

JUDGE BRACK, *dressed as though for a men's party, enters by the glass door. He carries a light overcoat over his arm.*

BRACK: Haven't you tired of that sport, yet?

HEDDA: I am only firing in the air.

BRACK: (*Gently takes the pistol out of her hand.*) Allow me! (*Looks at it.*) I know this pistol well! (*Looks around. Lays the pistol in the case, and shuts it.*) Now we won't play that game anymore today.

HEDDA: Then what in heaven's name would you have me do with myself?

BRACK: Have you had no visitors?

HEDDA: (*Closing the glass door.*) Not one. I suppose all our set are still out of town.

BRACK: And Tesman?

HEDDA: (*At the writing-table, putting the pistol-case in a drawer which she shuts.*) He rushed off to his aunt's after lunch; he didn't expect you so early.

BRACK: I should have come a little earlier.

HEDDA: (*Crossing the room.*) Then you would have no one to receive you; I have been in my room changing my dress ever since lunch.

BRACK: Is there no little hole that we could hold a parley through?

HEDDA: You forgot to arrange one.

BRACK: That was stupid of me.

HEDDA: Tesman is not likely to be back for some time.

BRACK: I shall not be impatient.

HEDDA *seats herself in the corner of the sofa. BRACK lays his overcoat over the back of the nearest chair, and sits down, but keeps his hat in his hand. A short silence. They look at each other.*

HEDDA: Well?

BRACK: (*In the same tone.*) Well?

HEDDA: I spoke first.

BRACK: (*Bending a little forward.*) Let us have a cozy little chat, Mrs. Hedda.<sup>5</sup>

HEDDA: (*Leaning further back in the sofa.*) Does it not seem like a whole eternity since our last talk?

BRACK: Our last tête-à-tête? Not a day passed but I have wished that you were home again.

HEDDA: And I have done nothing but wish the same thing.

BRACK: And I thought you had been enjoying your tour so much! Tesman's letters spoke of nothing but happiness.

HEDDA: Tesman thinks nothing is so delightful as grubbing in libraries and making copies of old parchments.

BRACK: (*With a smile of malice.*) That is his vocation in life.

HEDDA: Oh, how mortally bored I have been. To go for six whole months without meeting a soul that knew anything of our circle, or could talk about things we were interested in.

BRACK: A deprivation.

HEDDA: And then, being everlastingly in the company of—one and the same person—

BRACK: (*With a nod of assent.*) Morning, noon, and night, yes—

HEDDA: I said "everlastingly."

BRACK: I should have thought, with our excellent Tesman, one could—

HEDDA: Tesman is a specialist, my dear Judge. And specialists are not at all amusing to travel with.

BRACK: Not even—the specialist one happens to love?

HEDDA: Faugh—don't use that sickening word!

BRACK: (*Taken aback.*) Mrs. Hedda?

<sup>5</sup> As this form of address is contrary to English usage, and as the note of familiarity would be lacking in "Mrs. Tesman," Brack may, in stage representation, say "Miss Hedda," thus ignoring her marriage and reverting to the form of address no doubt customary between them of old. [Translator's Note]

HEDDA: (*Half laughing, half irritated.*) To hear of nothing but the history of civilisation, morning, noon, and night—

BRACK: Everlastingly.

HEDDA: Yes yes yes! And then all this about the domestic industry of the middle ages—!

BRACK: (*Looks searchingly at her.*) But how am I to understand your—?

HEDDA: My accepting George Tesman?

BRACK: Well..

HEDDA: I had danced myself tired, my dear Judge. My day was done—  
(*With a slight shudder.*) No I won't say that!

BRACK: No reason to.

HEDDA: And Tesman—you must admit that he is correctness itself.

BRACK: Beyond all question.

HEDDA: And I don't see anything absolutely ridiculous about him.

BRACK: No—I shouldn't say so—

HEDDA: And his powers of research are untiring.—No reason why he should not one day come to the front, after all. And since he was bent, at all hazards, on being allowed to provide for me—I really don't know why I should not have accepted his offer?

BRACK: In that light—

HEDDA: It was more than my other adorers were prepared to do for me.

BRACK: (*Laughing.*) I can't answer for all the rest; you know I have always entertained a—a certain respect for the marriage tie.

HEDDA: (*Jestingly.*) I never cherished any hopes with respect to you.

BRACK: All I require is a pleasant and intimate interior, where I can make myself useful, and am free to come and go as—as a trusted friend—

HEDDA: Of the master of the house?

BRACK: (*Bowing.*) Frankly—of the mistress first; but the master too. Such a triangular friendship—if I may—is really a great convenience for all the parties.

HEDDA: I have longed for someone to make a third on our travels.  
Those railway-carriage tête-à-têtes—!

BRACK: Your wedding journey is over now.

HEDDA: (*Shaking her head.*) I have only arrived at a station on the line.

BRACK: Then the passengers jump out and move about a little.

HEDDA: I never jump out. There is always someone standing by to—

BRACK: (*Laughing.*) To look at your ankles?

HEDDA: Precisely. I would rather keep my seat.

BRACK: Suppose a third person were to jump in and join the couple.

HEDDA: Ah!

BRACK: A trusted friend—

HEDDA: —with conversation on all sorts of lively topics—

BRACK: —and not the least bit of a specialist!

HEDDA: (*With an audible sigh.*) A relief indeed.

BRACK: (*Hears the front door open, and glances in that direction.*) The triangle is completed.

HEDDA: (*Half aloud.*) And on goes the train.

[2]

GEORGE TESMAN, in a grey walking-suit, with a soft felt hat, enters from the hall. He has a number of unbound books under his arm and in his pockets.

TESMAN: (*Goes up to the table beside the corner settee.*) Ouf—all these books.  
(*Lays them on the table.*) I'm positively perspiring, Hedda. Hallo—are you there already, my dear Judge? Eh?

BRACK: (*Rising.*) I came in through the garden.

HEDDA: What have you got there?

TESMAN: (*Stands looking them through.*) Some new books on my special subjects—quite indispensable.

HEDDA: Do you need still more books?