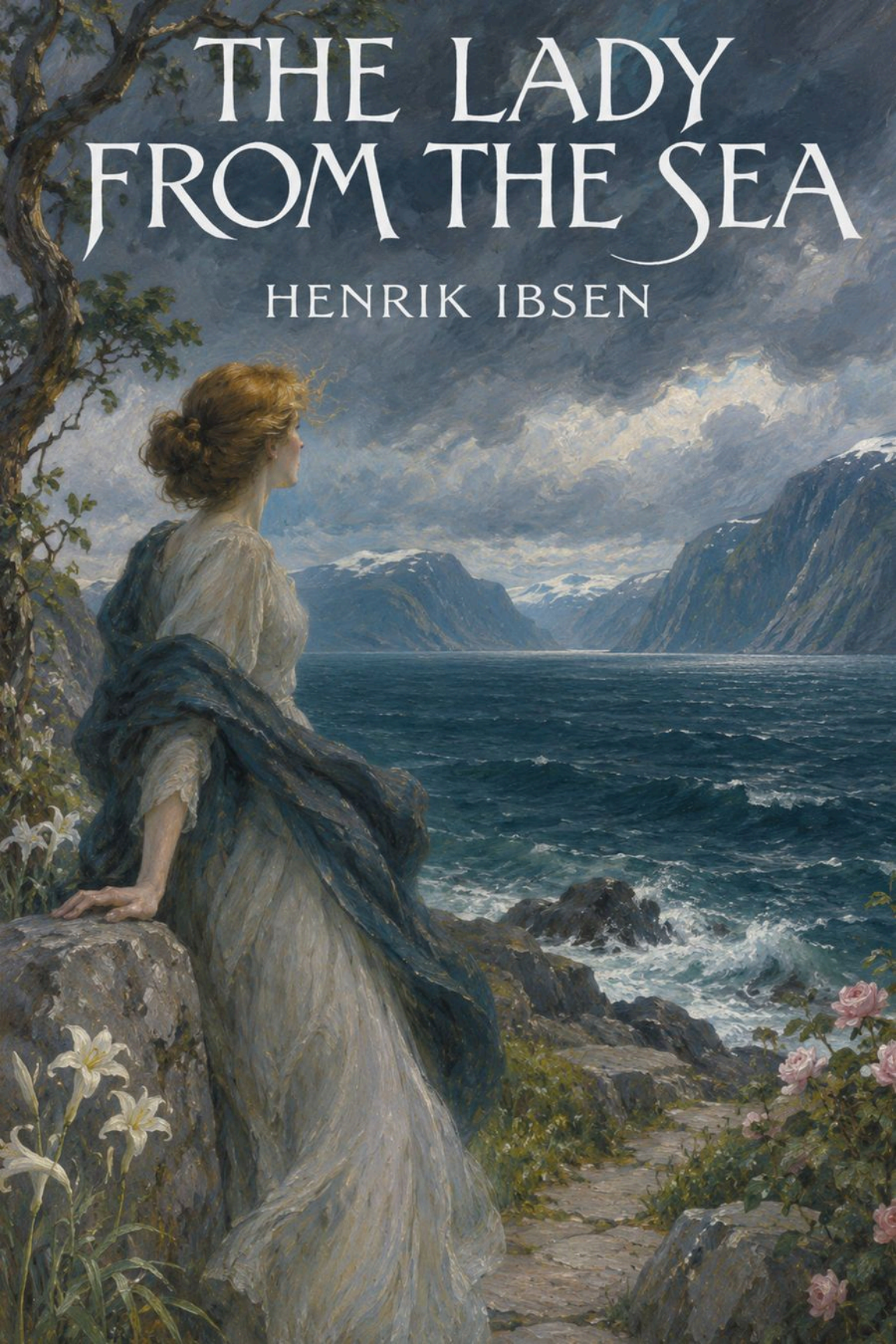
THE LADY FROM THE SEA

HENRIK IBSEN



The Lady from the Sea

Henrik Ibsen

Translated by Eleanor Marx-Aveling

THE AUTHOR



Henrik Ibsen

1828–1906

Illustration after Eilif Peterssen's 1895 painting.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Henrik Ibsen

Henrik Ibsen was born in Skien and worked in the Norwegian theatre before writing plays that reached a wider European audience. The Lady from the Sea was published in 1888. It takes place by a fjord, where Ellida's association with the open sea and a past promise strain the life she has made there.

Sources: University of Oslo's Ibsen Centre and the historical Unwin edition.

ABOUT THIS EDITION

Eleanor Marx-Aveling's historical translation of the five-act play, including the cast and stage directions.

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DRAMATIS PERSONAE

Doctor Wangel.
Ellida Wangel, his second wife.
Bolette,
Hilde (not yet grown up), his daughters by his first wife.
Arnholm (second master at a college).
Lyngstrand.
Ballested.
A Stranger.
Young People of the Town.
Tourists.
Visitors.

(The action takes place in small fjord town, Northern Norway.)

ACT I

(SCENE.—DOCTOR WANGEL'S house, with a large verandah garden in front of and around the house. Under the verandah a flagstaff. In the garden an arbour, with table and chairs. Hedge, with small gate at the back. Beyond, a road along the seashore. An avenue of trees along the road. Between the trees are seen the fjord, high mountain ranges and peaks. A warm and brilliantly clear summer morning.

BALLESTED, middle-aged, wearing an old velvet jacket, and a broad-brimmed artist's hat, stands under the flagstaff, arranging the ropes. The flag is lying on the ground. A little way from him is an easel, with an outspread canvas. By the easel on a camp-stool, brushes, a palette, and box of colours.

BOLETTE WANGEL comes from the room opening on the verandah. She carries a large vase with flowers, which she puts down on the table.)

Bolette. Well, Ballested, does it work smoothly?

Ballested. Certainly, Miss Bolette, that's easy enough. May I ask—do you expect any visitors today?

Bolette. Yes, we're expecting Mr. Arnholm this morning. He got to town in the night.

Ballested. Arnholm? Wait a minute—wasn't Arnholm the man who was tutor here several years ago?

Bolette. Yes, it is he.

Ballested. Oh, really! Is he coming into these parts again?

Bolette. That's why we want to have the flag up.

Ballested. Well, that's reasonable enough.

(BOLETTE goes into the room again. A little after LYNGSTRAND enters from the road and stands still, interested by the easel and

painting gear. He is a slender youth, poorly but carefully dressed, and looks delicate.)

Lyngstrand (on the other side of the hedge). Good-morning.

Ballested (turning round). Hallo! Good-morning. (Hoists up flag). That's it! Up goes the balloon. (Fastens the ropes, and then busies himself about the easel.) Good-morning, my dear sir. I really don't think I've the pleasure of—Lyngstrand. I'm sure you're a painter.

Ballested. Of course I am. Why shouldn't I be?

Lyngstrand. Yes, I can see you are. May I take the liberty of coming in a moment?

Ballested. Would you like to come in and see?

Lyngstrand. I should like to immensely.

Ballested. Oh! there's nothing much to see yet. But come in. Come a little closer.

Lyngstrand. Many thanks. (Comes in through the garden gate.)

Ballested (painting). It's the fjord there between the islands I'm working at.

Lyngstrand. So I see.

Ballested. But the figure is still wanting. There's not a model to be got in this town.

Lyngstrand. Is there to be a figure, too?

Ballested. Yes. Here by the rocks in the foreground a mermaid is to lie, half-dead.

Lyngstrand. Why is she to be half-dead?

Ballested. She has wandered hither from the sea, and can't find her way out again. And so, you see, she lies there dying in the brackish water.

Lyngstrand. Ah, I see.

Ballested. The mistress of this house put it into my head to do something of the kind.

Lyngstrand. What shall you call the picture when it's finished?

Ballested. I think of calling it "The Mermaid's End."

Lyngstrand. That's capital! You're sure to make something fine of it.

Ballested (looking at him). In the profession too, perhaps?

Lyngstrand. Do you mean a painter?

Ballested. Yes.

Lyngstrand. No, I'm not that; but I'm going to be a sculptor. My name is Hans Lyngstrand.

Ballested. So you're to be a sculptor? Yes, yes; the art of sculpture is a nice, pretty art in its way. I fancy I've seen you in the street once or twice. Have you been staying here long?

Lyngstrand. No; I've only been here a fortnight. But I shall try to stop till the end of the summer.

Ballested. For the bathing?

Lyngstrand. Yes; I wanted to see if I could get a little stronger.

Ballested. Not delicate, surely?

Lyngstrand. Yes, perhaps I am a little delicate; but it's nothing dangerous. Just a little tightness on the chest.

Ballested. Tush!—a bagatelle! You should consult a good doctor.

Lyngstrand. Yes, I thought of speaking to Doctor Wangel one of these times.

Ballested. You should. (Looks out to the left.) There's another steamer, crowded with passengers. It's really marvellous how travelling has increased here of late years.

Lyngstrand. Yes, there's a good deal of traffic here, I think.

Ballested. And lots of summer visitors come here too. I often hear our good town will lose its individuality with all these foreign goings on.

Lyngstrand. Were you born in the town?

Ballested. No; but I have accla—acclimatised myself. I feel united to the place by the bonds of time and habit.

Lyngstrand. Then you've lived here a long time?

Ballested. Well—about seventeen or eighteen years. I came here with Skive's Dramatic Company. But then we got into difficulties, and so the company broke up and dispersed in all directions.

Lyngstrand. But you yourself remained here?

Ballested. I remained, and I've done very well. I was then working chiefly as decorative artist, don't you know.

(BOLETTE comes out with a rocking-chair, which she places on the verandah.)

Bolette (speaking into the room). Hilde, see if you can find the embroidered footstool for father.

Lyngstrand (going up to the verandah, bows). Good-morning, Miss Wangel.

Bolette (by the balustrade). What! Is it you, Mr. Lyngstrand? Good-morning. Excuse me one moment, I'm only—(Goes into room.)

Ballested. Do you know the family?

Lyngstrand. Not well. I've only met the young ladies now and again in company; and I had a chat with Mrs. Wangel the last time we had music up at the "View." She said I might come and see them.

Ballested. Now, do you know, you ought to cultivate their acquaintance.

Lyngstrand. Yes; I'd been thinking of paying a visit. Just a sort of call. If only I could find some excuse—

Ballested. Excuse! Nonsense! (Looking out to the left.) Damn it! (Gathering his things.) The steamer's by the pier already. I must get off to the hotel. Perhaps some of the new arrivals may want me. For I'm a hairdresser, too, don't you know.

Lyngstrand. You are certainly very many-sided, sir.

Ballested. In small towns one has to try to acclam—acclimatise Oneself in various branches. If you should require anything in the hair line—a little pomatum or such like—you've only to ask for Dancing-master Ballested.

Lyngstrand. Dancing master!

Ballested. President of the "Wind Band Society," by your leave. We've a concert on this evening up at the "View." Goodbye, goodbye!

(He goes out with his painting gear through the garden gate.

HILDE comes out with the footstool. BOLETTE brings more flowers. LYNGSTRAND bows to HILDE from the garden below.)

Hilde (by the balustrade, not returning his bow). Bolette said you had ventured in today.

Lyngstrand. Yes; I took the liberty of coming in for a moment.

Hilde. Have you been out for a morning walk?

Lyngstrand. Oh, no! nothing came of the walk this morning.

Hilde. Have you been bathing, then?

Lyngstrand. Yes; I've been in the water a little while. I saw your mother down there. She was going into her bathing-machine.

Hilde. Who was?

Lyngstrand. Your mother.

Hilde. Oh! I see. (She puts the stool in front of the rocking-chair.)

Bolette (interrupting). Didn't you see anything of father's boat out on the fjord?

Lyngstrand. Yes; I thought I saw a sailing-boat that was steering inland.

Bolette. I'm sure that was father. He's been to visit patients on the islands. (She is arranging things on the table.)

Lyngstrand (taking a step up the stairs to the verandah). Why, how everything's decorated here with flowers!

Bolette. Yes; doesn't it look nice?

Lyngstrand. It looks lovely! It looks as if it were some festival day in the house.

Hilde. That's exactly what it is.

Lyngstrand. I might have guessed it! I'm sure it's your father's birthday.

Bolette (warningly to HILDE). Hm—hm!

Hilde (taking no notice of her). No, mother's.

Lyngstrand. Oh! Your mother's!

Bolette (in low voice, angrily). Really, Hilde!

Hilde (the same). Let me be! (To LYNGSTRAND.) I suppose you're going home to breakfast now?

Lyngstrand (going down steps). Yes, I suppose I must go and get something to eat.

Hilde. I'm sure you find the living very good at the hotel!

Lyngstrand. I'm not staying at the hotel now. It was too expensive for me.

Hilde. Where are you staying, then?

Lyngstrand. I'm staying up at Mrs. Jensen's.

Hilde. What Mrs. Jensen's?

Lyngstrand. The midwife.

Hilde. Excuse me, Mr. Lyngstrand, but I really have other matters to attend to Lyngstrand. Oh! I'm sure I ought not to have said that.

Hilde. Said what?

Lyngstrand. What I said.

Hilde (looking contemptuously at him). I don't understand you in the least.

Lyngstrand. No, no. But I must say goodbye for the present.

Bolette (comes forward to the steps). Good-bye, good-bye, Mr. Lyngstrand. You must excuse us now. But another day—when you've plenty of time—and inclination—you really must come in and see father and the rest of us.

Lyngstrand. Yes; thanks, very much. I shall be delighted. (Bows, and goes out through the garden gate. As he goes along the road he bows again towards the verandah.)

Hilde (in low voice). Adieu, Monsieur! Please remember me to Mother Jensen.

Bolette (in a low voice, shaking her arm). Hilde! You naughty child! Are you quite crazy? He might have heard you.

Hilde. Pshaw! Do you think I care about that?

Bolette (looking out to the right). Here's father!

(WANGEL, in travelling dress and carrying a small bag, comes from the footpath.)

Wangel. See! I'm back again, little girls! (He enters through the garden gate.)

Bolette (going towards him at the bottom of the garden). Oh! It is delightful that you've come!

Hilde (also going up to him). Now have you got off for the whole day, father?

Wangel. Oh! no. I must go down to the office for a little while presently. I say—do you know if Arnholm has come?

Bolette. Yes; he arrived in the night. We sent to the hotel to enquire.

Wangel. Then you've not seen him yet?

Bolette. No; but he's sure to come here this morning.

Wangel. Yes; he's sure to do that.

Hilde (pulling him). Father, now you must look round.

Wangel (looking towards the verandah). Yes, I see well enough, child. It's quite festive.

Bolette. Now, don't you think we've arranged it nicely?

Wangel. I must say you have. Are—are we alone at home now?

Hilde. Yes; she's gone to—

Bolette (interrupting quickly). Mother has gone to bathe.

Wangel (looks lovingly at BOLETTE, and pats her head. Then he says, hesitating). Look here, little ones. Do you want to keep this up all day? And the flag hoisted, too?

Hilde. Surely you understand that, father!

Wangel. Hm! Yes; but you see—

Bolette (looks at him and nods). Surely you can understand we've been doing all this in honour of Mr. Arnholm. When such a good friend comes to see you for the first time—

Hilde (smiling, and shaking him). Think! he who used to be Bolette's tutor, father!

Wangel (with a half-smile). You're a pair of sly minxes. Well—good heavens—after all, it's but natural we should remember her who is no more with us. Here, Hilde (Gives her his bag), take that down to the office. No, children. I don't like this—the way, I mean. This habit of every year—well—what can one say? I suppose it can't be managed any other way.

Hilde (about to go out of garden, and, with the bag, stops short, turns, and points out). Look at that gentleman coming up here. I'm sure it's your tutor.

Bolette (looks in that direction). He? (Laughs.) That is good! Do you think that middle-aged fellow is Arnholm?

Wangel. Wait a moment, child. Why, by Jove, I do believe it is he. Yes, it certainly is.

Bolette (staring at him in quiet amazement). Yes; I almost think—

(ARNHOLM, in elegant morning dress, with gold spectacles, and a thin cane, comes along the road. He looks overworked. He looks in at the garden, bows in friendly fashion, and enters by the garden gate.)

Wangel (going to meet him). Welcome, dear Arnholm! Heartily welcome back to your old quarters again!

Arnholm. Thanks, thanks, Doctor Wangel. A thousand thanks. (They shake hands and walk up the garden together.) And there are the children! (Holds out his hands and looks at them.) I should hardly have known these two again.

Wangel. No, I believe you.

Arnholm. And yet—perhaps Bolette—yes, I should have known Bolette again.

Wangel. Hardly, I think. Why, it is eight—nine years since you saw her. Ah, yes! Many a thing has changed here meanwhile.

Arnholm (looking round). I really don't see it; except that the trees have grown remarkably, and that you've set up that arbour.

Wangel. Oh! no—outwardly.

Arnholm (smiling). And then, of course, you've two grown-up daughters here now.

Wangel. Grown up! Well, there's only one grown up.

Hilde (aside). Just listen to father!

Wangel. But now let's sit down up there on the verandah. It's cooler than here. Won't you?

Arnholm. Thanks, thanks, dear doctor.

(They go up. WANGEL motions him to the rocking-chair.)

Wangel. That's right! Now make yourself comfortable, and rest, for you seem rather tired after your journey.

Arnholm. Oh, that's nothing. Here, amid these surroundings Bolette (to WANGEL). Hadn't we better have some soda and syrup in the sitting-room? It's sure to be too hot out here soon.

Wangel. Yes, girls. Let's have some soda and syrup, and perhaps a drop of Cognac, too.

Bolette. Cognac, too!

Wangel. Just a little, in case anyone should like some.

Bolette. All right. Hilde, go down to the office with the bag.

(BOLETTE goes into the room, and closes the door after her.

HILDE takes the bag, and goes through the garden to the back of the house.)

Arnholm (who has followed BOLETTE with his eyes). What a splendid—. They are both splendid girls, who've grown up here for you.

Wangel (sitting down). Yes; you think so, too?

Arnholm. Why, it's simply amazing, how Bolette!—and Hilde, too! But now, you yourself, dear doctor. Do you think of staying here all your life?

Wangel. Yes; I suppose so. Why, I've been born and bred here, so to say. I lived here so very happily with—her who left us so early—she whom you knew when you were here before, Arnholm.

Arnholm. Yes, yes!

Wangel. And now I live here so happily with her who has taken her place. Ah! On the whole, fate has been very good to me.

Arnholm. You have no children by your second marriage? Wangel. We had a little boy, two—two and a half years ago. But he didn't stay long. He died when he was four—five months old.

Arnholm. Isn't your wife at home today?

Wangel. Oh, yes. She's sure to be here soon. She's down there bathing. She does so every blessed day no matter what the weather.

Arnholm. Is she ill, then?

Wangel. Not exactly ill, although she has been extremely nervous for the last few years—that is to say, she is now and then. I can't make out what really ails her. But to plunge into the sea is her joy and delight.

Arnholm. Yes; I remember that of old.

Wangel (with an almost imperceptible smile). To be sure! You knew Ellida when you were teacher out there at Skjoldviken.

Arnholm. Certainly. She used often to visit at the Parsonage. But I mostly met her when I went to the lighthouse to see her father.

Wangel. Those times out there, you may believe me, have set deep marks upon her. The people in the town here can't understand her at all. They call her the "Lady from the Sea."

Arnholm. Do they?

Wangel. Yes. And so—now, you see, speak to her of the old days, dear Arnholm, it will do her good.

Arnholm (looks at him in doubt). Have you any reason for thinking so?

Wangel. Assuredly I have.

Ellida (her voice is heard outside the garden). Are you there, Wangel?

Wangel (rising). Yes, dear.

(Mrs. ELLIDA WANGEL, in a large, light wrap, and with wet hair hanging loose over her shoulders, comes from between the trees of the arbour. ARNHOLM rises.)

Wangel (smiling, and holding out his hands to her). Ah! So now we have our Mermaid!

Ellida (goes quickly up the verandah, and seizes his hands). Thank God that I see you again! When did you come?

Wangel. Just now; a little while since. (Pointing to ARNHOLM.) But won't you greet an old acquaintance?

Ellida (holding out her hand to ARNHOLM). So here you are! Welcome! And forgive me for not being at home—

Arnholm. Don't mention it—don't stand on any ceremony.

Wangel. Was the water nice and fresh today?

Ellida. Fresh! Oh! The water here never is fresh. It is so tepid and lifeless. Ugh! The water in the fjord here is sick.

Arnholm. Sick?

Ellida. Yes, sick. And I believe it makes one sick, too.

Wangel (smiling). You're giving our bathing resort a good name!

Arnholm. I should rather believe, Mrs. Wangel, that you have a peculiar relation to the sea, and to all that belongs to it.

Ellida. Perhaps; I almost think so myself. But do you see how festively the girls have arranged everything in your honour?

Wangel (embarrassed). Hm! (Looks at his watch.) Well, I suppose I must be quick and—

Arnholm. Is it really for me?

Ellida. Yes. You may be sure we don't decorate like this every day. Ugh! How suffocatingly hot it is under this roof. (Goes down into the garden.) Come over here. Here at least there is a little air. (Sits down in arbour.)

Arnholm (going thither). I think the air quite fresh here.

Ellida. Yes, you—who are used to the stifling air of the town! It's terrible there in the summer, I hear.

Wangel (who has also gone into the garden). Hm, dear Ellida, you must just entertain our friend alone for a little while.

Ellida. Are you busy?

Wangel. Yes, I must go down to the office. And then I must change. But I won't be long.

Arnholm (sitting down in arbour). Now, don't hurry, dear doctor. Your wife and I will manage to kill the time.

Wangel (nodding). Oh, yes! I'm sure you will. Well, goodbye for the present. (He goes out through the garden.)

Ellida (after a short pause). Don't you think it's pleasant sitting out here?

Arnholm. I think I've a pleasant seat now.

Ellida. They call this my arbour, because I had it fitted up, or rather Wangel did, for me.

Arnholm. And you usually sit here?

Ellida. Yes, I pass most of the day here.

Arnholm. With the girls, I suppose?

Ellida. No, the girls—usually sit on the verandah.

Arnholm. And Wangel himself?

Ellida. Oh! Wangel goes to and fro—now he comes to me, and then he goes to his children.

Arnholm. And is it you who wish this?

Ellida. I think all parties feel most comfortable in this way. You know we can talk across to one another—if we happen to find there is anything to say.

Arnholm (after thinking awhile). When I last crossed your path—out at Skjoldviken, I mean—Hm! That is long ago now.

Ellida. It's quite ten years since you were there with us.

Arnholm. Yes, about that. But when I think of you out there in the lighthouse! The heathen, as the old clergyman called you, because your father had named you, as he said, after an old ship, and hadn't given you a name fit for a Christian.

Ellida. Well, what then?

Arnholm. The last thing I should then have believed was that I should see you again down here as the wife of Wangel.

Ellida. No; at that time Wangel wasn't—at that time the girls' first mother was still living. Their real mother, so Arnholm. Of course, of course! But even if that had not been-even if he had been free—still, I could never have believed this would come about.

Ellida. Nor I. Never on earth—then.

Arnholm. Wangel is such a good fellow. So honourable. So thoroughly good and kind to all men.

Ellida (warmly and heartily). Yes, he is indeed.

Arnholm. But he must be so absolutely different from you, I fancy.

Ellida. You are right there. So he is.

Arnholm. Well, but how did it happen? How did it come about?

Ellida. Ah! dear Arnholm, you mustn't ask me about that. I couldn't explain it to you, and even if I could, you would never be able to understand, in the least.

Arnholm. Hm! (In lower tone.) Have you ever confided anything about me to your husband? Of course, I meant about the useless step—I allowed myself to be moved to.

Ellida. No. You may be sure of that. I've not said a word to him about—about what you speak of.

Arnholm. I am glad. I felt rather awkward at the thought that—

Ellida. There was no need. I have only told him what is true—that I liked you very much, and that you were the truest and best friend I had out there.

Arnholm. Thanks for that. But tell me—why did you never write to me after I had gone away?

Ellida. I thought that perhaps it would pain you to hear from one who—who could not respond as you desired. It seemed like re-opening a painful subject.

Arnholm. Hm. Yes, yes, perhaps you were right.

Ellida. But why didn't you write?

Arnholm (looks at her and smiles, half reproachfully). I make the first advance? Perhaps expose myself to the suspicion of wanting to begin all over again? After such a repulse as I had had?

Ellida. Oh no! I understand very well. Have you never since thought of forming any other tie?

Arnholm. Never! I have been faithful to my first memories.

Ellida (half jestingly). Nonsense! Let the sad old memories alone. You'd better think of becoming a happy husband, I should say.

Arnholm. I should have to be quick about it, then, Mrs. Wangel. Remember, I'm already—I'm ashamed to say—I'm past thirty-seven.

Ellida. Well, all the more reason for being quick. (She is silent for a moment, and then says, earnestly, in a low voice.) But listen, dear Arnholm; now I am going to tell you something that I could not have told you then, to save my life.

Arnholm. What is it?

Ellida. When you took the—the useless step you were just speaking of—I could not answer you otherwise than I did.

Arnholm. I know that you had nothing but friendship to give me; I know that well enough.

Ellida. But you did not know that all my mind and soul were then given elsewhere.

Arnholm. At that time!

Ellida. Yes.

Arnholm. But it is impossible. You are mistaken about the time. I hardly think you knew Wangel then.

Ellida. It is not Wangel of whom I speak.

Arnholm. Not Wangel? But at that time, out there at Skjoldviken—I can't remember a single person whom I can imagine the possibility of your caring for.

Ellida. No, no, I quite believe that; for it was all such bewildering madness—all of it.

Arnholm. But tell me more of this.

Ellida. Oh! it's enough if you know I was bound then; and you know it now.

Arnholm. And if you had not been bound?

Ellida. Well?

Arnholm. Would your answer to my letter have been different?

Ellida. How can I tell? When Wangel came the answer was different.

Arnholm. What is your object, then, in telling me that you were bound?

Ellida (getting up, as if in fear and unrest). Because I must have someone in whom to confide. No, no; sit still.

Arnholm. Then your husband knows nothing about this?

Ellida. I confessed to him from the first that my thoughts had once been elsewhere. He never asked to know more, and we have never touched upon it since. Besides, at bottom it was simply madness. And then it was over directly—that is to a certain extent.

Arnholm (rising). Only to a certain extent? Not quite?

Ellida. Yes, yes, it is! Oh, good heavens! Dear Arnholm, it is not what you think. It is something so absolutely incomprehensible, I don't know how I could tell it you. You would only think I was ill, or quite mad.

Arnholm. My dearest lady! Now you really must tell me all about it.

Ellida. Well, then, I'll try to. How will you, as a sensible man, explain to yourself that—(Looks round, and breaks off.) Wait a moment. Here's a visitor.

(LYNGSTRAND comes along the road, and enters the garden. He has a flower in his button-hole, and carries a large, handsome bouquet done up in paper and silk ribbons. He stands somewhat hesitatingly and undecidedly by the verandah.)

Ellida (from the arbour). Have you come to see the girls, Mr. Lyngstrand?

Lyngstrand (turning round). Ah, madam, are you there? (Bows, and comes nearer.) No, it's not that. It's not the young ladies. It's

you yourself, Mrs. Wangel. You know you gave me permission to come and see you Ellida. Of course I did. You are always welcome here.

Lyngstrand. Thanks; and as it falls out so luckily that it's a festival here today—

Ellida. Oh! Do you know about that?

Lyngstrand. Rather! And so I should like to take the liberty of presenting this to Mrs. Wangel. (Bows, and offers her the bouquet.)

Ellida (smiling). But, my dear Mr. Lyngstrand, oughtn't you to give these lovely flowers to Mr. Arnholm himself? For you know it's really he Lyngstrand (looking uncertainly at both of them). Excuse me, but I don't know this gentleman. It's only—I've only come about the birthday, Mrs. Wangel.

Ellida. Birthday? You've made a mistake, Mr. Lyngstrand. There's no birthday here today.

Lyngstrand (smiling slyly). Oh! I know all about that! But I didn't think it was to be kept so dark.

Ellida. What do you know?

Lyngstrand. That it is Madam's birthday.

Ellida. Mine?

Arnholm (looks questioningly at her). Today? Surely not.

Ellida (to LYNGSTRAND). Whatever made you think that?

Lyngstrand. It was Miss Hilde who let it out. I just looked in here a little while ago, and I asked the young ladies why they were decorating the place like this, with flowers and flags.

Ellida. Well?

Lyngstrand. And so Miss Hilde said, "Why, today is mother's birthday."

Ellida. Mother's!—I see.

Arnholm. Aha! (He and ELLIDA exchange a meaning look.) Well, now that the young man knows about it—

Ellida (to LYNGSTRAND). Well, now that you know—

Lyngstrand (offering her the bouquet again). May I take the liberty of congratulating you?

Ellida (taking the flowers). My best thanks. Won't you sit down a moment, Mr. Lyngstrand? (ELLIDA, ARNHOLM, and LYNGSTRAND sit down in the arbour.) This—birthday business—was to have been kept secret, Mr. Arnholm.

Arnholm. So I see. It wasn't for us uninitiated folk!

Ellida (putting down the bouquet). Just so. Not for the uninitiated.

Lyngstrand. 'Pon my word, I won't tell a living soul about it.

Ellida. Oh, it wasn't meant like that. But how are you getting on? I think you look better than you did.

Lyngstrand. Oh! I think I'm getting on famously. And by next year, if I can go south—

Ellida. And you are going south, the girls tell me.

Lyngstrand. Yes, for I've a benefactor and friend at Bergen, who looks after me, and has promised to help me next year.

Ellida. How did you get such a friend?

Lyngstrand. Well, it all happened so very luckily. I once went to sea in one of his ships.

Ellida. Did you? So you wanted to go to sea?

Lyngstrand. No, not at all. But when mother died, father wouldn't have me knocking about at home any longer, and so he sent me to sea. Then we were wrecked in the English Channel on our way home; and that was very fortunate for me.

Arnholm. What do you mean?

Lyngstrand. Yes, for it was in the shipwreck that I got this little weakness—of my chest. I was so long in the ice-cold water before they picked me up; and so I had to give up the sea. Yes, that was very fortunate.

Arnholm. Indeed! Do you think so?

Lyngstrand. Yes, for the weakness isn't dangerous; and now I can be a sculptor, as I so dearly want to be. Just think; to model in that delicious clay, that yields so caressingly to your fingers!

Ellida. And what are you going to model? Is it to be mermen and mermaids? Or is it to be old Vikings?

Lyngstrand. No, not that. As soon as I can set about it, I am going to try if I can produce a great work—a group, as they call it.

Ellida. Yes; but what's the group to be?

Lyngstrand. Oh! something I've experienced myself.

Arnholm. Yes, yes; always stick to that.

Ellida. But what's it to be?

Lyngstrand. Well, I thought it should be the young wife of a sailor, who lies sleeping in strange unrest, and she is dreaming. I fancy I shall do it so that you will see she is dreaming.

Arnholm. Is there anything else?

Lyngstrand. Yes, there's to be another figure—a sort of apparition, as they say. It's her husband, to whom she has been faithless while he was away, and he is drowned at sea.

Arnholm. What?

Ellida. Drowned?

Lyngstrand. Yes, he was drowned on a sea voyage. But that's the wonderful part of it—he comes home all the same. It is night-time. And he is standing by her bed looking at her. He is to stand there dripping wet, like one drawn from the sea.

Ellida (leaning back in her chair). What an extraordinary idea! (Shutting her eyes.) Oh! I can see it so clearly, living before me!

Arnholm. But how on earth, Mr.—Mr.—I thought you said it was to be something you had experienced.

Lyngstrand. Yes. I did experience that—that is to say, to a certain extent.

Arnholm. You saw a dead man?

Lyngstrand. Well, I don't mean I've actually seen this—experienced it in the flesh. But still—

Ellida (quickly, intently). Oh! tell me all you can about it! I must understand about all this.

Arnholm (smiling). Yes, that'll be quite in your line. Something that has to do with sea fancies.

Ellida. What was it, Mr. Lyngstrand?

Lyngstrand. Well, it was like this. At the time when we were to sail home in the brig from a town they called Halifax, we had to leave the boatswain behind in the hospital. So we had to engage an American instead. This new boatswain Ellida. The American?

Lyngstrand. Yes, one day he got the captain to lend him a lot of old newspapers and he was always reading them. For he wanted to teach himself Norwegian, he said.

Ellida. Well, and then?

Lyngstrand. It was one evening in rough weather. All hands were on deck—except the boatswain and myself. For he had sprained his foot and couldn't walk, and I was feeling rather low, and was lying in my berth. Well, he was sitting there in the forecastle, reading one of those old papers again.

Ellida. Well, well!

Lyngstrand. But just as he was sitting there quietly reading, I heard him utter a sort of yell. And when I looked at him, I saw his face

was as white as chalk. And then he began to crush and crumple the paper, and to tear it into a thousand shreds. But he did it so quietly, quietly.

Ellida. Didn't he say anything? Didn't he speak?

Lyngstrand. Not directly; but a little after he said to himself, as it were: "Married—to another man. While I was away."

Ellida (closes her eyes, and says, half to herself). He said that?

Lyngstrand. Yes. And think—he said it in perfect Norwegian. That man must have learnt foreign languages very easily—

Ellida. And what then? What else happened?

Lyngstrand. Well, now the remarkable part is coming—that I shall never forget as long as I live. For he added, and that quite quietly, too: "But she is mine, and mine she shall remain. And she shall follow me, if I should come home and fetch her, as a drowned man from the dark sea."

Ellida (pouring herself out a glass of water. Her hand trembles). Ah! How close it is here today.

Lyngstrand. And he said this with such strength of will that I thought he must be the man to do it.

Ellida. Don't you know anything about—what became of the man?

Lyngstrand. Oh! madam, he's certainly not living now.

Ellida (quickly). Why do you think that?

Lyngstrand. Why? Because we were shipwrecked afterwards in the Channel. I had got into the longboat with the captain and five others. The mate got into the stern-boat; and the American was in that too, and another man.

Ellida. And nothing has been heard of them since?

Lyngstrand. Not a word. The friend who looks after me said so quite recently in a letter. But it's just because of this I was so

anxious to make it into a work of art. I see the faithless sailor-wife so life-like before me, and the avenger who is drowned, and who nevertheless comes home from the sea. I can see them both so distinctly.

Ellida. I, too. (Rises.) Come; let us go in—or, rather, go down to Wangel. I think it is so suffocatingly hot. (She goes out of the arbour.)

Lyngstrand (who has also risen). I, for my part, must ask you to excuse me. This was only to be a short visit because of the birthday.

Ellida. As you wish. (Holds out her hand to him.) Goodbye, and thank you for the flowers.

(LYNGSTRAND bows, and goes off through the garden gate.)

Arnholm (rises, and goes up to ELLIDA). I see well enough that this has gone to your heart, Mrs. Wangel.

Ellida. Yes; you may well say so. Although Arnholm. But still—after all, it's no more than you were bound to expect.

Ellida (looks at him surprised). Expect!

Arnholm. Well, so it seems to me.

Ellida. Expect that anyone should come back again!—come to life again like that!

Arnholm. But what on earth!—is it that mad sculptor's sea story, then?

Ellida. Oh, dear Arnholm, perhaps it isn't so mad after all!

Arnholm. Is it that nonsense about the dead man that has moved you so? And I who thought that—

Ellida. What did you think?

Arnholm. I naturally thought that was only a make-believe of yours. And that you were sitting here grieving because you had

found out a family feast was being kept secret; because your husband and his children live a life of remembrances in which you have no part.

Ellida. Oh! no, no! That may be as it may. I have no right to claim my husband wholly and solely for myself.

Arnholm. I should say you had.

Ellida. Yes. Yet, all the same, I have not. That is it. Why, I, too, live in something from which they are shut out.

Arnholm. You! (In lower tone.) Do you mean?—you, you do not really love your husband!

Ellida. Oh! yes, yes! I have learnt to love him with all my heart! And that's why it is so terrible-so inexplicable—so absolutely inconceivable!

Arnholm. Now you must and shall confide all your troubles to me. Will you, Mrs. Wangel?

Ellida. I cannot, dear friend. Not now, in any case. Later, perhaps.

(BOLETTE comes out into the verandah, and goes down into the garden.)

Bolette. Father's coming up from the office. Hadn't we better all of us go into the sitting-room?

Ellida. Yes, let us.

(WANGEL, in other clothes, comes with HILDE from behind the house.)

Wangel. Now, then, here I am at your service. And now we shall enjoy a good glass of something cool.

Ellida. Wait a moment. (She goes into the arbour and fetches the bouquet.)

Hilde. I say! All those lovely flowers! Where did you get them?

Ellida. From the sculptor, Lyngstrand, my dear Hilde.

Hilde (starts). From Lyngstrand?

Bolette (uneasily). Has Lyngstrand been here again?

Ellida (with a half-smile). Yes. He came here with these. Because of the birthday, you understand.

Bolette (looks at HILDE). Oh!

Hilde (mutters). The idiot!

Wangel (in painful confusion to ELLIDA). Hm!—yes, well you see-I must tell you, my dear, good, beloved Ellida—

Ellida (interrupting). Come, girls! Let us go and put my flowers in the water together with the others. (Goes up to the verandah.)

Bolette (to HILDE). Oh! After all she is good at heart.

Hilde (in a low tone with angry look). Fiddlesticks! She only does it to take in father.

Wangel (on the verandah, presses ELLIDA'S hand).
Thanks-thanks! My heartfelt thanks for that, dear Ellida.

Ellida (arranging the flowers). Nonsense! Should not I, too, be in it, and take part in—in mother's birthday?

Arnholm. Hm!

(He goes up to WANGEL, and ELLIDA, BOLETTE, and HILDE remain in the garden below.)

ACT II

(SCENE.—At the "View," a shrub-covered hill behind the town. A little in the background, a beacon and a vane. Great stones arranged as seats around the beacon, and in the foreground. Farther back the outer fjord is seen, with islands and outstanding headlands. The open sea is not visible. It is a summer's evening, and twilight. A golden-red shimmer is in the air and over the mountain-tops in the far distance. A quartette is faintly heard singing below in the background. Young townsfolk, ladies and gentlemen, come up in pairs, from the right, and, talking familiarly, pass out beyond the beacon. A little after, BALLESTED enters, as guide to a party of foreign tourists with their ladies. He is laden with shawls and travelling bags.)

Ballested (pointing upwards with a stick). Sehen Sie, meine Herrschaften, dort, out there, liegt eine andere mountain, That wollen wir also besteigen, and so herunter. (He goes on with the conversation in French, and leads the party off to the left. HILDE comes quickly along the uphill path, stands still, and looks back. Soon after BOLETTE comes up the same way.)

Bolette. But, dear, why should we run away from Lyngstrand?

Hilde. Because I can't bear going uphill so slowly. Look—look at him crawling up!

Bolette. Ah! But you know how delicate he is.

Hilde. Do you think it's very—dangerous?

Bolette. I certainly do.

Hilde. He went to consult father this afternoon. I should like to know what father thinks about him.

Bolette. Father told me it was a thickening of the lungs, or something of the sort. He won't live to be old, father says.

Hilde. No! Did he say it? Fancy—that's exactly what I thought.

Bolette. For heaven's sake don't show it!

Hilde. How can you imagine such a thing? (In an undertone.) Look, here comes Hans crawling up. Don't you think you can see by the look of him that he's called Hans?

Bolette (whispering). Now do behave! You'd better!

(LYNGSTRAND comes in from the right, a parasol in his hand.)

Lyngstrand. I must beg the young ladies to excuse me for not getting along as quickly as they did.

Hilde. Have you got a parasol too, now?

Lyngstrand. It's your mother's. She said I was to use it as a stick. I hadn't mine with me.

Bolette. Are they down there still—father and the others?

Lyngstrand. Yes; your father looked in at the restaurant for a moment, and the others are sitting out there listening to the music. But they were coming up here presently, your mother said.

Hilde (stands looking at him). I suppose you're thoroughly tired out now?

Lyngstrand. Yes; I almost think I'm a little tired now. I really believe I shall have to sit down a moment. (He sits on one of the stones in the foreground.)

Hilde (standing in front of him). Do you know there's to be dancing down there on the parade?

Lyngstrand. Yes; I heard there was some talk about it.

Hilde. I suppose you think dancing's great fun?

Bolette (who begins gathering small flowers among the heather). Oh, Hilde! Now do let Mr. Lyngstrand get his breath.

Lyngstrand (to HILDE). Yes, Miss Hilde; I should very much like to dance—if only I could.

Hilde. Oh, I see! Haven't you ever learnt?

Lyngstrand. No, I've not. But it wasn't that I meant. I meant I couldn't because of my chest.

Hilde. Because of that weakness you said you suffered from?

Lyngstrand. Yes; because of that.

Hilde. Aren't you very sorry you've that—weakness?

Lyngstrand. Oh, no! I can't say I am (smiling), for I think it's because of it that everyone is so good, and friendly, and kind to me.

Hilde. Yes. And then, besides, it's not dangerous.

Lyngstrand. No; it's not at all dangerous. So I gathered from what your father said to me.

Hilde. And then it will pass away as soon as ever you begin travelling.

Lyngstrand. Of course it will pass away.

Bolette (with flowers). Look here, Mr. Lyngstrand, you are to put this in your button-hole.

Lyngstrand. Oh! A thousand thanks, Miss Wangel. It's really too good of you.

Hilde (looking down the path). There they are, coming along the road.

Bolette (also looking down). If only they know where to turn off. No; now they're going wrong.

Lyngstrand (rising). I'll run down to the turning and call out to them.

Hilde. You'll have to call out pretty loud.

Bolette. No; it's not worth while. You'll only tire yourself again.

Lyngstrand. Oh, it's so easy going downhill. (Goes off to the right.)

Hilde. Down-hill—yes. (Looking after him.) Why, he's actually jumping! And he never remembers he'll have to come up again.

Bolette. Poor fellow!

Hilde. If Lyngstrand were to propose, would you accept him?

Bolette. Are you quite mad?

Hilde. Of course, I mean if he weren't troubled with that "weakness." And if he weren't to die so soon, would you have him then?

Bolette. I think you'd better have him yourself!

Hilde. No, that I wouldn't! Why, he hasn't a farthing. He hasn't enough even to keep himself.

Bolette. Then why are you always going about with him?

Hilde. Oh, I only do that because of the weakness.

Bolette. I've never noticed that you in the least pity him for it!

Hilde. No, I don't. But I think it so interesting.

Bolette. What is?

Hilde. To look at him and make him tell you it isn't dangerous; and that he's going abroad, and is to be an artist. He really believes it all, and is so thoroughly happy about it. And yet nothing will ever come of it; nothing whatever. For he won't live long enough. I feel that's so fascinating to think of.

Bolette. Fascinating!

Hilde. Yes, I think it's most fascinating. I take that liberty.

Bolette. Hilde, you really are a dreadful child!

Hilde. That's just what I want to be—out of spite. (Looking down.) At last! I shouldn't think Arnholm liked coming up-hill. (Turns round.) By the way, do you know what I noticed about Arnholm at dinner?

Bolette. Well?

Hilde. Just think—his hair's beginning to come off—right on the top of his head.

Bolette. Nonsense! I'm sure that's not true.

Hilde. It is! And then he has wrinkles round both his eyes. Good gracious, Bolette, how could you be so much in love with him when he used to read with you?

Bolette (smiling). Yes. Can you believe it? I remember I once shed bitter tears because he thought Bolette was an ugly name.

Hilde. Only to think! (Looking down.) No! I say, do just look down here! There's the "Mermaid" walking along and chatting with him. Not with father. I wonder if those two aren't making eyes at one another.

Bolette. You ought to be ashamed of yourself! How can you stand there and say such a thing of her? Now, when everything was beginning to be so pleasant between us.

Hilde. Of course—just try and persuade yourself of that, my child! Oh, no! It will never be pleasant between us and her. For she doesn't belong to us at all. And we don't belong to her either. Goodness knows what father dragged her into the house for! I shouldn't wonder if some fine day she went mad under our very eyes.

Bolette. Mad! How can you think such a thing?

Hilde. Oh! it wouldn't be so extraordinary. Her mother went mad, too. She died mad—I know that.

Bolette. Yes, heaven only knows what you don't poke your nose into. But now don't go chattering about this. Do be good—for father's sake. Do you hear, Hilde?

(WANGEL, ELLIDA, ARNHOLM and LYNGSTRAND come up from the right.)

Ellida (pointing to the background). Out there it lies.

Arnholm. Quite right. It must be in that direction.

Ellida. Out there is the sea.

Bolette (to ARNHOLM). Don't you think it is delightful up here?

Arnholm. It's magnificent, I think. Glorious view!

Wangel. I suppose you never used to come up here?

Arnholm. No, never. In my time I think it was hardly accessible; there wasn't any path even.

Wangel. And no grounds. All this has been done during the last few years.

Bolette. And there, at the "Pilot's Mount," it's even grander than here.

Wangel. Shall we go there, Ellida?

Ellida (sitting down on one of the stones). Thanks, not I; but you others can. I'll sit here meanwhile.

Wangel. Then I'll stay with you. The girls can show Arnholm about.

Bolette. Would you like to go with us, Mr. Arnholm?

Arnholm. I should like to, very much. Does a path lead up there too?

Bolette. Oh yes. There's a nice broad path.

Hilde. The path is so broad that two people can walk along it comfortably, arm in arm.

Arnholm (jestingly). Is that really so, little Missie? (To BOLETTE.) Shall we two see if she is right?

Bolette (suppressing a smile). Very well, let's go. (They go out to the left, arm in arm.)

Hilde (to LYNGSTRAND). Shall we go too?

Lyngstrand. Arm in arm?

Hilde. Oh, why not? For aught I care!

Lyngstrand (taking her arm, laughing contentedly). This is a jolly lark.

Hilde. Lark?

Lyngstrand. Yes; because it looks exactly as if we were engaged.

Hilde. I'm sure you've never walked out arm in arm with a lady before, Mr. Lyngstrand. (They go off.)

Wangel (who is standing beside the beacon). Dear Ellida, now we have a moment to ourselves.

Ellida. Yes; come and sit down here, by me.

Wangel (sitting down). It is so free and quiet. Now we can have a little talk together.

Ellida. What about?

Wangel. About yourself, and then about us both. Ellida, I see very well that it can't go on like this.

Ellida. What do you propose instead?

Wangel. Perfect confidence, dear. A true life together—as before.

Ellida. Oh, if that could be! But it is so absolutely impossible!

Wangel. I think I understand you, from certain things you have let fall now and again.

Ellida (passionately). Oh, you do not! Don't say you understand!

Wangel. Yes. Yours is an honest nature, Ellida—yours is a faithful mind.

Ellida. It is.

Wangel. Any position in which you could feel safe and happy must be a completely true and real one.

Ellida (looking eagerly at him). Well, and then?

Wangel. You are not suited to be a man's second wife.

Ellida. What makes you think that?

Wangel. It has often flashed across me like a foreboding. Today it was clear to me. The children's memorial feast—you saw in me a kind of accomplice. Well, yes; a man's memories, after all, cannot be wiped out—not so mine, anyhow. It isn't in me.

Ellida. I know that. Oh! I know that so well.

Wangel. But you are mistaken all the same. To you it is almost as if the children's mother were still living—as if she were still here invisible amongst us. You think my heart is equally divided between you and her. It is this thought that shocks you. You see something immoral in our relation, and that is why you no longer can or will live with me as my wife.

Ellida (rising). Have you seen all that, Wangel—seen into all this?

Wangel. Yes; today I have at last seen to the very heart of it—to its utmost depths.

Ellida. To its very heart, you say? Oh, do not think that!

Wangel (rising). I see very well that there is more than this, dear Ellida.

Ellida (anxiously). You know there is more?

Wangel. Yes. You cannot bear your surroundings here. The mountains crush you, and weigh upon your heart. Nothing is open enough for you here. The heavens above you are not spacious enough. The air is not strong and bracing enough.

Ellida. You are right. Night and day, winter and summer, it weighs upon me—this irresistible home-sickness for the sea.

Wangel. I know it well, dear Ellida (laying his hands upon her head). And that is why the poor sick child shall go home to her own again.

Ellida. What do you mean?

Wangel. Something quite simple. We are going away.

Ellida. Going away?

Wangel. Yes. Somewhere by the open sea—a place where you can find a true home, after your own heart.

Ellida. Oh, dear, do not think of that! That is quite impossible. You can live happily nowhere on earth but here!

Wangel. That must be as it may. And, besides, do you think I can live happily here—without you?

Ellida. But I am here. And I will stay here. You have me.

Wangel. Have I, Ellida?

Ellida. Oh! don't speak of all this. Why, here you have all that you love and strive for. All your life's work lies here.

Wangel. That must be as it may, I tell you. We are going away from here—are going somewhere—out there. That is quite settled now, dear Ellida.

Ellida. What do you think we should gain by that?

Wangel. You would regain your health and peace of mind.

Ellida. Hardly. And then you, yourself! Think of yourself, too! What of you?

Wangel. I would win you back again, my dearest.

Ellida. But you cannot do that! No, no, you can't do that, Wangel! That is the terrible part of it—heart-breaking to think of.

Wangel. That remains to be proved. If you are harbouring such thoughts, truly there is no other salvation for you than to go hence.

And the sooner the better. Now this is irrevocably settled, do you hear?

Ellida. No! Then in heaven's name I had better tell you everything straight out. Everything just as it is.

Wangel. Yes, yes! Do.

Ellida. For you shall not ruin your happiness for my sake, especially as it can't help us in any way.

Wangel. I have your word now that you will tell me everything just as it is.

Ellida. I'll tell you everything as well as I can, and as far as I understand it. Come here and sit by me. (They sit down on the stones.)

Wangel. Well, Ellida, so—

Ellida. That day when you came out there and asked me if I would be yours, you spoke so frankly and honestly to me about your first marriage. It had been so happy, you said.

Wangel. And so it was.

Ellida. Yes, yes! I am sure of that, dear! It is not for that I am referring to it now. I only want to remind you that I, on my side, was frank with you. I told you quite openly that once in my life I had cared for another. That there had been a—a kind of engagement between us.

Wangel. A kind of—

Ellida. Yes, something of the sort. Well, it only lasted such a very short time. He went away; and after that I put an end to it. I told you all that.

Wangel. Why rake up all this now? It really didn't concern me; nor have I once asked you who he was!

Ellida. No, you have not. You are always so thoughtful for me.

Wangel (smiling). Oh, in this case I could guess the name well enough for myself.

Ellida. The name?

Wangel. Out in Skjoldviken and thereabouts there weren't many to choose from; or, rather, there was only a single one.

Ellida. You believe it was Arnholm!

Wangel. Well, wasn't it?

Ellida. No!

Wangel. Not he? Then I don't in the least understand.

Ellida. Can you remember that late in the autumn a large American ship once put into Skjoldviken for repairs?

Wangel. Yes, I remember it very well. It was on board that ship that the captain was found one morning in his cabin—murdered. I myself went out to make the post-mortem.

Ellida. Yes, it was you.

Wangel. It was the second mate who had murdered him.

Ellida. No one can say that. For it was never proved.

Wangel. There was enough against him anyhow, or why should he have drowned himself as he did?

Ellida. He did not drown himself. He sailed in a ship to the north.

Wangel (startled). How do you know?

Ellida (with an effort). Well, Wangel—it was this second mate to whom I was—betrothed.

Wangel (springing up). What! Is it possible!

Ellida. Yes, it is so. It was to him!

Wangel. But how on earth, Ellida! How did you come to betroth yourself to such a man? To an absolute stranger! What is his name?

Ellida. At that time he called himself Friman. Later, in his letters he signed himself Alfred Johnston.

Wangel. And where did he come from?

Ellida. From Finmark, he said. For the rest, he was born in Finland, had come to Norway there as a child with his father, I think.

Wangel. A Finlander, then?

Ellida. Yes, so he called himself.

Wangel. What else do you know about him?

Ellida. Only that he went to sea very young. And that he had been on long voyages.

Wangel. Nothing more?

Ellida. No. We never spoke of such things.

Wangel. Of what did you speak, then?

Ellida. We spoke mostly about the sea.

Wangel. Ah! About the sea—

Ellida. About storms and calm. Of dark nights at sea. And of the sea in the glittering sunshiny days we spoke also. But we spoke most of the whales, and the dolphins, and the seals who lie out there on the rocks in the midday sun. And then we spoke of the gulls, and the eagles, and all the other sea birds. I think—isn't it wonderful?—when we talked of such things it seemed to me as if both the sea beasts and sea birds were one with him.

Wangel. And with you?

Ellida. Yes; I almost thought I belonged to them all, too.

Wangel. Well, well! And so it was that you betrothed yourself to him?

Ellida. Yes. He said I must.

Wangel. You must? Had you no will of your own, then?

Ellida. Not when he was near. Ah! afterwards I thought it all so inexplicable.

Wangel. Were you often together?

Ellida. No; not very often. One day he came out to our place, and looked over the lighthouse. After that I got to know him, and we met now and again. But then that happened about the captain, and so he had to go away.

Wangel. Yes, yes. Tell me more about that.

Ellida. It was just daybreak when I had a note from him. He said in it I was to go out to him at the Bratthammer. You know the headland there between the lighthouse and Skjoldviken?

Wangel. I know, I know!

Ellida. I was to go out there at once, he wrote, because he wanted to speak to me.

Wangel. And you went?

Ellida. Yes. I could not do otherwise. Well, then he told me he had stabbed the captain in the night.

Wangel. He said that himself! Actually said so!

Ellida. Yes. But he had only acted rightly and justly, he said.

Wangel. Rightly and justly! Why did he stab him then?

Ellida. He wouldn't speak out about that. He said it was not fit for me to hear.

Wangel. And you believed his naked, bare word?

Ellida. Yes. It never occurred to me to do otherwise. Well, anyhow, he had to go away. But now, when he was to bid me farewell—. No; you never could imagine what he thought of—

Wangel. Well? Tell me.

Ellida. He took from his pocket a key-ring—and drew a ring that he always wore from his finger, and he took a small ring I had. These two he put on the key-ring. And then he said we should wed ourselves to the sea.

Wangel. Wed?

Ellida. Yes, so he said. And with that he threw the key-ring, and our rings, with all his might, as far as he could into the deep.

Wangel. And you, Ellida, you did all this?

Ellida. Yes—only think—it then seemed to me as if it must be so. But, thank God I—he went away.

Wangel. And when he was gone?

Ellida. Oh! You can surely understand that I soon came to my senses again—that I saw how absolutely mad and meaningless it had all been.

Wangel. But you spoke just now of letters. So you have heard from him since?

Ellida. Yes, I have heard from him. First I had a few short lines from Archangel. He only wrote he was going to America. And then he told me where to send an answer.

Wangel. And did you?

Ellida. At once. I wrote him, of course, that all must be at an end between us; and that he must no longer think of me, just as I should no longer think of him.

Wangel. But did he write again?

Ellida. Yes, he wrote again.

Wangel. And what was his answer to your communication?

Ellida. He took no notice of it. It was exactly as if I had never broken with him. He wrote quite composedly and calmly that I

must wait for him. When he could have me he would let me know, and then I was to go to him at once.

Wangel. So he would not release you?

Ellida. No. Then I wrote again, almost word for word as I had before; or perhaps more firmly.

Wangel. And he gave in?

Ellida. Oh, no! Don't think that! He wrote quietly, as before—not a word of my having broken with him. Then I knew it was useless, and so I never wrote to him again.

Wangel. And you never heard from him?

Ellida. Oh, yes! I have had three letters since then. Once he wrote to me from California, and a second time from China. The last letter I had from him was from Australia. He wrote he was going to the gold-mines; but since then he has made no sign.

Wangel. This man has had a strange power over you, Ellida.

Ellida. Yes, yes! The terrible man!

Wangel. But you mustn't think of that any more. Never again—never! Promise me that, my dear, beloved Ellida. Now we must try another treatment for you. Fresher air than here within the fjords. The salt, fresh air of the sea! Dear, what say you to that?

Ellida. Oh! don't speak of it! Don't think of it! There is no help in this for me. I feel that so well. I can't shake it off—not even there.

Wangel. What, dear?—What do you really mean?

Ellida. I mean the horror of it, this incomprehensible power over the mind.

Wangel. But you have shaken it off—long since—when you broke with him. Why, all this is long past now.

Ellida (springing up). No; that it is not—it is not!

Wangel. Not past?

Ellida. No, Wangel, it is not past; and I fear it never will be—never, in all our life.

Wangel (in a pained voice). Do you mean to say that in your innermost heart you have never been able to forget this strange man?

Ellida. I had forgotten him; but then it was as if he had suddenly come back again.

Wangel. How long ago is that?

Ellida. It's about three years ago, now, or a little longer. It was just when I expected the child.

Wangel. Ah! at that time? Yes, Ellida—now I begin to understand many things.

Ellida. You are mistaken, dear. What has come to me? Oh! I believe nothing on earth will ever make it clear.

Wangel (looking sadly at her). Only to think that all these three years you have cared for another man. Cared for another. Not for me—but for another!

Ellida. Oh! you are so utterly mistaken! I care for no one but you.

Wangel (in a subdued voice). Why, then, in all this time have you not lived with me as my wife?

Ellida. Because of the horror that comes from the strange man.

Wangel. The horror?

Ellida. Yes, the horror. A horror so terrible—such as only the sea could hold. For now you shall hear, Wangel.

(The young townsfolk come back, bow, and pass out to the right. Together with them come ARNHOLM, BOLETTE, HILDE, and LYNGSTRAND.)

Bolette (as she passes by). Well, are you still walking about up here?

Ellida. Yes, it is so cool and pleasant up here on the heights.

Arnholm. We, for our part, are going down for a dance.

Wangel. All right. We'll soon come down—we also.

Hilde. Goodbye, for the present!

Ellida. Mr. Lyngstrand, will you wait one moment?
(LYNGSTRAND Stops. ARNHOLM, BOLETTE and HILDE go out. To LYNGSTRAND.) Are you going to dance too?

Lyngstrand. No, Mrs. Wangel. I don't think I dare.

Ellida. No, you should be careful, you know—your chest. You're not quite well yet, you see.

Lyngstrand. Not quite.

Ellida (with some hesitation). How long may it be now since you went on that voyage?

Lyngstrand. That time when I contracted this weakness?

Ellida. Yes, that voyage you told me about this morning?

Lyngstrand. Oh! it's about—wait a moment—yes, it's a good three years now.

Ellida. Three years, then.

Lyngstrand. Perhaps a little more. We left America in February, and we were wrecked in March. It was the equinoctial gales we came in for.

Ellida (looking at WANGEL). So it was at that time—

Wangel. But, dear Ellida—

Ellida. Well, don't let me detain you, Mr. Lyngstrand. Now go down, but don't dance.

Lyngstrand. No, I'll only look on. (He goes out.)

Ellida. Johnston was on board too, I am quite certain of it.

Wangel. What makes you think so?

Ellida (without answering). He learnt on board that I had married another while he was away. And so that very hour this came over me.

Wangel. The horror?

Ellida. Yes, all of a sudden I see him alive right in front of me; or, rather a little in profile. He never looks at me, only he is there.

Wangel. How do you think he looks?

Ellida. Exactly as when I saw him last.

Wangel. Ten years ago?

Ellida. Yes; out there at Bratthammeren. Most distinctly of all I see his breastpin, with a large bluish-white pearl in it. The pearl is like a dead fish's eye, and it seems to glare at me.

Wangel. Good God! You are more ill than I thought. More ill than you yourself know, Ellida.

Ellida. Yes, yes! Help me if you can, for I feel how it is drawing closer and more close.

Wangel. And you have gone about in this state three whole years, bearing for yourself this secret suffering, without confiding in me.

Ellida. But I could not; not till it became necessary for your own sake. If I had confided in you I should also have had to confide to you the unutterable.

Wangel. Unutterable?

Ellida. No, no, no! Do not ask. Only one thing, nothing more. Wangel, when shall we understand that mystery of the boy's eyes?

Wangel. My dear love, Ellida, I assure you it was only your own fancy. The child had exactly the same eyes as other normal children have.

Ellida. No, he had not. And you could not see it! The child's eyes changed colour with the sea. When the fjord lay bathed in sunshine, so were his eyes. And so in storm. Oh, I saw it, if you did not!

Wangel (humouring her). Maybe. But even if it were true, what then?

Ellida (in lower voice, and coming nearer). I have seen such eyes before.

Wangel. Well? Where?

Ellida. Out at Bratthammeren, ten years ago.

Wangel (stepping back). What does it mean?

Ellida (whispers, trembling). The child had the strange man's eyes.

Wangel (cries out reluctantly). Ellida!

Ellida (clasps her hands despairingly about her head). Now you understand why I would not, why I dared not, live with you as your wife. (She turns suddenly and rushes off over the heights.)

Wangel (hurrying after her and calling). Ellida, Ellida! My poor unhappy Ellida!

ACT III

(SCENE.—A more remote part of DOCTOR WANGEL'S garden. It is boggy and overshadowed by large old trees. To the right is seen the margin of a dank pond. A low, open fence separates the garden from the footpath, and the fjord in the background. Beyond is the range of mountains, with its peaks. It is afternoon, almost evening. BOLETTE sits on a stone seat, and on the seat lie some books and a work-basket. HILDE and LYNGSTRAND, both with fishing-tackle, walk along the bank of the pond.)

Hilde (making a sign to LYNGSTRAND). I can see a large one.

Lyngstrand (looking). Where?

Hilde (pointing). Can't you see? He's down there. Good gracious! There's another! (Looks through the trees.) Out there. Now he's coming to frighten him away!

Bolette (looking up). Who's coming?

Hilde. Your tutor, Miss!

Bolette. Mine?

Hilde. Yes. Goodness knows he never was mine.

(ARNHOLM enters from between the trees.)

Arnholm. Are there fish in the pond now?

Hilde. There are some very ancient carp.

Arnholm. No! Are the old carp still alive?

Hilde. Yes; they're pretty tough. But now we're going to try and get rid of some of them.

Arnholm. You'd better try out there at the fjord.

Lyngstrand. No; the pond is—well—so to say—more mysterious.

Hilde. Yes; it's fascinating here. Have you been in the sea?

Arnholm. Yes; I've come straight from the baths.

Hilde. I suppose you kept in the enclosure?

Arnholm. Yes; I'm not much of a swimmer.

Hilde. Can you swim on your back?

Arnholm. No.

Hilde. I can. (To LYNGSTRAND.) Let's try out there on the other side. (They go off along the pond.)

Arnholm (coming closer to BOLETTE). Are you sitting all alone here, Bolette?

Bolette. Yes; I generally do.

Arnholm. Isn't your mother down here in the garden?

Bolette. No—she's sure to be out with father.

Arnholm. How is she this afternoon?

Bolette. I don't quite know. I forgot to ask.

Arnholm. What books have you there?

Bolette. The one's something about botany. And the other's a geography.

Arnholm. Do you care about such things?

Bolette. Yes, if only I had time for it. But, first of all, I've to look after the housekeeping.

Arnholm. Doesn't your mother help you—your stepmother—doesn't she help with that?

Bolette. No, that's my business. Why, I saw to that during the two years father was alone. And so it has been since.

Arnholm. But you're as fond as ever of reading.

Bolette. Yes, I read all the useful books I can get hold of. One wants to know something about the world. For here we live so completely outside of all that's going on—or almost.

Arnholm. Now don't say that, dear Bolette.

Bolette. Yes! I think we live very much as the carp down there in the pond. They have the fjord so near them, where the shoals of wild fishes pass in and out. But the poor, tame house-fishes know nothing, and they can take no part in that.

Arnholm. I don't think it would fare very well with them if they could get out there.

Bolette. Oh! it would be much the same, I expect.

Arnholm. Moreover, you can't say that one is so completely out of the world here—not in the summer anyhow. Why, nowadays this is quite a rendezvous for the busy world—almost a terminus for the time being.

Bolette. Ah, yes! you who yourself are only here for the time being—it is easy for you to make fun of us.

Arnholm. I make fun? How can you think that?

Bolette. Well, all that about this being a rendezvous, and a terminus for the busy world—that's something you've heard the townsfolk here saying. Yes—they're in the habit of saying that sort of thing.

Arnholm. Well, frankly, I've noticed that, too.

Bolette. But really there's not an atom of truth in it. Not for us who always live here. What good is it to us that the great strange world comes hither for a time on its way North to see the midnight sun? We ourselves have no part in that; we see nothing of the midnight sun. No! We've got to be good, and live our lives here in our carp pond.

Arnholm (sitting down by her). Now tell me, dear Bolette, isn't there something or other—something definite you are longing for?

Bolette. Perhaps.

Arnholm. What is it, really? What is it you are longing for?

Bolette. Chiefly to get away.

Arnholm. That above all, then?

Bolette. Yes; and then to learn more. To really know something about everything.

Arnholm. When I used to teach you, your father often said he would let you go to college.

Bolette. Yes, poor father! He says so many things. But when it comes to the point he—there's no real stamina in father.

Arnholm. No, unfortunately you're right there. He has not exactly stamina. But have you ever spoken to him about it—spoken really earnestly and seriously?

Bolette. No, I've not quite done that.

Arnholm. But really you ought to. Before it is too late, Bolette, why don't you?

Bolette. Oh! I suppose it's because there's no real stamina in me either. I certainly take after father in that.

Arnholm. Hm—don't you think you're unjust to yourself there?

Bolette. No, unfortunately. Besides, father has so little time for thinking of me and my future, and not much desire to either. He prefers to put such things away from him whenever he can. He is so completely taken up with Ellida.

Arnholm. With whom? What?

Bolette. I mean that he and my stepmother—(breaks off). Father and mother suffice one another, as you see.

Arnholm. Well, so much the better if you were to get away from here.

Bolette. Yes; but I don't think I've a right to; not to forsake father.

Arnholm. But, dear Bolette, you'll have to do that sometime, anyhow. So it seems to me the sooner the better.

Bolette. I suppose there is nothing else for it. After all, I must think of myself, too. I must try and get occupation of some sort. When once father's gone, I have no one to hold to. But, poor father! I dread leaving him.

Arnholm. Dread?

Bolette. Yes, for father's sake.

Arnholm. But, good heavens! Your stepmother? She is left to him.

Bolette. That's true. But she's not in the least fit to do all that mother did so well. There is so much she doesn't see, or that she won't see, or that she doesn't care about. I don't know which it is.

Arnholm. Um, I think I understand what you mean.

Bolette. Poor father! He is weak in some things. Perhaps you've noticed that yourself? He hasn't enough occupation, either, to fill up his time. And then she is so thoroughly incapable of helping him; however, that's to some extent his own fault.

Arnholm. In what way?

Bolette. Oh! father always likes to see happy faces about him. There must be sunshine and joy in the house, he says. And so I'm afraid he often gives her medicine which will do her little good in the long run.

Arnholm. Do you really think that?

Bolette. Yes; I can't get rid of the thought. She is so odd at times. (Passionately.) But isn't it unjust that I should have to stay at home here? Really it's not of any earthly use to father. Besides, I have a duty towards myself, too, I think.

Arnholm. Do you know what, Bolette? We two must talk these matters over more carefully.

Bolette. Oh! That won't be much use. I suppose I was created to stay here in the carp pond.

Arnholm. Not a bit of it. It depends entirely upon yourself.

Bolette (quickly). Do you think so?

Arnholm. Yes, believe me, it lies wholly and solely in your own hands.

Bolette. If only that were true! Will you perhaps put in a good word for me with father?

Arnholm. Certainly. But first of all I must speak frankly and freely with you yourself, dear.

Bolette (looks out to the left). Hush! don't let them notice anything. We'll speak of this later.

(ELLIDA enters from the left. She has no hat on, but a large shawl is thrown over her head and shoulders.)

Ellida (with restless animation). How pleasant it is here! How delightful it is here!

Arnholm (rising). Have you been for a walk?

Ellida. Yes, a long, long lovely walk up there with Wangel. And now we're going for a sail.

Bolette. Won't you sit down?

Ellida. No, thanks; I won't sit down.

Bolette (making room on seat). Here's a pleasant seat.

Ellida (walking about). No, no, no! I'll not sit down—not sit down!

Arnholm. I'm sure your walk has done you good. You look quite refreshed.

Ellida. Oh, I feel so thoroughly well—I feel so unspeakably happy. So safe, so safe! (Looking out to the left.) What great steamer is that coming along there?

Bolette (rising, and also looking out). It must be the large English ship.

Arnholm. It's passing the buoy. Does it usually stop here?

Bolette. Only for half an hour. It goes farther up the fjord.

Ellida. And then sails away again tomorrow—away over the great open sea—right over the sea. Only think! to be with them. If one could. If only one could!

Arnholm. Have you never been any long sea voyage, Mrs. Wangel?

Ellida. Never; only those little trips in the fjord here.

Bolette (with a sigh). Ah, no! I suppose we must put up with the dry land.

Arnholm. Well, after all, that really is our home.

Ellida. No; I don't think it is.

Arnholm. Not the land?

Ellida. No; I don't believe so. I think that if only men had from the beginning accustomed themselves to live on the sea, or in the sea perhaps, we should be more perfect than we are—both better and happier.

Arnholm. You really think that?

Ellida. Yes. I should like to know if we should not. I've often spoken to Wangel about it.

Arnholm. Well, and he?

Ellida. He thinks it might be so.

Arnholm (jestingly). Well, perhaps! But it can't be helped. We've once for all entered upon the wrong path, and have become land beasts instead of sea beasts. Anyhow, I suppose it's too late to make good the mistake now.

Ellida. Yes, you've spoken a sad truth. And I think men instinctively feel something of this themselves. And they bear it about with them as a secret regret and sorrow. Believe me—herein lies the deepest cause for the sadness of men. Yes, believe me, in this.

Arnholm. But, my dearest Mrs. Wangel, I have not observed that men are so extremely sad. It seems to me, on the contrary, that most of them take life easily and pleasantly—and with a great, quiet, unconscious joy.

Ellida. Oh! no, it is not so. The joy is, I suppose, something like our joy at the long pleasant summer days—it has the presentiment of the dark days coming. And it is this presentiment that casts its shadows over the joy of men, just as the driving clouds cast their shadow over the fjords. It lies there so bright and blue—and of a sudden.

Arnholm. You shouldn't give way to such sad thoughts. Just now you were so glad and so bright.

Ellida. Yes, yes, so I was. Oh, this—this is so stupid of me. (Looking about her uneasily.) If only Wangel would come! He promised me so faithfully he would. And yet he does not come. Dear Mr. Arnholm, won't you try and find him for me?

Arnholm. Gladly!

Ellida. Tell him he must come here directly now. For now I can't see him.

Arnholm. Not see him?

Ellida. Oh! you don't understand. When he is not by me I often can't remember how he looks. And then it is as if I had quite lost him. That is so terribly painful. But do go, please. (She paces round the pond.)

Bolette (to ARNHOLM). I will go with you—you don't know the way.

Arnholm. Nonsense, I shall be all right.

Bolette (aside). No, no, no. I am anxious. I'm afraid he is on board the steamer.

Arnholm. Afraid?

Bolette. Yes. He usually goes to see if there are any acquaintances of his. And there's a restaurant on board.

Arnholm. Ah! Come then.

(He and BOLETTE go off. ELLIDA stands still awhile, staring down at the pond. Now and again she speaks to herself in a low voice, and breaks off. Along the footpath beyond the garden fence a STRANGER in travelling dress comes from the left. His hair and beard are bushy and red. He has a Scotch cap on, and a travelling bag with strap across his shoulders.)

The Stranger (goes slowly along by the fence and peeps into the garden. When he catches sight of ELLIDA he stands still, looks at her fixedly and searchingly, and speaks in a low voice). Good-evening, Ellida!

Ellida (turns round with a cry). Oh dear! have you come at last!

The Stranger. Yes, at last.

Ellida (looking at him astonished and frightened). Who are you? Do you seek anyone here?

The Stranger. You surely know that well enough, Ellida.

Ellida (starting). What is this! How do you address me? Whom are you looking for?

The Stranger. Well, I suppose I'm looking for you.

Ellida (shuddering). Oh! (She stares at him, totters back, uttering a half-suffocating cry.) The eyes!—the eyes!

The Stranger. Are you beginning to recognise me at last? I knew you at once, Ellida.

Ellida. The eyes! Don't look at me like that! I shall cry for help!

The Stranger. Hush, hush! Do not fear. I shan't hurt you.

Ellida (covering her eyes with her hands). Do not look at me like that, I say!

The Stranger (leaning with his arms on the garden fence). I came with the English steamer.

Ellida (stealing a frightened look at him). What do you want with me?

The Stranger. I promised you to come as soon as I could—

Ellida. Go—go away! Never, never come here again! I wrote to you that everything must be over between us—everything! Oh! you know that!

The Stranger (imperturbably, and not answering her). I would gladly have come to you sooner; but I could not. Now, at last I am able to, and I am here, Ellida.

Ellida. What is it you want with me? What do you mean? Why have you come here?

The Stranger. Surely you know I've come to fetch you.

Ellida (recoils in terror). To fetch me! Is that what you mean?

The Stranger. Of course.

Ellida. But surely you know that I am married?

The Stranger. Yes, I know.

Ellida. And yet—and yet you have come to—to fetch me!

The Stranger. Certainly I have.

Ellida (seizing her head with both her hands). Oh! this misery—this horror! This horror!

The Stranger. Perhaps you don't want to come?

Ellida (bewildered). Don't look at me like that.

The Stranger. I was asking you if you didn't want to come.

Ellida. No, no, no! Never in all eternity! I will not, I tell you. I neither can nor will. (In lower tone.) I dare not.

The Stranger (climbs over the fence, and comes into the garden). Well, Ellida, let me tell you one thing before I go.

Ellida (wishes to fly, but cannot. She stands as one paralysed with terror, and leans for support against the trunk of a tree by the pond). Don't touch me! Don't come near me! No nearer! Don't touch me, I say!

The Stranger (cautiously coming a few steps nearer). You need not be so afraid of me, Ellida.

Ellida (covering her eyes with her hands). Don't look at me like that.

The Stranger. Do not be afraid—not afraid.

(WANGEL comes through the garden, from the left.)

Wangel (still half-way between the trees). Well, you've had to wait for me a long while.

Ellida (rushes towards him, clings fast to his arm, and cries out). Oh! Wangel! Save me! You save me—if you can!

Wangel. Ellida! What in heaven's name!

Ellida. Save me, Wangel! Don't you see him there? Why, he is standing there!

Wangel (looking thither). That man? (Coming nearer.) May I ask you who you are, and what you have come into this garden for?

The Stranger (motions with a nod towards ELLIDA). I want to talk to her.

Wangel. Oh! indeed. So I suppose it was you. (To ELLIDA.) I hear a stranger has been to the house and asked for you?

The Stranger. Yes, it was I.

Wangel. And what do you want with my wife? (Turning round.) Do you know him, Ellida?

Ellida (in a low voice and wringing her hands). Do I know him! Yes, yes, yes!

Wangel (quickly). Well!

Ellida. Why, it is he, Wangel!—he himself! He who you know!

Wangel. What! What is it you say? (Turning.) Are you the Johnston who once...

The Stranger. You may call me Johnston for aught I care! However, that's not my name.

Wangel. It is not?

The Stranger. It is—no longer. No!

Wangel. And what may you want with my wife? For I suppose you know the lighthouse-keeper's daughter has been married this long time, and whom she married, you of course also know.

The Stranger. I've known it over three years.

Ellida (eagerly). How did you come to know it?

The Stranger. I was on my way home to you, Ellida. I came across an old newspaper. It was a paper from these parts, and in it there was that about the marriage.

Ellida (looking straight in front of her). The marriage! So it was that!

The Stranger. It seemed so wonderful to me. For the rings—why that, too, was a marriage, Ellida.

Ellida (covering her face with her hands). Oh!—Wangel. How dare you?

The Stranger. Have you forgotten that?

Ellida (feeling his look, suddenly cries out). Don't stand there and look at me like that!

Wangel (goes up to him). You must deal with me, and not with her. In short—now that you know the circumstances—what is it you really want here? Why do you seek my wife?

The Stranger. I promised Ellida to come to her as soon as I could.

Wangel. Ellida, again—!

The Stranger. And Ellida promised faithfully she would wait for me until I came.

Wangel. I notice you call my wife by her first name. This kind of familiarity is not customary with us here.

The Stranger. I know that perfectly. But as she first, and above all, belongs to me—

Wangel. To you, still—

Ellida (draws back behind WANGEL). Oh! he will never release me!

Wangel. To you? You say she belongs to you?

The Stranger. Has she told you anything about the two rings—my ring and Ellida's?

Wangel. Certainly. And what then? She put an end to that long ago. You have had her letters, so you know this yourself.

The Stranger. Both Ellida and I agreed that what we did should have all the strength and authority of a real and full marriage.

Ellida. But you hear, I will not! Never on earth do I wish to know anything more of you. Do not look at me like that. I will not, I tell you!

Wangel. You must be mad to think you can come here, and base any claim upon such childish nonsense.

The Stranger. That's true. A claim, in your sense, I certainly have not.

Wangel. What do you mean to do, then? You surely do not imagine you can take her from me by force, against her own will?

The Stranger. No. What would be the good of that? If Ellida wishes to be with me she must come freely.

Ellida (starts, crying out). Freely!

Wangel. And you actually believe that—

Ellida (to herself). Freely!

Wangel. You must have taken leave of your senses! Go your ways. We have nothing more to do with you.

The Stranger (looking at his watch). It is almost time for me to go on board again. (Coming nearer.) Yes, yes, Ellida, now I have done my duty. (Coming still nearer.) I have kept the word I gave you.

Ellida (beseechingly drawing away). Oh! don't touch me!

The Stranger. And so now you must think it over till tomorrow night—

Wangel. There is nothing to think over here. See that you get away.

The Stranger (still to ELLIDA). Now I'm going with the steamer up the fjord. Tomorrow night I will come again, and then I shall look for you here. You must wait for me here in the garden, for I prefer settling the matter with you alone; you understand?

Ellida (in low, trembling tone). Do you hear that, Wangel?

Wangel. Only keep calm. We shall know how to prevent this visit.

The Stranger. Goodbye for the present, Ellida. So tomorrow night—

Ellida (imploringly). Oh! no, no! Do not come tomorrow night! Never come here again!

The Stranger. And should you then have a mind to follow me over the seas—

Ellida. Oh, don't look at me like that!

The Stranger. I only mean that you must then be ready to set out.

Wangel. Go up to the house, Ellida.

Ellida. I cannot! Oh, help me! Save me, Wangel!

The Stranger. For you must remember that if you do not go with me tomorrow, all is at an end.

Ellida (looks tremblingly at him). Then all is at an end? Forever?

The Stranger (nodding). Nothing can change it then, Ellida. I shall never again come to this land. You will never see me again, nor hear from me either. Then I shall be as one dead and gone from you forever.

Ellida (breathing with difficulty). Oh!

The Stranger. So think carefully what you do. Goodbye! (He goes to the fence and climbs over it, stands still, and says.) Yes, Ellida; be ready for the journey tomorrow night. For then I shall come and fetch you. (He goes slowly and calmly down the footpath to the right.)

Ellida (looking after him for a time). Freely, he said; think—he said that I must go with him freely!

Wangel. Only keep calm. Why, he's gone now, and you'll never see him again.

Ellida. Oh! how can you say that? He's coming again tomorrow night!

Wangel. Let him come. He shall not meet you again in any case.

Ellida (shaking her head). Ah, Wangel! Do not believe you can prevent him.

Wangel. I can, dearest; only trust me.

Ellida (pondering, and not listening to him). Now when he's been here tomorrow night—and then when he has gone over seas in the steamer—

Wangel. Yes; what then?

Ellida. I should like to know if he will never, never come back again.

Wangel. No, dear Ellida. You may be quite sure of that. What should he do here after this? Now that he has learnt from your own lips that you will have nothing more to do with him. With that the whole thing is over.

Ellida (to herself). Tomorrow, then, or never!

Wangel. And should it ever occur to him to come here again—

Ellida. Well?

Wangel. Why, then, it is in our power to make him harmless.

Ellida. Oh! do not think that!

Wangel. It is in our power, I tell you. If you can get rid of him in no other way, he must expiate the murder of the captain.

Ellida (passionately). No, no, no! Never that! We know nothing about the murder of the captain! Nothing whatever!

Wangel. Know nothing? Why, he himself confessed it to you!

Ellida. No, nothing of that. If you say anything of it I shall deny it. He shall not be imprisoned. He belongs out there—to the open sea. He belongs out there!

Wangel (looks at her and says slowly). Ah! Ellida—Ellida!

Ellida (clinging passionately to him). Oh! dear, faithful one—save me from this man!

Wangel (disengaging himself gently). Come, come with me! (LYNGSTRAND and HILDE, both with fishing tackle, come in from the right, along the pond.)

Lyngstrand (going quickly up to ELLIDA). Now, Mrs. Wangel, you must hear something wonderful.

Wangel. What is it?

Lyngstrand. Fancy! We've seen the American!

Wangel. The American?

Hilde. Yes, I saw him, too.

Lyngstrand. He was going round the back of the garden, and thence on board the great English steamer.

Wangel. How do you know the man?

Lyngstrand. Why, I went to sea with him once. I felt so certain he'd been drowned—and now he's very much alive!

Wangel. Do you know anything more about him?

Lyngstrand. No. But I'm sure he's come to revenge himself upon his faithless sailor-wife.

Wangel. What do you mean?

Hilde. Lyngstrand's going to use him for a work of art.

Wangel. I don't understand one word.

Ellida. You shall hear afterwards.

(ARNHOLM and BOLETTE come from the left along the footpath outside the garden.)

Bolette (to those in the garden). Do come and see! The great English steamer's just going up the fjord.

(A large steamer glides slowly past in the distance.)

Lyngstrand (to HILDE behind the garden fence). Tonight he's sure to come to her.

Hilde (nods). To the faithless sailor-wife—yes.

Lyngstrand. Fancy, at midnight!

Hilde. That must be so fascinating.

Ellida (looking after the ship). Tomorrow, then!

Wangel. And then never again.

Ellida (in a low, imploring tone). Oh! Wangel, save me from myself!

Wangel (looks anxiously at her). Ellida—I feel there is something behind this—

Ellida. There is—the temptation!

Wangel. Temptation?

Ellida. The man is like the sea!

(She goes slowly and thoughtfully through the garden, and out to the left. WANGEL walks uneasily by her side, watching her closely.)

ACT IV

(SCENE.—DOCTOR WANGEL'S garden-room. Doors right and left. In the background, between the windows, an open glass door leading out on to the verandah. Below this, a portion of the garden is visible. A sofa and table down left. To the right a piano, and farther back a large flower-stand. In the middle of the room a round table, with chairs. On the table is a rose-tree in bloom, and other plants around it. Morning.

In the room, by the table, BOLETTE is sitting on the sofa, busy with some embroidery. LYNGSTRAND is seated on a chair at the upper end of the table. In the garden below BALLESTED sits painting. HILDE stands by watching him.)

Lyngstrand (with his arms on the table, sits silent awhile, looking at BOLETTE'S work). It must be awfully difficult to do a border like that, Miss Wangel?

Bolette. Oh, no! It's not very difficult, if only you take care to count right.

Lyngstrand. To count? Must you count, too?

Bolette. Yes, the stitches. See!

Lyngstrand. So you do! Just fancy! Why, it's almost a kind of art. Can you design, too?

Bolette. Oh, yes! When I've a copy.

Lyngstrand. Not unless?

Bolette. No.

Lyngstrand. Well, then, after all, it's not a real art?

Bolette. No; it is rather only a sort of—handicraft.

Lyngstrand. But still, I think that perhaps you could learn art.

Bolette. If I haven't any talent?

Lyngstrand. Yes; if you could always be with a real true artist—

Bolette. Do you think, then, I could learn it from him?

Lyngstrand. Not exactly learn in the ordinary sense; but I think it would grow upon you little by little—by a kind of miracle as it were, Miss Wangel.

Bolette. That would be wonderful.

Lyngstrand (after a pause). Have you ever thought about—I mean, have you ever thought deeply and earnestly about marriage, Miss Wangel?

Bolette (looking quickly at him). About—no!

Lyngstrand. I have.

Bolette. Really? Have you?

Lyngstrand. Oh yes! I often think about things of that sort, especially about marriage; and, besides, I've read several books about it. I think marriage must be counted a sort of miracle—that a woman should gradually change until she is like her husband.

Bolette. You mean has like interests?

Lyngstrand. Yes, that's it.

Bolette. Well, but his abilities—his talents—and his skill?

Lyngstrand. Hm—well—I should like to know if all that too—

Bolette. Then, perhaps, you also believe that everything a man has read for himself, and thought out for himself, that this, too, can grow upon his wife?

Lyngstrand. Yes, I think it can. Little by little; as by a sort of miracle. But, of course, I know such things can only happen in a marriage that is faithful, and loving, and really happy.

Bolette. Has it never occurred to you that a man, too, might, perhaps, be thus drawn over to his wife? Grow like her, I mean.

Lyngstrand. A man? No, I never thought of that.

Bolette. But why not one as well as the other?

Lyngstrand. No; for a man has a calling that he lives for; and that's what makes a man so strong and firm, Miss Wangel. He has a calling in life.

Bolette. Has every man?

Lyngstrand. Oh no! I am thinking more especially of artists.

Bolette. Do you think it right of an artist to get married?

Lyngstrand. Yes, I think so. If he can find one he can heartily love, I—

Bolette. Still, I think he should rather live for his art alone.

Lyngstrand. Of course he must; but he can do that just as well, even if he marries.

Bolette. But how about her?

Lyngstrand. Her? Who?

Bolette. She whom he marries. What is she to live for?

Lyngstrand. She, too, is to live for his art. It seems to me a woman must feel so thoroughly happy in that.

Bolette. Hm, I don't exactly know—

Lyngstrand. Yes, Miss Wangel, you may be sure of that. It is not merely all the honour and respect she enjoys through him; for that seems almost the least important to me. But it is this—that she can help him to create, that she can lighten his work for him, be about him and see to his comfort, and tend him well, and make his life thoroughly pleasant. I should think that must be perfectly delightful to a woman.

Bolette. Ah! You don't yourself know how selfish you are!

Lyngstrand. I, selfish! Good heavens! Oh, if only you knew me a little better than you do! (Bending closer to her.) Miss Wangel, when once I am gone—and that will be very soon now—

Bolette (looks pityingly at him). Oh, don't think of anything so sad!

Lyngstrand. But, really, I don't think it is so very sad.

Bolette. What do you mean?

Lyngstrand. Well, you know that I set out in a month. First from here, and then, of course, I'm going south.

Bolette. Oh, I see! Of course.

Lyngstrand. Will you think of me sometimes, then, Miss Wangel?

Bolette. Yes, gladly.

Lyngstrand (pleased). No, promise!

Bolette. I promise.

Lyngstrand. By all that is sacred, Miss Bolette?

Bolette. By all that is sacred. (In a changed manner.) Oh, but what can come of it all? Nothing on earth can come of it!

Lyngstrand. How can you say that! It would be so delightful for me to know you were at home here thinking of me!

Bolette. Well, and what else?

Lyngstrand. I don't exactly know of anything else.

Bolette. Nor I either. There are so many things in the way. Everything stands in the way, I think.

Lyngstrand. Oh, another miracle might come about. Some happy dispensation of fortune, or something of the sort; for I really believe I shall be lucky now.

Bolette (eagerly). Really? You do believe that?

Lyngstrand. Yes, I believe it thoroughly. And so—after a few years—when I come home again as a celebrated sculptor, and well off, and in perfect health!

Bolette. Yes, yes! Of course, we will hope so.

Lyngstrand. You may be perfectly certain about it. Only think faithfully and kindly of me when I am down there in the south; and now I have your word that you will.

Bolette. You have (shaking her head). But, all the same, nothing will surely come of it.

Lyngstrand. Oh! yes, Miss Bolette. At least this will come of it. I shall get on so much more easily and quickly with my art work.

Bolette. Do you believe that, too?

Lyngstrand. I have an inner conviction of it. And I fancy it will be so cheering for you, too—here in this out-of-the-way place-to know within yourself that you are, so to say, helping me to create.

Bolette (looking at him). Well; but you on your side?

Lyngstrand. I?

Bolette (looking out into the garden). Hush! Let us speak of something else. Here's Mr. Arnholm.

(ARNHOLM is seen in the garden below. He stops and talks to HILDE and BALLESTED.)

Lyngstrand. Are you fond of your old teacher, Miss Bolette?

Bolette. Fond of him?

Lyngstrand. Yes; I mean do you care for him?

Bolette. Yes, indeed I do, for he is a true friend—and adviser, too—and then he is always so ready to help when he can.

Lyngstrand. Isn't it extraordinary that he hasn't married!

Bolette. Do you think it is extraordinary?

Lyngstrand. Yes, for you say he's well-to-do.

Bolette. He is certainly said to be so. But probably it wasn't so easy to find anyone who'd have him.

Lyngstrand. Why?

Bolette. Oh! He's been the teacher of nearly all the young girls that he knows. He says that himself.

Lyngstrand. But what does that matter?

Bolette. Why, good heavens! One doesn't marry a man who's been your teacher!

Lyngstrand. Don't you think a young girl might love her teacher?

Bolette. Not after she's really grown up.

Lyngstrand. No—fancy that!

Bolette (cautioning him). Sh! sh!

(Meanwhile BALLESTED has been gathering together his things, and carries them out from the garden to the right. HILDE helps him. ARNHOLM goes up the verandah, and comes into the room.)

Arnholm. Good-morning, my dear Bolette. Good-morning, Mr.—Mr.—hm—(He looks displeased, and nods coldly to LYNGSTRAND, who rises.)

Bolette (rising up and going up to ARNHOLM). Good-morning, Mr. Arnholm.

Arnholm. Everything all right here today?

Bolette. Yes, thanks, quite.

Arnholm. Has your stepmother gone to bathe again today?

Bolette. No. She is upstairs in her room.

Arnholm. Not very bright?

Bolette. I don't know, for she has locked herself in.

Arnholm. Hm—has she?

Lyngstrand. I suppose Mrs. Wangel was very much frightened about that American yesterday?

Arnholm. What do you know about that?

Lyngstrand. I told Mrs. Wangel that I had seen him in the flesh behind the garden.

Arnholm. Oh! I see.

Bolette (to ARNHOLM). No doubt you and father sat up very late last night, talking?

Arnholm. Yes, rather late. We were talking over serious matters.

Bolette. Did you put in a word for me, and my affairs, too?

Arnholm. No, dear Bolette, I couldn't manage it. He was so completely taken up with something else.

Bolette (sighs). Ah! yes; he always is.

Arnholm (looks at her meaningly). But later on today we'll talk more fully about—the matter. Where's your father now? Not at home?

Bolette. Yes, he is. He must be down in the office. I'll fetch him.

Arnholm. No, thanks. Don't do that. I'd rather go down to him.

Bolette (listening). Wait one moment, Mr. Arnholm; I believe that's father on the stairs. Yes, I suppose he's been up to look after her.

(WANGEL comes in from the door on the left.)

Wangel (shaking ARNHOLM'S hand). What, dear friend, are you here already? It was good of you to come so early, for I should like to talk a little further with you.

Bolette (to LYNGSTRAND). Hadn't we better go down to Hilde in the garden?

Lyngstrand. I shall be delighted, Miss Wangel.

(He and BOLETTE go down into the garden, and pass out between the trees in the background.)

Arnholm (following them with his eyes, turns to WANGEL). Do you know anything about that young man?

Wangel. No, nothing at all.

Arnholm. But do you think it right he should knock about so much with the girls?

Wangel. Does he? I really hadn't noticed it.

Arnholm. You ought to see to it, I think.

Wangel. Yes, I suppose you're right. But, good Lord! What's a man to do? The girls are so accustomed to look after themselves now. They won't listen to me, nor to Ellida.

Arnholm. Not to her either?

Wangel. No; and besides I really cannot expect Ellida to trouble about such things. She's not fit for that (breaking off). But it wasn't that which we were to talk of. Now tell me, have you thought the matter over—thought over all I told you of?

Arnholm. I have thought of nothing else ever since we parted last night.

Wangel. And what do you think should be done?

Arnholm. Dear Wangel, I think you, as a doctor, must know that better than I.

Wangel. Oh! if you only knew how difficult it is for a doctor to judge rightly about a patient who is so dear to him! Besides, this is no ordinary illness. No ordinary doctor and no ordinary medicines can help her.

Arnholm. How is she today?

Wangel. I was upstairs with her just now, and then she seemed to me quite calm; but behind all her moods something lies hidden

which it is impossible for me to fathom; and then she is so changeable, so capricious—she varies so suddenly.

Arnholm. No doubt that is the result of her morbid state of mind.

Wangel. Not altogether. When you go down to the bedrock, it was born in her. Ellida belongs to the sea-folk. That is the matter.

Arnholm. What do you really mean, my dear doctor?

Wangel. Haven't you noticed that the people from out there by the open sea are, in a way, a people apart? It is almost as if they themselves lived the life of the sea. There is the rush of waves, and ebb and flow too, both in their thoughts and in their feelings, and so they can never bear transplanting. Oh! I ought to have remembered that. It was a sin against Ellida to take her away from there, and bring her here.

Arnholm. You have come to that opinion?

Wangel. Yes, more and more. But I ought to have told myself this beforehand. Oh! I knew it well enough at bottom! But I put it from me. For, you see, I loved her so! Therefore, I thought of myself first of all. I was inexcusably selfish at that time!

Arnholm. Hm. I suppose every man is a little selfish under such circumstances. Moreover, I've never noticed that vice in you, Doctor Wangel.

Wangel (walks uneasily about the room). Oh, yes! And I have been since then, too. Why, I am so much, much older than she is. I ought to have been at once as a father to her and a guide. I ought to have done my best to develop and enlighten her mind. Unfortunately nothing ever came of that. You see, I hadn't stamina enough, for I preferred her just as she was. So things went worse and worse with her, and then I didn't know what to do. (In a lower voice.) That was why I wrote to you in my trouble, and asked you to come here.

Arnholm (looks at him in astonishment). What, was it for this you wrote?

Wangel. Yes; but don't let anyone notice anything.

Arnholm. How on earth, dear doctor—what good did you expect me to be? I don't understand it.

Wangel. No, naturally. For I was on an altogether false track. I thought Ellida's heart had at one time gone out to you, and that she still secretly cared for you a little—that perhaps it would do her good to see you again, and talk of her home and the old days.

Arnholm. So it was your wife you meant when you wrote that she expected me, and—and perhaps longed for me.

Wangel. Yes, who else?

Arnholm (hurriedly). No, no. You're right. But I didn't understand.

Wangel. Naturally, as I said, for I was on an absolutely wrong track.

Arnholm. And you call yourself selfish!

Wangel. Ah! but I had such a great sin to atone for. I felt I dared not neglect any means that might give the slightest relief to her mind.

Arnholm. How do you really explain the power this stranger exercises over her?

Wangel. Hm—dear friend—there may be sides to the matter that cannot be explained.

Arnholm. Do you mean anything inexplicable in itself—absolutely inexplicable?

Wangel. In any case not explicable as far as we know.

Arnholm. Do you believe there is something in it, then?

Wangel. I neither believe nor deny; I simply don't know. That's why I leave it alone.

Arnholm. Yes. But just one thing: her extraordinary, weird assertion about the child's eyes—

Wangel (eagerly). I don't believe a word about the eyes. I will not believe such a thing. It must be purely fancy on her part, nothing else.

Arnholm. Did you notice the man's eyes when you saw him yesterday?

Wangel. Of course I did.

Arnholm. And you saw no sort of resemblance?

Wangel (evasively). Hm—good heavens! What shall I say? It wasn't quite light when I saw him; and, besides, Ellida had been saying so much about this resemblance, I really don't know if I was capable of observing quite impartially.

Arnholm. Well, well, may be. But that other matter? All this terror and unrest coming upon her at the very time, as it seems, this strange man was on his way home.

Wangel. That—oh! that's something she must have persuaded and dreamed herself into since it happened. She was not seized with this so suddenly—all at once—as she now maintains. But since she heard from young Lyngstrand that Johnston—or Friman, or whatever his name is—was on his way hither, three years ago, in the month of March, she now evidently believes her unrest of mind came upon her at that very time.

Arnholm. It was not so, then?

Wangel. By no means. There were signs and symptoms of it before this time, though it did happen, by chance, that in that month of March, three years ago, she had a rather severe attack.

Arnholm. After all, then—?

Wangel. Yes, but that is easily accounted for by the circumstances—the condition she happened to be in at the time.

Arnholm. So, symptom for symptom, then.

Wangel (wringing his hands). And not to be able to help her! Not to know how to counsel her! To see no way!

Arnholm. Now if you could make up your mind to leave this place, to go somewhere else, so that she could live amid surroundings that would seem more homelike to her?

Wangel. Ah, dear friend! Do you think I haven't offered her that, too? I suggested moving out to Skjoldviken, but she will not.

Arnholm. Not that either?

Wangel. No, for she doesn't think it would be any good; and perhaps she's right.

Arnholm. Hm. Do you say that?

Wangel. Moreover, when I think it all over carefully, I really don't know how I could manage it. I don't think I should be justified, for the sake of the girls, in going away to such a desolate place. After all, they must live where there is at least a prospect of their being provided for someday.

Arnholm. Provided for! Are you thinking about that already?

Wangel. Heaven knows, I must think of that too! But then, on the other hand, again, my poor sick Ellida! Oh, dear Arnholm! in many respects I seem to be standing between fire and water!

Arnholm. Perhaps you've no need to worry on Bolette's account. (Breaking off.) I should like to know where she—where they have gone. (Goes up to the open door and looks out.)

Wangel. Oh, I would so gladly make any sacrifice for all three of them, if only I knew what!

(ELLIDA enters from the door on the left.)

Ellida (quickly to WANGEL). Be sure you don't go out this morning.

Wangel. No, no! of course not. I will stay at home with you. (Pointing to ARNHOLM, who is coming towards them.) But won't you speak to our friend?

Ellida (turning). Oh, are you here, Mr. Arnholm? (Holding out her hand to him.) Good-morning.

Arnholm. Good-morning, Mrs. Wangel. So you've not been bathing as usual today?

Ellida. No, no, no! That is out of the question today. But won't you sit down a moment?

Arnholm. No, thanks, not now. (Looks at WANGEL.) I promised the girls to go down to them in the garden.

Ellida. Goodness knows if you'll find them there. I never know where they may be rambling.

Wangel. They're sure to be down by the pond.

Arnholm. Oh! I shall find them right enough. (Nods, and goes out across the verandah into the garden.)

Ellida. What time is it, Wangel?

Wangel (looking at his watch). A little past eleven.

Ellida. A little past. And at eleven o'clock, or half-past eleven tonight, the steamer is coming. If only that were over!

Wangel (going nearer to her). Dear Ellida, there is one thing I should like to ask you.

Ellida. What is it?

Wangel. The evening before last—up at the "View"—you said that during the last three years you had so often seen him bodily before you.

Ellida. And so I have. You may believe that.

Wangel. But, how did you see him?

Ellida. How did I see him?

Wangel. I mean, how did he look when you thought you saw him?

Ellida. But, dear Wangel, why, you now know yourself how he looks.

Wangel. Did he look exactly like that in your imagination?

Ellida. He did.

Wangel. Exactly the same as you saw him in reality yesterday evening?

Ellida. Yes, exactly.

Wangel. Then how was it you did not at once recognise him?

Ellida. Did I not?

Wangel. No; you said yourself afterwards that at first you did not at all know who the strange man was.

Ellida (perplexed). I really believe you are right. Don't you think that strange, Wangel? Fancy my not knowing him at once!

Wangel. It was only the eyes, you said.

Ellida. Oh, yes! The eyes—the eyes.

Wangel. Well, but at the "View" you said that he always appeared to you exactly as he was when you parted out there—ten years ago.

Ellida. Did I?

Wangel. Yes.

Ellida. Then, I suppose he did look much as he does now.

Wangel. No. On our way home, the day before yesterday, you gave quite another description of him. Ten years ago he had no beard, you said. His dress, too, was quite different. And that breast-pin with the pearl? That man yesterday wore nothing of the sort.

Ellida. No, he did not.

Wangel (looks searchingly at her). Now just think a little, dear Ellida. Or perhaps you can't quite remember how he looked when he stood by you at Bratthammer?

Ellida (thoughtfully closing her eyes for a moment). Not quite distinctly. No, today I can't. Is it not strange?

Wangel. Not so very strange after all. You have now been confronted by a new and real image, and that overshadows the old one, so that you can no longer see it.

Ellida. Do you believe that, Wangel?

Wangel. Yes. And it overshadows your sick imaginings, too. That is why it is good a reality has come.

Ellida. Good? Do you think it good?

Wangel. Yes. That it has come. It may restore you to health.

Ellida (sitting down on sofa). Wangel, come and sit down by me. I must tell you all my thoughts.

Wangel. Yes, do, dear Ellida.

(He sits down on a chair on the other side of the table.)

Ellida. It was really a great misfortune—for us both—that we two of all people should have come together.

Wangel (amazed). What are you saying?

Ellida. Oh, yes, it was. And it's so natural. It could bring nothing but unhappiness, after the way in which we came together.

Wangel. What was there in that way?

Ellida. Listen, Wangel; it's no use going on, lying to ourselves and to one another.

Wangel. Are we doing so? Lying, you say?

Ellida. Yes, we are; or, at least, we suppress the truth. For the truth—the pure and simple truth is—that you came out there and bought me.

Wangel. Bought—you say bought!

Ellida. Oh! I wasn't a bit better than you. I accepted the bargain. Sold myself to you!

Wangel (looks at her full of pain). Ellida, have you really the heart to call it that?

Ellida. But is there any other name for it? You could no longer bear the emptiness of your house. You were on the look-out for a new wife.

Wangel. And a new mother for the children, Ellida.

Ellida. That too, perhaps, by the way; although you didn't in the least know if I were fit for the position. Why, you had only seen me and spoken to me a few times. Then you wanted me, and so—

Wangel. Yes, you may call it as you will.

Ellida. And I, on my side—why, I was so helpless and bewildered, and so absolutely alone. Oh! it was so natural I should accept the bargain, when you came and proposed to provide for me all my life.

Wangel. Assuredly it did not seem to me a providing for you, dear Ellida. I asked you honestly if you would share with me and the children the little I could call my own.

Ellida. Yes, you did; but all the same, I should never have accepted! Never have accepted that at any price! Not sold myself! Better the meanest work—better the poorest life—after one's own choice.

Wangel (rising). Then have the five—six years that we have lived together been so utterly worthless to you?

Ellida. Oh! Don't think that, Wangel. I have been as well cared for here as human being could desire. But I did not enter your house freely. That is the thing.

Wangel (looking at her). Not freely!

Ellida. No. It was not freely that I went with you.

Wangel (in subdued tone). Ah! I remember your words of yesterday.

Ellida. It all lies in those words. They have enlightened me; and so I see it all now.

Wangel. What do you see?

Ellida. I see that the life we two live together—is really no marriage.

Wangel (bitterly). You have spoken truly there. The life we now live is not a marriage.

Ellida. Nor was it formerly. Never—not from the very first (looks straight in front of her). The first—that might have been a complete and real marriage.

Wangel. The first—what do you mean?

Ellida. Mine—with him.

Wangel (looks at her in astonishment). I do not in the least understand you.

Ellida. Ah! dear Wangel, let us not lie to one another, nor to ourselves.

Wangel. Well—what more?

Ellida. You see—we can never get away from that one thing—that a freely given promise is fully as binding as a marriage.

Wangel. But what on earth—

Ellida (rising impetuously). Set me free, Wangel!

Wangel. Ellida! Ellida!

Ellida. Yes, yes! Oh! grant me that! Believe me, it will come to that all the same—after the way we two came together.

Wangel (conquering his pain). It has come to this, then?

Ellida. It has come to this. It could not be otherwise.

Wangel (looking gloomily at her). So I have not won you by our living together. Never, never possessed you quite.

Ellida. Ah! Wangel—if only I could love you, how gladly I would—as dearly as you deserve. But I feel it so well—that will never be.

Wangel. Divorce, then? It is a divorce, a complete, legal divorce that you want?

Ellida. Dear, you understand me so little! I care nothing for such formalities. Such outer things matter nothing, I think. What I want is that we should, of our own free will, release each other.

Wangel (bitterly, nods slowly). To cry off the bargain again—yes.

Ellida (quickly). Exactly. To cry off the bargain.

Wangel. And then, Ellida? Afterwards? Have you reflected what life would be to both of us? What life would be to both you and me?

Ellida. No matter. Things must turn out afterwards as they may. What I beg and implore of you, Wangel, is the most important. Only set me free! Give me back my complete freedom!

Wangel. Ellida, it is a fearful thing you ask of me. At least give me time to collect myself before I come to a decision. Let us talk it over more carefully. And you yourself—take time to consider what you are doing.

Ellida. But we have no time to lose with such matters. I must have my freedom again today.

Wangel. Why today?

Ellida. Because he is coming tonight.

Wangel (starts). Coming! He! What has this stranger to do with it?

Ellida. I want to face him in perfect freedom.

Wangel. And what—what else do you intend to do?

Ellida. I will not hide behind the fact that I am the wife of another man; nor make the excuse that I have no choice, for then it would be no decision.

Wangel, You speak of a choice. Choice, Ellida! A choice in such a matter!

Ellida. Yes, I must be free to choose—to choose for either side. I must be able to let him go away—alone, or to go with him.

Wangel. Do you know what you are saying? Go with him—give your whole life into his hands!

Ellida. Didn't I give my life into your hands, and without any ado?

Wangel. Maybe. But he! He! an absolute stranger! A man of whom you know so little!

Ellida. Ah! but after all I knew you even less; and yet I went with you.

Wangel. Then you knew to some extent what life lay before you. But now? Think! What do you know? You know absolutely nothing. Not even who or what he is.

Ellida (looking in front of her). That is true; but that is the terror.

Wangel. Yes, indeed, it is terrible!

Ellida. That is why I feel I must plunge into it.

Wangel (looking at her). Because it seems terrible?

Ellida. Yes; because of that.

Wangel (coming closer). Listen, Ellida. What do you really mean by terrible?

Ellida (reflectively). The terrible is that which repels and attracts.

Wangel. Attracts, you say?

Ellida. Attracts most of all, I think.

Wangel (slowly). You are one with the sea.

Ellida. That, too, is a terror.

Wangel. And that terror is in you. You both repel and attract.

Ellida. Do you think so, Wangel?

Wangel. After all, I have never really known you—never really. Now I am beginning to understand.

Ellida. And that is why you must set me free! Free me from every bond to you—and yours. I am not what you took me for. Now you see it yourself. Now we can part as friends—and freely.

Wangel (sadly). Perhaps it would be better for us both if we parted—And yet, I cannot! You are the terror to me, Ellida; the attraction is what is strongest in you.

Ellida. Do you say that?

Wangel. Let us try and live through this day wisely—in perfect quiet of mind. I dare not set you free, and release you today. I have no right to. No right for your own sake, Ellida. I exercise my right and my duty to protect you.

Ellida. Protect? What is there to protect me from? I am not threatened by any outward power. The terror lies deeper, Wangel. The terror is—the attraction in my own mind. And what can you do against that?

Wangel. I can strengthen and urge you to fight against it.

Ellida. Yes; if I wished to fight against it.

Wangel. Then you do not wish to?

Ellida. Oh! I don't know myself.

Wangel. Tonight all will be decided, dear Ellida—Ellida (bursting out). Yes, think! The decision so near—the decision for one's whole life!

Wangel. And then tomorrow—Ellida. Tomorrow! Perhaps my real future will have been ruined.

Wangel. Your real—Ellida. The whole, full life of freedom lost—lost for me, and perhaps for him also.

Wangel (in a lower tone, seizing her wrist). Ellida, do you love this stranger?

Ellida. Do I? Oh, how can I tell! I only know that to me he is a terror, and that—

Wangel. And that—

Ellida (tearing herself away). And that it is to him I think I belong.

Wangel (bowing his head). I begin to understand better.

Ellida. And what remedy have you for that? What advice to give me?

Wangel (looking sadly at her). Tomorrow he will be gone, then the misfortune will be averted from your head; and then I will consent to set you free. We will cry off the bargain tomorrow, Ellida.

Ellida. Ah, Wangel, tomorrow! That is too late.

Wangel (looking towards garden). The children—the children! Let us spare them, at least for the present.

(ARNHOLM, BOLETTE, HILDE, and LYNGSTRAND come into the garden. LYNGSTRAND says goodbye in the garden, and goes out. The rest come into the room.)

Arnholm. You must know we have been making plans.

Hilde. We're going out to the fjord tonight and—

Bolette. No; you mustn't tell.

Wangel. We two, also, have been making plans.

Arnholm. Ah!—really?

Wangel. Tomorrow Ellida is going away to Skjoldviken for a time.

Bolette. Going away?

Arnholm. Now, look here, that's very sensible, Mrs. Wangel.

Wangel. Ellida wants to go home again—home to the sea.

Hilde (springing towards ELLIDA). You are going away—away from us?

Ellida (frightened). Hilde! What is the matter?

Hilde (controlling herself). Oh, it's nothing. (In a low voice, turning from her.) Are only you going?

Bolette (anxiously). Father—I see it—you, too, are going—to Skjoldviken!

Wangel. No, no! Perhaps I shall run out there every now and again.

Bolette. And come here to us?

Wangel. I will—Bolette. Every now and again!

Wangel. Dear child, it must be. (He crosses the room.)

Arnholm (whispers). We will talk it over later, Bolette. (He crosses to WANGEL. They speak in low tones up stage by the door.)

Ellida (aside to BOLETTE). What was the matter with Hilde? She looked quite scared.

Bolette. Have you never noticed what Hilde goes about here, day in, day out, hungering for?

Ellida. Hungering for?

Bolette. Ever since you came into the house?

Ellida. No, no. What is it?

Bolette. One loving word from you.

Ellida. Oh! If there should be something for me to do here!

(She clasps her hands together over her head, and looks fixedly in front of her, as if torn by contending thoughts and emotions. WANGEL and ARNHOLM come across the room whispering. BOLETTE goes to the side room, and looks in. Then she throws open the door.)

Bolette. Father, dear—the table is laid—if you—

Wangel (with forced composure). Is it, child? That's well. Come, Arnholm! We'll go in and drink a farewell cup—with the "Lady from the Sea." (They go out through the right.)

ACT V

(SCENE.—The distant part of DOCTOR WANGEL'S garden, and the carp pond. The summer night gradually darkens.

ARNHOLM, BOLETTE, LYNGSTRAND and HILDE are in a boat, punting along the shore to the left.)

Hilde. See! We can jump ashore easily here.

Arnholm. No, no; don't!

Lyngstrand. I can't jump, Miss Hilde.

Hilde. Can't you jump either, Arnholm?

Arnholm. I'd rather not try.

Bolette. Then let's land down there, by the bathing steps.

(They push off. At the same moment BALLESTED comes along the footpath, carrying music-books and a French horn. He bows to those in the boat, turns and speaks to them. The answers are heard farther and farther away.)

Ballested. What do you say? Yes, of course it's on account of the English steamer; for this is her last visit here this year. But if you want to enjoy the pleasures of melody, you mustn't wait too long. (Calling out.) What? (Shaking his head.) Can't hear what you say!

(ELLIDA, with a shawl over her head, enters, followed by DOCTOR WANGEL.)

Wangel. But, dear Ellida, I assure you there's plenty of time.

Ellida. No, no, there is not! He may come any moment.

Ballested (outside the fence). Hallo! Good-evening, doctor. Good-evening, Mrs. Wangel.

Wangel (noticing him). Oh! is it you? Is there to be music tonight?

Ballested. Yes; the Wind Band Society thought of making themselves heard. We've no dearth of festive occasions nowadays. Tonight it's in honour of the English ship.

Ellida. The English ship! Is she in sight already?

Ballested. Not yet. But you know she comes from between the islands. You can't see anything of her, and then she's alongside of you.

Ellida. Yes, that is so.

Wangel (half to ELLIDA). Tonight is the last voyage, then she will not come again.

Ballested. A sad thought, doctor, and that's why we're going to give them an ovation, as the saying is. Ah! Yes—ah! yes. The glad summertime will soon be over now. Soon all ways will be barred, as they say in the tragedy.

Ellida. All ways barred—yes!

Ballested. It's sad to think of. We have been the joyous children of summer for weeks and months now. It's hard to reconcile yourself to the dark days—just at first, I mean. For men can accli—a—acclimatise themselves, Mrs. Wangel. Ay, indeed they can. (Bows, and goes off to the left.)

Ellida (looking out at the fjord). Oh, this terrible suspense! This torturing last half-hour before the decision!

Wangel. You are determined, then, to speak to him yourself?

Ellida. I must speak to him myself; for it is freely that I must make my choice.

Wangel. You have no choice, Ellida. You have no right to choose—no right without my permission.

Ellida. You can never prevent the choice, neither you nor anyone. You can forbid me to go away with him—to follow him—in case I should choose to do that. You can keep me here by force—against

my will. That you can do. But that I should choose, choose from my very soul—choose him, and not you—in case I would and did choose thus—this you cannot prevent.

Wangel. No; you are right. I cannot prevent that.

Ellida. And so I have nothing to help me to resist. Here, at home, there is no single thing that attracts me and binds me. I am so absolutely rootless in your house, Wangel. The children are not mine—their hearts, I mean—never have been. When I go, if I do go, either with him tonight, or to Skjoldviken tomorrow, I haven't a key to give up, an order to give about anything whatsoever. I am absolutely rootless in your house—I have been absolutely outside everything from the very first.

Wangel. You yourself wished it.

Ellida. No, no, I did not. I neither wished nor did not wish it. I simply left things just as I found them the day I came here. It is you, and no one else, who wished it.

Wangel. I thought to do all for the best for you.

Ellida. Yes, Wangel, I know it so well! But there is retribution in that, a something that avenges itself. For now I find no binding power here-nothing to strengthen me—nothing to help me—nothing to draw me towards what should have been the strongest possession of us both.

Wangel. I see it, Ellida. And that is why from t-morrow you shall have back your freedom. Henceforth, you shall live your own life.

Ellida. And you call that my own life! No! My own true life lost its bearings when I agreed to live with you. (Clenches her hand in fear and unrest.) And now—tonight—in half an hour, he whom I forsook is coming—he to whom I should have cleaved forever, even as he has cleaved to me! Now he is coming to offer me—for the last and only time—the chance of living my life over again, of living my own true life—the life that terrifies and attracts—and I can not forgo that—not freely.

Wangel. That is why it is necessary your husband—and your doctor—should take the power of acting from you, and act on your behalf.

Ellida. Yes, Wangel, I quite understand. Believe me, there are times when I think it would be peace and deliverance if with all my soul I could be bound to you—and try to brave all that terrifies—and attracts. But I cannot! No, no, I cannot do that!

Wangel. Come, Ellida, let us walk up and down together for awhile.

Ellida. I would gladly—but I dare not. For he said I was to wait for him here.

Wangel. Come! There is time enough.

Ellida. Do you think so?

Wangel. Plenty of time, I tell you.

Ellida. Then let us go, for a little while.

(They pass out in the foreground. At the same time ARNHOLM and BOLETTE appear by the upper bank of the pond.)

Bolette (noticing the two as they go out). See there—

Arnholm (in low voice). Hush! Let them go. Bolette. Can you understand what has been going on between them these last few days?

Arnholm. Have you noticed anything?

Bolette. Have I not!

Arnholm. Anything peculiar?

Bolette. Yes, one thing and another. Haven't you?

Arnholm. Well—I don't exactly know.

Bolette. Yes, you have; only you won't speak out about it.

Arnholm. I think it will do your stepmother good to go on this little journey.

Bolette. Do you think so?

Arnholm. I should say it would be well for all parties that she should get away every now and then.

Bolette. If she does go home to Skjoldviken tomorrow, she will never come back here again!

Arnholm. My dear Bolette, whatever makes you think that?

Bolette. I am quite convinced of it. Just you wait; you'll see that she'll not come back again; not anyhow as long as I and Hilde are in the house here.

Arnholm. Hilde, too?

Bolette. Well, it might perhaps be all right with Hilde. For she is scarcely more than a child. And I believe that at bottom she worships Ellida. But, you see, it's different with me—a stepmother who isn't so very much older than oneself!

Arnholm. Dear Bolette, perhaps it might, after all, not be so very long before you left.

Bolette (eagerly). Really! Have you spoken to father about it?

Arnholm. Yes, I have.

Bolette. Well, what does he say?

Arnholm. Hm! Well, your father's so thoroughly taken up with other matters just now—

Bolette. Yes, yes! that's how I knew it would be.

Arnholm. But I got this much out of him. You mustn't reckon upon any help from him.

Bolette. No?

Arnholm. He explained his circumstances to me clearly; he thought that such a thing was absolutely out of the question, impossible for him.

Bolette (reproachfully). And you had the heart to come and mock me?

Arnholm. I've certainly not done that, dear Bolette. It depends wholly and solely upon yourself whether you go away or not.

Bolette. What depends upon me?

Arnholm. Whether you are to go out into the world—learn all you most care for—take part in all you are hungering after here at home—live your life under brighter conditions, Bolette.

Bolette (clasping her hands together). Good God! But it's impossible! If father neither can nor will—and I have no one else on earth to whom I could turn—Arnholm. Couldn't you make up your mind to accept a little help from your old—from your former teacher?

Bolette. From you, Mr. Arnholm! Would you be willing to—

Arnholm. Stand by you! Yes—with all my heart. Both with word and in deed. You may count upon it. Then you accept? Well? Do you agree?

Bolette. Do I agree! To get away—to see the world—to learn something thoroughly! All that seemed to be a great, beautiful impossibility!

Arnholm. All that may now become a reality to you, if only you yourself wish it.

Bolette. And to all this unspeakable happiness you will help me! Oh, no! Tell me, can I accept such an offer from a stranger?

Arnholm. You can from me, Bolette. From me you can accept anything.

Bolette (seizing his hands). Yes, I almost think I can! I don't know how it is, but—(bursting out) Oh! I could both laugh and cry for joy, for happiness! Then I should know life really after all. I began to be so afraid life would pass me by.

Arnholm. You need not fear that, Bolette. But now you must tell me quite frankly—if there is anything—anything you are bound to here.

Bolette. Bound to? Nothing.

Arnholm. Nothing whatever?

Bolette. No, nothing at all. That is—I am bound to father to some extent. And to Hilde, too. But—

Arnholm. Well, you'll have to leave your father sooner or later. And some time Hilde also will go her own way in life. That is only a question of time. Nothing more. And so there is nothing else that binds you, Bolette? Not any kind of connection?

Bolette. Nothing whatever. As far as that goes, I could leave at any moment.

Arnholm. Well, if that is so, dear Bolette, you shall go away with me!

Bolette (clapping her hands). Oh God! What joy to think of it!

Arnholm. For I hope you trust me fully?

Bolette. Indeed, I do!

Arnholm. And you dare to trust yourself and your future fully and confidently into my hands, Bolette? Is that true? You will dare to do this?

Bolette. Of course; how could I not do so? Could you believe anything else? You, who have been my old teacher—my teacher in the old days, I mean.

Arnholm. Not because of that. I will not consider that side of the matter; but—well, so you are free, Bolette! There is nothing that

binds you, and so I ask you, if you could—if you could—bind yourself to me for life?

Bolette (steps back frightened). What are you saying?

Arnholm. For all your life, Bolette. Will you be my wife?

Bolette (half to herself). No, no, no! That is impossible, utterly impossible!

Arnholm. It is really so absolutely impossible for you to—

Bolette. But, surely, you cannot mean what you are saying, Mr. Arnholm! (Looking at him.) Or—yet—was that what you meant when you offered to do so much for me?

Arnholm. You must listen to me one moment, Bolette. I suppose I have greatly surprised you!

Bolette. Oh! how could such a thing from you—how could it but—but surprise me!

Arnholm. Perhaps you are right. Of course, you didn't—you could not know it was for your sake I made this journey.

Bolette. Did you come here for—for my sake?

Arnholm. I did, Bolette. In the spring I received a letter from your father, and in it there was a passage that made me think—hm—that you held your former teacher in—in a little more than friendly remembrance.

Bolette. How could father write such a thing?

Arnholm. He did not mean it so. But I worked myself into the belief that here was a young girl longing for me to come again—No, you mustn't interrupt me, dear Bolette! And—you see, when a man like myself, who is no longer quite young, has such a belief—or fancy, it makes an overwhelming impression. There grew within me a living, a grateful affection for you; I thought I must come to you, see you again, and tell you I shared the feelings that I fancied you had for me.

Bolette. And now you know it is not so!—that it was a mistake!

Arnholm. It can't be helped, Bolette. Your image, as I bear it within myself, will always be coloured and stamped with the impression that this mistake gave me. Perhaps you cannot understand this; but still it is so.

Bolette. I never thought such a thing possible.

Arnholm. But now you have seen that it is possible, what do you say now, Bolette? Couldn't you make up your mind to be—yes—to be my wife?

Bolette. Oh! it seems so utterly impossible, Mr. Arnholm. You, who have been my teacher! I can't imagine ever standing in any other relation towards you.

Arnholm. Well, well, if you think you really cannot—Then our old relations remain unchanged, dear Bolette.

Bolette. What do you mean?

Arnholm. Of course, to keep my promise all the same. I will take care you get out into the world and see something of it. Learn some things you really want to know; live safe and independent. Your future I shall provide for also, Bolette. For in me you will always have a good, faithful, trustworthy friend. Be sure of that.

Bolette. Good heavens! Mr. Arnholm, all that is so utterly impossible now.

Arnholm. Is that impossible too?

Bolette. Surely you can see that! After what you have just said to me, and after my answer—Oh! you yourself must see that it is impossible for me now to accept so very much from you. I can accept nothing from you—nothing after this.

Arnholm. So you would rather stay at home here, and let life pass you by?

Bolette. Oh! it is such dreadful misery to think of that.

Arnholm. Will you renounce knowing something of the outer world? Renounce bearing your part in all that you yourself say you are hungering for? To know there is so infinitely much, and yet never really to understand anything of it? Think carefully, Bolette.

Bolette. Yes, yes! You are right, Mr. Arnholm.

Arnholm. And then, when one day your father is no longer here, then perhaps to be left helpless and alone in the world; or live to give yourself to another man—whom you, perhaps, will also feel no affection for—

Bolette. Oh, yes! I see how true all you say is. But still—and yet perhaps—

Arnholm (quickly). Well?

Bolette (looking at him hesitatingly). Perhaps it might not be so impossible after all.

Arnholm. What, Bolette?

Bolette. Perhaps it might be possible—to accept—what you proposed to me.

Arnholm. Do you mean that, after all, you might be willing to—that at all events you could give me the happiness of helping you as a steadfast friend?

Bolette. No, no, no! Never that, for that would be utterly impossible now. No—Mr. Arnholm—rather take me.

Arnholm. Bolette! You will?

Bolette. Yes, I believe I will.

Arnholm. And after all you will be my wife?

Bolette. Yes; if you still think that—that you will have me.

Arnholm. Think! (Seizing her hand.) Oh, thanks, thanks, Bolette. All else that you said—your former doubts—these do not frighten

me. If I do not yet possess your whole heart, I shall know how to conquer it. Oh, Bolette, I will wait upon you hand and foot!

Bolette. And then I shall see something of the world? Shall live! You have promised me that?

Arnholm. And will keep my promise.

Bolette. And I may learn everything I want to?

Arnholm. I, myself, will be your teacher as formerly, Bolette. Do you remember the last school year?

Bolette (quietly and absently). To think—to know—one's self free, and to get out into the strange world, and then, not to need to be anxious for the future—not to be harassed about one's stupid livelihood!

Arnholm. No, you will never need to waste a thought upon such matters. And that's a good thing, too, in its way, dear Bolette, isn't it? Eh?

Bolette. Indeed it is. That is certain.

Arnholm (putting his arms about her). Oh, you will see how comfortably and easily we shall settle down together! And how well and safely and trustfully we two shall get on with one another, Bolette.

Bolette. Yes. I also begin to—I believe really—it will answer. (Looks out to the right, and hurriedly frees herself.) Oh, don't say anything about this.

Arnholm. What is it, dear?

Bolette. Oh! it's that poor (pointing}—see out there.

Arnholm. Is it your father?

Bolette. No. It's the young sculptor. He's down there with Hilde.

Arnholm. Oh, Lyngstrand! What's really the matter with him?

Bolette. Why, you know how weak and delicate he is.

Arnholm. Yes. Unless it's simply imaginary.

Bolette. No, it's real enough! He'll not last long. But perhaps that's best for him.

Arnholm. Dear, why should that be best?

Bolette. Because—because—nothing would come of his art anyhow. Let's go before they come.

Arnholm. Gladly, my dear Bolette.

(HILDE and LYNGSTRAND appear by the pond.)

Hilde. Hi, hi! Won't your honours wait for us?

Arnholm. Bolette and I would rather go on a little in advance. (He and BOLETTE go out to the Left.)

Lyngstrand (laughs quietly). It's very delightful here now. Everybody goes about in pairs—always two and two together.

Hilde (looking after them). I could almost swear he's proposing to her.

Lyngstrand. Really? Have you noticed anything?

Hilde. Yes. It's not very difficult—if you keep your eyes open.

Lyngstrand. But Miss Bolette won't have him. I'm certain of that.

Hilde. No. For she thinks he's got so dreadfully old-looking, and she thinks he'll soon get bald.

Lyngstrand. It's not only because of that. She'd not have him anyhow.

Hilde. How can you know?

Lyngstrand. Well, because there's someone else she's promised to think of.

Hilde. Only to think of?

Lyngstrand. While he is away, yes.

Hilde. Oh! then I suppose it's you she's to think of.

Lyngstrand. Perhaps it might be.

Hilde. She promised you that?

Lyngstrand. Yes—think—she promised me that! But mind you don't tell her you know.

Hilde. Oh! I'll be mum! I'm as secret as the grave.

Lyngstrand. I think it's awfully kind of her.

Hilde. And when you come home again—are you going to be engaged to her, and then marry her?

Lyngstrand. No, that wouldn't very well do. For I daren't think of such a thing during the first years. And when I shall be able to, she'll be rather too old for me, I fancy.

Hilde. And yet you wish her to think of you?

Lyngstrand. Yes; that's so useful to me. You see, I'm an artist. And she can very well do it, because she herself has no real calling. But all the same, it's kind of her.

Hilde. Do you think you'll be able to get on more quickly with your work if you know that Bolette is here thinking of you?

Lyngstrand. Yes, I fancy so. To know there is a spot on earth where a young, gentle, reserved woman is quietly dreaming about you—I fancy it must be so—so-well, I really don't exactly know what to call it.

Hilde. Perhaps you mean—fascinating?

Lyngstrand. Fascinating! Oh, yes! Fascinating was what I meant, or something like it. (Looks at her for a moment.) You are so clever, Miss Hilde. Really you are very clever. When I come home again you'll be about the same age as your sister is now. Perhaps, too, you'll look like your sister looks now. And perhaps, too, you'll be of the same mind she is now. Then, perhaps, you'll be both yourself and your sister—in one form, so to say.

Hilde. Would you like that?

Lyngstrand. I hardly know. Yes; I almost think I should. But now, for this summer, I would rather you were like yourself alone, and exactly as you are.

Hilde. Do you like me best as I am?

Lyngstrand. Yes, I like you immensely as you are.

Hilde. Hm. Tell me, you who are an artist, do you think I'm right always to wear bright-coloured summer dresses?

Lyngstrand. Yes; I think you're quite right!

Hilde. You think bright colours suit me, then?

Lyngstrand. They suit you charmingly—to my taste.

Hilde. But tell me, as an artist, how do you think I should look in black?

Lyngstrand. In black, Miss Hilde?

Hilde. Yes, all in black. Do you think I should look well?

Lyngstrand. Black's hardly suitable for the summer. However, you'd probably look remarkably well in black, especially with your appearance.

Hilde (looking straight in front of her). All in black, up to the throat; black frilling round that, black gloves, and a long black veil hanging down behind.

Lyngstrand. If you were dressed so, Miss Hilde, I should wish I were a painter, and I'd paint you as a young, beautiful, sorrowing widow!

Hilde. Or as a young, sorrowing, betrothed girl!

Lyngstrand. Yes, that would be better still. But you can't wish to be dressed like that?

Hilde. I hardly know; but I think it's fascinating.

Lyngstrand. Fascinating?

Hilde. Fascinating to think of, yes. (Suddenly pointing to the left.) Oh, just look there!

Lyngstrand (looking). The great English steamer; and right by the pier!

(WANGEL and ELLIDA come in past the pond.)

Wangel. No; I assure you, dear Ellida, you are mistaken. (Seeing the others.) What, are you two here? It's not in sight yet; is it, Mr. Lyngstrand?

Lyngstrand. The great English ship?

Wangel. Yes.

Lyngstrand (pointing). There she is already, doctor.

Ellida. I knew it.

Wangel. Come!

Lyngstrand. Come like a thief in the night, as one might say, so quietly and noiselessly.

Wangel. You must go to the pier with Hilde. Be quick! I'm sure she wants to hear the music.

Lyngstrand. Yes; we were just going there, doctor.

Wangel. Perhaps we'll follow you. We'll come directly.

Hilde (whispering to LYNGSTRAND). They're hunting in couples, too!

(HILDE and LYNGSTRAND go out through the garden. Music is heard in the distance out at the fiord during the following.)

Ellida. Come! He is here! Yes, yes—I feel it.

Wangel. You'd better go in, Ellida. Let me talk with him alone.

Ellida. Oh! that's impossible—impossible, I say. (With a cry.) Ah! do you see him, Wangel?

(The STRANGER enters from the left, and remains on the pathway outside the fence.)

The Stranger (bowing). Good-evening. You see I am here again, Ellida.

Ellida. Yes, yes. The time has come now.

The Stranger. And are you ready to start, or not?

Wangel. You can see for yourself that she is not.

The Stranger. I'm not asking about a travelling dress, or anything of that kind, nor about packed trunks. All that is needed for a journey I have with me on board. I've also secured a cabin for her. (To ELLIDA.) So I ask you if you are ready to go with me, to go with me—freely?

Ellida. Oh! do not ask me! Do not tempt me!

(A ship's bell is heard in the distance.)

The Stranger. That is the first bell for going on board. Now you must say "Yes" or "No."

Ellida (wringing her hands). To decide—decide for one's whole life! Never to be able to undo it again!

The Stranger. Never. In half an hour it will be too late.

Ellida (looking shyly and searchingly at him). Why is it you hold to me so resolutely?

The Stranger. Don't you feel, as I do, that we two belong together?

Ellida. Do you mean because of the vow?

The Stranger. Vows bind no one, neither man nor woman. If I hold so steadfastly to you, it is because I cannot do otherwise.

Ellida (in a low, trembling voice). Why didn't you come before?

Wangel. Ellida!

Ellida (bursting out). Ah! All that attracts, and tempts, and lures into the unknown! All the strength of the sea concentrated in this one thing!

(The STRANGER climbs over the fence.)

Ellida (stepping back to WANGEL). What is it? What do you want?

The Stranger. I see it and I hear it in you, Ellida. After all, you will choose me in the end.

Wangel (going towards him). My wife has no choice here, I am here both to choose for her and to defend her. Yes, defend! If you do not go away from here—away from this land—and never come back again—Do you know to what you are exposing yourself?

Ellida. No, no, Wangel, not that!

The Stranger. What will you do to me?

Wangel. I will have you arrested as a criminal, at once, before you go on board; for I know all about the murder at Skjoldviken.

Ellida. Ah! Wangel, how can you?

The Stranger. I was prepared for that, and so—(takes a revolver from his breast pocket)—I provided myself with this.

Ellida (throwing herself in front of him). No, no; do not kill him! Better kill me!

The Stranger. Neither you nor him, don't fear that. This is for myself, for I will live and die a free man.

Ellida (with growing excitement). Wangel, let me tell you this—tell it you so that he may hear it. You can indeed keep me here! You have the means and the power to do it. And you intend to do it. But my mind—all my thoughts, all the longings and desires of my soul—these you cannot bind! These will rush and press out into

the unknown that I was created for, and that you have kept from me!

Wangel (in quiet sorrow). I see it, Ellida. Step by step you are slipping from me. The craving for the boundless, the infinite, the unattainable will drive your soul into the darkness of night at last.

Ellida. Yes! I feel it hovering over me like black noiseless wings.

Wangel. It shall not come to that. No other deliverance is possible for you. I at least can see no other. And so—so I cry off our bargain at once. Now you can choose your own path in perfect—perfect freedom.

Ellida (stares at him a while as if stricken dumb). Is it true—true what you say? Do you mean that—mean it with all your heart?

Wangel. Yes—with all my sorrowing heart—I mean it.

Ellida. And can you do it? Can you let it be so?

Wangel. Yes, I can. Because I love you so dearly.

Ellida (in a low, trembling voice). And have I come so near—so close to you?

Wangel. The years and the living together have done that.

Ellida (clasping her hands together). And I—who so little understood this!

Wangel. Your thoughts went elsewhere. And now—now you are completely free of me and mine—and—and mine. Now your own true life may resume its real bent again, for now you can choose in freedom, and on your own responsibility, Ellida.

Ellida (clasps her head with her hands, and stares at WANGEL). In freedom, and on my own responsibility! Responsibility, too? That changes everything.

(The ship bell rings again.)

The Stranger. Do you hear, Ellida? It has rung now for the last time. Come.

Ellida (turns towards him, looks firmly at him, and speaks in a resolute voice). I shall never go with you after this!

The Stranger. You will not!

Ellida (clinging to WANGEL). I shall never go away from you after this.

The Stranger. So it is over?

Ellida. Yes. Over for all time.

The Stranger. I see. There is something here stronger than my will.

Ellida. Your will has not a shadow of power over me any longer. To me you are as one dead—who has come home from the sea, and who returns to it again. I no longer dread you. And I am no longer drawn to you.

The Stranger. Goodbye, Mrs. Wangel! (He swings himself over the fence.) Henceforth, you are nothing but a shipwreck in my life that I have tided over. (He goes out.)

Wangel (looks at her for a while). Ellida, your mind is like the sea—it has ebb and flow. Whence came the change?

Ellida. Ah! don't you understand that the change came—was bound to come when I could choose in freedom?

Wangel. And the unknown?—It no longer lures you?

Ellida. Neither lures nor frightens me. I could have seen it—gone out into it, if only I myself had willed it. I could have chosen it. And that is why I could also renounce it.

Wangel. I begin to understand little by little. You think and conceive in pictures—in visible figures. Your longing and aching for the sea, your attraction towards this strange man, these were the expression of an awakening and growing desire for freedom; nothing else.

Ellida. I don't know about that. But you have been a good physician for me. You found, and you dared to use the right remedy—the only one that could help me.

Wangel. Yes, in utmost need and danger we doctors dare much. And now you are coming back to me again, Ellida?

Ellida. Yes, dear, faithful Wangel—now I am coming back to you again. Now I can. For now I come to you freely, and on my own responsibility.

Wangel (looks lovingly at her). Ellida! Ellida! To think that now we can live wholly for one another—

Ellida. And with common memories. Yours, as well as mine.

Wangel. Yes, indeed, dear.

Ellida. And for our children, Wangel?

Wangel. You call them ours!

Ellida. They who are not mine yet, but whom I shall win.

Wangel. Ours! (Gladly and quickly kisses her hands.) I cannot speak my thanks for those words!

(HILDE, BALLESTED, LYNGSTRAND, ARNHOLM, and BOLETTE come into the garden. At the same time a number of young townspeople and visitors pass along the footpath.)

Hilde (aside to LYNGSTRAND). See! Why, she and father look exactly as if they were a betrothed couple!

Ballested (who has overheard). It is summertime, little Missie.

Arnholm (looking at WANGEL and ELLIDA). The English steamer is putting off.

Bolette (going to the fence). You can see her best from here.

Lyngstrand. The last voyage this year.

Ballested. Soon all the sea-highways will be closed, as the poet says. It is sad, Mrs. Wangel. And now we're to lose you also for a time. Tomorrow you're off to Skjoldviken, I hear.

Wangel. No; nothing will come of that. We two have changed our mind—tonight.

Arnholm (looking from one to the other). Oh!—really!

Bolette (coming forward). Father, is that true?

Hilde (going towards ELLIDA). Are you going to stay with us after all?

Ellida. Yes, dear Hilde, if you'll have me.

Hilde (struggling between tears and laughter). Fancy! Have you!

Arnholm (to ELLIDA). But this is quite a surprise—!

Ellida (smiling earnestly). Well, you see, Mr. Arnholm—Do you remember we talked about it yesterday? When you have once become a land-creature you can no longer find your way back again to the sea, nor to the sea-life either.

Ballested. Why, that's exactly the case with my mermaid.

Ellida. Something like—yes.

Ballested. Only with this difference—that the mermaid dies of it, it, while human beings can acclam—acclimatise themselves. Yes yes. I assure you, Mrs. Wangel, they can ac-climatise themselves.

Ellida. In freedom they can, Mr. Ballested.

Wangel. And when they act on their own responsibility, dear Ellida.

Ellida (quickly holding out her hand to him). Exactly. (The great steamer glides noiselessly out beyond the fjord. The music is heard nearer land.)

EDITION NOTE

The text follows the historical Eleanor Marx-Aveling version checked against the 1890 T. Fisher Unwin edition. The reading contents reflect all five acts.