

BRACK: Punch is not poison.

LOVBORG: Perhaps not for everyone.

HEDDA: I will keep Mr. Lovborg company.

TESMAN: Yes, yes.

*He and BRACK go into the inner room, seat themselves, drink punch, smoke cigarettes, and carry on a lively conversation during what follows. EILERT LOVBORG remains standing beside the stove. HEDDA goes to the writing table.*

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HEDDA: (*Raising her voice a little.*) Care to look at some photographs, Mr. Lovborg? Tesman and I made a tour in the Tyrol.

*She takes up an album, and places it on the table beside the sofa, in the further corner of which she seats herself. EILERT LOVBORG approaches, stops, and looks at her. Then he takes a chair and seats himself to her left.*

HEDDA: (*Opening the album.*) Do you see this range of mountains, Mr. Lovborg? It's the Ortler group. Tesman has written the name underneath. "The Ortler group near Meran."

LOVBORG: (*Who has never taken his eyes off her, says softly and slowly:*) Hedda—Gabler!

HEDDA: (*Glancing hastily at him.*) Hush!

LOVBORG: (*Repeats softly.*) Hedda Gabler!

HEDDA: (*Looking at the album.*) That was my name in the old days.

LOVBORG: And I must teach myself never to say Hedda Gabler again.

HEDDA: (*Still turning over the pages.*) You must. The sooner the better.

LOVBORG: (*In a tone of indignation.*) Hedda Gabler married? And to George Tesman! Hedda, how could you throw yourself away!

HEDDA: (*Looks sharply at him.*) I can't allow this!

*TESMAN comes into the room and goes towards the sofa.*

HEDDA: (*Hears him coming and says in an indifferent tone.*) And this is a view from the Val d'Ampezzo. Just look at these peaks! (*Looks*

*affectionately up at TESMAN.*) What's the name of these curious peaks, dear?

TESMAN: Oh, those are the Dolomites.

HEDDA: Those are the Dolomites, Mr. Lovborg.

TESMAN: Hedda, dear, should I bring you a little punch?

HEDDA: Yes, do, please; and perhaps a few biscuits.

TESMAN: No cigarettes?

HEDDA: No.

TESMAN: Very well.

*He goes into the inner room and out to the right. BRACK sits in the inner room, and keeps an eye from time to time on HEDDA and LOVBORG.*

LOVBORG: (*Softly, as before.*) How could you go and do this?

HEDDA: (*Apparently absorbed in the album.*) If you continue to speak to me like this, I won't talk to you.

LOVBORG: Not even when we are alone?

HEDDA: No. You may think it; but you mustn't say it.

LOVBORG: Ah. It is an offence against George Tesman, whom you love.

HEDDA: (*Glances at him and smiles.*) Love? What an ideal!

LOVBORG: You don't love him then!

HEDDA: I won't hear of any sort of unfaithfulness!

LOVBORG: Hedda—

HEDDA: Hush!

*TESMAN enters with a small tray from the inner room.*

TESMAN: Here you are! Isn't this tempting? (*He puts the tray on the table.*)

HEDDA: Why do you bring it yourself?

TESMAN: (*Filling the glasses.*) It's such fun to wait upon you, Hedda.

HEDDA: Two glasses? Mr. Lovborg said he wouldn't have any—

TESMAN: But Mrs. Elvsted will soon be here. Had you forgotten her?