, you are a wife and mother.

Nora. I don’t believe that any longer. I believe that before all else I am a reasonable human being, just as you are — or, at all events, that I must try and become one. I know quite well, Torvald, that most people would think you right, and that views of that kind are to be found in
books; but I can no longer content myself with what most people say, or with what is found in books. I must think over things for myself and get to understand them.

Helmer. Can you not understand your place in your own home? Have you not a reliable guide in such matters as that?— have you no religion?

Nora. I am afraid, Torvald, I do not exactly know what religion is.

Helmer. What are you saying?

Nora. I know nothing but what the clergyman said, when I went to be confirmed. He told us that religion was this, and that, and the other. When I am away from all this, and am alone, I will look into that matter too. I will see if what the clergyman said is true, or at all events if it is true for me.

Helmer. This is unheard of in a girl of your age! But if religion cannot lead you aright, let me try and awaken your conscience. I suppose you have some moral sense? Or — answer me — am I to think you have none?

Nora. I assure you, Torvald, that is not an easy question to answer. I really don’t know. The thing perplexes me altogether. I only know that you and I look at it in quite a different light. I am learning, too, that the law is quite another thing from what I supposed; but I find it impossible to convince myself that the law is right. According to it a woman has no right to spare her old dying father, or to save her husband’s life. I can’t believe that.

Helmer. You talk like a child. You don’t understand the conditions of the world in which you live.

Nora. No, I don’t. But now I am going to try. I am going to see if I can make out who is right, the world or I.

Helmer. You are ill, Nora; you are delirious; I almost think you are out of your mind.

Nora. I have never felt my mind so clear and certain as to—night.

Helmer. And is it with a clear and certain mind that you forsake your husband and your children?

Nora. Yes, it is.

Helmer. Then there is only one possible explanation.

Nora. What is that?

Helmer. You do not love me any more.
Nora. No, that is just it.

Helmer. Nora!— and you can say that?

Nora. It gives me great pain, Torvald, for you have always been so kind to me, but I cannot help it. I do not love you any more.

Helmer (regaining his composure). Is that a clear and certain conviction too?

Nora. Yes, absolutely clear and certain. That is the reason why I will not stay here any longer.

Helmer. And can you tell me what I have done to forfeit your love?

Nora. Yes, indeed I can. It was to-night, when the wonderful thing did not happen; then I saw you were not the man I had thought you.

Helmer. Explain yourself better — I don’t understand you.

Nora. I have waited so patiently for eight years; for, goodness knows, I knew very well that wonderful things don’t happen every day. Then this horrible misfortune came upon me; and then I felt quite certain that the wonderful thing was going to happen at last. When Krogstad’s letter was lying out there, never for a moment did I imagine that you would consent to accept this man’s conditions. I was so absolutely certain that you would say to him: Publish the thing to the whole world. And when that was done —

Helmer. Yes, what then?— when I had exposed my wife to shame and disgrace?

Nora. When that was done, I was so absolutely certain, you would come forward and take everything upon yourself, and say: I am the guilty one.

Helmer. Nora —!

Nora. You mean that I would never have accepted such a sacrifice on your part? No, of course not. But what would my assurances have been worth against yours? That was the wonderful thing which I hoped for and feared; and it was to prevent that, that I wanted to kill myself.

Helmer. I would gladly work night and day for you, Nora — bear sorrow and want for your sake. But no man would sacrifice his honour for the one he loves.

Nora. It is a thing hundreds of thousands of women have done.

Helmer. Oh, you think and talk like a heedless child.

Nora. Maybe. But you neither think nor talk like the man I could bind myself to. As soon as your fear was over — and it was not fear for what threatened me, but for what might happen to
you — when the whole thing was past, as far as you were concerned it was exactly as if nothing at all had happened. Exactly as before, I was your little skylark, your doll, which you would in future treat with doubly gentle care, because it was so brittle and fragile. (Getting up.) Torvald — it was then it dawned upon me that for eight years I had been living here with a strange man, and had borne him three children —. Oh! I can’t bear to think of it! I could tear myself into little bits!

Helmer (sadly). I see, I see. An abyss has opened between us — there is no denying it. But, Nora, would it not be possible to fill it up?

Nora. As I am now, I am no wife for you.

Helmer. I have it in me to become a different man.

Nora. Perhaps — if your doll is taken away from you.

Helmer. But to part!— to part from you! No, no, Nora, I can’t understand that idea.

Nora (going out to the right). That makes it all the more certain that it must be done. (She comes back with her cloak and hat and a small bag which she puts on a chair by the table.)

Helmer. Nora, Nora, not now! Wait till tomorrow.

Nora (putting on her cloak). I cannot spend the night in a strange man’s room.

Helmer. But can’t we live here like brother and sister —?

Nora (putting on her hat). You know very well that would not last long. (Puts the shawl round her.) Good-bye, Torvald. I won’t see the little ones. I know they are in better hands than mine. As I am now, I can be of no use to them.

Helmer. But some day, Nora — some day?

Nora. How can I tell? I have no idea what is going to become of me.

Helmer. But you are my wife, whatever becomes of you.

Nora. Listen, Torvald. I have heard that when a wife deserts her husband’s house, as I am doing now, he is legally freed from all obligations towards her. In any case I set you free from all your obligations. You are not to feel yourself bound in the slightest way, any more than I shall. There must be perfect freedom on both sides. See, here is your ring back. Give me mine.

Helmer. That too?

Nora. That too.
Helmer. Here it is.

Nora. That’s right. Now it is all over. I have put the keys here. The maids know all about everything in the house — better than I do. Tomorrow, after I have left her, Christine will come here and pack up my own things that I brought with me from home. I will have them sent after me.

Helmer. All over! All over!— Nora, shall you never think of me again?

Nora. I know I shall often think of you and the children and this house.

Helmer. May I write to you, Nora?

Nora. No — never. You must not do that.

Helmer. But at least let me send you —

Nora. Nothing — nothing —

Helmer. Let me help you if you are in want.

Nora. No. I can receive nothing from a stranger.

Helmer. Nora — can I never be anything more than a stranger to you?

Nora (taking her bag). Ah, Torvald, the most wonderful thing of all would have to happen.

Helmer. Tell me what that would be!

Nora. Both you and I would have to be so changed that —. Oh, Torvald, I don’t believe any longer in wonderful things happening.

Helmer. But I will believe in it. Tell me? So changed that —?

Nora. That our life together would be a real wedlock. Good-bye. (She goes out through the hall.)

Helmer (sinks down on a chair at the door and buries his face in his hands). Nora! Nora! (Looks round, and rises.) Empty. She is gone. (A hope flashes across his mind.) The most wonderful thing of all —?

(The sound of a door shutting is heard from below.)
1. Ethical Criticism’s Fall and Postmodernism’s Rise

For roughly 2500 years, ethical references constituted the starting point (and often the ending point) for most literary commentary. From Plato’s attack on tragedy up through the Victorians’ scandalized indignation over the work of Oscar Wilde and the Pre-Raphaelite poets, ethical criticism was the default position for most critics of literary art. However, like many long-lived positions not kept intellectually honest by ongoing criticism, ethical criticism over the centuries got fat, lazy, repetitive, shallow, doctrinaire, self-indulgent, platitudinous, and sometimes mean spirited. By the end of the 19th century, ethical criticism’s fatuity had brought it to the lip of the very cliff over which it was about to be pushed by a great many intellectual and societal forces that it never saw coming. What began as a fairly local – that is, British – late 19th-century backlash against ethical criticism swelled throughout the 20th century into a tsunami of new ideas from all across Europe and America that swept ethical criticism away. At the academic and professional levels ethical criticism was killed, crushed, annihilated. I need to concede early on, however, that my own contribution here reflects on the critical debate about ethical criticism from a clearly Anglo-North-American perspective. As a consequence, some European positions go unmentioned (such as reception theory and hermeneutics). I am focusing on the history of and debate about ethical criticism that occurred mainly in England and America ranging from the late 19th-century to the present.

Persistently throughout the entire 20th century, the higher the prestige of other modes of criticism ascended – first, New Criticism, and, second, postmodernism – the lower the prestige of ethical criticism descended. Since, however, for today’s disciplinarians even the history of this descent is hardly available, it may be useful here to string together a sketchy set of references to some of the most important 20th-century theories in criticism and philosophy that, in Cockney locution, ›did for‹ ethical criticism. The complete rout of such a centuries long mode as ethical criticism becomes intelligible only when one pulls all of these later views together and takes a moment to contemplate the credibility they claimed throughout most of the 20th century. These 20th-century theories did more than merely discredit ethical criticism of the arts; they tended to discredit ethics as a general human enterprise. I refer to such movements and theories as modernism, logical positivism, the writings of Karl Marx, the cultural aftermath of World Wars One and Two, the 20th-century elevation of scientific knowledge over humanistic inquiry, New Criticism, post-colonial studies, Freudianism, deconstruction, the work of Michel Foucault, anthropological relativism, changing views of human nature, and, finally, changing notions of truth.

Under the force and weight of all of these influences, ethical criticism bent and broke, and remained stuck for most of the 20th century in a literary criticism version of John Bunyan’s
Slough of Despond. A few critics made sidebar attempts to do something now and then that might have been called ethical criticism – some of the work of F. R. Leavis, Irving Babbitt, Ivor Winters, Lionel Trilling, and Kenneth Burke comes to mind – but either this work proved completely ineffectual at refocusing the attention of academic and intellectual critics (Leavis, Babbitt, and Winters) or the critics who took such lines of argument became well-known for other lines of argument, not their ethical criticism (Trilling and Burke).

It is curious, however – and, more than curious, it tells a compelling story about the inescapability of ethical concerns – to note that no matter how forcibly 20th-century critics tried to manage the house of criticism such that ethical criticism was kept locked in some Closet of Disrepute, the human concerns from which ethical criticism springs kept pushing it back into the middle of the room. During the nearly forty years of postmodern hegemony in criticism, it was considered almost an intellectual felony punishable by ridicule-undo-professional-death to introduce ethics in literary theory, yet politics played a vastly important role in theory during this entire period. The fact that political theory and the agendas of political policy are always nested inside ethical assumptions was an inconvenient fact that simply never got mentioned. As I put it in a previous publication,

Both within the academy and within society as a whole, someone is always claiming that a given novel, movie, or TV program is either uplifting or degrading, inspiring or demeaning, should be read and seen by everyone or shouldn’t disgrace either video airwaves or the shelves of the public library. Every time a feminist exposes Hemingway’s complicity with the patriarchy, or every time an African-American critic recommends the retrieval of slave narratives because such narratives shame our past and help us shape the future, and every time a Judith Fetterley, a Terry Eagleton, or a Michel Foucault decries the dehumanizing effects of master narratives on subject-readers, such critics are deeply engaged in important versions of ethical criticism that are not at all diminished in robustness for being disguised as any kind of discourse but ethical criticism.

(Gregory 1998, 195)

Allow me to offer one typical example of an important and well-known work of 20th-century criticism that, right in the middle of a critical discourse that ostensibly opposes ethical criticism, nevertheless deploys ethical commentary as an apparently unavoidable dimension of literary analysis. If this sounds self-contradictory, it is. I offer this one example here – and refer to other examples in a footnote – all of which stand in for a much larger range of examples that could be offered.

In one of the iconic, foundational texts of New Criticism, Cleanth Brooks’s ›Irony as a Principle of Structure‹ (1949), Brooks performs a typical, New Criticism ›close reading‹ of a poem, Randall Jarrell’s ›Eighth Air Force‹. After repeating intellectual gestures that we all recognize as the standard stuff of New Criticism (»There are no superfluous parts, no dead or empty details«, »The Pontius Pilate metaphor, as the poet uses it, becomes a device for tremendous concentration.« ibid., 1047), Brooks insists explicitly that the poem has nothing to do with ethics because it exists solely on an aesthetic plane – »We do not ask a poet to bring his poem into line with our personal beliefs – still less to flatter our personal beliefs« (1048) –
yet at the end of his essay he introduces considerations that are unequivocally ethical, almost, one is tempted to say, against his will, if not against his better judgment.

Jarrell manages to bring us by an act of imagination, to the most penetrating insight. Participating in that insight, we doubtless become better citizens. (One of the uses of poetry, I should agree, is to make us better citizens.) […] Finding its proper symbol, defined and refined by the participating metaphors, the theme becomes a part of the reality in which we live – an insight, rooted in and growing out of concrete experience, many-sided, three-dimensional.

(ibid., emphasis added)

It is impossible to read this conclusion to Brooks’s essay without being confused, or without thinking that Brooks himself is confused. Clearly, Brooks says, poetry has nothing to do with ethics, but, just as clearly, Brooks says, poetry has ways of engaging readers that »make us better citizens«. Evasively, Brooks does not say what he means by »better citizen«, but this notion makes sense only if it is based on (covert) ethical assumptions.

Regardless of whether one is reading Brooks’s fellow New Critics such as Empson, Warren, and Ransom; or whether one is reading Sklovsky, Bakhtin, Todorov, Frye, Foucault, Fish, Derrida, or other prominent critics of the period, Brooks’s confusion and inconsistency is typical of many literary critics of the 20th century. Ethical considerations get dragged in sideways, often at the end of an essay or book, and usually uttered in a parenthetical, passing, or oh-by-the-way tone. The point needing emphasis here, however, is that no matter how evasive or confused they are, ethical considerations almost always do get dragged in one way or another. Surely it is neither whimsical nor intellectually willful to insist that something both intellectually and culturally significant is occurring when one 20th-century critic after another who explicitly disesteems ethical considerations at one level cannot seem to help referring to such considerations at another level. (See footnote 18 for further examples.)

In this first decade of the 21st century, intellectual room for a renewed ethical criticism is expanding as the credibility of postmodernism is shrinking. To understand the see-saw relations of this dynamic, it will be helpful to discuss briefly three main reasons (both intellectual and cultural) that show why the credibility of postmodernism has shrunk so drastically. What is important about these reasons is how they help explain a new robustness in ethical criticism. The first two of these reasons occurred almost simultaneously near the end of the 20th century; the third reason occurred fourteen years later in the second year of the 21st century.

First, ethics came roaring back into criticism like an old-fashioned locomotive under a full head of steam at the end of 1987 with the explosive revelation of Paul de Man’s collaborationist writings for the Nazis in occupied Belgium during World War Two. The postmodernists’ claim that ethics has no place in literary criticism, a claim that de Man’s own writings had not only strongly supported but, indeed, had made the most radical claims for, were suddenly trumped by the profound ethical shock that ran through the academy as de Man’s duplicity came out in a series of articles first advanced by The New York Times in December, 1987 (cf. Anon. 1987). During all the years that de Man had been granted the status
of unimpeachable integrity by his American and European peers – with a fervency that was at times weirdly reverential – de Man had never made one single reference to these collaborationist writings, sitting on them in absolute silence, and, indeed, telling lies that misdirected anyone’s potential interest in them. (»de Man, when he adverted to his war years at all, told people that he’d gone to England and worked as a translator, or that he’d studied in Paris, or that he’d joined the underground in France – three palpable falsehoods.« Lehman 1991, 160) The effect on the field of criticism was like an earthquake, and

the academic equivalent of a guerilla war broke out in the pages of the Times Literary Supplement and the Chronicle of Higher Education, the New Republic and the New Criterion, the Village Voice and the London Review of Books. [...] One felt that one might just possibly be witnessing a crucial turning point in the history of an idea.

(Lehman 161, emphasis added)

As tempting as it is to rehearse this entire story, the point of the story for my argument in this essay is that the fall of Paul de Man was a crucial turning point in the history of an idea, or, more accurately, a whole set of ideas that lay at the center of post-structuralism in particular and postmodernism in general. Paul de Man’s fall created compelling grounds for the reintroduction into literary discourse of the very kinds of ethical considerations that, in a deeply ironic turnabout, de Man’s own theories had been designed to forestall.

Second, and nearly simultaneously with de Man’s downfall, a remarkable cluster of new publications beginning in the late 1980s and continuing into the present have provided a new set of arguments for not just the relevance of but the importance of ethical criticism. Some of these publications are, predictably, works in literary criticism, but others are works in philosophy, while some are works in science. Taken all together, with special credit for an unprecedented high level of argument going to Wayne Booth and Martha Nussbaum, these publications create a strong case against postmodernist assumptions that human beings are entirely creatures of ›social construction‹, and an equally strong case for the intrinsic importance of ethics to human beings. All of these works have done much to rehabilitate the dignity and value of thinking about ethics in relation to literature in particular, to narratives in general, and to the arts of all kinds, especially the representational arts. One of the earliest defectors from deconstruction was Frank Lentricchia, in whose Criticism and Social Change (1983) he paved the way for the reintroduction of ethical analysis into literary criticism with his assertion that »politically, deconstruction translates into the passive kind of conservatism called quietism; it thereby plays into the hands of established power. Deconstruction is conservatism by default – in Paul de Man it teaches the many ways to say that there is nothing to be done.« (ibid., 51) The primary sources from which intellectual capital was invested in a ›new‹ ethical criticism of literature came, however, from Wayne Booth and Martha Nussbaum. In 1986 Nussbaum published The Fragility of Goodness: Luck and Ethics in Greek Tragedy and Philosophy, followed in 1988 by Wayne Booth’s magisterial The Company We Keep: An Ethics of Fiction, followed two years later (1990) by another important Nussbaum book, Love’s Knowledge: Essays on Philosophy and Literature. Two years later, in 1992, Frederick Crews published The Critics Bear It Away, which received much attention as a scorching
attack on postmodernist inconsistencies and weaknesses. At the same time these intense books focused on literature were appearing, philosophers such as Mark Johnson and Richard Eldridge were publishing works arguing that notions hitherto thought by many people to be exclusive to literary criticism, such as metaphor and other figures of speech, have instead a biological basis, and that, instead of human beings being creatures of social construction all the way down, human beings have a nature in which, not very far down at all, lies a vast network of inclinations, dispositions, neural programming, and perceptual protocols that come installed in every human being’s brain as a part of our evolutionary heritage. In 1987 Mark Johnson published *The Body In the Mind: The Bodily Basis of Meaning, Imagination, and Reason*, while two years later Richard Eldridge published *On Moral Personhood: Philosophy, Literature, Criticism, and Self-Understanding*. In 1991 Mary Midgley published *Can’t We Make Moral Judgments?*, and in 1992 Robert Louden published *Morality and Moral Theory: A Reappraisal and Reaffirmation*, both of which argue that ethics comes neither from transcendental sources nor entirely from culture, but from intrinsic human needs that get mediated and tweaked by culture but that are not created by culture. The next year, in 1993, two books appeared that argue strongly against the postmodern view of an infinitely malleable human nature entirely shaped by cultural forms of pressure and embodiment: James Q. Wilson’s *The Moral Sense* and Mark Johnson’s *Moral Imagination: Implications of Cognitive Science for Ethics*. In 1996 Steven Mithen published his ground breaking *The Prehistory of the Mind*, giving readers a sense of the vastness of time in which evolutionary pressures shaped the human brain, and, thus, also shaped many features of human cognition, emotion, perception, and interpersonal protocols, such as ethics. Also in 1996, Frans de Waal, a research scientist at the Yerkes Regional Primate Research Center at Emory University, published *Good Natured: The Origins of Right and Wrong in Humans and Other Animals*, arguing that some features of ethics are shared with other species of animals and that, while ethics is centrally important to human beings, it is not unique to human beings, a view that reinforces the notion that ethics is an intrinsic human orientation, not a product of culture entirely, and certainly not just a product of any particular set of cultural biases. Two years later, in 1998, E. O. Wilson published *Consilience: The Unity of Knowledge*, in which he asserts that »the arts are not solely shaped by errant genius out of historical circumstances and idiosyncratic personal experience. The roots of their inspiration date back in deep history to the genetic origins of the human brain, and are permanent.« (ibid., 218). Lewis Wolpert’s 1996 book, *Six Impossible Things Before Breakfast: The Evolutionary Origins of Belief*, takes a line of argument similar to Wilson’s. In 1999 Geoffrey Galt Harpham published a searching inquiry into ethics, ethical criticism, and postmodernism, *Shadows of Ethics: Criticism and the Just Society*, a work that has received too little attention. In 2005 Jonathan Gottschall and David Sloan Wilson published an anthology of essays on the new approaches in criticism drawn from research done in the fields of cognitive science and evolutionary psychology, *The Literary Animal: Evolution and the Nature of Narrative* (with forewords by E. O. Wilson and Frederick Crews), but perhaps the two most well-known and influential books arguing for the value of applying the evolutionary perspective to the arts and ethics are Stephen Pinker’s *The Language Instinct* (1994) and *The Blank Slate: The Modern Denial of Human Nature* (2002). My own book on ethical criticism, *Shaped By Stories: The Ethical Power of Narratives*, appeared in 2009.
I have not seen anywhere else the third point to which I now turn, but for nearly a decade it has seemed clear to me that an additional major blow to the cachet and swagger that postmodernism enjoyed for almost forty years was the attack on the Twin Towers in New York City on September 11, 2001. After 9/11, the typical postmodern ethos of mooning the establishment and indulging in a rhetoric of sophomoric naughtiness, subversion, and transgression ran distastefully counter to the emotional mood of the national moment (a moment that is still ongoing, at least in America). To a nation in the throes of shock and grief, a discourse of subversion and paradox seemed profoundly deficient in gravitas. It was not a discourse that offered comfort or made sense out of tragedy, loss, grief, bewilderment, and fear. To many people, 9/11 made postmodernism seem cheap, cynical, and shallow. There was in fact a mood of national urgency about the need for a frankly ethical discourse, an urgency that helps explains why George W. Bush’s simplistic attempt to meet that need by giving the nation an ethical discourse revolving around his accusation about an »axis of evil« collection of terrorist states (State of the Union speech, January 29, 2002) was met with general acceptance instead of being widely ridiculed for the feeble notion that it was. The nation’s social and political context then (and now) was not a context in which postmodernism could continue to thrive.

2. Ethical Criticism’s Second Chance – What’s At Stake?

So – ethical criticism is back, after a fashion if not exactly in fashion. At least it seems no longer despised. Does this matter? And if ethical criticism is going to get a second chance to make a lasting and valuable contribution to critical discourse in the academic and intellectual spheres, how is it going to avoid making the same mistakes that plagued it in the past: fatuity, doctrinaire shrillness, empty moralizing for the sake of moralizing, and fruitless debates with critical enemies over the imputed ethical purity or ethical rot of one preferred or reviled work over another?

What’s at stake in ethical criticism anyway? Ethical critics, regardless of the very long time they had to work out a decent theory, have in fact never clearly done so. Typical of the history of ethical criticism are infuriatingly evasive claims such as Matthew Arnold’s statement near the end of ›Preface to Poems, 1853‹ that, »I know not how it is, but their commerce with the ancients appears to me to produce, in those who constantly practice it, a steadying and composing effect upon their judgment, not of literary works only, but of men and events in general.« (1968, 493) This claim is supported by no arguments or evidence and is left hanging, intellectually, by that frustrating clause, »I know not how it is.« This is the way ethical criticism was typically done until the late 20th-century work of Wayne Booth and Martha Nussbaum. As ethical critics now contemplate the possibility of reclaiming a hearing for their point of view, they must do better at developing real arguments rather than run on brainlessly and tediously about which works teach readers the »right« lessons about ethics, »right« usually referring to whatever ethical scheme the critic prefers.

What’s at stake in ethical criticism is the centrality of both ethics and literary art to human beings’ lives as morally deliberative, socially embedded, imaginatively fertile, and persistently
emotional creatures who are capable, even if frequently unwilling and clumsy about doing so, of submitting their moral deliberations, their social relations, their imaginative constructions, and their emotional impulses to rational inspection, intellectual analysis, and ethical evaluation.

Ethics refers to all the ways that people perform the essentially important social and moral task of evaluating human beings’ conduct as right or wrong, their own as well as others’. Literary art refers to those structures of language designed for the stimulation of aesthetic, imaginative, emotional, and ethical responses rather than for instrumental or utilitarian purposes. Artistic structures of language include the entire range of literary art: narratives, poems, chants, songs, movie scripts, TV scripts, and so on. The question for ethical criticism is whether there exists any space for enlightening and fruitful arguments about the dynamics between ethics and literary experience. There are more than 2000 years’ worth of ›yes‹ answers to this question, but, frankly, these yes answers – despite the fact that they are often inspiring, erudite, and moving testimonials to critics’ deep engagement with various texts – are seldom analytical in mode and seldom convincing as arguments. There have been about 130 years’ worth of ›no‹ answers to this question, but, frankly, these answers are also unconvincing, not to mention inconsistent enough to give one intellectual whiplash.

Ethical criticism needs a new start. In the remainder of this essay I will be working toward a new ›yes‹ answer – yes, there is both space and need for fruitful and enlightening arguments about the dynamics between ethics and literary art – but this new ›yes‹ argument will entail rejection of most of what both traditional ethical critics and their detractors have had to say.

As an abstract concept or as an academic or intellectual topic of discussion, people with certain agendas may be able to talk themselves around ethics – this is what postmodern theorists who viewed ethics as a tool of oppression attempted to do – but they never manage to live their way around ethics, and most of the time (to their ethical credit if not to their intellectual consistency) they do not even attempt to do so. For postmodernists as for all the rest of us, honesty counts – not just peripherally but centrally – in all arenas of real life (even if it does not count, curiously, in postmodern theory). Ethics counts because ethics is an evolved adaptation that served the survival interests of the individuals among our ancient ancestors who figured out – behaviorally if not consciously – that a person’s odds of survival were greater if everyone in the tribe observed certain injunctions about right and wrong, such as fairness in the distribution of resources, honesty in discussions about the adjudication of internal group conflicts, and compassion toward tribal members suffering from injury, illness, or loss.

In other words, ethics counts because the rights and wrongs of everyday life count, and they don’t count just because we have not yet become sufficiently sophisticated in mind or manners to cease letting them count. They count not only because they have helped us survive, but because the rights and wrongs of everyday life have more to do with the quality of our lives than any other considerations. In everyday life at every level ethics is the central issue of human interactions because nothing is more important to us than whether other people treat us with honesty or deceit, kindness or cruelty, stinginess or generosity, compassion or
callousness, contempt or charity, fairness or unfairness, respect or disrespect, and whether they acknowledge, apologize for, or offer restitution for any violations of these ethical standards they may have committed against us. Not only are these standards always crucial to our own quality of life, but they also carry an imperative of reciprocity. It matters to us not only how others treat us, but how we treat others.

The deep claim of ethics on human beings is illustrated clearly by the tenacity with which we hold on to some fundamental ethical standards despite the frequency with which they are violated. Cheating is common, for example, and so is deceit, but we never cease being shocked, angry, hurt, or outraged when our friends, family members, our bosses, or the politicians who represent us turn out to be cheaters and deceivers. The commonness of cheating and deceit never makes us blasé about being the object of these unethical behaviors. We cut off friends who lie to us and we vote politicians out of office or send them to jail for cheating. We may talk about ethics as an outmoded structure of moralistic injunctions, but the moment a spouse cheats or a child lies or a friend steals, it turns out that ethics counts.

The unavoidability of ethics explains why New Critics and postmodernists who try to ignore ethics in their discussions of literary art nevertheless keep trundling ethics back into their discussions like dieters who find themselves sneaking desserts at night right in the middle of their most determined efforts to lose weight. Human beings are built to like sweetness and they are also built to assess their interactions with each other by the application of ethical criteria. Ethics is primal, not discretionary. Ethics lies at the center of and derives from the nature and requirements of sociability itself. This does not mean that all human beings in all cultures share the same ethical standards for all human interactions, but what is less important than variations among ethical standards is the fact that there are no cultures in which ethical standards are not central to human interactions. As I put it in Shaped By Stories,

Every culture fills in the educational gaps left by first hand experience by means of stories. As Philip Sidney said so long ago (in 1583), poetry hath ever been the first light-giver to ignorance. Stories’ ethical visions enlighten our ignorance by giving us information that goes deeper than mere description. The real problem of life for human beings is not deciding on the one right description of the world, because the truth is that we can live quite comfortably as the fervent believers of many (and sometimes vast) descriptive errors. You can live as complete and happy a life thinking that the world is flat as you can knowing that it’s round, but if you cannot read other people’s ethical dispositions – if you cannot tell whether other people are prone to help you or harm you, deceive you or tell you the truth, hate you or love you, be kind or unkind to you, be generous or stingy with you, and so on – then it won’t matter if you think your world is flat or round because it will just be a mess. The real problem in life is knowing how to judge things, and this is a problem that, over and over, narratives’ ethical visions help us think about in richer ways than if we had to rely solely on our own first hand experience.

(Gregory 2009, 36)

But everything I have just said about ethics is also true of literary experience. Human beings are built for art, including literary art, as deeply as they are built for ethics. Both are human universals. There are no cultures without ethics and art, and both are coeval with the
emergence of modern human beings. In *The Art Instinct*, Denis Dutton gives a vivid account of the immensely long period of evolutionary time during which human beings’ behaviors and dispositions were shaped by adaptive pressures and the mechanisms of natural and sexual selection. It is only against the backdrop of this immense span of time that the shaping of the human brain into something that we might call a ‘narrative brain’ makes sense. According to Dutton,

> the Pleistocene itself – the evolutionary theater in which we acquired the tastes, intellectual features, emotional dispositions, and personality traits that distinguish us from our hominid ancestors and make us what we are – was 80,000 generations long…[and only] a slight pressure over [only a few] thousands of generations can deeply engrave physical and psychological traits into the mind of any species.  

*(2009, 42)*

The Neanderthals disappeared in a mere 30 generations, in a mere 1000 years, which leads to the robust hypothesis that during the vast span of the Pleistocene’s 1.6 million years, the socially cohesive functioning and imaginatively stimulating effects of story telling and poem making became indelible features of human consciousness through the slowly evolving brain functions of the survivors, our forebears, whose survival was in part.
The Fall of House of Usher

Edgar Allan Poe

DURING the whole of a dull, dark, and soundless day in the autumn of the year, when the clouds hung oppressively low in the heavens, I had been passing alone, on horseback, through a singularly dreary tract of country; and at length found myself, as the shades of the evening drew on, within view of the melancholy House of Usher. I know not how it was - but, with the first glimpse of the building, a sense of insufferable gloom pervaded my spirit. I say insufferable; for the feeling was unrelieved by any of that half-pleasurable, because poetic, sentiment, with which the mind usually receives even the sternest natural images of the desolate or terrible. I looked upon the scene before me - upon the mere house, and the simple landscape features of the domain - upon the bleak walls - upon the vacant eye-like windows - upon a few rank sedges - and upon a few white trunks of decayed trees - with an utter depression of soul which I can compare to no earthly sensation more properly than to the after-dream of the reveller upon opium - the bitter lapse into everyday life - the hideous dropping off of the veil. There was an iciness, a sinking, a sickening of the heart - an unredeemed dreariness of thought which no goading of the imagination could torture into aught of the sublime. What was it - I paused to think - what was it that so unnerved me in the contemplation of the House of Usher? It was a mystery all insoluble; nor could I grapple with the shadowy fancies that crowded upon me as I pondered. I was forced to fall back upon the unsatisfactory conclusion, that while, beyond doubt, there are combinations of very simple natural objects which have the power of thus affecting us, still the analysis of this power lies among considerations beyond our depth. It was possible, I reflected, that a mere different arrangement of the particulars of the scene, of the details of the picture, would be sufficient to modify, or perhaps to annihilate its capacity for sorrowful impression; and, acting upon this idea, I reined my horse to the precipitous brink of a black and lurid tarn that lay in unruffled lustre by the dwelling, and gazed down - but with a shudder even more thrilling than before - upon the remodelled and inverted images of the gray sedge, and the ghastly tree-stems, and the vacant and eye-like windows.

Nevertheless, in this mansion of gloom I now proposed to myself a sojourn of some weeks. Its proprietor, Roderick Usher, had been one of my boon companions in boyhood; but many years had elapsed since our last meeting. A letter, however, had lately reached me in a distant part of the country - a letter from him - which, in its wildly importunate nature, had admitted of no
other than a personal reply. The MS. gave evidence of nervous agitation. The writer spoke of acute bodily illness - of a mental disorder which oppressed him - and of an earnest desire to see me, as his best, and indeed his only personal friend, with a view of attempting, by the cheerfulness of my society, some alleviation of his malady. It was the manner in which all this, and much more, was said - it was the apparent heart that went with his request - which allowed me no room for hesitation; and I accordingly obeyed forthwith what I still considered a very singular summons.

Although, as boys, we had been even intimate associates, yet I really knew little of my friend. His reserve had been always excessive and habitual. I was aware, however, that his very ancient family had been noted, time out of mind, for a peculiar sensibility of temperament, displaying itself, through long ages, in many works of exalted art, and manifested, of late, in repeated deeds of munificent yet unobtrusive charity, as well as in a passionate devotion to the intricacies, perhaps even more than to the orthodox and easily recognisable beauties, of musical science. I had learned, too, the very remarkable fact, that the stem of the Usher race, all time-honored as it was, had put forth, at no period, any enduring branch ; in other words, that the entire family lay in the direct line of descent, and had always, with very trifling and very temporary variation, so lain. It was this deficiency, I considered, while running over in thought the perfect keeping of the character of the premises with the accredited character of the people, and while speculating upon the possible influence which the one, in the long lapse of centuries, might have exercised upon the other - it was this deficiency, perhaps, of collateral issue, and the consequent undeviating transmission, from sire to son, of the patrimony with the name, which had, at length, so identified the two as to merge the original title of the estate in the quaint and equivocal appellation of the "House of Usher" - an appellation which seemed to include, in the minds of the peasantry who used it, both the family and the family mansion.

I have said that the sole effect of my somewhat childish experiment - that of looking down within the tarn - had been to deepen the first singular impression. There can be no doubt that the consciousness of the rapid increase of my superstition - for why should I not so term it ? - served mainly to accelerate the increase itself. Such, I have long known, is the paradoxical law of all sentiments having terror as a basis. And it might have been for this reason only, that, when I again uplifted my eyes to the house itself, from its image in the pool, there grew in my mind a strange fancy - a fancy so ridiculous, indeed, that I but mention it to show the vivid force of the sensations which oppressed me. I had so worked upon my imagination as really to believe that about the whole mansion and domain there hung an atmosphere peculiar to
themselves and their immediate vicinity - an atmosphere which had no affinity with the air of heaven, but which had reeked up from the decayed trees, and the gray wall, and the silent tarn - a pestilent and mystic vapor, dull, sluggish, faintly discernible, and leaden-hued.

Shaking off from my spirit what must have been a dream, I scanned more narrowly the real aspect of the building. Its principal feature seemed to be that of an excessive antiquity. The discoloration of ages had been great. Minute fungi overspread the whole exterior, hanging in a fine tangled web-work from the eaves. Yet all this was apart from any extraordinary dilapidation. No portion of the masonry had fallen; and there appeared to be a wild inconsistency between its still perfect adaptation of parts, and the crumbling condition of the individual stones. In this there was much that reminded me of the specious totality of old wood-work which has rotted for long years in some neglected vault, with no disturbance from the breath of the external air. Beyond this indication of extensive decay, however, the fabric gave little token of instability. Perhaps the eye of a scrutinizing observer might have discovered a barely perceptible fissure, which, extending from the roof of the building in front, made its way down the wall in a zigzag direction, until it became lost in the sullen waters of the tarn.

Noticing these things, I rode over a short causeway to the house. A servant in waiting took my horse, and I entered the Gothic archway of the hall. A valet, of stealthy step, thence conducted me, in silence, through many dark and intricate passages in my progress to the studio of his master. Much that I encountered on the way contributed, I know not how, to heighten the vague sentiments of which I have already spoken. While the objects around me - while the carvings of the ceilings, the sombre tapestries of the walls, the ebon blackness of the floors, and the phantasmagoric armorial trophies which rattled as I strode, were but matters to which, or to such as which, I had been accustomed from my infancy - while I hesitated not to acknowledge how familiar was all this - I still wondered to find how unfamiliar were the fancies which ordinary images were stirring up. On one of the staircases, I met the physician of the family. His countenance, I thought, wore a mingled expression of low cunning and perplexity. He accosted me with trepidation and passed on. The valet now threw open a door and ushered me into the presence of his master.

The room in which I found myself was very large and lofty. The windows were long, narrow, and pointed, and at so vast a distance from the black oaken floor as to be altogether inaccessible from within. Feeble gleams of encrimsoned light made their way through the
trellissed panes, and served to render sufficiently distinct the more prominent objects around; the eye, however, struggled in vain to reach the remoter angles of the chamber, or the recesses of the vaulted and fretted ceiling. Dark draperies hung upon the walls. The general furniture was profuse, comfortless, antique, and tattered. Many books and musical instruments lay scattered about, but failed to give any vitality to the scene. I felt that I breathed an atmosphere of sorrow. An air of stern, deep, and irredeemable gloom hung over and pervaded all.

Upon my entrance, Usher arose from a sofa on which he had been lying at full length, and greeted me with a vivacious warmth which had much in it, I at first thought, of an overdone cordiality - of the constrained effort of the ennuyé; man of the world. A glance, however, at his countenance, convinced me of his perfect sincerity. We sat down; and for some moments, while he spoke not, I gazed upon him with a feeling half of pity, half of awe. Surely, man had never before so terribly altered, in so brief a period, as had Roderick Usher! It was with difficulty that I could bring myself to admit the identity of the wan being before me with the companion of my early boyhood. Yet the character of his face had been at all times remarkable. A cadaverousness of complexion; an eye large, liquid, and luminous beyond comparison; lips somewhat thin and very pallid, but of a surpassingly beautiful curve; a nose of a delicate Hebrew model, but with a breadth of nostril unusual in similar formations; a finely moulded chin, speaking, in its want of prominence, of a want of moral energy; hair of a more than web-like softness and tenuity; these features, with an inordinate expansion above the regions of the temple, made up altogether a countenance not easily to be forgotten. And now in the mere exaggeration of the prevailing character of these features, and of the expression they were wont to convey, lay so much of change that I doubted to whom I spoke. The now ghastly pallor of the skin, and the now miraculous lustre of the eye, above all things startled and even awed me. The silken hair, too, had been suffered to grow all unheeded, and as, in its wild gossamer texture, it floated rather than fell about the face, I could not, even with effort, connect its Arabesque expression with any idea of simple humanity.

In the manner of my friend I was at once struck with an incoherence - an inconsistency; and I soon found this to arise from a series of feeble and futile struggles to overcome an habitual trepidancy - an excessive nervous agitation. For something of this nature I had indeed been prepared, no less by his letter, than by reminiscences of certain boyish traits, and by conclusions deduced from his peculiar physical conformation and temperament. His action was alternately vivacious and sullen. His voice varied rapidly from a tremulous indecision (when
the animal spirits seemed utterly in abeyance) to that species of energetic concision - that abrupt, weighty, unhurried, and hollow-sounding enunciation - that leaden, self-balanced and perfectly modulated guttural utterance, which may be observed in the lost drunkard, or the irreclaimable eater of opium, during the periods of his most intense excitement.

It was thus that he spoke of the object of my visit, of his earnest desire to see me, and of the solace he expected me to afford him. He entered, at some length, into what he conceived to be the nature of his malady. It was, he said, a constitutional and a family evil, and one for which he despaired to find a remedy - a mere nervous affection, he immediately added, which would undoubtedly soon pass off. It displayed itself in a host of unnatural sensations. Some of these, as he detailed them, interested and bewildered me; although, perhaps, the terms, and the general manner of the narration had their weight. He suffered much from a morbid acuteness of the senses; the most insipid food was alone endurable; he could wear only garments of certain texture; the odors of all flowers were oppressive; his eyes were tortured by even a faint light; and there were but peculiar sounds, and these from stringed instruments, which did not inspire him with horror.

To an anomalous species of terror I found him a bounden slave. "I shall perish," said he, "I must perish in this deplorable folly. Thus, thus, and not otherwise, shall I be lost. I dread the events of the future, not in themselves, but in their results. I shudder at the thought of any, even the most trivial, incident, which may operate upon this intolerable agitation of soul. I have, indeed, no abhorrence of danger, except in its absolute effect - in terror. In this unnerved - in this pitiable condition - I feel that the period will sooner or later arrive when I must abandon life and reason together, in some struggle with the grim phantasm, FEAR".

I learned, moreover, at intervals, and through broken and equivocal hints, another singular feature of his mental condition. He was enchained by certain superstitious impressions in regard to the dwelling which he tenanted, and whence, for many years, he had never ventured forth - in regard to an influence whose supposititious force was conveyed in terms too shadowy here to be re-stated - an influence which some peculiarities in the mere form and substance of his family mansion, had, by dint of long sufferance, he said, obtained over his spirit - an effect which the physique of the gray walls and turrets, and of the dim tarn into which they all looked down, had, at length, brought about upon the morale of his existence.
He admitted, however, although with hesitation, that much of the peculiar gloom which thus afflicting him could be traced to a more natural and far more palpable origin - to the severe and long-continued illness - indeed to the evidently approaching dissolution - of a tenderly beloved sister - his sole companion for long years - his last and only relative on earth. "Her decease," he said, with a bitterness which I can never forget, "would leave him (him the hopeless and the frail) the last of the ancient race of the Ushers." While he spoke, the lady Madeline (for so was she called) passed slowly through a remote portion of the apartment, and, without having noticed my presence, disappeared. I regarded her with an utter astonishment not unmingled with dread - and yet I found it impossible to account for such feelings. A sensation of stupor oppressed me, as my eyes followed her retreating steps. When a door, at length, closed upon her, my glance sought instinctively and eagerly the countenance of the brother - but he had buried his face in his hands, and I could only perceive that a far more than ordinary waness had overspread the emaciated fingers through which trickled many passionate tears.

The disease of the lady Madeline had long baffled the skill of her physicians. A settled apathy, a gradual wasting away of the person, and frequent although transient affections of a partially cataleptical character, were the unusual diagnosis. Hitherto she had steadily borne up against the pressure of her malady, and had not betaken herself finally to bed; but, on the closing in of the evening of my arrival at the house, she succumbed (as her brother told me at night with inexpressible agitation) to the prostrating power of the destroyer; and I learned that the glimpse I had obtained of her person would thus probably be the last I should obtain - that the lady, at least while living, would be seen by me no more.

For several days ensuing, her name was unmentioned by either Usher or myself: and during this period I was busied in earnest endeavors to alleviate the melancholy of my friend. We painted and read together; or I listened, as if in a dream, to the wild improvisations of his speaking guitar. And thus, as a closer and still closer intimacy admitted me more unreservedly into the recesses of his spirit, the more bitterly did I perceive the futility of all attempt at cheering a mind from which darkness, as if an inherent positive quality, poured forth upon all objects of the moral and physical universe, in one unceasing radiation of gloom.

I shall ever bear about me a memory of the many solemn hours I thus spent alone with the master of the House of Usher. Yet I should fail in any attempt to convey an idea of the exact character of the studies, or of the occupations, in which he involved me, or led me the way. An excited and highly distempered ideality threw a sulphureous lustre over all. His long
improvised dirges will ring forever in my ears. Among other things, I hold painfully in mind a certain singular perversion and amplification of the wild air of the last waltz of Von Weber. From the paintings over which his elaborate fancy brooded, and which grew, touch by touch, into vaguenesses at which I shuddered the more thrillingly, because I shuddered knowing not why; - from these paintings (vivid as their images now are before me) I would in vain endeavor to educe more than a small portion which should lie within the compass of merely written words. By the utter simplicity, by the nakedness of his designs, he arrested and overawed attention. If ever mortal painted an idea, that mortal was Roderick Usher. For me at least - in the circumstances then surrounding me - there arose out of the pure abstractions which the hypochondriac contrived to throw upon his canvass, an intensity of intolerable awe, no shadow of which felt I ever yet in the contemplation of the certainly glowing yet too concrete reveries of Fuseli.

One of the phantasmagoric conceptions of my friend, partaking not so rigidly of the spirit of abstraction, may be shadowed forth, although feebly, in words. A small picture presented the interior of an immensely long and rectangular vault or tunnel, with low walls, smooth, white, and without interruption or device. Certain accessory points of the design served well to convey the idea that this excavation lay at an exceeding depth below the surface of the earth. No outlet was observed in any portion of its vast extent, and no torch, or other artificial source of light was discernible; yet a flood of intense rays rolled throughout, and bathed the whole in a ghastly and inappropriate splendor.

I have just spoken of that morbid condition of the auditory nerve which rendered all music intolerable to the sufferer, with the exception of certain effects of stringed instruments. It was, perhaps, the narrow limits to which he thus confined himself upon the guitar, which gave birth, in great measure, to the fantastic character of his performances. But the fervid facility of his impromptus could not be so accounted for. They must have been, and were, in the notes, as well as in the words of his wild fantasias (for he not unfrequently accompanied himself with rhymed verbal improvisations), the result of that intense mental collectedness and concentration to which I have previously alluded as observable only in particular moments of the highest artificial excitement. The words of one of these rhapsodies I have easily remembered. I was, perhaps, the more forcibly impressed with it, as he gave it, because, in the under or mystic current of its meaning, I fancied that I perceived, and for the first time, a full
consciousness on the part of Usher, of the tottering of his lofty reason upon her throne. The verses, which were entitled "The Haunted Palace," ran very nearly, if not accurately, thus:

I
1. In the greenest of our valleys,
2. By good angels tenanted,
3. Once a fair and stately palace-
4. Radiant palace - reared its head.
5. In the monarch Thought's dominion-
6. It stood there!
7. Never seraph spread a pinion
8. Over fabric half so fair.

II
9. Banners yellow, glorious, golden,
10. On its roof did float and flow;
11. (This - all this - was in the olden
12. Time long ago)
13. And every gentle air that dallied,
14. In that sweet day,
15. Along the ramparts plumed and pallid,

III
17. Wanderers in that happy valley
18. Through two luminous windows saw
19. Spirits moving musically
20. To a lute's well-tunéd law,
21. Round about a throne, where sitting
22. (Porphyrogene!)
23. In state his glory well befitting,
24. The ruler of the realm was seen.
IV
25. And all with pearl and ruby glowing 
26. Was the fair palace door, 
27. Through which came flowing, flowing, flowing, 
28. And sparkling evermore, 
29. A troop of Echoes whose sweet duty 
30. Was but to sing, 
31. In voices of surpassing beauty, 
32. The wit and wisdom of their king. 

V
33. But evil things, in robes of sorrow, 
34. Assailed the monarch's high estate; 
35. (Ah, let us mourn, for never morrow 
36. Shall dawn upon him, desolate !) 
37. And, round about his home, the glory 
38. That blushed and bloomed 
39. Is but a dim-remembered story 
40. Of the old time entombed. 

VI
41. And travellers now within that valley, 
42. Through the red-litten windows, see 
43. Vast forms that move fantasticaly 
44. To a discordant melody; 
45. While, like a rapid ghastly river, 
46. Through the pale door, 
47. A hideous throng rush out forever, 
48. And laugh - but smile no more. 

I well remember that suggestions arising from this ballad, led us into a train of thought wherein there became manifest an opinion of Usher's which I mention not so much on account of its novelty, (for other men have thought thus,) as on account of the pertinacity with which he maintained it. This opinion, in its general form, was that of the sentience of all vegetable things. But, in his disordered fancy, the idea had assumed a more daring character, and
trespassed, under certain conditions, upon the kingdom of inorganization. I lack words to express the full extent, or the earnest abandon of his persuasion. The belief, however, was connected (as I have previously hinted) with the gray stones of the home of his forefathers. The conditions of the sentience had been here, he imagined, fulfilled in the method of collocation of these stones - in the order of their arrangement, as well as in that of the many fungi which overspread them, and of the decayed trees which stood around - above all, in the long undisturbed endurance of this arrangement, and in its reduplication in the still waters of the tarn. Its evidence - the evidence of the sentience - was to be seen, he said, (and I here started as he spoke,) in the gradual yet certain condensation of an atmosphere of their own about the waters and the walls. The result was discoverable, he added, in that silent, yet importunate and terrible influence which for centuries had moulded the destinies of his family, and which made him what I now saw him - what he was. Such opinions need no comment, and I will make none.

Our books - the books which, for years, had formed no small portion of the mental existence of the invalid - were, as might be supposed, in strict keeping with this character of phantasm. We pored together over such works as the Ververt et Chartreuse of Gresset; the Belphegor of Machiavelli; the Heaven and Hell of Swedenborg; the Subterranean Voyage of Nicholas Klimm by Holberg; the Chiromancy of Robert Flud, of Jean D'Indaginé, and of De la Chambre; the Journey into the Blue Distance of Tieck; and the City of the Sun of Campanella. One favorite volume was a small octavo edition of the Directorium Inquisitorium, by the Dominican Eymeric de Gironne; and there were passages in Pomponius Mela, about the old African Satyrs and Oegipans, over which Usher would sit dreaming for hours. His chief delight, however, was found in the perusal of an exceedingly rare and curious book in quarto Gothic - the manual of a forgotten church - the Vigiliae Mortuorum secundum Chorum Ecclesiae Maguntinae.

I could not help thinking of the wild ritual of this work, and of its probable influence upon the hypochondriac, when, one evening, having informed me abruptly that the lady Madeline was no more, he stated his intention of preserving her corpse for a fortnight, (previously to its final interment,) in one of the numerous vaults within the main walls of the building. The worldly reason, however, assigned for this singular proceeding, was one which I did not feel at liberty to dispute. The brother had been led to his resolution (so he told me) by consideration of the unusual character of the malady of the deceased, of certain obtrusive and eager inquiries on the
part of her medical men, and of the remote and exposed situation of the burial-ground of the family. I will not deny that when I called to mind the sinister countenance of the person whom I met upon the staircase, on the day of my arrival at the house, I had no desire to oppose what I regarded as at best but a harmless, and by no means an unnatural, precaution.

At the request of Usher, I personally aided him in the arrangements for the temporary entombment. The body having been encoffined, we two alone bore it to its rest. The vault in which we placed it (and which had been so long unopened that our torches, half smothered in its oppressive atmosphere, gave us little opportunity for investigation) was small, damp, and entirely without means of admission for light; lying, at great depth, immediately beneath that portion of the building in which was my own sleeping apartment. It had been used, apparently, in remote feudal times, for the worst purposes of a donjon-keep, and, in later days, as a place of deposit for powder, or some other highly combustible substance, as a portion of its floor, and the whole interior of a long archway through which we reached it, were carefully sheathed with copper. The door, of massive iron, had been, also, similarly protected. Its immense weight caused an unusually sharp grating sound, as it moved upon its hinges.

Having deposited our mournful burden upon tressels within this region of horror, we partially turned aside the yet unscrewed lid of the coffin, and looked upon the face of the tenant. A striking similitude between the brother and sister now first arrested my attention; and Usher, divining, perhaps, my thoughts, murmured out some few words from which I learned that the deceased and himself had been twins, and that sympathies of a scarcely intelligible nature had always existed between them. Our glances, however, rested not long upon the dead— for we could not regard her unawed. The disease which had thus entombed the lady in the maturity of youth, had left, as usual in all maladies of a strictly cataleptical character, the mockery of a faint blush upon the bosom and the face, and that suspiciously lingering smile upon the lip which is so terrible in death. We replaced and screwed down the lid, and, having secured the door of iron, made our way, with toil, into the scarcely less gloomy apartments of the upper portion of the house.

And now, some days of bitter grief having elapsed, an observable change came over the features of the mental disorder of my friend. His ordinary manner had vanished. His ordinary occupations were neglected or forgotten. He roamed from chamber to chamber with hurried, unequal, and objectless step. The pallor of his countenance had assumed, if possible, a more ghastly hue— but the luminousness of his eye had utterly gone out. The once occasional
huskiness of his tone was heard no more; and a tremulous quaver, as if of extreme terror, habitually characterized his utterance. There were times, indeed, when I thought his unceasingly agitated mind was laboring with some oppressive secret, to divulge which he struggled for the necessary courage. At times, again, I was obliged to resolve all into the mere inexplicable vagaries of madness, for I beheld him gazing upon vacancy for long hours, in an attitude of the profoundest attention, as if listening to some imaginary sound. It was no wonder that his condition terrified - that it infected me. I felt creeping upon me, by slow yet certain degrees, the wild influences of his own fantastic yet impressive superstitions.

It was, especially, upon retiring to bed late in the night of the seventh or eighth day after the placing of the lady Madeline within the donjon, that I experienced the full power of such feelings. Sleep came not near my couch - while the hours waned and waned away. I struggled to reason off the nervousness which had dominion over me. I endeavored to believe that much, if not all of what I felt, was due to the bewildering influence of the gloomy furniture of the room - of the dark and tattered draperies, which, tortured into motion by the breath of a rising tempest, swayed fitfully to and fro upon the walls, and rustled uneasily about the decorations of the bed. But my efforts were fruitless. An irrepressible tremor gradually pervaded my frame; and, at length, there sat upon my very heart an incubus of utterly causeless alarm. Shaking this off with a gasp and a struggle, I uplifted myself upon the pillows, and, peering earnestly within the intense darkness of the chamber, harkened - I know not why, except that an instinctive spirit prompted me - to certain low and indefinite sounds which came, through the pauses of the storm, at long intervals, I knew not whence. Overpowered by an intense sentiment of horror, unaccountable yet unendurable, I threw on my clothes with haste (for I felt that I should sleep no more during the night), and endeavored to arouse myself from the pitiable condition into which I had fallen, by pacing rapidly to and fro through the apartment.

I had taken but few turns in this manner, when a light step on an adjoining staircase arrested my attention. I presently recognised it as that of Usher. In an instant afterward he rapped, with a gentle touch, at my door, and entered, bearing a lamp. His countenance was, as usual, cadaverously wan - but, moreover, there was a species of mad hilarity in his eyes - an evidently restrained hysteria in his whole demeanor. His air appalled me - but anything was preferable to the solitude which I had so long endured, and I even welcomed his presence as a relief.

"And you have not seen it?" he said abruptly, after having stared about him for some moments in silence - "you have not then seen it? - but, stay! you shall." Thus speaking, and having
carefully shaded his lamp, he hurried to one of the casements, and threw it freely open to the storm.

The impetuous fury of the entering gust nearly lifted us from our feet. It was, indeed, a tempestuous yet sternly beautiful night, and one wildly singular in its terror and its beauty. A whirlwind had apparently collected its force in our vicinity; for there were frequent and violent alterations in the direction of the wind; and the exceeding density of the clouds (which hung so low as to press upon the turrets of the house) did not prevent our perceiving the life-like velocity with which they flew careering from all points against each other, without passing away into the distance. I say that even their exceeding density did not prevent our perceiving this - yet we had no glimpse of the moon or stars - nor was there any flashing forth of the lightning. But the under surfaces of the huge masses of agitated vapor, as well as all terrestrial objects immediately around us, were glowing in the unnatural light of a faintly luminous and distinctly visible gaseous exhalation which hung about and enshrouded the mansion.

"You must not - you shall not behold this !" said I, shudderingly, to Usher, as I led him, with a gentle violence, from the window to a seat. "These appearances, which bewilder you, are merely electrical phenomena not uncommon - or it may be that they have their ghastly origin in the rank miasma of the tarn. Let us close this casement; - the air is chilling and dangerous to your frame. Here is one of your favorite romances. I will read, and you shall listen; - and so we will pass away this terrible night together".

The antique volume which I had taken up was the "Mad Trist" of Sir Launcelot Canning; but I had called it a favorite of Usher's more in sad jest than in earnest; for, in truth, there is little in its uncouth and unimaginative prolixity which could have had interest for the lofty and spiritual ideality of my friend. It was, however, the only book immediately at hand; and I indulged a vague hope that the excitement which now agitated the hypochondriac, might find relief (for the history of mental disorder is full of similar anomalies) even in the extremeness of the folly which I should read. Could I have judged, indeed, by the wild overstrained air of vivacity with which he harkened, or apparently harkened, to the words of the tale, I might well have congratulated myself upon the success of my design.

I had arrived at that well-known portion of the story where Ethelred, the hero of the Trist, having sought in vain for peaceable admission into the dwelling of the hermit, proceeds to
make good an entrance by force. Here, it will be remembered, the words of the narrative run thus:

"And Ethelred, who was by nature of a doughty heart, and who was now mighty withal, on account of the powerfulness of the wine which he had drunken, waited no longer to hold parley with the hermit, who, in sooth, was of an obstinate and maliceful turn, but, feeling the rain upon his shoulders, and fearing the rising of the tempest, uplifted his mace outright, and, with blows, made quickly room in the plankings of the door for his gauntleted hand; and now pulling therewith sturdily, he so cracked, and ripped, and tore all asunder, that the noise of the dry and hollow-sounding wood alarummed and reverberated throughout the forest.

At the termination of this sentence I started, and for a moment, paused; for it appeared to me (although I at once concluded that my excited fancy had deceived me) - it appeared to me that, from some very remote portion of the mansion, there came, indistinctly, to my ears, what might have been, in its exact similarity of character, the echo (but a stifled and dull one certainly) of the very cracking and ripping sound which Sir Launcelot had so particularly described. It was, beyond doubt, the coincidence alone which had arrested my attention; for, amid the rattling of the sashes of the casements, and the ordinary commingled noises of the still increasing storm, the sound, in itself, had nothing, surely, which should have interested or disturbed me. I continued the story:

"But the good champion Ethelred, now entering within the door, was sore enraged and amazed to perceive no signal of the maliceful hermit; but, in the stead thereof, a dragon of a scaly and prodigious demeanor, and of a fiery tongue, which sate in guard before a palace of gold, with a floor of silver; and upon the wall there hung a shield of shining brass with this legend enwritten-

| Who entereth herein, a conqueror hath bin; |
| Who slayeth the dragon, the shield he shall win; |

And Ethelred uplifted his mace, and struck upon the head of the dragon, which fell before him, and gave up his pesty breath, with a shriek so horrid and harsh, and withal so piercing, that Ethelred had fain to close his ears with his hands against the dreadful noise of it, the like whereof was never before heard."

Here again I paused abruptly, and now with a feeling of wild amazement - for there could be no doubt whatever that, in this instance, I did actually hear (although from what direction it
proceeded I found it impossible to say) a low and apparently distant, but harsh, protracted, and most unusual screaming or grating sound - the exact counterpart of what my fancy had already conjured up for the dragon's unnatural shriek as described by the romancer.

Oppressed, as I certainly was, upon the occurrence of this second and most extraordinary coincidence, by a thousand conflicting sensations, in which wonder and extreme terror were predominant, I still retained sufficient presence of mind to avoid exciting, by any observation, the sensitive nervousness of my companion. I was by no means certain that he had noticed the sounds in question; although, assuredly, a strange alteration had, during the last few minutes, taken place in his demeanor. From a position fronting my own, he had gradually brought round his chair, so as to sit with his face to the door of the chamber; and thus I could but partially perceive his features, although I saw that his lips trembled as if he were murmuring inaudibly. His head had dropped upon his breast - yet I knew that he was not asleep, from the wide and rigid opening of the eye as I caught a glance of it in profile. The motion of his body, too, was at variance with this idea - for he rocked from side to side with a gentle yet constant and uniform sway. Having rapidly taken notice of all this, I resumed the narrative of Sir Launcelot, which thus proceeded:

"And now, the champion, having escaped from the terrible fury of the dragon, bethinking himself of the brazen shield, and of the breaking up of the enchantment which was upon it, removed the carcass from out of the way before him, and approached valorously over the silver pavement of the castle to where the shield was upon the wall; which in sooth tarried not for his full coming, but fell down at his feet upon the silver floor, with a mighty great and terrible ringing sound".

No sooner had these syllables passed my lips, than - as if a shield of brass had indeed, at the moment, fallen heavily upon a floor of silver - I became aware of a distinct, hollow, metallic, and clangorous, yet apparently muffled reverberation. Completely unnerved, I leaped to my feet; but the measured rocking movement of Usher was undisturbed. I rushed to the chair in which he sat. His eyes were bent fixedly before him, and throughout his whole countenance there reigned a stony rigidity. But, as I placed my hand upon his shoulder, there came a strong shudder over his whole person; a sickly smile quivered about his lips; and I saw that he spoke in a low, hurried, and gibbering murmur, as if unconscious of my presence. Bending closely over him, I at length drank in the hideous import of his words.
"Not hear it? - yes, I hear it, and have heard it. Long - long - long - many minutes, many hours, many days, have I heard it - yet I dared not - oh, pity me, miserable wretch that I am! - I dared not - I dared not speak! We have put her living in the tomb! Said I not that my senses were acute? I now tell you that I heard her first feeble movements in the hollow coffin. I heard them - many, many days ago - yet I dared not - I dared not speak! And now - to-night - Ethelred - ha! ha! - the breaking of the hermit's door, and the death-cry of the dragon, and the clangor of the shield! - say, rather, the rending of her coffin, and the grating of the iron hinges of her prison, and her struggles within the coppered archway of the vault! Oh whither shall I fly? Will she not be here anon? Is she not hurrying to upbraid me for my haste? Have I not heard her footstep on the stair? Do I not distinguish that heavy and horrible beating of her heart? Madman!" - here he sprang furiously to his feet, and shrieked out his syllables, as if in the effort he were giving up his soul - "Madman! I tell you that she now stands without the door!"

As if in the superhuman energy of his utterance there had been found the potency of a spell - the huge antique pannels to which the speaker pointed, threw slowly back, upon the instant, their ponderous and ebony jaws. It was the work of the rushing gust - but then without those doors there did stand the lofty and enshrouded figure of the lady Madeline of Usher. There was blood upon her white robes, and the evidence of some bitter struggle upon every portion of her emaciated frame. For a moment she remained trembling and reeling to and fro upon the threshold - then, with a low moaning cry, fell heavily inward upon the person of her brother, and in her violent and now final death-agonies, bore him to the floor a corpse, and a victim to the terrors he had anticipated.

From that chamber, and from that mansion, I fled aghast. The storm was still abroad in all its wrath as I found myself crossing the old causeway. Suddenly there shot along the path a wild light, and I turned to see whence a gleam so unusual could have issued; for the vast house and its shadows were alone behind me. The radiance was that of the full, setting, and blood-red moon, which now shone vividly through that once barely-discernible fissure, of which I have before spoken as extending from the roof of the building, in a zigzag direction, to the base. While I gazed, this fissure rapidly widened - there came a fierce breath of the whirlwind - the entire orb of the satellite burst at once upon my sight - my brain reeled as I saw the mighty walls rushing asunder - there was a long tumultuous shouting sound like the voice of a thousand waters - and the deep and dank tarn at my feet closed sullenly and silently over the fragments of the "House of Usher".
Afterthought

William Wordsworth

1. I thought of Thee, my partner and my guide,

2. As being past away.--Vain sympathies

3. For, backward, Duddon! as I cast my eyes,

4. I see what was, and is, and will abide;

5. Still glides the Stream, and shall for ever glide;

6. The Form remains, the Function never dies;

7. While we, the brave, the mighty, and the wise,

8. We Men, who in our morn of youth defied

9. The elements, must vanish;--be it so!

10. Enough, if something from our hands have power

11. To live, and act, and serve the future hour;

12. And if, as toward the silent tomb we go,

13. Through love, through hope, and faith's transcendent dower,

14. We feel that we are greater than we know
The Rainbow

W. Wordsworth

1. My heart leaps up when I behold
2. A rainbow in the sky:
3. So was it when my life began;
4. So is it now I am a man;
5. So be it when I shall grow old,
6. Or let me die!
7. The Child is father of the Man;
8. I could wish my days to be
9. Bound each to each by natural piety
Young Goodman Brown

Nathaniel Hawthorne

Young Goodman Brown came forth at sunset into the street at Salem village; but put his head back, after crossing the threshold, to exchange a parting kiss with his young wife. And Faith, as the wife was aptly named, thrust her own pretty head into the street, letting the wind play with the pink ribbons of her cap while she called to Goodman Brown.

"Dearest heart," whispered she, softly and rather sadly, when her lips were close to his ear, "prithee put off your journey until sunrise and sleep in your own bed to-night. A lone woman is troubled with such dreams and such thoughts that she's afeard of herself sometimes. Pray tarry with me this night, dear husband, of all nights in the year".

"My love and my Faith," replied young Goodman Brown, "of all nights in the year, this one night must I tarry away from thee. My journey, as thou callest it, forth and back again, must needs be done 'twixt now and sunrise. What, my sweet, pretty wife, dost thou doubt me already, and we but three months married"?

"Then God bless youe!" said Faith, with the pink ribbons; "and may you find all well whn you come back".

"Amen!" cried Goodman Brown. "Say thy prayers, dear Faith, and go to bed at dusk, and no harm will come to thee".

So they parted; and the young man pursued his way until, being about to turn the corner by the meeting-house, he looked back and saw the head of Faith still peeping after him with a melancholy air, in spite of her pink ribbons.

"Poor little Faith!" thought he, for his heart smote him. "What a wretch am I to leave her on such an errand! She talks of dreams, too. Methought as she spoke there was trouble in her face, as if a dream had warned her what work is to be done tonight. But no, no; 't would kill her to think it. Well, she's a blessed angel on earth; and after this one night I'll cling to her skirts and follow her to heaven".

With this excellent resolve for the future, Goodman Brown felt himself justified in making more haste on his present evil purpose. He had taken a dreary road, darkened by all the
gloomiest trees of the forest, which barely stood aside to let the narrow path creep through, and closed immediately behind. It was all as lonely as could be; and there is this peculiarity in such a solitude, that the traveller knows not who may be concealed by the innumerable trunks and the thick boughs overhead; so that with lonely footsteps he may yet be passing through an unseen multitude.

"There may be a devilish Indian behind every tree," said Goodman Brown to himself; and he glanced fearfully behind him as he added, "What if the devil himself should be at my very elbow!"

His head being turned back, he passed a crook of the road, and, looking forward again, beheld the figure of a man, in grave and decent attire, seated at the foot of an old tree. He arose at Goodman Brown's approach and walked onward side by side with him.

"You are late, Goodman Brown," said he. "The clock of the Old South was striking as I came through Boston, and that is full fifteen minutes agone".

"Faith kept me back a while," replied the young man, with a tremor in his voice, caused by the sudden appearance of his companion, though not wholly unexpected.

It was now deep dusk in the forest, and deepest in that part of it where these two were journeying. As nearly as could be discerned, the second traveller was about fifty years old, apparently in the same rank of life as Goodman Brown, and bearing a considerable resemblance to him, though perhaps more in expression than features. Still they might have been taken for father and son. And yet, though the elder person was as simply clad as the younger, and as simple in manner too, he had an indescribable air of one who knew the world, and who would not have felt abashed at the governor's dinner table or in King William's court, were it possible that his affairs should call him thither. But the only thing about him that could be fixed upon as remarkable was his staff, which bore the likeness of a great black snake, so curiously wrought that it might almost be seen to twist and wriggle itself like a living serpent. This, of course, must have been an ocular deception, assisted by the uncertain light.

"Come, Goodman Brown," cried his fellow-traveller, "this is a dull pace for the beginning of a journey. Take my staff, if you are so soon weary".
"Friend," said the other, exchanging his slow pace for a full stop, "having kept covenant by meeting thee here, it is my purpose now to return whence I came. I have scruples touching the matter thou wot'st of".

"Sayest thou so?" replied he of the serpent, smiling apart. "Let us walk on, nevertheless, reasoning as we go; and if I convince thee not thou shalt turn back. We are but a little way in the forest yet".

"Too far! too far!" exclaimed the goodman, unconsciously resuming his walk. "My father never went into the woods on such an errand, nor his father before him. We have been a race of honest men and good Christians since the days of the martyrs; and shall I be the first of the name of Brown that ever took this path and kept"

"Such company, thou wouldst say," observed the elder person, interpreting his pause. "Well said, Goodman Brown! I have been as well acquainted with your family as with ever a one among the Puritans; and that's no trifle to say. I helped your grandfather, the constable, when he lashed the Quaker woman so smartly through the streets of Salem; and it was I that brought your father a pitch-pine knot, kindled at my own hearth, to set fire to an Indian village, in King Philip's war. They were my good friends, both; and many a pleasant walk have we had along this path, and returned merrily after midnight. I would fain be friends with you for their sake".

"If it be as thou sayest," replied Goodman Brown, "I marvel they never spoke of these matters; or, verily, I marvel not, seeing that the least rumor of the sort would have driven them from New England. We are a people of prayer, and good works to boot, and abide no such wickedness".

"Wickedness or not," said the traveller with the twisted staff, "I have a very general acquaintance here in New England. The deacons of many a church have drunk the communion wine with me; the selectmen of divers towns make me their chairman; and a majority of the Great and General Court are firm supporters of my interest. The governor and I, too--But these are state secrets".

"Can this be so?" cried Goodman Brown, with a stare of amazement at his undisturbed companion. "Howbeit, I have nothing to do with the governor and council; they have their own ways, and are no rule for a simple husbandman like me. But, were I to go on with thee, how
should I meet the eye of that good old man, our minister, at Salem village? Oh, his voice would make me tremble both Sabbath day and lecture day".

Thus far the elder traveller had listened with due gravity; but now burst into a fit of irrepressible mirth, shaking himself so violently that his snake-like staff actually seemed to wriggle in sympathy.

"Ha! ha! ha!" shouted he again and again; then composing himself, "Well, go on, Goodman Brown, go on; but, prithee, don't kill me with laughing".

"Well, then, to end the matter at once," said Goodman Brown, considerably nettled, "there is my wife, Faith. It would break her dear little heart; and I'd rather break my own".

"Nay, if that be the case," answered the other, "e'en go thy ways, Goodman Brown. I would not for twenty old women like the one hobbling before us that Faith should come to any harm".

As he spoke he pointed his staff at a female figure on the path, in whom Goodman Brown recognized a very pious and exemplary dame, who had taught him his catechism in youth, and was still his moral and spiritual adviser, jointly with the minister and Deacon Gookin.

"A marvel, truly, that Goody Cloyse should be so far in the wilderness at nightfall," said he. "But with your leave, friend, I shall take a cut through the woods until we have left this Christian woman behind. Being a stranger to you, she might ask whom I was consorting with and whither I was going".

"Be it so," said his fellow-traveller. "Betake you to the woods, and let me keep the path".

Accordingly the young man turned aside, but took care to watch his companion, who advanced softly along the road until he had come within a staff's length of the old dame. She, meanwhile, was making the best of her way, with singular speed for so aged a woman, and mumbling some indistinct words--a prayer, doubtless--as she went. The traveller put forth his staff and touched her withered neck with what seemed the serpent's tail.

"The devil!" screamed the pious old lady.

"Then Goody Cloyse knows her old friend?" observed the traveller, confronting her and leaning on his writhing stick.
"Ah, forsooth, and is it your worship indeed?" cried the good dame. "Yea, truly is it, and in the very image of my old gossip, Goodman Brown, the grandfather of the silly fellow that now is. But--would your worship believe it?--my broomstick hath strangely disappeared, stolen, as I suspect, by that unhanged witch, Goody Cory, and that, too, when I was all anointed with the juice of smallage, and cinquefoil, and wolf's bane"

"Mingled with fine wheat and the fat of a new-born babe," said the shape of old Goodman Brown.

"Ah, your worship knows the recipe," cried the old lady, cackling aloud. "So, as I was saying, being all ready for the meeting, and no horse to ride on, I made up my mind to foot it; for they tell me there is a nice young man to be taken into communion to-night. But now your good worship will lend me your arm, and we shall be there in a twinkling".

"That can hardly be," answered her friend. "I may not spare you my arm, Goody Cloyse; but here is my staff, if you will".

So saying, he threw it down at her feet, where, perhaps, it assumed life, being one of the rods which its owner had formerly lent to the Egyptian magi. Of this fact, however, Goodman Brown could not take cognizance. He had cast up his eyes in astonishment, and, looking down again, beheld neither Goody Cloyse nor the serpentine staff, but his fellow-traveller alone, who waited for him as calmly as if nothing had happened.

"That old woman taught me my catechism," said the young man; and there was a world of meaning in this simple comment.

They continued to walk onward, while the elder traveller exhorted his companion to make good speed and persevere in the path, discoursing so aptly that his arguments seemed rather to spring up in the bosom of his auditor than to be suggested by himself. As they went, he plucked a branch of maple to serve for a walking stick, and began to strip it of the twigs and little boughs, which were wet with evening dew. The moment his fingers touched them they became strangely withered and dried up as with a week's sunshine. Thus the pair proceeded, at a good free pace, until suddenly, in a gloomy hollow of the road, Goodman Brown sat himself down on the stump of a tree and refused to go any farther.
"Friend," said he, stubbornly, "my mind is made up. Not another step will I budge on this errand. What if a wretched old woman do choose to go to the devil when I thought she was going to heaven: is that any reason why I should quit my dear Faith and go after her"?

"You will think better of this by and by," said his acquaintance, composedly. "Sit here and rest yourself a while; and when you feel like moving again, there is my staff to help you along".

Without more words, he threw his companion the maple stick, and was as speedily out of sight as if he had vanished into the deepening gloom. The young man sat a few moments by the roadside, applauding himself greatly, and thinking with how clear a conscience he should meet the minister in his morning walk, nor shrink from the eye of good old Deacon Gookin. And what calm sleep would be his that very night, which was to have been spent so wickedly, but so purely and sweetly now, in the arms of Faith! Amidst these pleasant and praiseworthy meditations, Goodman Brown heard the tramp of horses along the road, and deemed it advisable to conceal himself within the verge of the forest, conscious of the guilty purpose that had brought him thither, though now so happily turned from it.

On came the hoof tramps and the voices of the riders, two grave old voices, conversing soberly as they drew near. These mingled sounds appeared to pass along the road, within a few yards of the young man's hiding-place; but, owing doubtless to the depth of the gloom at that particular spot, neither the travellers nor their steeds were visible. Though their figures brushed the small boughs by the wayside, it could not be seen that they intercepted, even for a moment, the faint gleam from the strip of bright sky athwart which they must have passed. Goodman Brown alternately crouched and stood on tiptoe, pulling aside the branches and thrusting forth his head as far as he durst without discerning so much as a shadow. It vexed him the more, because he could have sworn, were such a thing possible, that he recognized the voices of the minister and Deacon Gookin, jogging along quietly, as they were wont to do, when bound to some ordination or ecclesiastical council. While yet within hearing, one of the riders stopped to pluck a switch.

"Of the two, reverend sir," said the voice like the deacon's, "I had rather miss an ordination dinner than to-night's meeting. They tell me that some of our community are to be here from Falmouth and beyond, and others from Connecticut and Rhode Island, besides several of the Indian powwows, who, after their fashion, know almost as much deviltry as the best of us. Moreover, there is a goodly young woman to be taken into communion".
"Mighty well, Deacon Gookin!" replied the solemn old tones of the minister. "Spur up, or we shall be late. Nothing can be done, you know, until I get on the ground".

The hoofs clattered again; and the voices, talking so strangely in the empty air, passed on through the forest, where no church had ever been gathered or solitary Christian prayed. Whither, then, could these holy men be journeying so deep into the heathen wilderness? Young Goodman Brown caught hold of a tree for support, being ready to sink down on the ground, faint and overburdened with the heavy sickness of his heart. He looked up to the sky, doubting whether there really was a heaven above him. Yet there was the blue arch, and the stars brightening in it.

"With heaven above and Faith below, I will yet stand firm against the devil!" cried Goodman Brown.

While he still gazed upward into the deep arch of the firmament and had lifted his hands to pray, a cloud, though no wind was stirring, hurried across the zenith and hid the brightening stars. The blue sky was still visible, except directly overhead, where this black mass of cloud was sweeping swiftly northward. Aloft in the air, as if from the depths of the cloud, came a confused and doubtful sound of voices. Once the listener fancied that he could distinguish the accents of towns-people of his own, men and women, both pious and ungodly, many of whom he had met at the communion table, and had seen others rioting at the tavern. The next moment, so indistinct were the sounds, he doubted whether he had heard aught but the murmur of the old forest, whispering without a wind. Then came a stronger swell of those familiar tones, heard daily in the sunshine at Salem village, but never until now from a cloud of night. There was one voice of a young woman, uttering lamentations, yet with an uncertain sorrow, and entreating for some favor, which, perhaps, it would grieve her to obtain; and all the unseen multitude, both saints and sinners, seemed to encourage her onward.

"Faith!" shouted Goodman Brown, in a voice of agony and desperation; and the echoes of the forest mocked him, crying, "Faith! Faith!" as if bewildered wretches were seeking her all through the wilderness.

The cry of grief, rage, and terror was yet piercing the night, when the unhappy husband held his breath for a response. There was a scream, drowned immediately in a louder murmur of voices, fading into far-off laughter, as the dark cloud swept away, leaving the clear and silent
sky above Goodman Brown. But something fluttered lightly down through the air and caught on the branch of a tree. The young man seized it, and beheld a pink ribbon.

"My Faith is gone!" cried he, after one stupefied moment. "There is no good on earth; and sin is but a name. Come, devil; for to thee is this world given".

And, maddened with despair, so that he laughed loud and long, did Goodman Brown grasp his staff and set forth again, at such a rate that he seemed to fly along the forest path rather than to walk or run. The road grew wilder and drearier and more faintly traced, and vanished at length, leaving him in the heart of the dark wilderness, still rushing onward with the instinct that guides mortal man to evil. The whole forest was peopled with frightful sounds--the creaking of the trees, the howling of wild beasts, and the yell of Indians; while sometimes the wind tolled like a distant church bell, and sometimes gave a broad roar around the traveller, as if all Nature were laughing him to scorn. But he was himself the chief horror of the scene, and shrank not from its other horrors.

"Ha! ha! ha!" roared Goodman Brown when the wind laughed at him.

"Let us hear which will laugh loudest. Think not to frighten me with your deviltry. Come witch, come wizard, come Indian powwow, come devil himself, and here comes Goodman Brown. You may as well fear him as he fear you".

In truth, all through the haunted forest there could be nothing more frightful than the figure of Goodman Brown. On he flew among the black pines, brandishing his staff with frenzied gestures, now giving vent to an inspiration of horrid blasphemy, and now shouting forth such laughter as set all the echoes of the forest laughing like demons around him. The fiend in his own shape is less hideous than when he rages in the breast of man. Thus sped the demoniac on his course, until, quivering among the trees, he saw a red light before him, as when the felled trunks and branches of a clearing have been set on fire, and throw up their lurid blaze against the sky, at the hour of midnight. He paused, in a lull of the tempest that had driven him onward, and heard the swell of what seemed a hymn, rolling solemnly from a distance with the weight of many voices. He knew the tune; it was a familiar one in the choir of the village meeting-house. The verse died heavily away, and was lengthened by a chorus, not of human voices, but of all the sounds of the benighted wilderness pealing in awful harmony together. Goodman Brown cried out, and his cry was lost to his own ear by its unison with the cry of the desert.
In the interval of silence he stole forward until the light glared full upon his eyes. At one extremity of an open space, hemmed in by the dark wall of the forest, arose a rock, bearing some rude, natural resemblance either to an alter or a pulpit, and surrounded by four blazing pines, their tops aflame, their stems untouched, like candles at an evening meeting. The mass of foliage that had overgrown the summit of the rock was all on fire, blazing high into the night and fitfully illuminating the whole field. Each pendent twig and leafy festoon was in a blaze. As the red light arose and fell, a numerous congregation alternately shone forth, then disappeared in shadow, and again grew, as it were, out of the darkness, peopling the heart of the solitary woods at once.


In truth they were such. Among them, quivering to and fro between gloom and splendor, appeared faces that would be seen next day at the council board of the province, and others which, Sabbath after Sabbath, looked devoutly heavenward, and benignantly over the crowded pews, from the holiest pulpits in the land. Some affirm that the lady of the governor was there. At least there were high dames well known to her, and wives of honored husbands, and widows, a great multitude, and ancient maidens, all of excellent repute, and fair young girls, who trembled lest their mothers should espy them. Either the sudden gleams of light flashing over the obscure field bedazzled Goodman Brown, or he recognized a score of the church members of Salem village famous for their especial sanctity. Good old Deacon Gookin had arrived, and waited at the skirts of that venerable saint, his revered pastor. But, irreverently consorting with these grave, reputable, and pious people, these elders of the church, these chaste dames and dewy virgins, there were men of dissolute lives and women of spotted fame, wretches given over to all mean and filthy vice, and suspected even of horrid crimes. It was strange to see that the good shrank not from the wicked, nor were the sinners abashed by the saints. Scattered also among their pale-faced enemies were the Indian priests, or powwows, who had often scared their native forest with more hideous incantations than any known to English witchcraft.

"But where is Faith?" thought Goodman Brown; and, as hope came into his heart, he trembled.

Another verse of the hymn arose, a slow and mournful strain, such as the pious love, but joined to words which expressed all that our nature can conceive of sin, and darkly hinted at far more. Unfathomable to mere mortals is the lore of fiends. Verse after verse was sung; and still the
chorus of the desert swelled between like the deepest tone of a mighty organ; and with the final peal of that dreadful anthem there came a sound, as if the roaring wind, the rushing streams, the howling beasts, and every other voice of the unconcerted wilderness were mingling and according with the voice of guilty man in homage to the prince of all. The four blazing pines threw up a loftier flame, and obscurely discovered shapes and visages of horror on the smoke wreaths above the impious assembly. At the same moment the fire on the rock shot redly forth and formed a glowing arch above its base, where now appeared a figure. With reverence be it spoken, the figure bore no slight similitude, both in garb and manner, to some grave divine of the New England churches.

"Bring forth the converts!" cried a voice that echoed through the field and rolled into the forest.

At the word, Goodman Brown stepped forth from the shadow of the trees and approached the congregation, with whom he felt a loathful brotherhood by the sympathy of all that was wicked in his heart. He could have well-nigh sworn that the shape of his own dead father beckoned him to advance, looking downward from a smoke wreath, while a woman, with dim features of despair, threw out her hand to warn him back. Was it his mother? But he had no power to retreat one step, nor to resist, even in thought, when the minister and good old Deacon Gookin seized his arms and led him to the blazing rock. Thither came also the slender form of a veiled female, led between Goody Cloyse, that pious teacher of the catechism, and Martha Carrier, who had received the devil's promise to be queen of hell. A rampant hag was she. And there stood the proselytes beneath the canopy of fire.

"Welcome, my children," said the dark figure, "to the communion of your race. Ye have found thus young your nature and your destiny. My children, look behind you!"

They turned; and flashing forth, as it were, in a sheet of flame, the fiend worshippers were seen; the smile of welcome gleamed darkly on every visage.

"There," resumed the sable form, "are all whom ye have reverenced from youth. Ye deemed them holier than yourselves, and shrank from your own sin, contrasting it with their lives of righteousness and prayerful aspirations heavenward. Yet here are they all in my worshipping assembly. This night it shall be granted you to know their secret deeds: how hoary-bearded elders of the church have whispered wanton words to the young maids of their households; how many a woman, eager for widows' weeds, has given her husband a drink at bedtime and let him sleep his last sleep in her bosom; how beardless youths have made haste to inherit their
fathers' wealth; and how fair damsels--blush not, sweet ones--have dug little graves in the garden, and bidden me, the sole guest to an infant's funeral. By the sympathy of your human hearts for sin ye shall scent out all the places--whether in church, bedchamber, street, field, or forest--where crime has been committed, and shall exult to behold the whole earth one stain of guilt, one mighty blood spot. Far more than this. It shall be yours to penetrate, in every bosom, the deep mystery of sin, the fountain of all wicked arts, and which inexhaustibly supplies more evil impulses than human power--than my power at its utmost--can make manifest in deeds. And now, my children, look upon each other".

They did so; and, by the blaze of the hell-kindled torches, the wretched man beheld his Faith, and the wife her husband, trembling before that unhallowed altar.

"Lo, there ye stand, my children," said the figure, in a deep and solemn tone, almost sad with its despairing awfulness, as if his once angelic nature could yet mourn for our miserable race. "Depending upon one another's hearts, ye had still hoped that virtue were not all a dream. Now are ye undeceived. Evil is the nature of mankind. Evil must be your only happiness. Welcome again, my children, to the communion of your race".

"Welcome," repeated the fiend worshippers, in one cry of despair and triumph.

And there they stood, the only pair, as it seemed, who were yet hesitating on the verge of wickedness in this dark world. A basin was hollowed, naturally, in the rock. Did it contain water, reddened by the lurid light? or was it blood? or, perchance, a liquid flame? Herein did the shape of evil dip his hand and prepare to lay the mark of baptism upon their foreheads, that they might be partakers of the mystery of sin, more conscious of the secret guilt of others, both in deed and thought, than they could now be of their own. The husband cast one look at his pale wife, and Faith at him. What polluted wretches would the next glance show them to each other, shuddering alike at what they disclosed and what they saw!

"Faith! Faith!" cried the husband, "look up to heaven, and resist the wicked one".

Whether Faith obeyed he knew not. Hardly had he spoken when he found himself amid calm night and solitude, listening to a roar of the wind which died heavily away through the forest. He staggered against the rock, and felt it chill and damp; while a hanging twig, that had been all on fire, besprinkled his cheek with the coldest dew.
The next morning young Goodman Brown came slowly into the street of Salem village, staring around him like a bewildered man. The good old minister was taking a walk along the graveyard to get an appetite for breakfast and meditate his sermon, and bestowed a blessing, as he passed, on Goodman Brown. He shrank from the venerable saint as if to avoid an anathema. Old Deacon Gookin was at domestic worship, and the holy words of his prayer were heard through the open window. "What God doth the wizard pray to?" quoth Goodman Brown. Goody Cloyse, that excellent old Christian, stood in the early sunshine at her own lattice, catechizing a little girl who had brought her a pint of morning's milk. Goodman Brown snatched away the child as from the grasp of the fiend himself. Turning the corner by the meeting-house, he spied the head of Faith, with the pink ribbons, gazing anxiously forth, and bursting into such joy at sight of him that she skipped along the street and almost kissed her husband before the whole village. But Goodman Brown looked sternly and sadly into her face, and passed on without a greeting.

Had Goodman Brown fallen asleep in the forest and only dreamed a wild dream of a witch-meeting?

Be it so if you will; but, alas! it was a dream of evil omen for young Goodman Brown. A stern, a sad, a darkly meditative, a distrustful, if not a desperate man did he become from the night of that fearful dream. On the Sabbath day, when the congregation were singing a holy psalm, he could not listen because an anthem of sin rushed loudly upon his ear and drowned all the blessed strain. When the minister spoke from the pulpit with power and fervid eloquence, and, with his hand on the open Bible, of the sacred truths of our religion, and of saint-like lives and triumphant deaths, and of future bliss or misery unutterable, then did Goodman Brown turn pale, dreading lest the roof should thunder down upon the gray blasphemer and his hearers. Often, waking suddenly at midnight, he shrank from the bosom of Faith; and at morning or eventide, when the family knelt down at prayer, he scowled and muttered to himself, and gazed sternly at his wife, and turned away. And when he had lived long, and was borne to his grave a hoary corpse, followed by Faith, an aged woman, and children and grandchildren, a goodly procession, besides neighbors not a few, they carved no hopeful verse upon his tombstone, for his dying hour was gloom.
The Yellow Wallpaper

Charlotte Perkins Gilman, (1899)

It is very seldom that mere ordinary people like John and myself secure ancestral halls for the summer.

A colonial mansion, a hereditary estate, I would say a haunted house, and reach the height of romantic felicity--but that would be asking too much of fate!

Still I will proudly declare that there is something queer about it.

Else, why should it be let so cheaply? And why have stood so long untenanted?

John laughs at me, of course, but one expects that in marriage.

John is practical in the extreme. He has no patience with faith, an intense horror of superstition, and he scoffs openly at any talk of things not to be felt and seen and put down in figures.

John is a physician, and perhaps--(I would not say it to a living soul, of course, but this is dead paper and a great relief to my mind)--perhaps that is one reason I do not get well faster.

You see he does not believe I am sick!

And what can one do?

If a physician of high standing, and one’s own husband, assures friends and relatives that there is really nothing the matter with one but temporary nervous depression--a slight hysterical tendency--what is one to do?

My brother is also a physician, and also of high standing, and he says the same thing.

So I take phosphates or phosphites--whichever it is, and tonics, and journeys, and air, and exercise, and am absolutely forbidden to "work" until I am well again.

Personally, I disagree with their ideas.

Personally, I believe that congenial work, with excitement and change, would do me good.

But what is one to do?

I did write for a while in spite of them; but it does exhaust me a good deal--having to be so sly about it, or else meet with heavy opposition.

I sometimes fancy that in my condition if I had less opposition and more society and stimulus--but John says the very worst thing I can do is to think about my condition, and I confess it always makes me feel bad.

So I will let it alone and talk about the house.

The most beautiful place! It is quite alone standing well back from the road, quite three
miles from the village. It makes me think of English places that you read about, for there are hedges and walls and gates that lock, and lots of separate little houses for the gardeners and people.

There is a delicious garden! I never saw such a garden--large and shady, full of box-bordered paths, and lined with long grape-covered arbors with seats under them.

There were greenhouses, too, but they are all broken now.

There was some legal trouble, I believe, something about the heirs and coheirs; anyhow, the place has been empty for years.

That spoils my ghostliness, I am afraid, but I don't care--there is something strange about the house--I can feel it.

I even said so to John one moonlight evening but he said what I felt was a draught, and shut the window.

I get unreasonably angry with John sometimes I'm sure I never used to be so sensitive. I think it is due to this nervous condition.

But John says if I feel so, I shall neglect proper self-control; so I take pains to control myself--before him, at least, and that makes me very tired.

I don't like our room a bit. I wanted one downstairs that opened on the piazza and had roses all over the window, and such pretty old-fashioned chintz hangings! but John would not hear of it.

He said there was only one window and not room for two beds, and no near room for him if he took another.

He is very careful and loving, and hardly lets me stir without special direction.

I have a schedule prescription for each hour in the day; he takes all care from me, and so I feel basely ungrateful not to value it more.

He said we came here solely on my account, that I was to have perfect rest and all the air I could get. "Your exercise depends on your strength, my dear," said he, "and your food somewhat on your appetite; but air you can absorb all the time." So we took the nursery at the top of the house.

It is a big, airy room, the whole floor nearly, with windows that look all ways, and air and sunshine galore. It was nursery first and then playroom and gymnasium, I should judge; for the windows are barred for little children, and there are rings and things in the walls.

The paint and paper look as if a boys' school had used it. It is stripped off--the paper in great patches all around the head of my bed, about as far as I can reach, and in a great place on the other side of the room low down. I never saw a worse paper in my life.
One of those sprawling flamboyant patterns committing every artistic sin.

It is dull enough to confuse the eye in following, pronounced enough to constantly irritate and provoke study, and when you follow the lame uncertain curves for a little distance they suddenly commit suicide--plunge off at outrageous angles, destroy themselves in unheard of contradictions.

The color is repellent, almost revolting; a smouldering unclean yellow, strangely faded by the slow-turning sunlight.

It is a dull yet lurid orange in some places, a sickly sulphur tint in others.

No wonder the children hated it! I should hate it myself if I had to live in this room long.

There comes John, and I must put this away,--he hates to have me write a word.

We have been here two weeks, and I haven't felt like writing before, since that first day.

I am sitting by the window now, up in this atrocious nursery, and there is nothing to hinder my writing as much as I please, save lack of strength.

John is away all day, and even some nights when his cases are serious.

I am glad my case is not serious!

But these nervous troubles are dreadfully depressing.

John does not know how much I really suffer. He knows there is no reason to suffer, and that satisfies him.

Of course it is only nervousness. It does weigh on me so not to do my duty in any way!

I meant to be such a help to John, such a real rest and comfort, and here I am a comparative burden already!

Nobody would believe what an effort it is to do what little I am able,--to dress and entertain, and order things.

It is fortunate Mary is so good with the baby. Such a dear baby!

And yet I cannot be with him, it makes me so nervous.

I suppose John never was nervous in his life. He laughs at me so about this wall-paper!

At first he meant to repaper the room, but afterwards he said that I was letting it get the better of me, and that nothing was worse for a nervous patient than to give way to such fancies.

He said that after the wall-paper was changed it would be the heavy bedstead, and then the barred windows, and then that gate at the head of the stairs, and so on.

"You know the place is doing you good," he said, "and really, dear, I don't care to renovate the house just for a three months' rental."
"Then do let us go downstairs," I said, "there are such pretty rooms there."
Then he took me in his arms and called me a blessed little goose, and said he would go
down to the cellar, if I wished, and have it whitewashed into the bargain.
But he is right enough about the beds and windows and things.
It is an airy and comfortable room as any one need wish, and, of course, I would not be so
silly as to make him uncomfortable just for a whim.
I'm really getting quite fond of the big room, all but that horrid paper.
Out of one window I can see the garden, those mysterious deepshaded arbors, the riotous
old-fashioned flowers, and bushes and gnarly trees.
Out of another I get a lovely view of the bay and a little private wharf belonging to the
estate. There is a beautiful shaded lane that runs down there from the house. I always fancy I
see people walking in these numerous paths and arbors, but John has cautioned me not to give
way to fancy in the least. He says that with my imaginative power and habit of story-making, a
nervous weakness like mine is sure to lead to all manner of excited fancies, and that I ought to
use my will and good sense to check the tendency. So I try.
I think sometimes that if I were only well enough to write a little it would relieve the press
of ideas and rest me.
But I find I get pretty tired when I try.
It is so discouraging not to have any advice and companionship about my work. When I
get really well, John says we will ask Cousin Henry and Julia down for a long visit; but he says
he would as soon put fireworks in my pillow-case as to let me have those stimulating people
about now.
I wish I could get well faster.
But I must not think about that. This paper looks to me as if it knew what a vicious
influence it had!
There is a recurrent spot where the pattern lolls like a broken neck and two bulbous eyes
stare at you upside down.
I get positively angry with the impertinence of it and the everlastingness. Up and down
and sideways they crawl, and those absurd, unblinking eyes are everywhere There is one place
where two breaths didn't match, and the eyes go all up and down the line, one a little higher
than the other.
I never saw so much expression in an inanimate thing before, and we all know how much
expression they have! I used to lie awake as a child and get more entertainment and terror out
of blank walls and plain furniture than most children could find in a toy-store.
I remember what a kindly wink the knobs of our big, old bureau used to have, and there was one chair that always seemed like a strong friend.

I used to feel that if any of the other things looked too fierce I could always hop into that chair and be safe.

The furniture in this room is no worse than inharmonious, however, for we had to bring it all from downstairs. I suppose when this was used as a playroom they had to take the nursery things out, and no wonder! I never saw such ravages as the children have made here.

The wall-paper, as I said before, is torn off in spots, and it sticketh closer than a brother--they must have had perseverance as well as hatred.

Then the floor is scratched and gouged and splintered, the plaster itself is dug out here and there, and this great heavy bed which is all we found in the room, looks as if it had been through the wars.

But I don't mind it a bit--only the paper.

There comes John's sister. Such a dear girl as she is, and so careful of me! I must not let her find me writing.

She is a perfect and enthusiastic housekeeper, and hopes for no better profession. I verily believe she thinks it is the writing which made me sick!

But I can write when she is out, and see her a long way off from these windows.

There is one that commands the road, a lovely shaded winding road, and one that just looks off over the country. A lovely country, too, full of great elms and velvet meadows.

This wall-paper has a kind of sub-pattern in a, different shade, a particularly irritating one, for you can only see it in certain lights, and not clearly then.

But in the places where it isn't faded and where the sun is just so--I can see a strange, provoking, formless sort of figure, that seems to skulk about behind that silly and conspicuous front design.

There's sister on the stairs!

Well, the Fourth of July is over! The people are all gone and I am tired out. John thought it might do me good to see a little company, so we just had mother and Nellie and the children down for a week.

Of course I didn't do a thing. Jennie sees to everything now.

But it tired me all the same.
John says if I don't pick up faster he shall send me to Weir Mitchell in the fall.

But I don't want to go there at all. I had a friend who was in his hands once, and she says he is just like John and my brother, only more so!

Besides, it is such an undertaking to go so far.

I don't feel as if it was worth while to turn my hand over for anything, and I'm getting dreadfully fretful and querulous.

I cry at nothing, and cry most of the time.

Of course I don't when John is here, or anybody else, but when I am alone.

And I am alone a good deal just now. John is kept in town very often by serious cases, and Jennie is good and lets me alone when I want her to.

So I walk a little in the garden or down that lovely lane, sit on the porch under the roses, and lie down up here a good deal.

I'm getting really fond of the room in spite of the wall-paper. Perhaps because of the wall-paper.

It dwells in my mind so!

I lie here on this great immovable bed--it is nailed down, I believe--and follow that pattern about by the hour. It is as good as gymnastics, I assure you. I start, we'll say, at the bottom, down in the corner over there where it has not been touched, and I determine for the thousandth time that I will follow that pointless pattern to some sort of a conclusion.

I know a little of the principle of design, and I know this thing was not arranged on any laws of radiation, or alternation, or repetition, or symmetry, or anything else that I ever heard of.

It is repeated, of course, by the breadths, but not otherwise.

Looked at in one way each breadth stands alone, the bloated curves and flourishes--a kind of "debased Romanesque" with delirium tremens--go waddling up and down in isolated columns of fatuity.

But, on the other hand, they connect diagonally, and the sprawling outlines run off in great slanting waves of optic horror, like a lot of wallowing seaweeds in full chase.

The whole thing goes horizontally, too, at least it seems so, and I exhaust myself in trying to distinguish the order of its going in that direction.

They have used a horizontal breadth for a frieze, and that adds wonderfully to the confusion.

There is one end of the room where it is almost intact, and there, when the crosslights fade and the low sun shines directly upon it, I can almost fancy radiation after all,--the interminable
grotesques seem to form around a common centre and rush off in headlong plunges of equal distraction.

It makes me tired to follow it. I will take a nap I guess.

I don't know why I should write this.
I don't want to.
I don't feel able. And I know John would think it absurd. But I must say what I feel and think in some way--it is such a relief!
But the effort is getting to be greater than the relief.
Half the time now I am awfully lazy, and lie down ever so much.
John says I mustn't lose my strength, and has me take cod liver oil and lots of tonics and things, to say nothing of ale and wine and rare meat.
Dear John! He loves me very dearly, and hates to have me sick. I tried to have a real earnest reasonable talk with him the other day, and tell him how I wish he would let me go and make a visit to Cousin Henry and Julia.
But he said I wasn't able to go, nor able to stand it after I got there; and I did not make out a very good case for myself, for I was crying before I had finished.
It is getting to be a great effort for me to think straight. Just this nervous weakness I suppose.
And dear John gathered me up in his arms, and just carried me upstairs and laid me on the bed, and sat by me and read to me till it tired my head.
He said I was his darling and his comfort and all he had, and that I must take care of myself for his sake, and keep well.
He says no one but myself can help me out of it, that I must use my will and self-control and not let any silly fancies run away with me.
There's one comfort, the baby is well and happy, and does not have to occupy this nursery with the horrid wall-paper.
If we had not used it, that blessed child would have! What a fortunate escape! Why, I wouldn't have a child of mine, an impressionable little thing, live in such a room for worlds.
I never thought of it before, but it is lucky that John kept me here after all, I can stand it so much easier than a baby, you see.
Of course I never mention it to them any more--I am too wise,--but I keep watch of it all
the same.

There are things in that paper that nobody knows but me, or ever will.

Behind that outside pattern the dim shapes get clearer every day.

It is always the same shape, only very numerous.

And it is like a woman stooping down and creeping about behind that pattern. I don't like it a bit. I wonder--I begin to think--I wish John would take me away from here!

It is so hard to talk with John about my case, because he is so wise, and because he loves me so.

But I tried it last night.

It was moonlight. The moon shines in all around just as the sun does.

I hate to see it sometimes, it creeps so slowly, and always comes in by one window or another.

John was asleep and I hated to waken him, so I kept still and watched the moonlight on that undulating wall-paper till I felt creepy.

The faint figure behind seemed to shake the pattern, just as if she wanted to get out.

I got up softly and went to feel and see if the paper did move, and when I came back John was awake.

"What is it, little girl?" he said. "Don't go walking about like that--you'll get cold."

I thought it was a good time to talk, so I told him that I really was not gaining here, and that I wished he would take me away.

"Why darling!" said he, "our lease will be up in three weeks, and I can't see how to leave before.

"The repairs are not done at home, and I cannot possibly leave town just now. Of course if you were in any danger, I could and would, but you really are better, dear, whether you can see it or not. I am a doctor, dear, and I know. You are gaining flesh and color, your appetite is better, I feel really much easier about you."

"I don't weigh a bit more," said I, "nor as much; and my appetite may be better in the evening when you are here, but it is worse in the morning when you are away!"

"Bless her little heart!" said he with a big hug, "she shall be as sick as she pleases! But now let's improve the shining hours by going to sleep, and talk about it in the morning!"

"And you won't go away?" I asked gloomily.
"Why, how can I, dear? It is only three weeks more and then we will take a nice little trip of a few days while Jennie is getting the house ready. Really dear you are better!"

"Better in body perhaps--" I began, and stopped short, for he sat up straight and looked at me with such a stern, reproachful look that I could not say another word.

"My darling," said he, "I beg of you, for my sake and for our child's sake, as well as for your own, that you will never for one instant let that idea enter your mind! There is nothing so dangerous, so fascinating, to a temperament like yours. It is a false and foolish fancy. Can you not trust me as a physician when I tell you so?"

So of course I said no more on that score, and we went to sleep before long. He thought I was asleep first, but I wasn't, and lay there for hours trying to decide whether that front pattern and the back pattern really did move together or separately.

On a pattern like this, by daylight, there is a lack of sequence, a defiance of law, that is a constant irritant to a normal mind.

The color is hideous enough, and unreliable enough, and infuriating enough, but the pattern is torturing.

You think you have mastered it, but just as you get well underway in following, it turns a back somersault and there you are. It slaps you in the face, knocks you down, and tramples upon you. It is like a bad dream.

The outside pattern is a florid arabesque, reminding one of a fungus. If you can imagine a toadstool in joints, an interminable string of toadstools, budding and sprouting in endless convolutions--why, that is something like it.

That is, sometimes!

There is one marked peculiarity about this paper, a thing nobody seems to notice but myself, and that is that it changes as the light changes.

When the sun shoots in through the east window--I always watch for that first long, straight ray--it changes so quickly that I never can quite believe it.

That is why I watch it always.

By moonlight--the moon shines in all night when there is a moon--I wouldn't know it was the same paper.

At night in any kind of light, in twilight, candlelight, lamplight, and worst of all by moonlight, it becomes bars! The outside pattern I mean, and the woman behind it is as plain as
can be.

I didn't realize for a long time what the thing was that showed behind, that dim sub-
pattern, but now I am quite sure it is a woman.

By daylight she is subdued, quiet. I fancy it is the pattern that keeps her so still. It is so
puzzling. It keeps me quiet by the hour.

I lie down ever so much now. John says it is good for me, and to sleep all I can.
Indeed he started the habit by making me lie down for an hour after each meal.
It is a very bad habit I am convinced, for you see I don't sleep.
And that cultivates deceit, for I don't tell them I'm awake--O no!
The fact is I am getting a little afraid of John.
He seems very queer sometimes, and even Jennie has an inexplicable look.
It strikes me occasionally, just as a scientific hypothesis,--that perhaps it is the paper!
I have watched John when he did not know I was looking, and come into the room
suddenly on the most innocent excuses, and I've caught him several times looking at the paper!
And Jennie too. I caught Jennie with her hand on it once.
She didn't know I was in the room, and when I asked her in a quiet, a very quiet voice,
with the most restrained manner possible, what she was doing with the paper--she turned
around as if she had been caught stealing, and looked quite angry-- asked me why I should
frighten her so!

Then she said that the paper stained everything it touched, that she had found yellow
smooches on all my clothes and John's, and she wished we would be more careful!
Did not that sound innocent? But I know she was studying that pattern, and I am
determined that nobody shall find it out but myself!

Life is very much more exciting now than it used to be. You see I have something more to
expect, to look forward to, to watch. I really do eat better, and am more quiet than I was.

John is so pleased to see me improve! He laughed a little the other day, and said I seemed to
be flourishing in spite of my wall-paper.

I turned it off with a laugh. I had no intention of telling him it was because of the wall-
paper--he would make fun of me. He might even want to take me away.
I don't want to leave now until I have found it out. There is a week more, and I think that will be enough.

I'm feeling ever so much better! I don't sleep much at night, for it is so interesting to watch developments; but I sleep a good deal in the daytime.

In the daytime it is tiresome and perplexing.

There are always new shoots on the fungus, and new shades of yellow all over it. I cannot keep count of them, though I have tried conscientiously.

It is the strangest yellow, that wall-paper! It makes me think of all the yellow things I ever saw—not beautiful ones like buttercups, but old foul, bad yellow things.

But there is something else about that paper—the smell! I noticed it the moment we came into the room, but with so much air and sun it was not bad. Now we have had a week of fog and rain, and whether the windows are open or not, the smell is here.

It creeps all over the house.

I find it hovering in the dining-room, skulking in the parlor, hiding in the hall, lying in wait for me on the stairs.

It gets into my hair.

Even when I go to ride, if I turn my head suddenly and surprise it—there is that smell!

Such a peculiar odor, too! I have spent hours in trying to analyze it, to find what it smelled like.

It is not bad—at first, and very gentle, but quite the subtlest, most enduring odor I ever met.

In this damp weather it is awful, I wake up in the night and find it hanging over me.

It used to disturb me at first. I thought seriously of burning the house—to reach the smell.

But now I am used to it. The only thing I can think of that it is like is the color of the paper! A yellow smell.

There is a very funny mark on this wall, low down, near the mopboard. A streak that runs round the room. It goes behind every piece of furniture, except the bed, a long, straight, even smooch, as if it had been rubbed over and over.

I wonder how it was done and who did it, and what they did it for. Round and round and round—round and round and round—round—round—round, as if it had been rubbed over and over.

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I really have discovered something at last.
Through watching so much at night, when it changes so, I have finally found out.
The front pattern does move--and no wonder! The woman behind shakes it!
Sometimes I think there are a great many women behind, and sometimes only one, and
she crawls around fast, and her crawling shakes it all over.

Then in the very bright spots she keeps still, and in the very shady spots she just takes
hold of the bars and shakes them hard.

And she is all the time trying to climb through. But nobody could climb through that
pattern--it strangles so; I think that is why it has so many heads.

They get through, and then the pattern strangles them off and turns them upside down, and
makes their eyes white!

If those heads were covered or taken off it would not be half so bad.

I think that woman gets out in the daytime!
And I'll tell you why--privately--I've seen her!
I can see her out of every one of my windows!
It is the same woman, I know, for she is always creeping, and most women do not creep
by daylight.

I see her on that long road under the trees, creeping along, and when a carriage comes she
hides under the blackberry vines.

I don't blame her a bit. It must be very humiliating to be caught creeping by daylight!
I always lock the door when I creep by daylight. I can't do it at night, for I know John
would suspect something at once.

And John is so queer now, that I don't want to irritate him. I wish he would take another
room! Besides, I don't want anybody to get that woman out at night but myself.

I often wonder if I could see her out of all the windows at once.
But, turn as fast as I can, I can only see out of one at one time.

And though I always see her, she may be able to creep faster than I can turn!

I have watched her sometimes away off in the open country, creeping as fast as a cloud
shadow in a high wind.
If only that top pattern could be gotten off from the under one! I mean to try it, little by little.

I have found out another funny thing, but I shan't tell it this time! It does not do to trust people too much.

There are only two more days to get this paper off, and I believe John is beginning to notice. I don't like the look in his eyes.

And I heard him ask Jennie a lot of professional questions about me. She had a very good report to give.

She said I slept a good deal in the daytime.

John knows I don't sleep very well at night, for all I'm so quiet!

He asked me all sorts of questions, too, and pretended to be very loving and kind.

As if I couldn't see through him!

Still, I don't wonder he acts so, sleeping under this paper for three months.

It only interests me, but I feel sure John and Jennie are secretly affected by it.

Hurrah! This is the last day, but it is enough. John to stay in town over night, and won't be out until this evening.

Jennie wanted to sleep with me--the sly thing! but I told her I should undoubtedly rest better for a night all alone.

That was clever, for really I wasn't alone a bit! As soon as it was moonlight and that poor thing began to crawl and shake the pattern, I got up and ran to help her.

I pulled and she shook, I shook and she pulled, and before morning we had peeled off yards of that paper.

A strip about as high as my head and half around the room.

And then when the sun came and that awful pattern began to laugh at me, I declared I would finish it to-day!

We go away to-morrow, and they are moving all my furniture down again to leave things as they were before.

Jennie looked at the wall in amazement, but I told her merrily that I did it out of pure spite at the vicious thing.

She laughed and said she wouldn't mind doing it herself, but I must not get tired.

How she betrayed herself that time!
But I am here, and no person touches this paper but me,—not alive!

She tried to get me out of the room—it was too patent! But I said it was so quiet and empty and clean now that I believed I would lie down again and sleep all I could; and not to wake me even for dinner—I would call when I woke.

So now she is gone, and the servants are gone, and the things are gone, and there is nothing left but that great bedstead nailed down, with the canvas mattress we found on it.

We shall sleep downstairs to-night, and take the boat home to-morrow.

I quite enjoy the room, now it is bare again.

How those children did tear about here!

This bedstead is fairly gnawed!

But I must get to work.

I have locked the door and thrown the key down into the front path.

I don't want to go out, and I don't want to have anybody come in, till John comes.

I want to astonish him.

I've got a rope up here that even Jennie did not find. If that woman does get out, and tries to get away, I can tie her!

But I forgot I could not reach far without anything to stand on!

This bed will not move!

I tried to lift and push it until I was lame, and then I got so angry I bit off a little piece at one corner—but it hurt my teeth.

Then I peeled off all the paper I could reach standing on the floor. It sticks horribly and the pattern just enjoys it! All those strangled heads and bulbous eyes and waddling fungus growths just shriek with derision!

I am getting angry enough to do something desperate. To jump out of the window would be admirable exercise, but the bars are too strong even to try.

Besides I wouldn't do it. Of course not. I know well enough that a step like that is improper and might be misconstrued.

I don't like to look out of the windows even--there are so many of those creeping women, and they creep so fast.

I wonder if they all come out of that wall-paper as I did?

But I am securely fastened now by my well-hidden rope—you don't get me out in the road there!

I suppose I shall have to get back behind the pattern when it comes night, and that is hard!

It is so pleasant to be out in this great room and creep around as I please!
I don't want to go outside. I won't, even if Jennie asks me to.

For outside you have to creep on the ground, and everything is green instead of yellow.

But here I can creep smoothly on the floor, and my shoulder just fits in that long smooch around the wall, so I cannot lose my way.

Why there's John at the door!

It is no use, young man, you can't open it!

How he does call and pound!

Now he's crying for an axe.

It would be a shame to break down that beautiful door!

"John dear!" said I in the gentlest voice, "the key is down by the front steps, under a plantain leaf!"

That silenced him for a few moments.

Then he said--very quietly indeed, "Open the door, my darling!"

"I can't," said I. "The key is down by the front door under a plantain leaf!"

And then I said it again, several times, very gently and slowly, and said it so often that he had to go and see, and he got it of course, and came in. He stopped short by the door.

"What is the matter?" he cried. "For God's sake, what are you doing!"

I kept on creeping just the same, but I looked at him over my shoulder.

"I've got out at last," said I, "in spite of you and Jane. And I've pulled off most of the paper, so you can't put me back!"

Now why should that man have fainted? But he did, and right across my path by the wall, so that I had to creep over him every time!
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