

A DOLL'S HOUSE

A Dramatic Reading

by
Henrik Ibsen



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From the play.

Early in the married life of Nora and Torvald Helmer, Torvald was ill, and the doctors said only a year in Italy would save his life. Nora secretly borrowed money for the trip from Krogstadt, a money lender. She told her husband, who disapproved of debt, that her father gave it to her. For years Nora struggled to pay Krogstadt by economies in housekeeping and by working without her husband's knowledge.

Later luck came. Torvald was appointed a director of a bank. He called Nora his "little squirrel" and they seemed very happy in what Ibsen termed their "doll house" marriage.

The money lender had a job in Torvald's bank and Torvald discharged him to make a place for a friend of Nora's. Krogstadt threatened Nora that unless she persuaded Torvald to re-employ him, he would reveal not only the debt but the fact that Nora had forged her father's name to the note as security. Her father had been dying at the time and she signed his name herself--not realizing that this was a crime. She tried in vain to influence Torvald, and finally, Krogstadt wrote Torvald the facts. Nora succeeded in keeping her husband from opening his mail during the holidays and in the meantime, Nora's friend who turned out to be Krogstadt's old sweetheart, persuaded him, without Nora's knowledge, not to expose Nora.

It is now New Year's Eve and Nora and Torvald have just returned from a masquerade ball.

HELMER: My darling wife! Do you know, Nora, I often wish some danger might threaten you, that I might risk everything for your dear sake.

NORA: (Tears herself from him and says firmly) Now you shall go to your room and read your letters, Torvald.

HELMER: Good night, my little songbird. Sleep well, Nora. I shall read them now.

NORA: Never to see him again!--Oh that black, icy water! If it were only over! Now he's reading it. Oh, Torvald, goodbye--! Goodbye.

She is rushing out by the hall; at the same moment Helmer flings his door open and stands there with an open letter in his hand.

HELMER: Nora! What is this? Do you know what is in this letter?

NORA: Yes, I know. Let me go! You shall not save me, Torvald.

HELMER: Is what he writes true? No, no, it is impossible!

NORA: It is true. I have loved you beyond all else in the world.

HELMER: No melodramatic airs! Do you understand what you have done?

NORA: (With a stiffening expression) Yes; I begin to understand.

HELMER: (Walking) What an awakening!--She who was my pride and my joy--a hypocrite--a criminal. I ought to have foreseen it. All your father's want of principle--be silent!--all your father's want of principle you have inherited--no religion, no sense of duty.--All this ruin is brought upon me by an unprincipled woman!

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