APPENDIX

Appendix 1

Biography

Henrik Johan Ibsen (1828-1906) was born in the small Norwegian seaport of Skien. There are two Henrik Ibesen, the one who inspired a social and political revolution under the banner of "Ibsenism," and the one who protested his complete innocence of any revolutionary intentions. That the two Ibsens were the same men is testimony to both the complexities of the man and the misunderstanding that plagued him all his life. The truth seems to be that Ibsen underwent a great change of character. He did indeed begin as the social reformer his disciples took him for, but when disillusionment with his fellow Norwegians forced him inward and away from political and social reform to an examination of man's inner being, his disciples did notice either the change in Ibsen or the change in his art. But then, neither did Ibsen when he insisted upon the unchanging tenor of his life's work. In 1890, he wrote ingenuously, " I was surprised that I, who had made it my chief life-task to depict human characters and human destinies, should, without conscious or direct intention, have arrived in several matters at the same conclusions as the social democratic moral philosophers had arrived at by scientific processes." This was Ibsen reacting against the simplified view of himself as the great fighting liberal emancipator invented by his disciples.

Henrik Ibsen was the product of a frustrated and embittered childhood. When he was eight, his wealthy merchant family lost it fortune, bringing down upon him the full force of the entire provincial narrowness and social ostracism of which the small Norwegian town of Skien was capable. He received an inferior education at a poor people's school, and was further disappointed by his parent's lack of sympathy for his artistic ambitions. He was so alienated by his father's indifference and his mother's religious dogmatism that, after leaving home at the age of fifteen, he scarcely bothered to keep up family connections. But the family and its middle class sensibility left its mark on Ibsen. He spent a great deal of his time either flouting middle-class conventions or trying to live up to them. He was considered a revolutionary, but he dressed with unusual care, often revealing the temperament of a conservative banker. He also liked to display the orders of merit that governments and royalty bestowed in him in the days of his international fame,

before the scandalous publication of *A Doll's House* and *Ghost* made his name an anathema to the conventionally pious. The unfavorable public reaction he received in his later years added to the already well- known dourness of his temperament, and pushed him further into himself. It might be said that he emerged only in the great symbolic dramas of his later years.

In his launching of modern drama, Ibsen progressed along the entire range of dramatic production. After an immature excursion into the field of folk and nationalistic drama, he experimented success

Appendix 2

Synopsis

Jacob Engstrand tries to convince his supposed daughter Regina to come work at the sailor's establishment he wants to open, but she is too proud of her job as Mrs. Alving's maid to do so. He leaves and Pastor Manders enters. The Pastor tries to convince Regina to help her father, while she pesters him to find her a position somewhere in high society. She leaves and Mrs. Alving enters. Oswald, Mrs. Alving's son, comes down. He has been traveling in Europe since he was young, and he has not been home in years. He and the Pastor get into an argument over living out of wedlock. He leaves, and the Pastor admonishes Mrs. Alving for letting her son grow in such a way. He also blames her for once leaving her husband. Mrs. Alving replies that her husband made her miserable and that she sent her son away to save him from her husband's debauchery. She even admits to the Pastor that regina is the love-child of her husband and their former maid, Johanna. As dinner is about to start, the two hear a cry from the kitchen. Apparently Oswald is making advances to Regina.

After dinner, the Pastor and Mrs. Alving discuss this strange development. Pastor realizes that Oswald is furious at Engstrand for never telling him the truth about Regina. Engstrand enters and suggests to the Pastor that he hold a prayer meeting at the orphanage. The Pastor questions him, and Engstrand convinces him that it was only to save Johanna's reputation that he kept the truth from him. Engstrand and the Pastor leave, and Mrs. Alving goes to talk to her son. Oswald is drinking. She wants to tell him the truth about his father. He tells her about the sickness he is suffering from. A doctor in Paris diagnosed it by saying that the sins of the father visit the son. He goes on to complain about the misery and hypocrisy of gloomy Norway, contrasting it with the joy of life. Mrs. Alving is about to tell him and Regina the truth, but then they notice that the orphanage has caught fire.

Engstrand and the Pastor return to the house, announcing that the orphanage is lost to the flames. Engstrand convinces the Pastors that there will be a public scandal, blaming the Pastor for carelessly letting the prayer candles start the fire. He blackmails the Pastor into funding his sailor establishment, convincing the Pastor that it will be dedicated to the reform of the sailors. They leave, and Mrs. Alving finally tells Regina

and Oswald the truth about their father. Regina feels cheated and goes to claim part of inheritance. Oswald is partly relieved but reveals to his mother that he is sick beyond hope. He shows her some morphine pills and asks her to administer them in case of a relapse. As the sun comes up, he melts into his chair and begins to mumble nonsense. Mrs. Alving desperately searches for the pills, having seemingly lost all hope for her son or anyone else.

NORA. Motherless! [*Struggles with herself, lets her travelling bag fall, and says.*] Oh, this is a sin against myself, but I cannot leave them. [*Half sinks down by the door.*]

HELMER [*joyfully, but softly*]. Nora!

[*The curtain falls.*]

For an insight into what eventually persuaded Ibsen to commit this 'barbaric outrage'—as he himself called it—see his letters to a Copenhagen newspaper of 17 Feb. 1880, to Heinrich Laube of 18 Feb. 1880, and to Moritz Prozor of 23 Jan. 1891 (translated below, pp. 454–56).

GHOSTS

[*Gengangere*]

A DOMESTIC DRAMA IN THREE ACTS

(1881)

Translated by James McFarlane

CHARACTERS

MRS. HELENE ALVING, widow of Captain (and Chamberlain) Alving

OSWALD ALVING, her son, an artist

PASTOR MANDERS

JACOB ENGSTRAND, a carpenter

REGINE ENGSTRAND, in service with Mrs. Alving

The action takes place on Mrs. Alving's country estate by one of the large fjords of Western Norway

ACT ONE

A spacious garden room, with one door on the left wall, and two on the right. In the centre of the room stands a round table, with chairs round it; books, periodicals, and newspapers are lying on the table. Downstage, left, is a window, and near it a small sofa with a work-table in front of it. The room is continued at the back of the stage into an open and rather narrower conservatory, the walls of which are extensively glazed. In the right wall of the conservatory is a door that leads out into the garden. Through the glass wall may be glimpsed a gloomy fjord landscape, shrouded in steady rain.

JACOB ENGSTRAND *is standing beside the door into the garden. His left leg is somewhat deformed, and he wears a boot with a built-up wooden sole.* REGINE, *with an empty garden syringe in her hand, is trying to prevent him coming any further.*

REGINE [*keeping her voice low*]. What do you want? Stay where you are. You are dripping wet.

ENGSTRAND. It's God's own rain, my child.

REGINE. More like the devil's, you mean.

ENGSTRAND. Lord, the things you say, Regine. [*Takes a few limping steps into the room.*] But what I wanted to tell you was . . .

REGINE. Stop clumping about with that foot, man! The young master's upstairs asleep.

ENGSTRAND. Asleep? At this time of day?

REGINE. That's got nothing to do with you.

ENGSTRAND. I was out having a few drinks last night. . . .

REGINE. That I can well believe.

ENGSTRAND. Well, we are frail creatures, all of us, my child . . .

REGINE. We are that.

ENGSTRAND. . . . and many are the temptations of this world, you know . . . but still, there was I up and at work at half-past five this morning.

REGINE. Yes, yes, but off you go now. I'm not standing for having *rendez-vous's* here with you.

ENGSTRAND. Having what, did you say?

REGINE. I'm not going to have anybody finding you here. So, away you go.

ENGSTRAND [*comes a few steps closer*]. I'm damned if I'm going before I've had a word with you. I'll have that work down at the schoolhouse finished by this afternoon, and I'm taking the night boat home, back to town.

REGINE [*mutters*]. Pleasant journey!

ENGSTRAND. Thank you, my child. You see tomorrow, the Orphanage is being opened, and I expect there'll be a lot of drinking and such like going on. And nobody's going to say about Jacob Engstrand that he can't resist temptation when it comes along.

REGINE. Huh!

ENGSTRAND. There'll be a lot of posh people here tomorrow. And they're expecting Pastor Manders from town as well.

REGINE. He'll be here today.

ENGSTRAND. There you are, you see. Got to be damned careful I don't put my foot in it with him, you know.

REGINE. Aha! So *that's* it!

ENGSTRAND. So what's it?

REGINE [*looks hard at him*]. What are you going to try and talk him into this time?

ENGSTRAND. Sh! Are you crazy? *Me* talk Pastor Manders into anything? Oh no, Pastor Manders has been far too good to me for *that*. But look, what I really wanted to talk to you about was me going back home again tonight.

REGINE. The sooner the better, as far as I'm concerned.

ENGSTRAND. Yes, but I want you to come with me, Regine.

REGINE [*open-mouthed*]. You want me to. . . . What did you say?

ENGSTRAND. I said I want you to come home with me.

REGINE [*scornfully*]. Not likely! You'll never get me coming home with you.

ENGSTRAND. Oh? We'll see about that.

REGINE. Yes, I'll say we will. *Me*? Who's been brought up here by a lady like Mrs. Alving . . . ? Who's been treated like one of the family, almost. . . ? Expect me to go home with you? To a place like that? Puh!

ENGSTRAND. What the devil. . . ? Setting yourself up against your own father, you little bitch?

REGINE [*mutters, without looking at him*]. Often enough you've said I wasn't any concern of yours.

ENGSTRAND. Huh! You are not going to bother your head about *that*. . . ?

REGINE. And what about all the times you've sworn at me and called me a . . . ? *Fi donc!*

ENGSTRAND. I'll be damned if I ever used such filthy language.

REGINE. Oh, I know well enough what language you used.

ENGSTRAND. Well, but only when I'd had a few . . . h'm. Many are the temptations of this world, Regine.

REGINE. Ugh!

ENGSTRAND. Or else when your mother started her nagging. I had to have something to get my own back on her, my girl. Always so stuck-up, she was. [*Mimics.*] 'Let me go, Engstrand. Let me be. I was three years in service at Rosenvold, with Chamberlain Alving, I was.' [*Laughs.*] My God! She couldn't ever forget that the captain was made a chamberlain while she was in service there.

REGINE. Poor mother! You drove her to her death the way you tormented her.

ENGSTRAND [*shrugs*]. Oh, that's right! Blame me for everything.

REGINE [*turns away, under her breath*]. Ugh! And then that leg!

ENGSTRAND. What's that you say, my girl?

REGINE. *Pied de mouton.*

ENGSTRAND. Is that English?

REGINE. Yes.

ENGSTRAND. Ah, you've learned quite a lot out here, and that might come in very handy now, Regine.

REGINE [*after a short silence*]. And what did you want with me in town?

ENGSTRAND. How can you ask what a father wants with his only child? I'm a lonely, deserted widower, aren't I?

REGINE. Oh, don't come that fiddle-faddle with me. What do you want me there for?

ENGSTRAND. Well, the thing is I've been thinking of going in for something new.

REGINE [*sneers*]. How many times haven't I heard *that* one before! But you always made a mess of it.

ENGSTRAND. Yes, but just you watch me this time, Regine! Damn me if . . .

REGINE [*stamps her foot*]. Stop that swearing!

ENGSTRAND. Sh! sh! You are right enough there, my girl! I just wanted to say this: I've saved quite a bit of money out of this Orphanage job.

REGINE. Have you? How nice for you.

ENGSTRAND. Because what can you spend your money on, stuck out here in the country?

REGINE. What about it?

ENGSTRAND. Well, you see, I'd thought of putting the money into something worthwhile. A sort of hotel for seamen. . . .

REGINE. Ugh!

ENGSTRAND. A real classy hotel, I mean . . . not one of them cheap dumps for deckhands. By God, no! It'd be for captains and mates and . . . and real classy people, you know.

REGINE. And I'd have to . . . ?

ENGSTRAND. To lend a hand, that's right. Just help to look after the place, if you know what I mean. You wouldn't have such a hell of a lot to do, my girl. You could do pretty well what you liked.

REGINE. Oh, really!

ENGSTRAND. There has to be some women about the place, that's clear. Because we'd want a bit of fun in the evenings, singing and dancing and that sort of thing. These are seafaring men, you've got to remember, roaming the high seas. [*Comes closer.*] Now don't be such a fool as to stand in your own way, Regine. What can you do with yourself out here? Is it going to be any use to you, all this education the lady's lavished on you? You'll be looking after the children in the new Orphanage, they tell me. What sort of *thing* is that for a girl like you, eh? Are you all that keen on working yourself to death for the sake of a lot of dirty little brats?

REGINE. No, if things worked out as *I* wanted them to. . . . Well, it could happen. It could happen!

ENGSTRAND. What could happen?

REGINE. Never you mind. . . . Have you managed to put a lot of money by?

ENGSTRAND. What with one thing and another, it might be about seven or eight hundred crowns.

REGINE. Not bad.

ENGSTRAND. Enough to make a start with, my girl.

REGINE. You didn't think of giving me any of it?

ENGSTRAND. No, I'm damned if I did.

REGINE. Don't even think of sending me a bit of stuff for a dress?

ENGSTRAND. Come back to town with me, and you can have plenty of dresses.

REGINE. Puh, I can manage that on my own if I want.

ENGSTRAND. Ah, but it's better with a father's hand to guide you, Regine. I can get a nice little house that's going in Little Harbour Road. They're not asking a big deposit; and it could be a kind of Sailors' Home, see?

REGINE. But I don't *want* to come with *you*! I don't want anything to do with you. Now get away!

ENGSTRAND. I bet you damn well wouldn't stay very long with me, my girl. Not much chance of that. Not if you played your cards properly. Pretty little piece you've turned into, this last year or two. . . .

REGINE. Well. . . ?

ENGSTRAND. It wouldn't be long before some ship's officer would turn up . . . maybe even a captain. . . .

REGINE. I wouldn't marry anybody like that. Sailors have no *savoir vivre*.

ENGSTRAND. What's that they haven't got?

REGINE. I know what sailors are, let me tell you. No use marrying *them*.

ENGSTRAND. You don't have to marry them. It can still be worth your while. [*More confidentially.*] That Englishman, now . . . the one with the yacht . . . he paid three hundred dollars . . . and she wasn't any prettier than you.

REGINE [*going towards him*]. Get out!

ENGSTRAND [*retreating*]. Now, now, you wouldn't hit me, would you!

REGINE. Wouldn't I! You say one word about Mother, and I'll let you have it. Get out, I say! [*Drives him towards the door into the garden.*] And don't go slamming any doors. Young Mr. Alving. . .

ENGSTRAND. He's asleep, I know. You seem very concerned about this young Mr. Alving. [*Softly.*] Aha! It wouldn't be *him* . . . eh?

REGINE. Out, and quick about it! You're barmy, man! No, not that way. There's Pastor Manders coming. Down the back stairs.

ENGSTRAND [*towards the right*]. All right, I'm going. But you just have a talk with *him*, coming in there. *He's* the man to tell you what a child owes its father. Because after all I am your father, you know. I can prove it from the Parish Register.

[He goes out through the other door which REGINE *opens for him, and closes again after him.* REGINE *hastily looks at herself in the mirror, dabs herself with her handkerchief and straightens her collar; then she busies herself with the flowers.* PASTOR MANDERS, *in topcoat, carrying an umbrella and with a small satchel slung over his shoulder, enters the conservatory from the garden.]*

MANDERS. Good morning, Miss Engstrand.

REGINE [*turning round in glad surprise*]. Why it's Pastor Manders! Good morning, Pastor. Is the steamer in already?

MANDERS. Just arrived. [*He comes into the room.*] Miserable rainy weather we've been having lately.

REGINE [*following him*]. A blessing for the farmers, though, Pastor.

MANDERS. Ah, you are quite right. We townsfolk so rarely think of that. [*He begins to take off his topcoat.*]

REGINE. Oh, please let me help you. There! Goodness, how wet it is. I'll just hang it up in the hall. And your umbrella . . . I'll leave it up somewhere, so it can be drying.

[She takes the things out through the second door, right. PASTOR MANDERS *takes his satchel and lays it along with his hat on a chair. Meanwhile* REGINE *returns.]*

MANDERS. Ah, it's good to get indoors. And how are things out here? All right, I hope.

REGINE. Yes, thank you.

MANDERS. But pretty busy, I imagine, getting ready for tomorrow?

REGINE. Oh yes, there's plenty to do.

MANDERS. And Mrs. Alving is at home, I trust?

REGINE. Yes, of course. She's just upstairs seeing to some cocoa for Mr. Oswald.

MANDERS. Ah yes . . . I heard down at the quay that Oswald is supposed to have arrived.

REGINE. Yes, he came the day before yesterday. We hadn't been expecting him till today.

MANDERS. Fit and well, I hope?

REGINE. Yes, thank you, quite well. But horribly tired after his journey. He did the whole trip from Paris in one. . . . I mean he travelled all the way without a break. I think he's having a little sleep now, so perhaps we'd better talk just a little bit quieter.

MANDERS. Sh! We'll be very quiet.

REGINE [*moving an armchair into place beside the table*]. Do sit down, Pastor Manders, and make yourself comfortable. [*He sits down; she places a footstool under his feet.*] There now! Nice and comfortable?

MANDERS. Splendid, thank you. [*Looks at her.*] You know, Miss Engstrand, I do believe you've grown since I saw you last.

REGINE. Do you think so, Pastor? Mrs. Alving says I've also filled out.

MANDERS. Filled out? Oh, yes, a little perhaps . . . quite nicely.

[*Short pause.*]

REGINE. Should I go and tell Mrs. Alving?

MANDERS. Thank you, but there's no hurry, my dear. . . . Tell me, Regine, how is your father getting on out here?

REGINE. Fairly well, thank you, Pastor.

MANDERS. He looked in to see me last time he was in town.

REGINE. Did he? He's always glad to have a talk with you, Pastor.

MANDERS. And you run across and see him pretty regularly, I suppose?

REGINE. Me? Oh yes, I do, whenever I have a moment. . . .

MANDERS. Your father is not a particularly strong character, Miss Engstrand. He sorely needs a guiding hand.

REGINE. Oh yes, that's very likely.

MANDERS. He needs somebody near and dear to him to turn to, somebody whose judgement he respects. He admitted that himself quite frankly the last time he came to see me.

REGINE. Yes, he mentioned something of the kind to me too. But I don't know that Mrs. Alving would want to let me go . . . especially now we've got the new Orphanage to run. And then again, I would hate to leave Mrs. Alving, because she's always been so kind to me.

MANDERS. But a daughter's duty, my good girl. . . . Of course we'd have to get the consent of your mistress first.

REGINE. But I'm not sure it's quite the thing for me, at my age, to keep house for a single man.

MANDERS. What! But my dear Miss Engstrand, we happen to be talking about your own father.

REGINE. Yes, that may be, but all the same. . . . Now, if it was in a *good* house with a proper gentleman . . .

MANDERS. But my dear Regine. . . .

REGINE. . . . Somebody I could feel affection and respect for, and be a sort of daughter to . . .

MANDERS. Yes, but my dear, good child . . .

REGINE. Then I should be quite happy to go back to town. It's awfully lonely out here . . . and you know well enough yourself, Pastor, what it's like to be alone in the world. And I think I can honestly say I'm both willing and able. You don't know of any place like that for me, Pastor, do you?

MANDERS. Who, me? No, to be quite honest, I don't.

REGINE. But dear, dear Pastor Manders . . . you will think of me, won't you, if ever . . .

MANDERS [*gets up*]. Yes, that I will, Miss Engstrand.

REGINE. Because if I . . .

MANDERS. Would you be so kind as to fetch Mrs. Alving?

REGINE. I'll see to it at once, Pastor.

[REGINE *goes out, left.* PASTOR MANDERS *walks up and down the room a few times, stands at the back of the room for a moment with his hands clasped behind his back, looking out at the garden. Then he again comes back near the table, picks up a book and looks at the title page; he gives a start and looks at several more.*]

MANDERS. H'm! Indeed!

[MRS. ALVING *enters through the door, left. She is followed by* REGINE *who immediately goes off again, right.*]

MRS. ALVING [*holds out her hand*]. Welcome, Pastor.

MANDERS. Good morning, Mrs. Alving. Here I am, just as I promised.

MRS. ALVING. Punctual, as ever.

MANDERS. But it wasn't easy getting away, believe me. All these blessed committees and things I've been put on. . . .

MRS. ALVING. All the nicer of you to come so promptly. Now we can get our business settled before dinner. But where's your suitcase?

MANDERS [*hurriedly*]. I left my things down at the store. I'll stay there tonight.

MRS. ALVING [*suppressing a smile*]. Can't you be persuaded even yet to stay the night in my house?

MANDERS. No, no, Mrs. Alving, thanks all the same. I'll stay down there again as usual. It's so handy for catching the boat.

MRS. ALVING. Well, have it your own way. All the same, I really do think a couple of old things like us. . . .

MANDERS. Dear me, you will have your little joke, won't you? Well, of course you must be feeling extremely pleased with yourself today. First the celebrations tomorrow, and then having Oswald at home.

MRS. ALVING. Yes, just fancy! Isn't it marvellous! It's more than two years since he was last home. Now he's promised to stay with me the whole winter.

MANDERS. Has he now? There's a nice dutiful son for you. Because I imagine the attractions of living in Rome or Paris are altogether different.

MRS. ALVING. Yes, but you see here at home he has his mother. Ah, my dear, darling boy . . . he still has a soft spot for his mother!

MANDERS. I must say it would be a sad thing if leaving home and taking up Art and all that interfered with his natural feelings.

MRS. ALVING. Ah, it's right what you say. But there isn't any danger of that with him, no really there isn't. It will be fun to see if you recognize him again. He'll be coming down later. He's just upstairs having a little rest on the sofa. But do sit down, my dear Pastor.

MANDERS. Thank you. You are sure it's quite convenient. . . ?

MRS. ALVING. Yes, of course it is.

[*She sits down at the table.*]

MANDERS. Good. Let's see then. . . . [*He goes over to the chair on which his satchel is lying, takes a sheaf of papers out of it, sits down at the opposite side of the table and looks for a clear space to put his papers down.*] First of all we have . . . [*Breaking off.*] Tell me, Mrs. Alving, how did *these* books get *here*?

MRS. ALVING. These books? They are books *I* am reading.

MANDERS. You read that sort of thing?

MRS. ALVING. Of course I do.

MANDERS. Do you think reading that sort of thing makes you feel any better, or any happier?

MRS. ALVING. I feel, as it were, more confident.

MANDERS. Strange. How?

MRS. ALVING. Well, I find it seems to explain and confirm a lot of the things I had been thinking myself. That's the strange thing, Pastor Manders . . . there's really nothing new in these books; there's nothing there but what most people think and believe already. It's just that most people either haven't really considered these things, or won't admit them.

MANDERS. Good God! Do you seriously believe that most people . . . ?

MRS. ALVING. Yes, I do.

MANDERS. Yes, but surely not in this country? Not here?

MRS. ALVING. Oh yes, here too.

MANDERS. Well, I must say. . . !

MRS. ALVING. Anyway, what is it in fact you've got against these books?

MANDERS. Got against them? You don't think I waste my time examining publications of that kind, surely?

MRS. ALVING. Which means you know absolutely nothing about what you are condemning?

MANDERS. I have read sufficient about these publications to disapprove of them.

MRS. ALVING. Yes, but your own personal opinion. . . .

MANDERS. My dear lady, there are many occasions in life when one must rely on others. That's the way of the world, and things are best that way. How else would society manage?

MRS. ALVING. Well, you may be right.

MANDERS. Not that I want to deny, of course, that these books can have a considerable fascination. Nor can I blame you for wanting to get to know something about the new trends of thought which, so they tell me, are current in the great world outside—that world in which you have allowed your son so much rein for so long. But . . .

MRS. ALVING. But . . . ?

MANDERS [*lowering his voice*]. But one doesn't talk about it, Mrs. Alving. One doesn't have to account to all and sundry for what one reads and thinks in the privacy of one's own room.

MRS. ALVING. No, of course not. I quite agree.

MANDERS. Think for a moment of the responsibilities you have towards this Orphanage. You decided to found it at a time when your opinions and beliefs were very different from what they are now—as far as *I* can judge, anyway.

MRS. ALVING. Yes, yes, I quite admit that. But about the Orphanage. . . .

MANDERS. That's right, we were going to discuss the Orphanage. Still . . . caution, dear lady! Now let's get down to business. [*Opens an envelope and takes some papers out.*] You see these?

MRS. ALVING. The deeds?

MANDERS. Complete, and in order. It wasn't easy getting them ready in time, believe me. I had to bring a certain amount of pressure to bear. The authorities are painfully conscientious when it comes to drawing up agreements. But anyway, here they are. [*He turns over the papers.*] Here is the deed of conveyance for the site known as Solvik, being part of the Rosenvold estate, together with the buildings newly erected thereon, the school, the school house and

the chapel. And here is the authorization for the bequest and for the regulations of the institution. Would you like to see. . . . [*Reads.*] Regulations for the Captain Alving Memorial Home.

MRS. ALVING [*looks long at the paper*]. So there it is.

MANDERS. I chose 'Captain' rather than 'Chamberlain' for the name. 'Captain' looks less ostentatious.

MRS. ALVING. Yes, just as you think best.

MANDERS. And in this Bank Book you have details of the capital sum, the interest on which is to cover the running expenses of the Orphanage.

MRS. ALVING. Thank you. But it would be a great convenience if you would please hold on to them.

MANDERS. With pleasure. I think we'll leave the money in the bank for the time being. The interest isn't very attractive, it's true—four per cent. at six months' notice. If in time we could find some good mortgage investment . . . a first mortgage it would have to be, of course, and absolutely sound . . . then we could discuss the thing again in more detail.

MRS. ALVING. Yes, yes, dear Pastor Manders, you know best about these things.

MANDERS. Anyway, I'll keep my eyes open. . . . But there's just one other thing I've been meaning to ask you several times.

MRS. ALVING. And what is that?

MANDERS. Are the Orphanage buildings to be insured or not?

MRS. ALVING. Yes, of course they must be insured.

MANDERS. Ah, but wait a moment Mrs. Alving. Let's examine this matter more closely.

MRS. ALVING. I keep everything insured—the buildings, the contents, the crops and the stock.

MANDERS. Naturally. On your own property. I do the same . . . of course. But this is quite a different thing, you see. The Orphanage is, as it were, to be dedicated to a higher purpose.

MRS. ALVING. Yes, but . . .

MANDERS. As for me personally, I don't honestly see anything objectionable in covering ourselves against all possible contingencies. . .

MRS. ALVING. Nor do I.

MANDERS. . . . but what about the people round here, how would they react? That's something you know better than I.

MRS. ALVING. H'm, people's reactions. . . .

MANDERS. Would there be any considerable body of responsible opinion—really responsible opinion—that might take exception to it?

MRS. ALVING. Well, what actually is it you mean by responsible opinion?

MANDERS. I'm thinking principally of men in independent and influential positions of the kind that makes it difficult not to attach a certain importance to their opinions.

MRS. ALVING. Oh, there are plenty here of the kind that might very easily take exception if . . .

MANDERS. Well, there you are! In town we have plenty of that kind. You've only got to think of all those who support my colleague! It would be so terribly easy to interpret things as meaning that neither you nor I had a proper faith in Divine Providence.

MRS. ALVING. But as far as you are concerned, my dear Pastor, you know perfectly well yourself. . . .

MANDERS. Yes, I know, I know . . . my conscience is clear, that's true enough. But all the same, we might not be able to stop people from seriously misrepresenting us. And that in turn might well have an inhibiting effect on the activities of the Orphanage.

MRS. ALVING. Well, if *that* were to be the case . . .

MANDERS. Nor can I altogether disregard the difficult . . . I might well call it painful position, I might conceivably find myself in. All the influential people in town have been talking about this Orphanage. It's partly intended to benefit the town, of course, and people are hoping it will help considerably towards reducing the burden

on the rates. But since I have acted as your adviser and looked after the business side of things, I rather fear the more zealous ones would turn on *me* in the first place. . . .

MRS. ALVING. Yes, that risk you mustn't run.

MANDERS. To say nothing of the attacks that would undoubtedly be made on me in certain papers and periodicals. . . .

MRS. ALVING. You've said enough, my dear Pastor Manders. That settles it.

MANDERS. So you don't want any insurance?

MRS. ALVING. No, we'll let it go.

MANDERS [*leaning back in his chair*]. But if there did happen to be an accident? You never know . . . would you be able to make good the damage?

MRS. ALVING. No, I can tell you straight, I wouldn't.

MANDERS. Well, you know, Mrs. Alving . . . this is really a grave responsibility we are taking upon ourselves.

MRS. ALVING. But *can* we do anything else, do you think?

MANDERS. No, that's just it. In fact, we *can't*. We mustn't run the risk of giving people the wrong impression; and mustn't at any cost give offence to the general public.

MRS. ALVING. You mustn't anyway, a clergyman.

MANDERS. And really I think we may assume that an institution of this kind will have luck on its side . . . indeed that it will enjoy a very special measure of protection.

MRS. ALVING. Let us hope so, Pastor Manders.

MANDERS. So we leave things as they are?

MRS. ALVING. Yes, certainly.

MANDERS. Good. Just as you wish. [*Notes down.*] Well, then—no insurance.

MRS. ALVING. Incidentally, it's odd you should happen to mention this today . . .

MANDERS. I had often thought of asking you about it. . . .

MRS. ALVING. . . . because yesterday we nearly had a fire down there.

MANDERS. What!

MRS. ALVING. Well, it wasn't anything very much. Some shavings caught fire in the carpenter's shop.

MANDERS. Where Engstrand works?

MRS. ALVING. Yes. They say he's sometimes rather careless with matches.

MANDERS. He has a lot on his mind, that man . . . all sorts of worries. From what I hear, he's trying very hard to turn over a new leaf, thank God.

MRS. ALVING. Oh? Who told you that?

MANDERS. He told me so himself. He's a good workman, too.

MRS. ALVING. Oh yes, when he's sober.

MANDERS. Ah, it's sad, that failing of his! He says he's very often driven to it because of his bad leg. The last time he was in town, I really felt very touched. He came and thanked me so sincerely for getting him this work here, so he could be beside Regine.

MRS. ALVING. He doesn't see much of her.

MANDERS. Oh yes. He has a word with her every day, he told me so himself.

MRS. ALVING. Oh well, it could be.

MANDERS. He feels he needs somebody to stand by him when temptation comes along. *That's* what is so likeable about Jacob Engstrand—the fact that he comes along so helplessly, so full of self-reproach, to confess his failings. The last time he looked in to see me. . . . Look, Mrs. Alving, suppose he desperately needed Regine back home with him again . . .

MRS. ALVING [*rises quickly*]. Regine!

MANDERS. . . . *You* mustn't try to prevent it.

MRS. ALVING. I will. I most certainly will try to prevent it. Anyway . . . Regine is going to work in the Orphanage.

MANDERS. But remember, he *is* her father. . . .

MRS. ALVING. Oh, I know best what sort of a father he's been to her. No, she's not going back to him if I can help it.

MANDERS [*rises*]. But dear Mrs. Alving, you mustn't get so worked-up about it. It's sad the way you misjudge poor Engstrand. It's almost as though you were terrified. . . .

MRS. ALVING [*calmer*]. That's as may be. I have taken Regine into my house and in my house she shall remain. [*Listens.*] Sh! my dear Pastor Manders, I don't want to hear any more about it. [*Her face lights up with joy.*] Listen! There's Oswald coming downstairs. Let's think about *him* now.

[OSWALD ALVING *enters by the door, left; he has on a light overcoat, carries his hat in his hand, and is smoking a large Meerschaum pipe.*]

OSWALD [*remains standing in the doorway*]. Oh, I beg your pardon . . . I thought you were in the study. [*Comes forward.*] Good morning, Pastor.

MANDERS [*staring*]. Ah . . . ! Astounding . . . !

MRS. ALVING. Well, what have you got to say about him *now*, Pastor Manders.

MANDERS. I say . . . I say . . . But is it really . . . ?

OSWALD. Yes, it really is the Prodigal Son, Pastor.

MANDERS. But my dear young friend. . . .

OSWALD. Well, the exile returned, then.

MRS. ALVING. Oswald is thinking of the time when you were so very much against the idea of his becoming an artist.

MANDERS. Some decisions often seem to mortal view unwise at the time, but later. . . . [*Shakes his hand.*] Welcome, welcome! Really, my dear Oswald . . . I can call you Oswald, can't I?

OSWALD. What else would you call me?

MANDERS. Good. What I wanted to say, my dear Oswald, was *this*—you mustn't think I want to condemn out of hand all artists and their ways. I assume there are many who can still preserve some integrity of soul even in their circumstances.

OSWALD. We must hope so.

MRS. ALVING [*beaming with pleasure*]. I know one who has preserved his integrity, both of soul and of body. Just look at him, Pastor Manders.

OSWALD [*pacing up and down*]. Mother dear, please. . . !

MANDERS. Oh, indubitably . . . nobody will deny that. And already you've begun to make a name for yourself. There have often been things in the paper about you, and extremely favourable too. Well that is . . . I believe things seem to have fallen off a bit of late.

OSWALD [*near the conservatory*]. I haven't been doing much painting lately.

MRS. ALVING. Even an artist must rest now and again.

MANDERS. I can well imagine that. Then he gathers strength in preparation for something big.

OSWALD. Yes. . . . Mother, how soon will dinner be ready?

MRS. ALVING. In just half an hour. He's got a good appetite, thank God.

MANDERS. And a taste for tobacco, too.

OSWALD. I found Father's pipe in the little room upstairs, and . . .

MANDERS. Aha! So that was it!

MRS. ALVING. What?

MANDERS. When Oswald was standing there in the door, with that pipe in his mouth, he looked the very spit and image of his father.

OSWALD. Really?

MRS. ALVING. How can you say that! Oswald takes after me.

MANDERS. Yes, but there's something about the corners of the mouth, something about the lips, that reminds one exactly of Alving . . . at least when he is smoking.

MRS. ALVING. Not at all. Oswald is much more like a clergyman about the mouth, I would say.

MANDERS. Yes, yes, quite a lot of my colleagues have a similar expression.

MRS. ALVING. But put that pipe away now, my dear boy. I don't want smoke in here.

OSWALD [*does so*]. Certainly. I just wanted to try it. Because I smoked it once before, as a child.

MRS. ALVING. You?

OSWALD. Yes. I was quite small at the time. And I remember I went up to Father's room one evening when he was feeling rather pleased with himself.

MRS. ALVING. You can't remember anything of those years.

OSWALD. I can. I distinctly remember he sat me on his knee and gave me the pipe to smoke. 'Smoke, lad,' he said, 'go on, lad, smoke!' And I smoked as hard as I could, till I felt I was going quite pale and great beads of sweat stood out on my forehead. Then he roared with laughter. . . .

MANDERS. Most extraordinary!

MRS. ALVING. My dear Pastor, it's only something Oswald has dreamt.

OSWALD. No, Mother, I certainly didn't dream it. Because—don't you remember—you came in and carried me off to the nursery. Then I was sick, and I saw you were crying. . . . Did Father often play tricks like that?

MANDERS. When he was young, he was always full of the joys of living. . . .

OSWALD. And still managed to accomplish such a lot in life. So much that was good and useful, though he wasn't very old when he died.

MANDERS. Yes, you certainly bear the name of a fine, enterprising man, my dear Oswald Alving. I trust it will be an incentive to you. . . .

OSWALD. Yes, it ought to be.

MANDERS. It was nice of you to come home for these celebrations in his honour.

OSWALD. That's the least I could do for Father.

MRS. ALVING. The really nice thing is that he is letting me keep him here a while.

MANDERS. You are going to be at home over the winter, I hear.

OSWALD. I'm going to be at home indefinitely, Pastor. . . . Ah, it *is* nice to be home again.

MRS. ALVING [*beaming*]. Yes, isn't it, Oswald?

MANDERS [*looking sympathetically at him*]. You left home at a very early age, my dear Oswald.

OSWALD. I did. Sometimes I wonder whether it wasn't *too* early.

MRS. ALVING. Not at all. It's a good thing for a bright lad. Especially when he's an only child. You don't want him staying at home with his mother and father getting spoilt.

MANDERS. That's a very moot point, Mrs. Alving. A child's proper place is and must be the home.

OSWALD. I rather think I agree with the pastor there.

MANDERS. Look at your own son. There's no reason why we shouldn't talk about it in front of him. What has been the result in his case? There he is—twenty-six, twenty-seven years old, and never had an opportunity of knowing what a proper home is like.

OSWALD. I beg your pardon, Pastor . . . you are quite wrong there.

MANDERS. Oh? I thought you had been moving more or less exclusively in artistic circles.

OSWALD. I have.

MANDERS. And mostly among the younger artists.

OSWALD. Yes.

MANDERS. But I thought most of those people couldn't afford to set up a home and start a family.

OSWALD. Plenty of them can't afford to get married, Pastor Manders.

MANDERS. Yes. That's what I am saying.

OSWALD. Yet they can still have a home. And some of them *do*. And very proper and very comfortable homes they are.

[MRS. ALVING *follows with close attention, and nods but says nothing.*]

MANDERS. But I'm not talking about bachelor establishments. By 'home' I mean a place for a family, where a man lives with his wife and children.

OSWALD. Yes, or with his children and his children's mother.

MANDERS [*startled, clasps his hands*]. Good heavens!

OSWALD. Well?

MANDERS. Live with his children's mother!

OSWALD. Well, would you rather he abandoned his children's mother?

MANDERS. So it's illicit relationships you are talking about. These so-called sham marriages!

OSWALD. I have never noticed anything particularly sham about these people's lives together.

MANDERS. But how is it possible for any young man or woman with . . . with the slightest sense of decency to consent to live in that fashion . . . openly, for all the world to see!

OSWALD. But what are they to do? A poor young artist . . . a poor girl. . . . It costs money to get married. What are they to do?

MANDERS. What are they to do? Yes, Mr. Alving, I'll tell you what they are to do. They should have kept away from each other from the very start—that's what they should have done!

OSWALD. That kind of talk won't get you very far with eager young people in love.

MRS. ALVING. No, that won't get you very far!

MANDERS [*continuing*]. To think the authorities tolerate such things! That this sort of thing goes on openly! [*Facing* MRS. ALVING.] Hadn't I good reason to be so deeply concerned about your son? Moving in circles where blatant immorality is rampant, where it's even become the accepted thing. . . .

OSWALD. I'll tell you something, Pastor Manders. I have been a regular Sunday visitor in some of these unconventional homes. . . .

MANDERS. On Sundays, even!

OSWALD. Yes, surely that's when people should enjoy themselves? But never have I heard one word that could give offence, let alone seen anything that could be called immoral. No, do you know where and when I *have* encountered immorality in artistic circles?

MANDERS. No, thank God!

OSWALD. Well then, permit me to tell you. When some of our model husbands and fathers took themselves a trip to Paris to have a look round on the loose . . . and condescended to drop in on the artists in their modest haunts, that's when I've met it. Then we got to know what was what. These gentlemen were able to tell us about places and things we'd never even dreamt of.

MANDERS. What? Are you insinuating that respectable men from this country would . . . ?

OSWALD. Have you never heard these respectable men when they get home again? Never heard them holding forth about the outrageous immorality that's to be found abroad?

MANDERS. Yes, of course. . . .

MRS. ALVING. I have too.

OSWALD. Well, you can believe every word they say. Some of them are experts. [*Clutching his head.*] Oh, when I think of that glorious, free life out there . . . smeared by this filth.

MRS. ALVING. You mustn't excite yourself, Oswald. It's not good for you.

OSWALD. Yes, you are right, Mother. It's bad for my health. It's this confounded tiredness, you know. Well, I'll take a little walk before dinner. Forgive me, Pastor Manders, I know you can't agree with all this. But I just had to say it.

[*He goes out through the second door, right.*]

MRS. ALVING. My poor boy. . . !

MANDERS. Yes, you may well say so. So this is what he's come to. [MRS. ALVING *looks at him in silence.* MANDERS *walks, up and down.*] He called himself the Prodigal Son. Alas . . . it's true! [MRS. ALVING *continues to look at him.*] And what do you say to all this?

MRS. ALVING. I say Oswald was right in every single word he said.

MANDERS [*stops short*]. Right! Right! To have standards like that!

MRS. ALVING. Living here alone, I have come round to the same way of thinking myself, Pastor Manders. But I've never had the courage to say so. All right, now my boy shall speak for me.

MANDERS. Then you are greatly to be pitied, Mrs. Alving. But now I have something very serious to say to you. No longer as your business executor and adviser, nor even as you and your husband's life-long friend do I stand before you now. It is as your priest, standing now as he stood once before at that most critical moment of your life.

MRS. ALVING. And what does my priest have to say to me?

MANDERS. Let me first refresh your memory, Mrs. Alving. The time is well chosen. Tomorrow is the tenth anniversary of your husband's death. Tomorrow a memorial is to be unveiled in his honour. Tomorrow I shall address the assembled company. But today I want to speak to you alone.

MRS. ALVING. Very well, Pastor Manders. Go on!

MANDERS. You remember how, after little more than a year of married life, you stood on the very brink of disaster? How you left house and home. . . . How you ran away from your husband. . . . Yes, Mrs. Alving, ran away, and refused to go back to him, no matter how much he begged and pleaded?

MRS. ALVING. Have you forgotten how utterly miserable I felt that first year?

MANDERS. All this demanding to be happy in life, it's all part of this same wanton idea. What right have people to happiness? No, we have our duty to do, Mrs. Alving! And your duty was to stand by the man you had chosen, and to whom you were bound by sacred ties.

MRS. ALVING. You know very well what sort of life my husband was living in those days, the excesses he committed.

MANDERS. I know quite well the rumours that were going about. And I would be the last person to condone his conduct as a young man, assuming these rumours told the truth. But it is not a wife's place to sit in judgement on her husband. Your duty should have been to bear with humility that cross which a higher power had judged proper for you. But instead you have the effrontery to cast away the cross, you abandon the man whose stumbling steps you should have guided, you go and risk your own good name, and . . . very nearly jeopardize other people's reputations into the bargain.

MRS. ALVING. Other people's? *One* other person's, you mean?

MANDERS. It was extremely inconsiderate of you to seek refuge with *me*.

MRS. ALVING. With our priest? With our close friend?

MANDERS. Precisely for that reason. . . . Yes, you should thank God I possessed the necessary strength of mind . . . that I managed to dissuade you from your hysterical intentions, and that it was granted to me to lead you back into the path of duty, and home to your lawful husband.

MRS. ALVING. Yes, Pastor Manders, that certainly was your doing.

MANDERS. I was only the humble instrument of a higher power. And the fact that I made you return to the path of duty and obedience, hasn't that proved a tremendous blessing to you ever since? Didn't things go just as I had prophesied? Didn't Alving turn his back on his profligate ways, as a decent man should? And didn't he, from then on, live a quite irreproachable and affectionate life with you for the rest of his days? Didn't he become a great benefactor to this district? And didn't he help and encourage you, so much that you eventually came to collaborate with him in all his enterprises? And a very efficient helpmate you were, too. . . . Oh, I know that, Mrs. Alving. Credit where credit is due. . . . But then I come to the next big mistake in your life.

MRS. ALVING. What do you mean?

MANDERS. Just as you once denied your duty as a wife, you have since denied it as a mother.

MRS. ALVING. Ah. . . !

MANDERS. All your life, you've always been quite disastrously selfish and stubborn. In everything you have done, you have tended to be headstrong and undisciplined. Never would you tolerate any kind of restraint. Anything that became an encumbrance to you in your life, you had no scruples or hesitations about throwing it off, as though it were a burden you could dispose of as and when you pleased. It didn't suit you any longer to be a wife, so you left your husband. You found it irksome being a mother, so you put your child out with strangers.

MRS. ALVING. Yes, that's true. I did do that.

MANDERS. With the result that you are now a stranger to him.

MRS. ALVING. No, no, I'm not!

MANDERS. You are! You must be! And what is he like, now you've got him back? Stop and think, Mrs. Alving. You did your husband great wrong—the fact that you are raising this memorial to him shows you recognize that. You should also recognize the wrong you have done your son. There may still be time to lead him back from the paths of iniquity. Turn back yourself, and save what can perhaps still be saved in him. Because, Mrs. Alving [*with raised forefinger*], you are in truth a very guilty mother. . . . I see it as my duty to tell you this.

[*Silence.*]

MRS. ALVING [*slowly, and with control*]. You have had your say, Pastor Manders. And tomorrow you will make a speech in my husband's memory. I shall not speak tomorrow. But now I'm going to talk to you just as you have talked to me.

MANDERS. Of course, you want to make excuses for what you did. . . .

MRS. ALVING. No. I just want to tell you something.

MANDERS. Well?

MRS. ALVING. None of these things you have been saying about my husband and me and our life together after you had led me back to the path of duty, as you put it—absolutely none of these things do you know from first-hand. From that moment on, you—our closest

friend, who regularly used to call every day—you never once set foot in our house.

MANDERS. You and your husband moved out of town immediately afterwards.

MRS. ALVING. Yes. And never once while my husband was alive did you come and see us. It was business that finally forced you to come and visit me, when you had to see about the Orphanage.

MANDERS [*in a low, uncertain voice*]. Helene, if this is meant as a reproach, I must ask you to bear in mind . . .

MRS. ALVING. . . . the consideration you owed to your position. Oh, yes! Also that I was a runaway wife. One can never be too careful where such reckless women are concerned.

MANDERS. My dear . . . Mrs. Alving, that is a gross exaggeration. . . .

MRS. ALVING. All right, all right. I just wanted to say *this*: that when you pass judgement on my married life, you are simply taking it for granted that popular opinion is right.

MANDERS. Well? What then?

MRS. ALVING. But now, Pastor Manders, now I'm going to tell you the truth. I swore to myself that one day you should know. You and you alone!

MANDERS. And what is the truth, then?

MRS. ALVING. The truth is this: my husband was just as debauched when he died as he had been all his life.

MANDERS [*fumbling for a chair*]. What did you say?

MRS. ALVING. After nineteen years of marriage, just as debauched—in his pleasures, at any rate—as he was before you married us.

MANDERS. Those youthful indiscretions . . . those irregularities . . . excesses, if you like . . . you call that a debauched life!

MRS. ALVING. That was the expression our doctor used.

MANDERS. I don't understand you.

MRS. ALVING. Nor is it necessary.

MANDERS. I feel quite dazed. Am I to believe that your entire married life . . . all those years together with your husband . . . were nothing but a façade.

MRS. ALVING. Precisely that. Now you know.

MANDERS. This is something . . . I find very hard to accept. I just don't understand. It's beyond me. How was it possible. . . ? How could a thing like that be kept hidden?

MRS. ALVING. That was the endless battle I fought, day after day. When we had Oswald, I rather thought Alving improved a little. But it didn't last long. And then I had to battle twice as hard, fight tooth and nail to prevent anybody from knowing what sort of person my child's father was. And you know, of course, how charming Alving could be. Nobody could believe anything but good of him. He was one of those people whose reputation is proof against anything they may do. But then, Pastor Manders . . . something else you must know . . . then came the most hideous thing of all.

MANDERS. More hideous than this?

MRS. ALVING. I put up with things, although I knew very well what was going on in secret outside this house. But when it came to scandal within these very walls. . . .

MANDERS. What's that you say! Here!

MRS. ALVING. Yes, here in our own home. In there [*points to the first door right*] in the dining-room, that's where I first got wind of it. I was doing something in there, and the door was standing ajar. Then I heard our maid come in from the garden with some water for the plants over there.

MANDERS. Well. . . ?

MRS. ALVING. Shortly afterwards I heard my husband come in, too. I heard him say something to her in a low voice. And then I heard. . . . [*With a short laugh.*] Oh, I can still hear it, so devastating and yet at the time so ludicrous . . . I heard my own maid whisper: 'Let me go, Mr. Alving! Leave me alone!'

MANDERS. How unseemly! How indiscreet of him! But I'm sure it was no more than an indiscretion, Mrs. Alving, please believe me.

MRS. ALVING. I soon knew what to believe. My husband had his way with the girl. . . . And *that* affair had its consequences, Pastor Manders.

MANDERS [*as though stunned*]. And all that in this very house! In this house!

MRS. ALVING. I had to put up with a lot in this house. To keep him at home in the evenings . . . and at nights . . . I had to join him in secret drinking orgies up in his room. I had to sit there with him, just the two of us drinking, and listen to his obscene, stupid remarks, and then struggling with him to get him dragged into his bed. . . .

MANDERS [*shaken*]. How could you bear it?

MRS. ALVING. I had to bear it for the sake of my little boy. But then came that final humiliation when my own servant girl . . . Then I swore to myself that this would have to stop! So I took control in the house . . . complete control . . . over him and everything else. Because now I had a weapon against him, you see, and he didn't dare say anything. That was the time Oswald was sent away. He was getting on for seven, and beginning to notice things and ask questions, as children do. That was something I couldn't bear. I felt the child would somehow be poisoned simply by breathing the foul air of this polluted house. That was why I sent him away. And now you understand why he was never allowed to set foot in this place as long as his father was alive. Nobody knows what that cost me.

MANDERS. What a terrible ordeal for you.

MRS. ALVING. I'd never have stood it if it hadn't been for my work. And I think I can say I have worked! The extensions to the estate, the improvements, all those useful innovations Alving got the credit for—do you imagine he was capable of anything like that? *Him*, sprawling there all day long on the sofa reading an old government gazette! No. And I will tell you this as well: I was the one who urged him on when he had his occasional more lucid intervals; and it was I who was left to run everything when he started kicking over the traces again, or lapsed into moaning and self-pity.

MANDERS. And this is the man you are raising a memorial to.

MRS. ALVING. Such is the power of a bad conscience.

MANDERS. Bad. . . ? What do you mean?

MRS. ALVING. I was obsessed by the thought that inevitably the truth must come out sometime and be believed. So the Orphanage was meant as it were to kill any rumours, and sweep away any misgivings.

MANDERS. I must say you haven't failed in that respect, Mrs. Alving.

MRS. ALVING. There was also one other reason. I didn't want Oswald, my son, to inherit a single thing from his father.

MANDERS. So it's Alving's money that . . . ?

MRS. ALVING. Yes. The money I have donated, year by year, to this Orphanage adds up exactly—and I've calculated it very carefully—exactly to the amount that made Lieutenant Alving such a good match in his day.

MANDERS. I don't understand. . . .

MRS. ALVING. That was my purchase price . . . I don't want any of that money to pass to Oswald. Anything my son gets is to come from me, and that's that.

[OSWALD ALVING *enters through the second door, right; he has taken off his hat and coat outside.*]

MRS. ALVING [*going towards him*]. Back already? My dear, dear boy!

OSWALD. Yes, what can you do outside in this everlasting rain? But I hear dinner's ready. Splendid!

REGINE [*with a parcel, from the dining-room*]. A parcel's come for you, Mrs. Alving.

[*She hands it to her.*]

MRS. ALVING [*with a glance at* PASTOR MANDERS]. The song sheets for tomorrow, presumably.

MANDERS. H'm. . . .

REGINE. And dinner is served.

MRS. ALVING. Good. We'll be there in a moment. I just want to. . .

[*She begins to open the parcel.*]

REGINE [*to* OSWALD]. Would Mr. Alving like white or red wine?

)SWALD. Both, please, Miss Engstrand.

EGINE. *Bien.* . . . Very good, Mr. Alving.

[*She goes into the dining-room.*]

)SWALD. I may as well help to draw the corks. . . .

[*He also goes into the dining-room; the door swings half open after him.*]

IRS. ALVING [*who has opened the parcel*]. Yes, quite right. Here are the song sheets, Pastor Manders.

IANDERS [*with folded hands*]. How I shall ever have the face to give my speech tomorrow . . . !

IRS. ALVING. Oh, you'll manage it somehow.

IANDERS [*in a low voice, so as not to be heard in the dining-room*]. Yes, we mustn't have any scandal, of course.

IRS. ALVING [*quietly but firmly*]. No. But *then* this long, ghastly farce will be over. After tomorrow I shall feel as though that man had never lived in this house. There'll be nobody else here but my son and his mother.

[*From the dining-room comes the sound of a chair being overturned; simultaneously a voice is heard.*]

REGINE'S VOICE [*in a sharp whisper*]. Oswald! Are you mad? Let me go!

MRS. ALVING [*stiffening with horror*]. Ah. . . !

[*She stares wild-eyed towards the half-open door.* OSWALD *can be heard coughing and humming. A bottle is uncorked.*]

MANDERS [*agitated*]. What on earth was that! What's the matter, Mrs. Alving?

MRS. ALVING [*hoarsely*]. Ghosts! Those two in the conservatory . . . come back to haunt us.

MANDERS. What do you say! Regine. . . ? Is *she* . . . ?

MRS. ALVING. Yes. Come. Not a word. . . !

[*She grips* PASTOR MANDERS *by the arm and walks unsteadily towards the dining-room.*]

ACT TWO

The same room. A heavy mist still lies over the landscape. PASTOR MANDERS *and* MRS. ALVING *come out of the dining-room.*

MRS. ALVING [*still in the doorway*]. Kind of you to say so, Pastor. [*Calling into the dining-room.*] Aren't you coming, Oswald?

OSWALD [*within*]. No, thank you. I think I'll go out for a bit.

MRS. ALVING. Yes, do. It's a little clearer now. [*She shuts the dining-room door, walks over to the hall door, and calls.*] Regine!

REGINE [*outside*]. Yes, Mrs. Alving?

MRS. ALVING. Go and help with the decorations down in the ironing room.

REGINE. Yes, Mrs. Alving.

[MRS. ALVING *assures herself that* REGINE *is going, then she shuts the door.*]

MANDERS. I suppose he can't hear anything in there?

MRS. ALVING. Not when the door is shut. Anyway, he's going out.

MANDERS. I'm still quite bewildered. How I managed to swallow a single bite of that excellent dinner, I don't know.

MRS. ALVING [*controlling her agitation, walking up and down*]. Nor I. But what's to be done?

MANDERS. Yes, what's to be done? I'm blessed if I know. I'm completely inexperienced in matters of this kind.

MRS. ALVING. I'm convinced nothing disastrous has happened yet.

MANDERS. No, God forbid. But it's a most unfortunate state of affairs, all the same.

MRS. ALVING. The whole thing's only a passing fancy of Oswald's, you can be sure.

IANDERS. Well, as I said, I'm not very well up in these things. But I cannot help feeling. . .

IRS. ALVING. Of course, we must get her out of the house. Immediately. That's quite clear. . . .

IANDERS. Naturally.

IRS. ALVING. But where to? We can't very well. . . .

IANDERS. Where to? Home to her father, of course.

IRS. ALVING. To whom did you say?

IANDERS. To her. . . . Ah, but of course Engstrand isn't. . . . Good heavens, Mrs. Alving, this can't be possible? You must be mistaken, surely?

IRS. ALVING. I'm afraid there's no mistake. Johanna had to confess everything to me, and Alving couldn't deny it. There was nothing else we could do but get the thing hushed up.

MANDERS. I suppose there was nothing else for it.

MRS. ALVING. The girl left at once, and she was given quite a fair amount to keep her mouth shut. The rest she managed for herself when she got to town. She took up with Engstrand again and I dare say dropped a few hints about how much money she had, and told him a tale about some foreigner who was supposed to have put in here that summer with his yacht. So she and Engstrand got married, all in a great hurry. Why, you married them yourself.

MANDERS. But what am I to make of . . . ? I distinctly remember Engstrand coming to arrange about the wedding. He was quite abject, and full of remorse about the foolish thing he and the girl had done.

MRS. ALVING. Of course, he had to take the blame on himself.

MANDERS. But the deceit of the man! And to *me*! I would honestly never have believed it of Jacob Engstrand. Well I shall have something to say to him about that, so he can just look out. . . . The immorality of a match of that sort! And all for money. . . ! How much did the girl have?

MRS. ALVING. Three hundred dollars.

MANDERS. Fancy going and getting married to a fallen woman for three hundred miserable dollars!

MRS. ALVING. What do you say about me, then, going and letting myself be married to a fallen man?

MANDERS. But . . . good heavens! What are you talking about? A fallen man!

MRS. ALVING. Do you imagine when I went to the altar with Alving, he was any purer than Johanna was when Engstrand married her?

MANDERS. But these are two utterly different things. . . .

MRS. ALVING. Not so terribly different, in fact. Admittedly there was a big difference in the price . . . three hundred miserable dollars as against a whole fortune.

MANDERS. But how can you compare things so utterly dissimilar. You had taken counsel with your own heart, and with your family.

MRS. ALVING [*not looking at him*]. I thought you realized where my heart, as you put it, had strayed at that time.

MANDERS [*distantly*]. If I had realized anything of the kind, I would not have been a daily guest in your husband's house.

MRS. ALVING. Well, the fact remains I did not, after all, take counsel with myself.

MANDERS. Well, with your nearest relatives, then, as it was your duty to. With your mother and your two aunts.

MRS. ALVING. Yes, that's true. The three of them reckoned it all up for me. It's incredible how nicely worked out they had it all, showing how it would be sheer madness to turn down an offer like that. If only Mother could look in now and see what had become of all the glory.

MANDERS. Nobody can be held responsible for the way things have turned out. But nevertheless one thing is clear: your marriage was arranged in strict accord with law and order.

MRS. ALVING. Oh, all this law and order! I often think *that's* the cause of all the trouble in the world.

MANDERS. Mrs. Alving, that's a very wrong thing to say.

MRS. ALVING. Well, perhaps it is. But I'm not putting up with it any longer, all these ties and restrictions. I can't stand it! I must work myself free.

MANDERS. What do you mean by that?

MRS. ALVING [*drumming on the window frame*]. I should never have kept it a secret, the kind of life Alving led. But at the time I didn't dare do anything else . . . and it was partly for my own sake. What a coward I was!

MANDERS. Coward?

MRS. ALVING. If people had got to know about it, they'd probably have said 'Poor man, no wonder he lets himself go a bit, with a wife who runs off and leaves him.'

MANDERS. There would have been some justification for saying that.

MRS. ALVING [*looking hard at him*]. If I were the sort of person I should be, I would take Oswald on one side and say: 'Listen, my son, your father was an old reprobate. . . .'

MANDERS. Heavens above!

MRS. ALVING. . . . and then I would tell him everything I've told you . . . the whole lot.

MANDERS. I am really rather shocked at you, Mrs. Alving.

MRS. ALVING. Oh, I know! I know! I find the idea shocking myself. [*Walks away from the window.*] What a coward I am!

MANDERS. Do you call it cowardice, to do what is quite plainly your duty? Have you forgotten that a child is supposed to love and honour its father and mother?

MRS. ALVING. Let's not generalize. The question is: is Oswald supposed to love and honour Captain Alving?

MANDERS. Don't you feel your mother's heart prompting you not to shatter your son's ideals?

MRS. ALVING. But what about the truth?

MANDERS. What about his ideals?

MRS. ALVING. Oh, ideals, ideals! If only I weren't such a coward!

MANDERS. Don't despise ideals, Mrs. Alving . . . that can bring a cruel reckoning. Especially in Oswald's case. Oswald hasn't so very many ideals, unfortunately. But I saw enough to realize that his father represents a kind of ideal to him.

MRS. ALVING. Yes, you are right.

MANDERS. And it was you yourself who gave him these ideas, and your letters encouraged him in them.

MRS. ALVING. Yes, I was doing my duty, observing the proprieties. That's why I lied to my son, year in and year out. Oh, what a coward . . . what a coward I have been!

MANDERS. You have built up a beautiful illusion in your son's mind, Mrs. Alving . . . and really, that's something you shouldn't underestimate.

MRS. ALVING. H'm! Who knows if it is actually such a good thing after all. . . . But I won't stand for any funny business with Regine. He's not going to go and mess up that girl's life.

MANDERS. Good Lord, no! That would be terrible!

MRS. ALVING. If I thought he was serious, and that it would make him happy. . . .

MANDERS. Well? What then?

MRS. ALVING. But it wouldn't. I'm afraid Regine isn't that kind.

MANDERS. What of it? What do you mean?

MRS. ALVING. If only I weren't such a miserable coward, I'd say to him: marry the girl, or come to some arrangement between yourselves. So long as there's nothing underhand.

MANDERS. Merciful heavens! Legal marriage, even! Of all the frightful. . . . Of all the unheard-of . . . !

MRS. ALVING. Unheard-of, you say? Hand on heart, Pastor Manders, do you think there aren't plenty of couples all over the country who are every bit as closely related?

MANDERS. I simply don't understand you.

MRS. ALVING. Oh yes, you do.

MANDERS. I suppose you are thinking of the possibility that. . . . Yes, I regret to say family life is in fact not always as pure as it ought to be. But with the sort of thing you are hinting at, nobody can ever really tell . . . not with any certainty, at least. Here, on the other hand. . . ! How you, as a mother, could be willing to allow your . . . !

MRS. ALVING. But I'm *not* willing! I couldn't wish it, not for anything. That's precisely what I'm saying.

MANDERS. No, because you are a coward, as you put it. But supposing you weren't a coward. . . ! God in Heaven, what a shocking union!

MRS. ALVING. Well, for that matter we are all descended from unions of that sort, they say. And who was it arranged things like that here on earth, Pastor Manders?

MANDERS. I do not propose to discuss such questions with you, Mrs. Alving. You are far from having the right attitude of mind. But how you dare call it cowardice. . . !

MRS. ALVING. I'll tell you what I mean. The reason I'm so timid and afraid is that I can never get properly rid of the ghosts that haunt me.

MANDERS. What did you call them?

MRS. ALVING. Ghosts. When I heard Regine and Oswald in there, it was just like seeing ghosts. But then I'm inclined to think that we are all ghosts, Pastor Manders, every one of us. It's not just what we inherit from our mothers and fathers that haunts us. It's all kinds of old defunct theories, all sorts of old defunct beliefs, and things like that. It's not that they actually *live* on in us; they are simply lodged there, and we cannot get rid of them. I've only to pick up a newspaper and I seem to see ghosts gliding between the lines. Over the whole country there must be ghosts, as numerous as the sands of the sea. And here we are, all of us, abysmally afraid of the light.

MANDERS. Aha! So there we see the fruits of your reading. And a nice harvest it is, I must say. Oh, these disgusting, free-thinking pamphlets! Revolting!

MRS. ALVING. You are wrong, my dear Pastor. You were the one who goaded me into doing some thinking. And I shall always be grateful to you for that.

MANDERS. *I* did!

MRS. ALVING. Yes, when you forced me to submit to what you called my duty and my obligations. When you praised as right and proper what my whole mind revolted against, as against some loathsome thing. It was then I began to examine the fabric of your teachings. I began picking at one of the knots, but as soon as I'd got that undone, the whole thing came apart at the seams. It was then I realized it was just tacked together.

MANDERS [*softly, moved*]. And that's all that came of what was the hardest struggle of my life?

MRS. ALVING. Call it rather your most pitiful defeat.

MANDERS. It was my life's greatest victory, Helene; victory over myself.

MRS. ALVING. It was a crime against us both.

MANDERS. Was it a crime to say to you: 'Woman, go back to your lawful husband'? When you came to me, demented, shouting: 'Here I am! Take me!'? Was *that* a crime?

MRS. ALVING. Yes, I think so.

MANDERS. We two don't understand each other.

MRS. ALVING. Not any more, at least.

MANDERS. Never once . . . not in my most secret thoughts . . . have I ever regarded you as anything other than another man's wife.

MRS. ALVING. Really?

MANDERS. Helene. . . .

MRS. ALVING. It's so easy to forget one's own past.

MANDERS. Not me. I'm the same as I always was.

MRS. ALVING [*changing her tone*]. Well, well, well, let's not talk any more about the old days. You are now up to the ears in committee work and other undertakings; and here I go battling on with ghosts, both within and without.

MANDERS. The latter kind I can at least help you to put down. After all the dreadful things I've heard from you today, I cannot in all conscience think of permitting a young defenceless girl to remain in your house.

MRS. ALVING. Don't you think the best thing would be if we could see her settled? Decently married, I mean?

MANDERS. Indubitably. I think in her case it's in every way desirable. Regine is now of an age when. . . . Of course, I'm not an expert in these things, but. . . .

MRS. ALVING. Regine matured very early.

MANDERS. Yes she did, didn't she. I seem to remember she was remarkably well developed physically when I was preparing her for confirmation. But she'd better go home for the present, under her father's care. . . . Ah, but of course Engstrand isn't. . . . To think that he, *he* of all people, could conceal the truth from me like that!

[*There is a knock on the hall door.*]

MRS. ALVING. Who can *that* be? Come in!

ENGSTRAND [*in his Sunday suit, in the doorway*]. Begging your pardon, but . . .

MANDERS. Aha! H'm. . . .

MRS. ALVING. It's you, is it, Engstrand?

ENGSTRAND. . . . there was none of the maids around, so I made so bold as to knock.

MRS. ALVING. Oh, very well, come in. Something you want to see me about?

ENGSTRAND [*comes in*]. No, thanks all the same. It was really the pastor I was wanting a word with.

MANDERS [*walking up and down*]. H'm, indeed. You want to talk to me, do you?

ENGSTRAND. Yes, I'd be awfully glad if . . .

MANDERS [*stops in front of him*]. Well? What is it, may I ask?

ENGSTRAND. Well, it's like this, Pastor. We are being paid off now down there . . . and many thanks to you, ma'am . . . and now everything's finished. And I was thinking it would be a good idea if us that's been working so hard together all this time . . . I was thinking we ought perhaps to finish up this evening with a bit of a service.

MANDERS. A service? Down at the Orphanage?

ENGSTRAND. Yes, but if you don't happen to think it's such a good idea, Pastor. . . .

MANDERS. Oh yes, I do, but . . . H'm. . . .

ENGSTRAND. I often used to say a prayer or two myself down there in the evenings. . . .

MRS. ALVING. Did you?

ENGSTRAND. Yes, now and again. Nothing like a bit of uplift, as you might say. But I'm just a simple, ordinary man with no real gift for it, so help me . . . and then it struck me that since Pastor Manders happened to be here. . . .

MANDERS. Look, Engstrand, first I must ask you something. Are you in the right frame of mind for a meeting of this kind? Do you feel your conscience is clear?

ENGSTRAND. God help us, Pastor, there's not much point in talking about consciences.

MANDERS. Oh yes, there is. That's exactly what we *are* going to talk about. Well? What have you got to say?

ENGSTRAND. Ah . . . it can be pretty bad, conscience can, sometimes.

MANDERS. Well, at least you admit it. But now I want you to tell me straight—what's the real story about Regine?

MRS. ALVING [*quickly*]. Pastor Manders!

MANDERS [*reassuringly*]. Please allow me. . . .

ENGSTRAND. About Regine? Lord, you put the wind up me there! [*Looks at* MRS. ALVING.] There's nothing the matter about Regine, is there?

MANDERS. Let's hope not. What I mean is this: what's the position as far as you and Regine are concerned? You are supposed to be her father, aren't you? Well?

ENGSTRAND [*hesitantly*]. Well . . . h'm . . . you know all about that business about me and poor Johanna.

MANDERS. No more prevarication. Your late wife informed Mrs. Alving of the true state of affairs before she left her service.

ENGSTRAND. Well I'll be. . . ! She did, did she?

MANDERS. So we've found you out, Engstrand.

ENGSTRAND. And she swore by all that was holy . . .

MANDERS. Swore?

ENGSTRAND. Well, took her oath, then. Really solemn.

MANDERS. And all these years you've been hiding the truth from me. From *me*, when I've always gone out of my way to show every confidence in you.

ENGSTRAND. Yes, I'm sorry to say I have that.

MANDERS. Have I deserved this of you, Engstrand? Haven't I always been ready to lend you a helping hand in any way, as far as it lay in my power? Answer me! Haven't I?

ENGSTRAND. Many's the time things would have looked pretty black for me if I hadn't had Pastor Manders.

MANDERS. And this is what I get for it. You get me to make false entries in the church register, and then for years afterwards you withhold the information you owed to me and to truth. Your conduct has been quite indefensible, Engstrand. And that's the end as far as we two are concerned.

ENGSTRAND [*with a sigh*]. Well, that's that, I suppose.

MANDERS. Because I can't see what possible excuse you could have?

ENGSTRAND. You didn't expect her to go round making the scandal worse by talking about it, did you? Now, Pastor, you just imagine yourself now in the same predicament as poor Johanna. . . .

MANDERS. Me?

ENGSTRAND. Good Lord, I don't mean exactly the same. What I mean is, suppose you had something you were ashamed of in the eyes of the world, as they say. We men shouldn't judge a poor woman too harshly, Pastor.

MANDERS. But I'm not. It's you I'm accusing.

ENGSTRAND. Could I ask you one little question, Pastor?

MANDERS. All right.

ENGSTRAND. Isn't it right and proper for a man to try and raise the fallen?

MANDERS. Yes, of course.

ENGSTRAND. And isn't a man bound to keep his promise?

MANDERS. Certainly he is. But. . . .

ENGSTRAND. When Johanna got into trouble on account of that Englishman—or maybe it was an American, or a Russian or whatever they're called—well, she came back to town. Poor thing, she'd already turned me down once or twice before; she only had eyes for the good-looking ones, she had; and of course I had this gammy leg of mine. You'll remember, Pastor, how I once screwed up my courage to go into one of them dance-halls where you get seafaring men carrying on all drunk and disorderly, as the saying goes. And just as I was appealing to them to turn over a new leaf . . .

MRS. ALVING [*over beside the window*]. H'm. . . .

MANDERS. I know, Engstrand. The brutes threw you downstairs. You've told me about that incident before. Your injury does you honour.

ENGSTRAND. I'm not the one to brag about it, Pastor. But what I was going to say was that she came along to me and confessed everything, with weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth. I must say it fair broke my heart to listen to her.

MANDERS. Did it really, Engstrand. What then?

ENGSTRAND. So then I says to her: this American is off roaming the seven seas. And as for you Johanna, I says, you've committed a sin, you're a fallen woman. But Jacob Engstrand, I says, he's a man that stands firm on his own two feet, he is . . . in a manner of speaking, that is, I meant, Pastor.

MANDERS. I quite understand. Go on.

ENGSTRAND. Well, so then I married her properly and set her on her feet again, so as nobody would get to know about her carrying on with foreigners.

MANDERS. All this is very admirable. What I can't approve of is that you could stoop to accepting money. . . .

ENGSTRAND. Money? Me? Not a cent.

MANDERS [*inquiringly to* MRS. ALVING]. But . . . ?

ENGSTRAND. Oh, yes, wait a minute . . . now I remember. Johanna did have a copper or two. But I wouldn't have anything to do with *that*. Puh, that's Mammon, I says, that's the wages of sin. We'll take that filthy gold—or notes, or whatever it was—and we'll chuck it back at that American, I says. But he was already up and away, over the stormy seas.

MANDERS. Was he now, Engstrand, my good fellow?

ENGSTRAND. Yes. So then Johanna and I agreed that the money was to go towards the child's education. And so it did. And I can account for every cent of it.

MANDERS. But this changes things quite considerably.

ENGSTRAND. That's the way things are, Pastor. And I think I can say I've been a good father to Regine . . . as far as my strength would let me . . . because I'm just a poor sinner, I'm afraid.

MANDERS. Come now, my dear Engstrand. . . .

ENGSTRAND. But I think I can say I was a loving husband to poor Johanna, and I brought up the child and provided a home, as the good book says we should. But it would never have occurred to me to go bragging to Pastor Manders and giving myself a pat on the back just because I'd happened to do a good deed for once in a while. No, when anything like that happens to Jacob Engstrand, he keeps his mouth shut about it. I should say it doesn't happen all that often, I'm afraid. And whenever I go along to see Pastor Manders, I've always plenty to do, talking about my mistakes and shortcomings. Because as I said just now, and I say it again: my conscience can be in a pretty bad way, sometimes.

MANDERS. Give me your hand, Jacob Engstrand.

ENGSTRAND. Oh Lord, Pastor. . . .

MANDERS. No beating about the bush! [*Grasps his hand.*] There now!

ENGSTRAND. And please, Pastor, I want to ask you very humbly to forgive me. . . .

MANDERS. You? On the contrary. I'm the one who should be asking you. . . .

ENGSTRAND. Oh, Lord, no!

MANDERS. But yes, I insist. And I do so with all my heart. Please forgive me for misjudging you like that. I only wish there were some way I could show my sincere regret, and my good will. . . .

ENGSTRAND. Would you, Pastor?

MANDERS. With the very greatest of pleasure. . . .

ENGSTRAND. Well, in point of fact there is something. With the bit of money I've put aside out of this job, I was thinking of starting a kind of Seamen's Home down in town.

MRS. ALVING. You *what*?

ENGSTRAND. Yes, the idea is to make it into a kind of home from home, as you might say. Many are the temptations open to a sailor when he sets foot ashore. But in this place of mine, I was thinking he could be sort of under a fatherly eye.

MANDERS. What do you say to that, Mrs. Alving!

ENGSTRAND. Heaven knows I haven't a great deal to make a start with. But if only I could be given a bit of a helping hand. . . .

MANDERS. Yes, yes, we must go into that in more detail. But now, you go on ahead and get things ready, and light the candles and brighten up the place a little. And we'll spend an improving hour together there, my dear Engstrand. Because now I do think you are in the right frame of mind.

ENGSTRAND. Yes, I think I am. Goodbye then, Mrs. Alving, and thank you. And take good care of Regine for me. [*He wipes away a tear.*] Poor Johanna's little girl . . . ah, it's a funny thing . . . but it's just as though she were tied fast to my heartstrings. Yes, it really is.

[*He bows and goes out through the hall.*]

MANDERS. Well, what do you say to our man now, Mrs. Alving? That was a very different explanation we got from him, wasn't it?

MRS. ALVING. Yes, it certainly was.

MANDERS. You see now how extremely careful one has to be when passing judgement on one's fellow men. But then what a real joy it is to discover that one has been mistaken. What do *you* say?

MRS. ALVING. I say you are a great big baby, and always will be.

MANDERS. Me?

MRS. ALVING [*places both hands on his shoulders*]. And I say I could almost feel like hugging you.

MANDERS [*drawing back hastily*]. Bless me, no. . . . What an idea!

MRS. ALVING [*with a smile*]. Oh, you needn't be afraid of me.

MANDERS [*beside the table*]. Sometimes you have such an extravagant way of expressing yourself. I'll just collect up these documents first and put them in my case. [*He does this.*] There now. And now, good-bye for the present. Keep your eyes open when Oswald returns. I'll look in on you again later.

[*He takes his hat and goes out through the hall door.* MRS. ALVING *sighs, looks for a moment out of the window, tidies up the room a little and is about to go into the dining-room but stops with a stifled cry in the doorway.*]

MRS. ALVING. Oswald, are you still in the dining-room!

OSWALD [*in the dining-room*]. I'm just finishing my cigar.

MRS. ALVING. I thought you'd gone for a little walk up the road.

OSWALD. In *this* weather?

[*A glass clinks.* MRS. ALVING *lets the door stand open and sits down with her knitting on the sofa by the window.*]

OSWALD. Wasn't that Pastor Manders who just went out?

MRS. ALVING. Yes, he went down to the Orphanage.

OSWALD. H'm.

[*The glass and the decanter clink again.*]

MRS. ALVING [*with a worried look*]. Oswald dear, you ought to go carefully with that liqueur. It's strong.

OSWALD. It keeps out the damp.

MRS. ALVING. Wouldn't you rather come in here beside me?

OSWALD. I can't smoke in there.

MRS. ALVING. You know it's all right to smoke cigars.

OSWALD. All right, I'll come then. Just another little drop. . . . There now.

[*He comes into the room smoking his cigar and shuts the door behind him. There is a short silence.*]

OSWALD. Where's the pastor gone?

MRS. ALVING. I told you, he's gone down to the Orphanage.

OSWALD. Oh yes, that's right.

MRS. ALVING. You shouldn't sit so long at the table, Oswald.

OSWALD [*holding his cigar behind his back*]. But I find it so pleasant, Mother. [*Pats and caresses her.*] Think what it means to me . . . to be home, to sit at my mother's own table, in my mother's room, and enjoy my mother's delicious cooking.

MRS. ALVING. My dear, dear boy!

OSWALD [*somewhat impatiently walks up and down, smoking*]. What else is there for me to do here? I can't get started on anything.

MRS. ALVING. Oh, can't you?

OSWALD. This dull weather? When there isn't a glimpse of the sun all day? [*Walks across the room.*] Oh, this not being able to work. . . !

MRS. ALVING. Perhaps you should have thought twice about coming home.

OSWALD. Oh no, Mother. I had to.

MRS. ALVING. Because I'd ten times rather sacrifice the joy of having you here than see you. . .

OSWALD [*stops beside the table*]. But tell me, Mother . . . does it really make you so very happy to have me home?

MRS. ALVING. Make me happy!

OSWALD [*crumpling a newspaper*]. I shouldn't have thought it made much difference to you whether I was around or not.

MRS. ALVING. Have you the heart to say that to your mother, Oswald?

OSWALD. Yet you managed to get on quite well without me before.

MRS. ALVING. Yes. I got on without you, that's true.

[*Silence. It begins slowly to grow dusk.* OSWALD *walks up and down the room. He has put the cigar down.*]

OSWALD [*stops beside* MRS. ALVING]. Mother, may I sit beside you on the sofa?

MRS. ALVING [*makes room for him*]. Yes, do, my dear.

OSWALD [*sits down*]. There is something I must tell you, Mother.

MRS. ALVING [*tense*]. Well?

OSWALD [*staring into space*]. Because I can't stand it any longer.

MRS. ALVING. Stand what? What is it?

OSWALD [*as before*]. I couldn't bring myself to write to you about it. And since I got home . . .

MRS. ALVING [*gripping his arm*]. Oswald, what is it?

OSWALD. Yesterday and again today, I tried to shake off these thoughts . . . fight myself free. But it's no use.

MRS. ALVING [*rising*]. You must tell me everything, Oswald!

OSWALD [*drags her down on the sofa again*]. Sit still, and I'll try and tell you . . . I've been complaining of feeling tired after my journey, you know. . . .

MRS. ALVING. Yes? Well?

OSWALD. But that's not what is wrong with me. Not ordinary tiredness. . . .

MRS. ALVING [*tries to jump up*]. You aren't ill, Oswald!

OSWALD [*pulling her down again*]. Sit still, Mother. Take it easy. I'm not really ill, either. Not what people generally call being ill. [*He puts his hands to his head.*] Mother, it's my mind that's given way . . . destroyed . . . I'll never be able to work again!

[*Hiding his face in his hands, he buries his head in her lap, sobbing bitterly.*]

MRS. ALVING [*pale and trembling*]. Oswald! Look at me! No, no, it isn't true!

OSWALD [*looks up with despair in his eyes*]. Never to be able to work again! Never . . . never! Like a living death! Mother, can you imagine anything more horrible?

MRS. ALVING. My poor boy! How did this terrible thing happen to you?

OSWALD [*sitting up again*]. Yes, that's just what I can't for the life of me understand. I've never gone in for reckless living. Not in any sense of the word. You must believe me, Mother. I've never done that.

MRS. ALVING. I'm sure you haven't, Oswald.

OSWALD. And yet a thing like this happens to me! This terrible thing!

MRS. ALVING. Oh, but it will get better, my darling. It's simply overwork, believe me.

OSWALD [*dully*]. That's also what I believed at first. But it isn't.

MRS. ALVING. Tell me everything, from beginning to end.

OSWALD. All right, I will.

MRS. ALVING. When did you first notice anything?

OSWALD. Immediately after the last time I was home, when I got back to Paris. I began to get the most violent pains in the head . . . generally here at the back of the head, it seemed. It was just like having an iron band clamped tight round your neck, and up there.

MRS. ALVING. And then?

OSWALD. At first I didn't think it was anything more than the ordinary headache I'd always suffered from, ever since I was a child.

MRS. ALVING. Yes, yes. . . .

OSWALD. But it wasn't. I soon realized that. I couldn't work any more. I wanted to start on a big new picture. But my skill just seemed to desert me, I felt paralysed, I couldn't concentrate, I felt giddy, everything went round and round. Oh, I was in a terrible state! In the end I sent for the doctor . . . and I learned the truth from him.

MRS. ALVING. What do you mean?

OSWALD. He was one of the leading doctors over there. I had to tell him how I felt. And then he started asking me a whole lot of questions that didn't seem to me to have anything at all to do with it. I couldn't understand what the man was getting at. . . .

MRS. ALVING. Well!

OSWALD. At last he said: there's been something worm-eaten about you since birth. He used that very word: 'vermoulu'.

MRS. ALVING [*tense*]. What did he mean by that?

OSWALD. I couldn't understand it either, and I asked him for a more detailed explanation. And then he said, the old cynic . . . [*Clenches his fist.*] Oh. . . !

MRS. ALVING. What did he say?

OSWALD. He said: the sins of the fathers are visited upon the children.

MRS. ALVING [*rising slowly*]. The sins of the fathers . . . !

OSWALD. I very nearly hit him in the face. . . .

MRS. ALVING [*walks across the floor*]. The sins of the fathers. . . .

OSWALD [*smiling sadly*]. Yes, what do you think? Of course, I assured him that was quite out of the question. But do you think he would give way? No, he wouldn't budge. And it wasn't until I'd produced your letters and translated for him all those bits about Father. . . .

MRS. ALVING. What then. . . ?

OSWALD. Well, then he naturally had to admit that he'd been on the wrong track. Then I learnt the truth. The incredible truth! This blissfully happy life I'd been living with my friends, I should never have indulged in it. It had been too much for my strength. So it was my own fault, you see!

MRS. ALVING. Oswald! Oh no, you mustn't think that!

OSWALD. There was no other possible explanation, he said. *That's* the really terrible thing. A hopeless wreck for the rest of my life . . . and all the result of my own thoughtlessness. All the things I wanted to do in life . . . I daren't even think about them again . . . can't think about them. Oh, if only I could live my life over again . . . undo everything I've done!

[*He throws himself face-down on the sofa.* MRS. ALVING *wrings her hands and walks up and down in silent inner conflict.*]

OSWALD [*after a moment, looks up and remains lying propped on his elbow*]. If only it had been something inherited . . . something one couldn't have helped. But this! The shame of it, throwing everything away like that, wantonly, thoughtlessly . . . happiness, health, everything . . . one's future . . . one's whole life . . . !

MRS. ALVING. No, no, my dear, darling boy! This is impossible. [*Bends over him.*] Things are not as desperate as you think.

OSWALD. Oh, you don't know. . . . [*Jumps up.*] And then there's all the worry I'm causing you, Mother. Many's the time I've half hoped you didn't really care very much about me.

MRS. ALVING. Oh, Oswald, my own boy! The one thing I have in all the world. The one thing I care anything at all about.

OSWALD [*seizes both her hands and kisses them*]. Yes, yes, I can see that. When I'm at home, I can see it all right. And that's almost the hardest thing about it for me.—Still, now you know. And let's not talk about it any more today. I can't bear thinking about it for long. [*Walks across the room.*] Get me something to drink, Mother!

MRS. ALVING. Drink? What do you want to drink now?

OSWALD. Oh, anything. You must have some of that cold punch in the house, haven't you?

MRS. ALVING. Yes, but my dear Oswald. . . !

OSWALD. Don't begrudge me that, Mother. Please! I *must* have something to swill all these nagging thoughts down with. [*He goes into the conservatory.*] How . . . how dark it is here! [MRS. ALVING *pulls the bell-rope, right.*] And this incessant rain! Week after week it can go

on, for months on end. Never a glimpse of the sun. All the times I've been home, I can't ever remember having once seen the sun.

MRS. ALVING. Oswald . . . you are thinking of leaving me!

OSWALD. H'm. . . . [*Sighs deeply.*] I'm not thinking of anything. I *can't* think of anything! [*In a low voice.*] I've given up thinking.

REGINE [*from the dining-room*]. You rang, ma'am?

MRS. ALVING. Yes, can we have the lamp in, please?

REGINE. At once, ma'am. It's already lit.

[*She goes out.*]

MRS. ALVING [*walks over to* OSWALD]. Oswald, don't keep anything back from me.

OSWALD. I'm not, Mother. [*He walks over to the table.*] I think I've told you plenty.

[REGINE *brings in the lamp and puts it on the table.*]

MRS. ALVING. And, Regine, you might bring us a half-bottle of champagne.

REGINE. Very good, ma'am.

[*She goes out again.*]

OSWALD [*puts his arm round* MRS. ALVING'S *neck.*] That's the style. I knew my mother wouldn't let her son go thirsty.

MRS. ALVING. My poor darling Oswald. How could I possibly refuse you anything now?

OSWALD [*eagerly*]. Is that true, Mother. Do you mean it?

MRS. ALVING. What?

OSWALD. That you couldn't refuse me anything?

MRS. ALVING. But Oswald dear. . .

OSWALD. Hush!

[REGINE *brings in a tray with a half-bottle of champagne and two glasses, which she places on the table.*]

REGINE. Shall I open . . . ?

OSWALD. No, thank you, I'll do it myself.

[REGINE *goes out again.*]

MRS. ALVING [*sits down at the table*]. What was it you thought . . . I couldn't refuse you?

OSWALD [*busy opening the bottle*]. First we'll have a glass . . . or two.

[*The cork pops, he fills one glass and is about to fill the other.*]

MRS. ALVING [*putting her hand over it*]. No, thanks . . . not for me.

OSWALD. All right, for me, then!

[*He empties his glass, re-fills it and empties it again; then he sits down at the table.*]

MRS. ALVING [*expectantly*]. Well?

OSWALD [*without looking at her*]. Tell me . . . I thought you and Pastor Manders were looking strangely . . . h'm . . . subdued, at dinner.

MRS. ALVING. You noticed?

OSWALD. Yes. H'm. . . . [*After a silence.*] Tell me . . . what do you think of Regine?

MRS. ALVING. What do I think of her?

OSWALD. Yes, isn't she marvellous?

MRS. ALVING. Oswald dear, you don't know her as well as I do. . . .

OSWALD. Well?

MRS. ALVING. Unfortunately Regine stayed too long at home. I should have had her here earlier.

OSWALD. Yes, but isn't she marvellous looking, Mother?

[*He fills his glass.*]

MRS. ALVING. Regine has many serious shortcomings. . . .

OSWALD. Well, what's that matter?

[*He drinks again.*]

MRS. ALVING. All the same, I'm fond of her; and I'm responsible for her. I wouldn't for the world want anything to happen to her.

OSWALD [*jumps up*]. Mother, Regine is my only hope!

MRS. ALVING [*rising*]. What do you mean by that?

OSWALD. I can't go on bearing all this agony of mind alone.

MRS. ALVING. Haven't you got your mother to bear it with you?

OSWALD. Yes, that's what I thought. That's why I came home to you. But that way's no use. I can see it's no use. I can't stand living here.

MRS. ALVING. Oswald!

OSWALD. I must live a different life, Mother. That's why I must leave you. I don't want you to have to watch it.

MRS. ALVING. My poor boy! But, Oswald, while you are as ill as this. . . .

OSWALD. If it were only the illness, I'd have been quite ready to stay with you, Mother. Because you are the best friend I have in the world.

MRS. ALVING. Yes, Oswald, I am, aren't I?

OSWALD [*wandering restlessly up and down*]. But it's all the torment, the anguish, the remorse . . . and this great mortal dread. Oh . . . this terrible feeling of dread!

MRS. ALVING [*following him*]. Dread? What feeling of dread? What do you mean?

OSWALD. Oh, you mustn't ask me any more. I don't know. I can't describe it to you. [MRS. ALVING *walks over and pulls the bell-rope, right.*] What do you want?

MRS. ALVING. I want my boy to be happy, that's what I want. He mustn't go on brooding like this. [*To* REGINE *who appears in the doorway.*] More champagne. A whole bottle.

[REGINE *goes.*]

OSWALD. Mother!

MRS. ALVING. Perhaps you think we don't know how to live out here in the country?

OSWALD. Isn't she marvellous looking? What a figure! And as sound as a bell!

MRS. ALVING [*sits down at the table*]. Sit down, Oswald, and let's talk things over quietly.

OSWALD [*sits down*]. You probably don't know, Mother, but I have to make it up to Regine for something I've done to her.

MRS. ALVING. *You've* done?

OSWALD. A bit of thoughtlessness . . . or whatever you like to call it. All very innocent, incidentally. When I was last home . . .

MRS. ALVING. Yes?

OSWALD. . . . she was always asking me about Paris, and I used to tell her something of what went on over there. Then one day I remember I happened to say: 'Wouldn't you like to come over yourself?'

MRS. ALVING. Well?

OSWALD. I saw her blush, and then she said: 'Yes, I wouldn't mind at all.' 'All right,' I said, 'we'll see if it can't be managed' . . . or something like that.

MRS. ALVING. Yes?

OSWALD. Of course I'd forgotten the whole thing. But when I happened to ask her a couple of days ago if she was glad I was going to be at home for so long. . .

MRS. ALVING. Yes?

OSWALD. . . . she gave me a funny look and said: 'But what about my trip to Paris?'

MRS. ALVING. Her trip!

OSWALD. And then she came out with it: she'd taken it all seriously, she'd been thinking about me the whole time, she'd even started learning French. . . .

MRS. ALVING. So that's why. . . .

OSWALD. Mother . . . this girl looked so marvellous standing there, so good-looking and vital . . . I'd never really noticed her very much before. . . . Then when she stood there, ready it seemed to take me in her arms . . .

MRS. ALVING. Oswald!

OSWALD. . . . it was then I realized that she was my salvation. Because she was filled with the joy of life.

MRS. ALVING [*starts*]. Joy of life. . . ? Can there be salvation in *that*?

REGINE [*from the dining-room with a bottle of champagne*]. I'm sorry I took so long, but I had to go down to the cellar. . . .

[*She puts the bottle on the table.*]

OSWALD. And fetch another glass.

REGINE [*looks at him in surprise*]. Mrs. Alving's glass is there, Mr. Alving.

OSWALD. Yes, but fetch one for yourself, Regine. [REGINE *starts, and casts a swift timid glance at* MRS. ALVING.] Well?

REGINE [*softly and hesitantly*]. If Mrs. Alving doesn't object. . . .

MRS. ALVING. Fetch the glass, Regine.

[REGINE *goes out to the dining-room.*]

OSWALD [*watching her*]. Have you noticed the way she walks? So firm, so unafraid.

MRS. ALVING. This is impossible, Oswald!

OSWALD. It's all decided. You must see that. It's useless to say anything. [REGINE *enters with an empty glass, which she keeps in her hand.*] Sit down, Regine.

[REGINE *looks inquiringly at* MRS. ALVING.]

MRS. ALVING. Sit down. [REGINE *sits down on a chair beside the dining-room door, still holding the empty glass in her hand.*] Oswald . . . what was that you were saying about the joy of life?

OSWALD. Yes, Mother, the joy of life. . . . You don't see much of that around this place. I never feel it here.

MRS. ALVING. Not even when you are with me?

OSWALD. Never when I'm at home. But you don't understand.

MRS. ALVING. Yes, I do . . . I'm beginning to understand . . . now.

OSWALD. That . . . and the joy of work, too. Well, they are the same thing, in fact. But people here don't know anything about that either.

MRS. ALVING. Perhaps you are right. Oswald, tell me more about this.

OSWALD. Well, all I mean is that people here are brought up to believe that work is a curse, and a sort of punishment for their sins; and that life is some kind of miserable affair, which the sooner we are done with the better for everybody.

MRS. ALVING. A vale of tears, I know. And we do our damnedest to make it that.

OSWALD. But people elsewhere simply won't have that. Nobody really believes in ideas of that sort any more. In other countries they think it's tremendous fun just to be alive at all. Mother, have you noticed how everything I've ever painted has turned on this joy of life? Always and without exception, this joy of life. Light and sunshine and a holiday spirit . . . and radiantly happy faces. That's why I'm frightened to stay at home with you.

MRS. ALVING. Frightened? What have you got to be frightened about, here with me?

OSWALD. I'm frightened that everything I care about would degenerate here into something ugly.

MRS. ALVING [*looks hard at him*]. You think *that* would happen?

OSWALD. I'm convinced it would. Live the same life here as abroad, yet it still wouldn't be the same life.

MRS. ALVING [*who has been listening intently, rises and says with big pensive eyes*]. Now I see the whole thing.

OSWALD. What do you see?

MRS. ALVING. Now I see for the first time. And now I can speak.

OSWALD [*rising*]. I don't understand you, Mother.

REGINE [*who has also risen*]. Perhaps I'd better go?

MRS. ALVING. No, stay here. Now I can speak. Now my boy must know everything. And then you can choose. Oswald! Regine!

OSWALD. Hush! The pastor. . . .

MANDERS [*enters by the hall door*]. There we are! We've had a most heart-warming time down there.

OSWALD. So have we.

MANDERS. Engstrand must be given help with his Seamen's Home. Regine must move in with him and lend a hand. . . .

REGINE. No, thank you, Pastor.

MANDERS [*only notices her now*]. What. . . ? Here, and with a glass in your hand!

REGINE [*quickly puts the glass down*]. Pardon!

OSWALD. Regine is leaving with me, Pastor.

MANDERS. Leaving with you!

OSWALD. Yes, as my wife . . . if she wants it that way.

MANDERS. But good heavens. . . !

REGINE. Don't blame me, Pastor.

OSWALD. Or else she stays here, if I stay.

REGINE [*involuntarily*]. Here!

MANDERS. I'm appalled at you, Mrs. Alving.

MRS. ALVING. Neither of these things will happen. Because now I can speak plainly.

MANDERS. But you mustn't. No, no, no!

MRS. ALVING. Oh yes I can, and I will. And nobody's ideals are going to suffer by it.

OSWALD. Mother, something's being kept from me! What is it?

REGINE [*listening*]. Mrs. Alving! Listen! They are shouting something out there.

[*She goes into the conservatory and looks out.*]

OSWALD [*over to the window, left*]. What's going on? Where's that glare coming from?

REGINE. The Orphanage is on fire!

MRS. ALVING [*towards the window*]. On fire!

MANDERS. On fire? Impossible. I've just been down there.

OSWALD. Where's my hat? Oh, never mind that . . . Father's Orphanage . . . !

[*He runs into the garden.*]

MRS. ALVING. My shawl, Regine! It's all in flames.

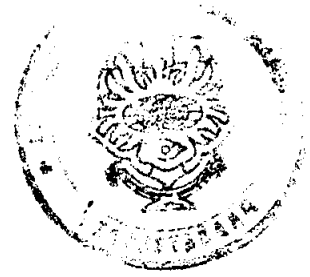
MANDERS. Dreadful! Mrs. Alving, *this* is a flaming judgement on this house of iniquity.

MRS. ALVING. Yes, of course. Come on, Regine.

[*She and* REGINE *hurry out through the hall.*]

MANDERS [*clasping his hands*]. And not insured!

[*He goes out the same way.*]



ACT THREE

The room as before. All the doors are standing open. The lamp is still burning on the table. It is dark outside, apart from a faint glow in the background, left.

MRS. ALVING, *a large shawl over her head, is standing in the conservatory looking out.* REGINE, *also with a shawl round her, is standing a little behind her.*

MRS. ALVING. Everything burnt. Burnt to the ground.

REGINE. The basement is still burning.

MRS. ALVING. Why doesn't Oswald come. There's nothing to save.

REGINE. Perhaps I should take him his hat down?

MRS. ALVING. Didn't he even have his hat?

REGINE [*pointing into the hall*]. No, it's hanging there.

MRS. ALVING. Leave it. He must be coming by now. I'll go and look myself.

[*She goes into the garden.*]

MANDERS [*enters from the hall*]. Isn't Mrs. Alving here?

REGINE. She's just gone into the garden.

MANDERS. This is the most terrible night I have ever known.

REGINE. Yes, it's a dreadful thing to happen, isn't it, Pastor?

MANDERS. Oh, don't talk about it! I hardly dare think about it even.

REGINE. But how can it have happened. . . ?

MANDERS. Don't ask me, Miss Engstrand! How should I know? You are not also wanting to. . . ? Isn't it enough that your father. . . ?

REGINE. What about him?

MANDERS. Oh, he's driving me to distraction.

ENGSTRAND [*enters from the hall*]. Pastor Manders. . . !

MANDERS [*turns round, startled*]. Are you after me in here, even?

ENGSTRAND. Yes, by God, I must. . . ! Oh, Lord! This is a terrible business, Pastor!

MANDERS [*walking up and down*]. I'm afraid it is!

REGINE. What is?

ENGSTRAND. Well, you see, it was that there service that did it. [*Aside.*] Now we've got him nicely, my girl. [*Aloud.*] And to think that I'm to blame for Pastor Manders being to blame for a thing like this!

MANDERS. But I assure you, Engstrand . . .

ENGSTRAND. But nobody else down there touched the candles apart from you, Pastor.

MANDERS [*halts*]. Yes, so you say. But I honestly can't remember ever having a candle in my hand.

ENGSTRAND. But I quite distinctly *saw* you take the candle and snuff it with your fingers and chuck the end away straight into some shavings.

MANDERS. You saw that?

ENGSTRAND. As plain as anything, I saw it.

MANDERS. I find that utterly incomprehensible. Besides, that is not a thing I'm in the habit of doing—snuffing candles out with my fingers.

ENGSTRAND. Yes, and horrible careless it looked too, I can tell you. But is it really all that serious, Pastor?

MANDERS [*walking restlessly up and down*]. Oh, don't ask me!

ENGSTRAND [*following him about*]. And you hadn't insured it either, eh, Pastor?

MANDERS [*still walking*]. No, no, no. I've told you.

ENGSTRAND. Not insured. And then to go straight away and set the whole place on fire! Lord, what rotten luck!

MANDERS [*mopping the sweat from his brow*]. You may very well say so, Engstrand.

ENGSTRAND. Fancy a thing like that happening to a charitable institution, something that was going to be such a boon to the whole district, as you might say. I don't suppose the papers are going to let *you* off very lightly, Pastor.

MANDERS. No, that's just what I'm thinking. That's just about the worst part of the whole affair. All these spiteful accusations and insinuations. . . ! Oh, it's terrible to think about!

MRS. ALVING [*coming from the garden*]. I can't get him to come away from the fire.

MANDERS. Ah, there you are, Mrs. Alving.

MRS. ALVING. Well, Pastor Manders, so you did get out of giving your speech.

MANDERS. Oh, I would have been only too glad. . . .

MRS. ALVING [*subdued*]. It's best things have turned out this way. That Orphanage wouldn't have done anybody any good.

MANDERS. Don't you think so?

MRS. ALVING. Do *you* think it would?

MANDERS. But it was a terrible calamity, all the same.

MRS. ALVING. Let's be businesslike about it, and not beat about the bush. . . . Are you waiting for Pastor Manders, Engstrand?

ENGSTRAND [*by the hall door*]. As a matter of fact I am.

MRS. ALVING. Have a seat, then, for the time being.

ENGSTRAND. Thanks, but I'd just as soon stand.

MRS. ALVING [*to* MANDERS]. You are leaving by the boat, presumably?

MANDERS. Yes. It leaves in an hour's time.

MRS. ALVING. Please take all the documents away with you again. I don't want to hear another word about this business. I've got other things to think about. . . .

MANDERS. Mrs. Alving. . . .

MRS. ALVING. Later on I'll send you authorization to clear things up as you think best.

MANDERS. I shall be only too delighted to see to that. The original terms of the bequest will have to be completely altered now, I'm afraid.

MRS. ALVING. Naturally.

MANDERS. Well, my idea at the moment is to arrange for the Solvik estate to be made over to the parish. The land cannot by any means be described as entirely valueless. It will always come in useful for something or other. And as for the interest on the capital in the bank, perhaps the best use I could put it to would be to support some scheme that might bring benefit to the town.

MRS. ALVING. Do just what you wish. It makes not the slightest difference to me.

ENGSTRAND. Don't forget my Seamen's Home, Pastor!

MANDERS. Ah, to be sure, there's something in what you say. Well, it must be given careful consideration.

ENGSTRAND. Oh, to hell with considering. . . . Oh Lord!

MANDERS [*with a sigh*]. And I'm afraid I don't know how much longer I'll have any say in these things. Or whether public opinion might not compel me to resign. It all depends on the result of the official inquiry into the cause of the fire.

MRS. ALVING. What's that you say?

MANDERS. And it's quite impossible to predict what those findings will be.

ENGSTRAND [*comes closer*]. Oh, no, it isn't. Because there's always Jacob Engstrand and me.

MANDERS. Yes, but . . . ?

ENGSTRAND [*in a low voice*]. And Jacob Engstrand isn't the sort to desert a worthy benefactor in his hour of need, as the saying goes.

MANDERS. Yes, but my dear fellow . . . how . . . ?

ENGSTRAND. Jacob Engstrand is a sort of guardian angel, like, as you might say, Pastor.

MANDERS. No, no. I honestly couldn't allow that.

ENGSTRAND. Oh, you just let things take their course. It's not the first time somebody I know has taken the blame for somebody else.

MANDERS. Jacob! [*Shakes him by the hand.*] Characters like you are rare. Well, you'll get support for your Seamen's Home, you can depend on it. [ENGSTRAND *tries to thank him, but cannot for emotion.* MANDERS *slings his satchel over his shoulder.*] Let's be off now. We'll travel together.

ENGSTRAND [*by the dining-room door, in a low voice to* REGINE]. Come on with me, lass! You could live like a queen!

REGINE [*tosses her head*]. *Merci!*

[*She goes out into the hall to fetch the pastor's things.*]

MANDERS. Goodbye, Mrs. Alving. And may I hope that very soon some sense of order and propriety will find its way into this house.

MRS. ALVING. Goodbye, Manders!

[*Seeing* OSWALD *enter from the garden, she goes straight towards the conservatory.*]

ENGSTRAND [*as he and* REGINE *help* MANDERS *on with his coat*]. Goodbye, my girl. And if you are ever in any difficulty, you know where to find Jacob Engstrand. [*In a low voice.*] Little Harbour Street, h'm. . . ! [*To* MRS. ALVING *and* OSWALD.] And this place for seafaring men, it's going to be called the 'Captain Alving Home'. And if I can run it *my* way, I think I can promise it'll be a place worthy of the Captain's memory.

MANDERS [*in the doorway*]. H'm . . . h'm! Come along, my dear Engstrand. Goodbye, goodbye!

[*He and* ENGSTRAND *go out through the hall.*]

OSWALD [*goes over to the table*]. What place was that he was talking about?

MRS. ALVING. It's a sort of hostel he and Pastor Manders are thinking of starting.

OSWALD. It will burn down, just like all this.

MRS. ALVING. What gives you that idea?

OSWALD. Everything will burn. There'll be nothing left to remind people of Father. And here am I, burning down too.

[REGINE *looks at him, startled.*]

MRS. ALVING. Oswald! You shouldn't have stayed so long out there, my poor boy.

OSWALD [*sits at the table*]. I almost believe you are right.

MRS. ALVING. Let me dry your face, Oswald, you are all wet.

[*She dries his face with her handkerchief.*]

OSWALD [*not caring, looks fixedly ahead*]. Thank you, Mother.

MRS. ALVING. Aren't you tired, Oswald? Wouldn't you like a sleep, perhaps?

OSWALD [*fearfully*]. No, no . . . not sleep! I never sleep, I just pretend to. [*Dully.*] That will come soon enough.

MRS. ALVING [*looks anxiously at him*]. Yes, you really *are* ill, all the same, my darling boy.

REGINE [*tense*]. Mr. Alving ill?

OSWALD [*impatiently*]. And now shut all the doors! This deadly feeling of dread. . . .

MRS. ALVING. Shut them, Regine.

[REGINE *shuts the doors, and remains standing by the hall door.* MRS. ALVING *takes off her shawl, and* REGINE *does the same.* MRS. ALVING *draws a chair up near* OSWALD, *and sits down beside him.*]

MRS. ALVING. There now, I'm coming to sit beside you. . . .

OSWALD. Yes, do. And Regine must stay here too. Regine must always be near me. You'll give me a helping hand, Regine, won't you?

REGINE. I don't understand. . . .

MRS. ALVING. Helping hand?

OSWALD. Yes . . . when it's necessary.

MRS. ALVING. Oswald, haven't you got your mother to give you a helping hand?

OSWALD. You? [*Smiles.*] No, Mother, you'd never give me that sort of helping hand. [*Laughs dully.*] You! Ha! Ha! [*Looks earnestly at her.*] And yet who has a better right than you. [*Bursts out.*] Why can't you relax a bit with me, Regine? Why don't you call me Oswald?

REGINE [*softly*]. I don't think Mrs. Alving would like it.

MRS. ALVING. Very soon you can. Come over here and sit beside us. [REGINE *sits demurely and hesitantly on the other side of the table.*] And now, my darling, I am going to take a great burden off your poor, tormented mind . . .

OSWALD. You, Mother?

MRS. ALVING. . . . all the remorse and the self-reproach, as you called it, all those things that have been worrying you. . . .

OSWALD. You think you can?

MRS. ALVING. I can now, Oswald. Yes. You were talking earlier about the joy of living. And suddenly I seemed to see my whole life . . . everything in a new light.

OSWALD [*shakes his head*]. I don't understand a word of what you are saying.

MRS. ALVING. You should have seen your father when he was a young lieutenant. *He* had plenty of the joy of living, I can tell you!

OSWALD. Yes, I know.

MRS. ALVING. It cheered you up just to look at him. All that boundless energy and vitality he had!

OSWALD. Well. . . ?

MRS. ALVING. Well, there was this lively, happy boy—and at the time he *was* still like a boy—having to eat his heart out here in this little provincial town; pleasures of a kind it had to offer, but no real joy; no chance of any proper vocation, only an official position to fill; no sign of any kind of work he could throw himself into heart and soul—only business. He never had a single real friend capable of appreciating the joy of life and what it meant—nothing but a lot of lazy, drunken, hangers-on. . . .

OSWALD. Mother. . . !

MRS. ALVING. So then the inevitable happened.

OSWALD. What do you mean . . . the inevitable?

MRS. ALVING. You told me yourself this evening what would happen if you stayed at home.

OSWALD. Are you trying to say that Father. . . ?

MRS. ALVING. Your father could never find any outlet for this tremendous exuberance of his. And I didn't exactly bring very much gaiety into his home, either.

OSWALD. Didn't you?

MRS. ALVING. They'd taught me various things about duty and such-like, and I'd simply gone on believing them. Everything seemed to come down to duty in the end—*my* duty and *his* duty and . . . I'm afraid I must have made the house unbearable for your poor father, Oswald.

OSWALD. Why did you never write to me about this?

MRS. ALVING. Until now I've never regarded it as anything I could bring myself to talk about to you—his son.

OSWALD. How did you regard it then?

MRS. ALVING [*slowly*]. I saw only one thing: that your father was a broken man before you were even born.

OSWALD [*in a smothered voice*]. Ah. . . !

[*He rises and goes across to the window.*]

MRS. ALVING. And day in and day out, one thought filled my mind: that in fact Regine belonged here in this house . . . just as much as my own son.

OSWALD [*turns quickly*]. Regine. . . !

REGINE [*jumps up startled, and says in a choking voice*]. Me. . . !

MRS. ALVING. Yes. Now you both know.

OSWALD. Regine!

REGINE [*to herself*]. So my mother was that sort.

MRS. ALVING. Your mother was in many ways a fine woman, Regine.

REGINE. Yes, but she was that sort, all the same. Well, sometimes I've thought as much, but. . . . Well, Mrs. Alving, please may I leave straight away?

MRS. ALVING. Do you really want to, Regine?

REGINE. Yes, I do that.

MRS. ALVING. You must please yourself, of course, but . . .

OSWALD [*walks over to* REGINE]. Leave now? But you belong here.

REGINE. *Merci*, Mr. Alving . . . well, now I suppose I can say Oswald. I must say *this* wasn't the way I'd imagined it happening.

MRS. ALVING. Regine, I haven't been altogether frank with you. . . .

REGINE. No, more's the pity! If I'd known Oswald had something wrong with him. . . . And anyway, now that there can never be anything serious between us. . . . No, you don't catch me staying out here in the country, working myself to death looking after invalids.

OSWALD. Not even somebody so close to you?

REGINE. Not likely. A poor girl's got to make the most of things while she's young. Or else you find yourself on the shelf before you know where you are. I've *also* got some of this joy of life as well, Mrs. Alving.

MRS. ALVING. Yes, I'm afraid so. But don't just throw yourself away, Regine.

REGINE. Oh, whatever will be, will be. If Oswald takes after his father, I probably take after my mother, I suppose. Mrs. Alving, may I ask if Pastor Manders knows all this about me?

MRS. ALVING. Pastor Manders knows everything.

REGINE [*busy putting on her shawl*]. Well, I'd better see what I can do about catching that boat, and getting away from here as quick as I can. The pastor's such a nice easy man to get on with. And it strikes me I've just as much right to a bit of that money as that rotten old carpenter.

MRS. ALVING. You're welcome to it, Regine.

REGINE [*looking fixedly at her*]. I think you might have brought me up like a gentleman's daughter, Mrs. Alving. It would have suited me a bit better than this. [*Tosses her head.*] Still, what the hell. . . ! What difference does it make! [*With a bitter glance at the unopened bottle.*] I'll be drinking champagne with the best yet, you see if I'm not.

MRS. ALVING. And if ever you need a home, Regine, come to me.

REGINE. No thank you, Mrs. Alving. Pastor Manders will look after me all right. And if the worst comes to the worst, I know a place I can make my home.

MRS. ALVING. Where is that?

REGINE. The Captain Alving Home.

MRS. ALVING. Regine . . . I can see it now . . . you are going to your ruin.

REGINE. Oh, get away! *Adieu!*

[*She nods and goes out through the hall.*]

OSWALD [*stands at the window looking out*]. Has she gone?

MRS. ALVING. Yes.

OSWALD [*mutters to himself*]. I think it's crazy, this.

MRS. ALVING [*goes and stands behind him and puts her hands on his shoulders*]. Oswald, my dear . . . has this been a big shock to you?

OSWALD [*turns his face towards her*]. All this about Father, you mean?

MRS. ALVING. Yes, your poor unhappy father. I'm so afraid it's been too much for you.

OSWALD. Whatever gives you that idea? Of course, it came as a great surprise; but fundamentally it doesn't make very much difference to me.

MRS. ALVING [*draws her hands back*]. Not much difference! That your father was so utterly unhappy!

OSWALD. Of course, I feel sorry for *him* just as I would for anybody else, but . . .

MRS. ALVING. Is that all! Your own father!

OSWALD [*impatiently*]. Oh, father . . . father! I never knew anything about my father. All I remember about him is that he once made me sick.

MRS. ALVING. What a terrible thought! Surely a child ought to love its father in spite of all?

OSWALD. What if a child has nothing to thank its father for? Never knew him? You don't really believe in this old superstition still, do you? And you so enlightened in other ways?

MRS. ALVING. You call that mere superstition. . . !

OSWALD. Yes, surely you realize that, Mother. It's simply one of those ideas that get around and . . .

MRS. ALVING [*shaken*]. Ghosts!

OSWALD [*walks across the room*]. Yes, call them ghosts if you like.

MRS. ALVING [*wildly*]. Oswald . . . then you don't love me either.

OSWALD. Well, at least I do know you. . . .

MRS. ALVING. Yes, you know me. But is that all!

OSWALD. And I also know how fond you are of me. And that's something I must be grateful to you for. And you can also be extremely useful to me, now I'm a sick man.

MRS. ALVING. Yes I can, can't I, Oswald! Oh, I could almost bless this illness that drove you home to me. I can see I haven't made you completely mine yet—I must still win you.

OSWALD [*impatiently*]. Yes, yes, yes, but these are just empty words. You must remember I'm a sick man, Mother. I can't be bothered very much with other people, I've got enough to think of with myself.

MRS. ALVING [*in a low voice*]. I shall be calm and patient.

OSWALD. And *cheerful*, Mother!

MRS. ALVING. Yes, my darling, you are right. [*She walks over to him.*] Now have I taken away all that remorse, those self-reproaches?

OSWALD. Yes, you have. But who now will take away the feeling of dread?

MRS. ALVING. Dread?

OSWALD [*walks across the room*]. Regine would have done it, just for the asking.

MRS. ALVING. I don't understand you. What's all this about dread . . . and about Regine?

OSWALD. Is it very late, Mother?

MRS. ALVING. It's early morning. [*She looks out from the conservatory.*] Dawn is already breaking over the mountains. And it's going to be fine, Oswald! In a little while you'll be able to see the sun.

OSWALD. I'm looking forward to that. Oh, there might be all sorts of things I could still take a delight in, and live for. . . .

MRS. ALVING. I should just think so!

OSWALD. Even if I can't work, I . . .

MRS. ALVING. Oh, but now you'll soon be able to work again, my darling. Now that you are rid of all those nagging and depressing thoughts that were worrying you.

OSWALD. Yes, you've made me stop imagining things now anyway, and that's a good thing. And if only I can get this last thing settled now. . . . [*Sits down on the sofa.*] Mother, we are going to have a talk . . .

MRS. ALVING. Yes, of course.

[*She pushes an armchair over to the sofa and sits close by him.*]

OSWALD. . . . and meanwhile the sun will be rising. And then you'll know. And then I'll no longer have this feeling of dread.

MRS. ALVING. What am I to know, did you say?

OSWALD [*without listening to her*]. Mother, earlier on this evening didn't you say there was nothing in the world you wouldn't do for me, if I asked you.

MRS. ALVING. Yes, that's what I said!

OSWALD. And you mean that, Mother?

MRS. ALVING. You can depend on me, my dear, darling boy. I have nothing to live for but you.

OSWALD. All right, then I'll tell you. . . . Mother, I know you are quite strong-minded. You must sit quite calmly when you hear what it is.

MRS. ALVING. What terrible thing is this. . . ?

OSWALD. You mustn't scream. Do you hear? Promise me? You'll sit and talk about it quite quietly? Promise me, Mother?

MRS. ALVING. Yes, yes, I promise. But tell me!

OSWALD. Well then, I must tell you that all this about being tired . . . about not being able to bear the thought of work . . . all this isn't the real illness. . . .

MRS. ALVING. What is the illness, then?

OSWALD. The disease I have inherited . . . [*He points to his forehead and adds softly.*] . . . has its seat here.

MRS. ALVING [*almost speechless*]. Oswald! No! no!

OSWALD. Don't scream. I couldn't bear it. Yes, Mother, it sits lurking in here. And it can break out any day, any time.

MRS. ALVING. Oh, how horrible. . . !

OSWALD. Keep calm. That's how things are with me. . . .

MRS. ALVING [*jumping up*]. It's not true, Oswald! It's impossible! It can't be!

OSWALD. I've already had one attack over there. It soon passed. But when they told me how I'd been, I suddenly felt so dreadfully, pitifully afraid. So I set off back home to you as quick as I could.

MRS. ALVING. So this is the feeling of dread. . . !

OSWALD. Yes, and it's so utterly revolting, don't you see. If only it had been some ordinary kind of fatal disease. . . . Because I'm not afraid to die, although I would like to live as long as I can.

MRS. ALVING. Of course, Oswald, you must!

OSWALD. But this is so horribly revolting. To be turned into a helpless child again. To have to be fed, to have to be. . . . Oh, it doesn't bear talking about!

MRS. ALVING. My child will have his mother to look after him.

OSWALD [*jumping up*]. No, never. That's exactly what I don't want. I can't bear the thought that I might lie like that for years . . . till I become old and grey. And in the meantime you might die and leave me. [*He sits in* MRS. ALVING'S *chair.*] For the doctor said it wouldn't necessarily prove fatal immediately. He called it a kind of softening of the brain . . . or something like that. [*Smiles sadly.*] I think that expression sounds so nice. It always makes me think of cherry-red velvet curtains . . . something soft and delicate to the touch.

MRS. ALVING [*screams*]. Oswald!

OSWALD [*jumps up again and walks across the room*]. And now you have taken Regine away from me! If only I'd had her. She'd have given me this helping hand all right.

MRS. ALVING [*walks over to him*]. What do you mean by that, my darling. Is there anything in the world I wouldn't do for you?

OSWALD. When I came round again after that attack over there, the doctor said when it happened again—and it will happen again—there'd be no hope.

MRS. ALVING. How could he be so heartless. . . .

OSWALD. I demanded to know. I told him I had certain arrangements to make. . . . [*He smiles craftily.*] And so I had. [*He takes a little box out of his breast pocket.*] Mother, do you see this?

MRS. ALVING. What is it?

OSWALD. Morphine.

MRS. ALVING [*looks at him in terror*]. Oswald . . . my son!

OSWALD. I've got twelve tablets stored up. . . .

MRS. ALVING [*snatching at it*]. Give me that box, Oswald!

OSWALD. Not yet, Mother.

[*He puts the box back in his pocket.*]

MRS. ALVING. I can't bear this!

OSWALD. You must bear it. Now if I'd had Regine here, I'd have told her how things stood . . . and asked her for this last helping hand. She'd have helped me, I'm sure.

MRS. ALVING. Never!

OSWALD. If she saw me struck down by this ghastly thing, lying there helpless, like an imbecile child, beyond all hope of recovery. . . .

MRS. ALVING. Regine would never have done it, never!

OSWALD. Regine would have done it. Regine was so marvellously light-hearted. And she'd soon have got bored with looking after an invalid like me.

MRS. ALVING. Then thank God Regine isn't here!

OSWALD. Well then, now you'll have to give me this helping hand, Mother.

MRS. ALVING [*with a scream*]. Me!

OSWALD. There's nobody with a better right than you.

MRS. ALVING. Me! Your mother!

OSWALD. All the more reason.

MRS. ALVING. Me! Who gave you life!

OSWALD. I never asked you for life. And what sort of a life is this you've given me? I don't want it! Take it back!

MRS. ALVING. Help! Help!

[*She runs into the hall.*]

OSWALD. Don't leave me! Where are you going?

MRS. ALVING [*in the hall*]. To fetch the doctor, Oswald! Let me get out!

OSWALD [*also in the hall*]. You are not getting out. And nobody's getting in.

[*A key is turned.*]

MRS. ALVING [*comes in again*]. Oswald! Oswald! . . . my child!

OSWALD [*following her*]. If you love me, Mother . . . how can you let me suffer all this unspeakable terror!

MRS. ALVING [*after a moment's silence, says firmly*]. Here is my hand on it.

OSWALD. You will. . . ?

MRS. ALVING. If it becomes necessary. But it won't *be* necessary. No, no, it's quite impossible!

OSWALD. Well, let us hope so. And let's live together as long as we can. Thank you, Mother.

[*He sits in the armchair, which* MRS. ALVING *has moved over to the sofa. Day is dawning; the lamp is still burning on the table.*]

MRS. ALVING [*approaching him cautiously*]. Do you feel calmer now?

OSWALD. Yes.

MRS. ALVING [*bent over him*]. What terrible ideas they were to get into your head, Oswald. But all just imagination. All these upsets have been too much for you. But now you'll be able to have a good long rest. At home, with your mother beside you, my darling. Anything you want you shall have, just like when you were a little boy. There now. The attack's over. You see how quickly it went. Oh, I knew it would. . . . See what a lovely day we're going to have, Oswald? Brilliant sunshine. Now you'll be able to see the place properly.

[*She walks over to the table, and puts out the lamp. Sunrise. The glacier and the mountain peaks in the background gleam in the morning light.*]

OSWALD [*sits motionless in the armchair, with his back to the view; suddenly he says*]. Mother, give me the sun.

MRS. ALVING [*by the table, looks at him startled*]. What do you say?

OSWALD [*repeats dully and tonelessly*]. The sun. The sun.

MRS. ALVING [*across to him*]. Oswald, what's the matter with you? [OSWALD *seems to shrink in his chair, all his muscles go flaccid, his face is expressionless, and his eyes stare vacantly.* MRS. ALVING *quivers with terror.*] What is it? [*Screams.*] Oswald! What's the matter with you! [*Throws herself down on her knees beside him and shakes him.*] Oswald! Oswald! Look at me! Don't you know me?

OSWALD [*tonelessly as before*]. The sun. . . . The sun.

MRS. ALVING [*jumps up in anguish, tears at her hair with both hands, and shouts*]. I can't bear it! [*As though petrified, she whispers.*] I can't bear it! Never! [*Suddenly.*] Where's he put them? [*Hastily fumbling at his breast.*] Here! [*She shrinks back a step or two and screams.*] No, no, no! . . . Yes! . . . No, no!

[*She stands a few paces away from him, with her hands clutching her hair, staring at him in speechless horror.*]

OSWALD [*sits motionless as before, and says*]. The sun. . . . The sun.