

BRACK: Not a single home. Every respectable house will be closed against Eilert Lovborg.

HEDDA: And so ought mine to be?

BRACK: Yes. How intrusive, if he were to force his way into—

HEDDA: —the triangle?

BRACK: Precisely.

HEDDA: (*Looks at him with a smile.*) You want to be the one cock in the yard.⁶

BRACK: (*Nods slowly and lowers his voice.*) That is my aim. And for that I will fight—with every weapon I can command.

HEDDA: (*Her smile vanishing.*) I see you are a dangerous person.

BRACK: You think so?

HEDDA: And I am glad you have no sort of hold over me.

BRACK: (*Laughing equivocally.*) Perhaps you are right. Who knows what I might be capable of?

HEDDA: That sounds almost like a threat.

BRACK: (*Rising.*) Not at all! The triangle ought, if possible, to be spontaneously constructed. Well, I have said all I had to say and better be getting back. Good-bye, Mrs. Hedda.

He goes towards the glass door. They exchange laughing nods of farewell. He goes. She closes the door behind him.

[4]

HEDDA, who has become quite serious, stands for a moment looking out. Presently she goes and peeps through the curtain over the middle doorway. Then she goes to the writing-table, takes LOVBORG'S packet out of the bookcase, and is on the point of looking through its contents. BERTA is heard speaking loudly in the hall. HEDDA turns and listens. Then she hastily locks up the packet in the drawer, and lays the key on the inkstand.

⁶ Originally, "one cock in the basket." [Editor's Note] From "Enest hane i kurven"—a proverbial saying. [Translator's Note]

EILERT LOVBORG, with his greatcoat on and his hat in his hand, tears open the hall door. He looks somewhat confused and irritated.

LOVBORG: (*Looking towards the hall.*) and I tell you I will come in! There! *He closes the door, turns, sees HEDDA, at once regains his self-control, and bows.*

HEDDA: (*At the writing-table.*) This is a late hour to call for Thea.

LOVBORG: You mean an early hour to call on you.

HEDDA: How do you know she is still here?

LOVBORG: They told me at her lodgings she had been out all night.

HEDDA: Did they think it odd?

LOVBORG: Of course! I am dragging her down with me! Tesman is not up yet?

HEDDA: No. I gather you had an exceedingly jolly evening at Judge Brack's.

MRS. ELVSTED *enters through the curtains of the middle doorway.*

MRS. ELVSTED: Lovborg! At last—!

LOVBORG: Yes, at last. And too late!

MRS. ELVSTED: What is too late?

LOVBORG: Everything. It is all over with me.

MRS. ELVSTED: Don't say that!

HEDDA: Perhaps you would prefer to talk alone?

LOVBORG: No, stay—

MRS. ELVSTED: I won't hear anything, I tell you.

LOVBORG: It is not last night I want to talk about.

MRS. ELVSTED: What then—?

LOVBORG: I want to say that now our ways must part.

MRS. ELVSTED: Part!

HEDDA: (*Involuntarily.*) I knew it.

LOVBORG: You can be of no more service to me, Thea.

MRS. ELVSTED: How can you say that! Am I not to help you now, as before? Are we not to go on working together?

LOVBORG: Henceforward I shall do no work.

MRS. ELVSTED: (*Despairingly.*) Then what am I to do with my life?

LOVBORG: You must try to live your life as if you had never known me.

MRS. ELVSTED: I cannot do that!

LOVBORG: Try, Thea. You must go home again—

MRS. ELVSTED: (*In vehement protest.*) Never! I will not be driven away like this! I will be with you when the book appears.

HEDDA: (*Half aloud, in suspense.*) The book!

LOVBORG: (*Looks at her.*) My book and Thea's; for that is what it is.

MRS. ELVSTED: And I have a right to be with you when it appears! I will see respect and honour pour in upon you afresh. And the happiness—I must share it with you!

LOVBORG: Thea—our book will never appear.

HEDDA: Ah!

MRS. ELVSTED: Never appear! (*In agonised foreboding.*) Lovborg—what have you done with the manuscript?

HEDDA: (*Looks anxiously at him.*) Yes—

LOVBORG: The manuscript—I have torn it into a thousand pieces.

MRS. ELVSTED: (*Scrieks.*) Oh no, no—!

HEDDA: (*Involuntarily.*) But that's not—

LOVBORG: (*Looks at her.*) Not true?

HEDDA: (*Collecting herself.*) Oh, it sounded so improbable—

LOVBORG: True all the same.

MRS. ELVSTED: (*Wringing her hands.*) Oh God—torn his own work to pieces!

LOVBORG: Torn my own life to pieces. Why not tear my life's work too?

MRS. ELVSTED: You did this last night?

LOVBORG: Yes! Tore it into a thousand pieces—and scattered them on the fiord. There there is cool sea water—let them drift with the current and the wind. And sink—deeper and deeper—as I shall, Thea.

MRS. ELVSTED: What you have done—I shall think of it to my dying day as though you had killed a little child.

LOVBORG: Yes.

MRS. ELVSTED: How could you! Did not the child belong to me too?

HEDDA: (*Almost inaudibly.*) Ah, the child—

MRS. ELVSTED: (*Breathing heavily.*) It is all over then. Now I will go, Hedda.

HEDDA: Away from town?

MRS. ELVSTED: I don't know. I see nothing but darkness before me.

She goes out by the ball door.

[5]

HEDDA: (*Stands waiting for a moment.*) You are not going to see her home?

LOVBORG: Would you have people see her walking with me?

HEDDA: I don't know what else happened last night, but is it so utterly irretrievable?

LOVBORG: It will not end with last night. Now I have no taste for that sort of life. She has broken my courage and my power of braving life out.

HEDDA: (*Looking straight before her.*) So that pretty little fool has had her fingers in a man's destiny. (*Looks at him.*) But all the same, how could you treat her so heartlessly.

LOVBORG: Don't say that!

HEDDA: To destroy what has filled her soul! You do not call that heartless!

LOVBORG: To you I can tell the truth, Hedda.

HEDDA: The truth?