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For Ma and the Old Man

IBSEN UNDONE

by Patrick Greene

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INTRODUCTION

Cast of Characters

HENRIK IBSEN
AUGUST STRINDBERG
ANTON CHEKHOV
EUGENE O'NEILL

(Lights up. A handsome young man walks on stage. He is dressed in a three-piece suit, a bowler, nice shoes. He walks center stage and addresses the audience.)

IBSEN. *(A British accent:)* Good evening ladies and gentlemen. I am Henrik Ibsen and tonight I will present to you two of my most famous dramas. Now, there may be some of you out there who are thinking, "Henrik Ibsen was an old man with a beard and glasses." I say to you, I am dead, so I can look however I wish. Now, there may be others amongst you who are thinking, "Henrik Ibsen was Norwegian. He didn't speak with a British accent." First of all, none of you were alive when I died in 1906, so you don't know what I sounded like. Secondly, from what I know of American films and theatre, a British accent is used to represent all of Europe. I wouldn't want to confuse all of you with a strange Norwegian accent. Now, as I was saying, I, Henrik Ibsen, am delighted to present to you my famous plays *A Doll's House* and *Hedda Gabler*. Attention spans have severely shortened since I first wrote these plays, so I have shortened them to about the time it takes to watch one of your television programs. I invite you to sit back, relax, and enjoy yourselves as the father of modern drama *(He points to himself)* brings you two of the world's greatest plays... Let the drama begin.

(IBSEN begins to walk off SR. A MAN in a dark suit, a cape, a monocle, and a top hat appears SL.)

STRINDBERG. *(A bad German accent:)* Not so fast, Ibsen.

(IBSEN stops, turns around.)

IBSEN. Why if it isn't my arch nemesis, August Strindberg. I see you have gone with the German accent.

STRINDBERG. I am zee villain, I had no choice.

IBSEN. Leave my stage, you devil.

STRINDBERG. I vill do no such thing, Ibsen. You claim to be zee father of modern drama, yet my plays are ze ones zat have had ze biggest impact on zis past century.

A VOICE FROM OFFSTAGE. *(A bad French accent:)* Correction Strindberg.

(ANTON CHEKHOV enters from upstage. He is dressed in a beret, tight black pants, and a striped shirt.)

STRINDBERG / IBSEN. Anton Chekhov!

CHEKHOV. *(His accent is by far the worst of the three:)* It is I.

IBSEN. Why are you speaking with that horrible French accent. You're Russian. Americans know Russian accents. The Cold War?

CHEKHOV. I thought we were doing different ones.

STRINDBERG. Such a feeble mind, Chekhov. You are out of your league.

CHEKHOV. Wrong. It is I whom am the father of modern drama.

IBSEN. This is ridiculous. I am clearly the father...

STRINDBERG. You fools, I am ze father of modern...

CHEKHOV. I wrote *The Cherry Orchard*, and *Three Sisters*. I am most definitely the father...

(IBSEN, STRINDBERG, and CHEKHOV speak over each other. A young BOY enters. He is dressed in your stereotypical 1920s "newsie" clothing.)

O'NEILL. *(A thick New York accent:)* Excuse me.

(IBSEN, STRINDBERG, and CHEKHOV continue to bicker. It's nearly coming to blows.)

O'NEILL. *(Shouting:)* Excuse me!

(They stop.)

O'NEILL. I think you're all the fathers of modern drama.

IBSEN. Who the devil are you?

O'NEILL. The name's Eugene O'Neill, sir.

IBSEN. Well, I'll be!

STRINDBERG. Ze boy vonder himself.

CHEKHOV. *(Kneeling in front of O'NEILL:)* It is an honor, young master.

O'NEILL. You're all great writers. You look stupid fightin' like that.

IBSEN. Well said, young lad.

(STRINDBERG begins to cry.)

STRINDBERG. I am so sorry.

CHEKHOV. I, too, am being sorry.

(IBSEN, STRINDBERG, and CHEKHOV hug. The three men walk off stage together. O'NEILL goes center stage and addresses the audience.)

O'NEILL. Ladies and gentlemen, enjoy the show.

(O'NEILL walks off stage.)

(Lights out.)

A DOLL'S HOUSE IS A METAPHOR

Cast of Characters

NORA, a high school age girl. Not very bright.

TORVALD, her boyfriend. Class president.

KROGSTAD, he likes to pretend he's a movie villain, but he's a nerd to the core.

CHRISTINE, a jaded college dropout. Torvald's sister.

MAID, Torvald and Christine's mother.

GRANDMA BRACK, Torvald and Christine's nutty grandmother.

Scene 1

(The living room of a normal suburban home. All of the usual amenities. A hallway to the rest of the first floor. Stairs leading up. A door to the outside.)

(NORA enters through the front door carrying shopping bags. She sets them down on the couch.)

NORA. Torvald, oh Torvald my dear.

(MAID enters.)

NORA. Oh, hello Maid, is Torvald here?

MAID. For the last time, I am not the maid, I am Torvald's mother and I'd appreciate it if you'd stop treating me as a servant.

NORA. That's nice. Is Torvald home?

MAID. He's on his way home from...

NORA. Can you please take these things up to Torvald's room? There's really too much for me to carry.

MAID. Go to hell!

NORA. You're right. I'll just leave it all on the couch. Torvald can bring them up when he comes home. I've purchased a new skirt that I'll need you to shorten. And I'll need that for tomorrow.

MAID. I hate you.

NORA. Where are my puppies? Out playing I suspect.

MAID. They're not your puppies you annoying twit. Why won't you leave?

NORA. Oh, and dear Maid, I almost forgot. I've purchased something for you as well.

(NORA pulls a feather duster from her bag. She hands it to MAID.)

MAID. If it takes me the rest of my life, I will beat you to death with this feather duster.

NORA. I knew you would love it.

(NORA turns and begins going through her bags, looking for something. MAID raises the feather duster over her head as if she were going to hit NORA. The front door opens. TORVALD enters wearing a paper hat and a smock. MAID quickly lowers her duster.)

TORVALD. Nora, my little lark.

NORA. Dearest Torvald!

TORVALD. Hello Maid, I mean Mother.

MAID. I hate these kids.

(MAID exits into the hallway. NORA runs over to TORVALD and gives him a big hug.)

TORVALD. I trust you are well, my dearest.

NORA. I had such a wonderful day today, Torvald.

TORVALD. Do tell.

NORA. I went shopping...with your money.

TORVALD. Again?

NORA. I purchased ever so many wonderful things; toys for the puppies; short skirts, shoes, oh so many shoes, and I even got something for you.

TORVALD. A gift for me? How sweet of you.

NORA. I got you a present for you to give to me.

(TORVALD stands confused. NORA hands him a wrapped box with a bow. He holds it, looks at her. NORA grabs it from him.)

NORA. Oh Torvald, you shouldn't have.

TORVALD. I didn't.

NORA. *(Opening her gift:)* You got me a pair of shoes. Oh look, they're the really expensive ones that I've been asking for for months. I love you.

(She kisses him.)

TORVALD. Honey doll, you can't be buying all these expensive things just because I'm the new manager at Frankie's Diner. Although it is an important job that has increased my already immense popularity, I cannot afford to keep on buying you all of these things.

NORA. I'm sorry, dearest Torvald.

TORVALD. It's okay, my little jelly-bean. Now, if you'll excuse me, I have to go to my room to check my email and then prepare for the student council meeting tomorrow. For as you know, my tender dumpling, I am the student body president.

NORA. Must you work, dearest Torvald, I would ever so much like to model my new purchases for you.

TORVALD. The job of student body president is not to be taken lightly. If I am to remain the most popular boy in school, I must be dedicated. Do you understand, my little teddy bear?

NORA. Where are the puppies? I will give them their gifts and play with them, while I wait for you.

TORVALD. Don't you have homework?

NORA. They are the cutest puppies in the whole world.

TORVALD. They're full-grown pit bulls.

NORA. Oh how I just adore our puppies.

TORVALD. I must retire to my room.

NORA. Puppies, where are you my precious dears?

(Sounds of large dogs barking off stage. TORVALD sighs and exits upstairs. NORA begins to go through her bags again. She pulls out a bag of cookies and begins to eat them one after the other as she admires her new purchases. After a moment, the doorbell rings. NORA continues eating and looking at her shoes. The doorbell rings again and again. MAID enters. She stares at NORA, hands on hips.)

NORA. Cookie?

MAID. I hope you choke on them.

(MAID stomps over to the front door. Opens it. CHRISTINE enters.)

MAID. Christine! What the hell are you doing here?

CHRISTINE. I have flunked out of college, Mother, and I have returned home to start a new life.

MAID. Well isn't that just great!

CHRISTINE. I have learned many things in my time away. Life is a cruel animal that will tear you apart.

MAID. You didn't even finish your first semester!

CHRISTINE. Even though my golden years have been wasted in a futile attempt to please others, I must continue on in the hopes of finding some other reason to live.

MAID. You children are hopeless.

(MAID exits.)

CHRISTINE. Lovely Nora, it is so good to see a kind face.

NORA. Do I know you?

CHRISTINE. We were once friends many months ago.

NORA. Yes, I do believe I recognize you. Is that really you, Karen?

CHRISTINE. It's Christine.

NORA. You look so much older, Christine. Oh how college has weathered you.

CHRISTINE. The past month and a half have taken quite a toll on me. Yet I learned so much of what this world is. Enjoy your youth, Nora.

NORA. Want to see my new shoes?

CHRISTINE. You are such a pretty child.

NORA. Aren't you like two years older than me?

CHRISTINE. And in those years I have seen the horrors of this awful world. I must find some new spark to keep me going. Does Torvald still work at Frankie's Diner?

NORA. He's a manager now.

CHRISTINE. If only I could get a job as a waitress somewhere, then maybe I could find some joy in this despicable world.

NORA. They have waitresses at Frankie's Diner. (*A revelation:*) Wait! Maybe Torvald could get you a job as a waitress at the diner.

CHRISTINE. Why Nora, that is a marvelous idea.

NORA. Yes, you will become a waitress and we will become like sisters. Oh, how I missed you, Karen.

CHRISTINE. My name is Christine.

NORA. We'll go shopping together, and play with the puppies. It will be ever so delightful

CHRISTINE. You are such a simple little child, not a care in the world.

NORA. But Christine, I am no child. I too have secrets.

CHRISTINE. What secrets could a little baby child have? How I envy your youth.

NORA. I will tell you Christine. Do you know how Torvald became president of the student council?

CHRISTINE. He won the election fair and square, as all elections are won.

NORA. I forged two thousand ballots and hired a student on the elections board to put them through for me.

CHRISTINE. Nora, how could you?

NORA. I had to. I had to do it for Torvald. His popularity was in a dire condition. If he didn't win that election he wouldn't have become the most popular kid in school. It would have ruined him. I had to do something. And for the past many months, I have lived with that shameful secret.

CHRISTINE. Oh Nora, you poor girl.

(GRANDMA BRACK enters from the hallway.)

GRANDMA BRACK. I think I'm dying. I can see a light.

NORA. Grandma Brack, so good to see you.

GRANDMA BRACK. Am I dead? Are you an angel?

CHRISTINE. It's only Nora and Christine, Grammy.

GRANDMA BRACK. So I'm not dead?

NORA. You are in perfect health. Come sit with us.

GRANDMA BRACK. You're such a pretty girl. *(Pointing to CHRISTINE:)* Who's that one?

CHRISTINE. I'm your granddaughter, Christine. I've come back from the brutal world of college.

GRANDMA BRACK. You look older.

CHRISTINE. These past few months have...

GRANDMA BRACK. *(To NORA:)* I wish you were my granddaughter. You and Torvald are my only friends.

NORA. You are such a sweet and wise old woman. I don't know what I'd do without you. Would you like me to model my new clothes for you?

GRANDMA BRACK. I have to go to the bathroom. I think I'm dying. Where's the bathroom? I love you, Nora.

(GRANDMA BRACK exits.)

NORA. She is such a joy in our lives. The puppies just love her.

(Sounds of GRANDMA BRACK being attacked by large dogs off-stage. TORVALD enters from upstairs.)

NORA. Dearest Torvald, you will never believe who has returned.

TORVALD. I'm busy, my dearest angel food cake. I have to go to the diner.

NORA. But Christine is here.

TORVALD. Christine? Christine. That name sounds familiar.

NORA. Your older sister. The one who went away to college a couple of months ago.

TORVALD. Ah, yes, Christine.

CHRISTINE. You look well, Torvald.

TORVALD. You look older. What happened?

CHRISTINE. These past few months have...

NORA. She needs a job as a waitress at the diner.

TORVALD. Sure, I'll just fire someone. Well, I'm off. Give me a kiss my little hot fudge sunday with sprinkles on top and two cherries with just enough whip cream.

(TORVALD and NORA kiss. TORVALD exits.)

CHRISTINE. Thank you so much, Nora. Now I must retire to my room and prepare for my new life as a waitress.

NORA. Goodbye Christine. I trust my shameful secret is safe with you.

CHRISTINE. Of course it is my dear.

NORA. Then nothing bad will happen. Life, it seems, is perfect.

(CHRISTINE smiles, exits. NORA grabs her bag of cookies goes to the hallway entrance.)

NORA. Do my precious puppies want some cookies?

(Sounds of large dogs barking. NORA exits.)

(Lights down.)

Scene 2

(Lights up on the living room. NORA is sitting on the couch playing video games. She is very animated as she plays. She screams, she shouts, calling out commands to the television, "Jump, no dive, kick, hit, jump," and the such. MAID enters from the hallway.)

MAID. What's with all the racket?

NORA. Not now maid, I'm almost to level 47.

MAID. Don't you have a home...a family? Why are you here? This is my house. I...

NORA. No...don't...you see that, Maid? Now I have died, and I was so close to beating...oh, don't be mad, Maid, I can play again. Life is perfect and I have not a care in the world. Would you like me to talk to you while you clean and I wait for my dearest Torvald?

MAID. I'm not a violent woman, Nora, but when I hear your voice I get this vivid image in my head of cutting your tongue out with a rusty spoon.

NORA. Will diner be ready soon? Torvald should be home shortly, and we must make sure his meal is ready when he gets here. If you need some help getting supper ready, I will gladly help fold the napkins.

MAID. A rusty spoon.

(MAID exits.)

NORA. What a wonderful woman she is.

(The front door swings open and in the doorways stands KROGSTAD, a bespectacled and acne riddled teenager.)

NORA. Krogstad, what are you doing here?

KROGSTAD. Nora, it is I, Krogstad!

NORA. I know, I just said that.

KROGSTAD. You are probably wondering what I'm doing here.

NORA. I just said...

KROGSTAD. I will tell you why I am here.

(An awkward pause.)

NORA. Why are you here?

KROGSTAD. I am here to threaten you.

NORA. *(Shocked:)* You mustn't.

KROGSTAD. Oh yes... I must.

NORA. But life is perfect.

KROGSTAD. You see, little Nora, your beloved Torvald has fired me and hired that fox, Christine. As you may know, my popularity level at school had dropped significantly since the unfortunate public pantsing incident last year, and my position at Frankie's was my first step in reclaiming my popularity. Now that your boyfriend has fired me, I am a ruined man.

NORA. I don't understand. What does all this have to do with me?

KROGSTAD. Do I really have to spell it out for you?

NORA. Yes.

KROGSTAD. I'm the one who put your forged ballots through in the school council election.

NORA. Uh huh.

KROGSTAD. Your boyfriend is a manager at Frankie's Diner.

NORA. I see.

KROGSTAD. You really haven't figured it out?

NORA. No.

KROGSTAD. I'm going to speak very slowly, so you can understand me. If you don't make Torvald give me my job back then I'm going to tell everyone that you forged the ballots and Torvald will be impeached.

NORA. I don't get it.

KROGSTAD. I'm threatening you!

NORA. (*Shocked:*) No, you mustn't.

KROGSTAD. I already have.

NORA. But what am I to do?

KROGSTAD. You must get me my job back.

NORA. But Torvald despises you. He says you smell like cheese.

KROGSTAD. Nevertheless, if I do not have my job back by tomorrow evening, I will tell everyone that you forged the ballots, starting with Torvald, who will promptly dump you.

NORA. No, you mustn't.

KROGSTAD. I shall.

(An awkward pause.)

NORA. Aren't you going to leave now?

KROGSTAD. I...I have to go to the bathroom.

NORA. It's through the hall. Second door on the left.

(KROGSTAD goes to the hall. Stops.)

KROGSTAD. I shall leave the toilet seat up.

NORA. (*Shocked as before:*) No, you mustn't.

KROGSTAD. You can't stop me.

(KROGSTAD exits off into the hallway. After a brief moment he returns. This time he has the posture and voice of an awkward teenager.)

KROGSTAD. I was pretty frightening, wasn't I?

NORA. Yes, you were simply devastating.

KROGSTAD. I've been practicing with my little sister for the past two hours. I made her cry a couple of times, but she's only three.

NORA. Still, you were very believable.

KROGSTAD. Thank you. I have to go to the bathroom now. I'm sorry about the toilet seat thing. I got a little carried away. I'll put it down.

NORA. Thank you.

(KROGSTAD exits through the hallway.)

NORA. What am I to do? This cannot be happening. Life is not supposed to be this difficult. Where are my cookies? Cookies will solve all my problems.

(NORA begins to rifle through her purse. She finds some cookies and begins to shove them in her mouth. After a moment the front door swings open, frightening NORA. She relaxes as no one enters, and then TORVALD suddenly bursts in.)

TORVALD. There's quite a wind out there. How is my little apple-pie-with-a-side-of-ice-cream?

NORA. Nothing is wrong. Stop accusing me.

TORVALD. What's the matter, dear sugar plum?

NORA. I didn't forge anything. You can't prove it.

TORVALD. Whatever are you talking about?

NORA. Dinner is almost ready.

TORVALD. Have you been eating cookies again? You know they make you crazy.

NORA. *(Hysterical:)* I haven't eaten any cookies. Everything is fine!

TORVALD. I'm sorry I doubted you, my chocolate truffle. Does it smell like cheese in here?

NORA. What? No, I passed gas.

TORVALD. You mustn't break wind in my presence. It sickens me.

NORA. I'm sorry, dearest Torvald.

(A beat.)

NORA. Torvald, my dear?

TORVALD. Yes.

NORA. If I did something bad, say something that ruined your name, you'd still love me, right?

TORVALD. My dearest cheesecake, I would dump you in a second.

NORA. Oh.

TORVALD. But don't worry, you'd never do such a thing.

NORA. Right.

TORVALD. Now, if you'll excuse me, I have to retire to my room, for as you know, I am the student body president and I must check my email and then prepare my speech for tomorrow's pep rally.

NORA. Must you?

TORVALD. Yes... I must.

(TORVALD exits upstairs. KROGSTAD enters from the hallway.)

KROGSTAD. Is he gone?

NORA. Yes, and you must go.

KROGSTAD. Did you get my job back?

NORA. I didn't get a chance.

KROGSTAD. Foolish girl, you are trying my patience.

NORA. I'm doing what now?

KROGSTAD. It means you're making me angry.

NORA. Oh.

KROGSTAD. Remember Nora, if in twenty-four hours, I do not have my job back, your life will be ruined forever.

NORA. Not forever!

KROGSTAD. Yes...forever.

(KROGSTAD goes to the front door. He stops in front of it and turns to NORA.)

KROGSTAD. And Nora, if you dare try and...

(The front door swings open, knocking KROGSTAD to the ground. He lets out a girlish scream. CHRISTINE stands in the doorway.)

NORA. Christine, what are you doing here?

CHRISTINE. I live here. Who's he?

KROGSTAD. *(His voice cracking:)* I am Krogstad. *(He clears his throat:)* I am Krogstad, a friend of Nora's. You must be the lovely Christine.

(He takes her hand and kisses it.)

CHRISTINE. Aren't you the guy Torvald fired so I could have a job.

KROGSTAD. The very same.

CHRISTINE. Life is a cruel beast that...

KROGSTAD. ...will tear you to bloody shreds. Yes, I know. But sometimes we must fight this beast. It's kill or be killed.

CHRISTINE. I never knew such passion could come from such a small, pimply boy.

KROGSTAD. To kill the beast, one must become the beast.

CHRISTINE. Oh, Krogstad.

KROGSTAD. *(He puts a finger to CHRISTINE's lips:)* Hush now. I must be going.

(KROGSTAD exits though the front door. After a brief moment he returns, an awkward teenager as before.)

KROGSTAD. I was pretty good, wasn't I?

NORA. Oh yes, very.

CHRISTINE. I was really turned on.

KROGSTAD. Awesome. Okay, well I'll see you guys later.

(KROGSTAD exits.)

CHRISTINE. Who was that disgusting and beautiful man?

NORA. He is the man who is going to ruin my life.

CHRISTINE. He's so hideous, yet so...fascinating.

NORA. I said, he's the man who is going to ruin my life...forever!

CHRISTINE. Part of me never wants to look upon his disgusting face again, yet it is a face that has been ravaged by this cruel world and I can't stop thinking about it.

NORA. Will you please pay attention to me?

CHRISTINE. Something wrong, little Nora?

NORA. That's what I've been trying to tell you, Christine. Do you remember Krogstad, the man that was here about thirty seconds ago?

CHRISTINE. Yes, I do.

NORA. He's the one that put my forged ballots through and now...

CHRISTINE. He wants you to help him get his job back or he'll reveal your shameful secret to the world and to Torvald who will surely dump you.

NORA. Well...yes. I guess that's it.

CHRISTINE. Well, have fun with all that. I'm going to my room to brood.

NORA. Won't you help me, dear Christine? Maybe you can quit your job and then Krogstad could get his job back and everything will be like it was.

CHRISTINE. A great man once said, "To kill the beast, one must become the beast."

NORA. Huh?

CHRISTINE. Become the beast, Nora.

NORA. I don't want to.

CHRISTINE. *(Slowly walking to the upstairs exit. Whispering:)* Become the beast.

(CHRISTINE exits.)

NORA. Oh life, life, once you were so perfect and now everything is ruined. Where are my puppies? They will comfort me.

(NORA goes to the hallway.)

NORA. Puppies, oh puppies, come to Mommy.

(Sounds of large dogs barking. GRANDMA BRACK comes racing out of the hallway, past NORA, almost bumping into her.)

GRANDMA BRACK. I think those things were talking to me.

NORA. They're just puppies, Grandma Brack.

GRANDMA BRACK. Are you dim? Those things are the size of horses.

NORA. You're such a sweet old woman, how have you managed to live such a wonderful, perfect life?

GRANDMA BRACK. Well, I'm crazy, so that helps. And I eat a lot of raisins and they keep me regular. You gotta be regular to be happy.

NORA. I don't quite understand.

GRANDMA BRACK. Well that's 'cause you're dim. But ya got looks, so you'll be alright, as long as you stay regular. You are regular, right?

NORA. Nothing is regular anymore. Everything is all twisted up. Nothing works.

GRANDMA BRACK. That sounds painful.

NORA. It's ever so painful. I feel trapped, stuck.

GRANDMA BRACK. You might wanna get that checked out.

NORA. What am I going to do?

GRANDMA BRACK. Raisins.

NORA. But you don't understand, something is blocking me from true happiness. I feel so...

GRANDMA BRACK. Constipated.

NORA. I was going to say scared.

GRANDMA BRACK. It scares me to death.

NORA. Thank you, Grandma Brack. Thank you for listening to me.

GRANDMA BRACK. Prunes are good too.

NORA. Yes they are. There are many great fruits.

GRANDMA BRACK. Remember, Nora, stay regular and stay happy.

NORA. I will, Grandma Brack. I will.

GRANDMA BRACK. You're a good girl. Will you kill me?

NORA. You're so silly, Grandma Brack.

GRANDMA BRACK. I'm serious. I'm sick of it here. All day long I'm in the bathroom, and when I'm not there, the dogs attack me. Kill me, please.

NORA. Such a sweet, old woman.

GRANDMA BRACK. I hate this place. I just want to... *(She grabs her stomach:)* Gotta go.

(GRANDMA BRACK exits quickly into the hallway. Sounds of large dogs attacking GRANDMA BRACK. TORVALD enters from upstairs.)

TORVALD. Nora, you're still here.

NORA. I was waiting for you, dearest Torvald.

TORVALD. I must be off. I have to help get ready for the pep rally tomorrow, for as you know, I am the student body president.

NORA. Please, wait, dearest Torvald.

TORVALD. Is something wrong, my little mint-that-they-put-on-pillows-in-hotel-rooms?

NORA. I was wondering.

TORVALD. You were wondering?

NORA. I was wondering if you would rehire that boy Krogstad.

TORVALD. No way, he smells like cheese. It's disgusting.

NORA. Please, Torvald, for me?

TORVALD. But you are a woman, why would I listen to you. And besides, no harm will come from me firing him.

NORA. I need a cookie.

TORVALD. I must be off now.

NORA. Must you?

TORVALD. Yes...I must.

NORA. But Torvald, please reconsider.

TORVALD. I am a man, I never reconsider. Goodbye.

(TORVALD kisses NORA on the cheek and exits.)

NORA. I am doomed. This world has beaten me. Maid, Maid, bring me some cookies. Maid?

(Lights out.)

Scene 3

(Lights up on an empty living room. After a moment the door swings open and KROGSTAD enters.)

KROGSTAD. Nora, it is I, Krogstad, come to see if you have fulfilled your end of our bargain. *(He looks around.)* Oh, no one is here. Well then.

(KROGSTAD goes to the couch. His shoulders sink. He picks his nose. Maybe he sings a little song off key. After a moment the door

swings open and NORA enters with a bag of cookies. KROGSTAD quickly goes back into "villain" mode.)

KROGSTAD. Nora!

NORA. Krogstad!

KROGSTAD. Yes, it is I, Krogstad.

NORA. I know who you are. You don't have to keep saying your name.

KROGSTAD. Yes, well, that is neither here nor there. You know why I have come. So, what is your answer?

NORA. Do you want a cookie?

KROGSTAD. Awesome, what kind? I mean, no. I did not come here for treats.

NORA. They're really good.

KROGSTAD. *(A sigh:)* If you insist.

(KROGSTAD takes a cookie.)

KROGSTAD. Wow, this is really good.

NORA. They're my favorite.

KROGSTAD. I can see why, I mean these are divine.

NORA. Well, I guess I'll be seeing you then.

KROGSTAD. Not so fast, little Nora. Do I have my job, or not?

NORA. I tried Krogstad, but you see, he just hates you.

KROGSTAD. So be it.

(KROGSTAD takes a Blackberry or something of the like from his pocket.)

NORA. What are you doing?

KROGSTAD. I am emailing your dear Torvald. Now when he comes home he will read what you have done. And soon the whole school will know.

NORA. You mustn't.

KROGSTAD. Will you stop saying that. It's so melodramatic.

NORA. Sorry.

(KROGSTAD finishes typing.)

KROGSTAD. There! The deed is done. Now you will feel what it is like to suffer as I have suffered.

NORA. I must stop this. I will erase the email from Torvald's computer.

KROGSTAD. Do you know his password?

NORA. There is only one word that my Torvald would use as a password...my name.

KROGSTAD. *(A laugh:)* Go on, foolish girl. You're only wasting your time.

NORA. We shall see.

KROGSTAD. We shall.

NORA. Yes, we shall.

KROGSTAD. I know.

NORA. Fine then.

KROGSTAD. Okay.

NORA. Good.

(An awkward pause.)

NORA. I'm going to go upstairs now.

KROGSTAD. I'm gonna hit on Christine when she comes home.

NORA. Right.

(NORA exits upstairs. KROGSTAD goes back to picking his nose and slouching. Maybe he eats a few more cookies. After a moment, the door swings open and CHRISTINE enters.)

CHRISTINE. Krogstad!

KROGSTAD. Christine!

CHRISTINE. What are you doing here?

KROGSTAD. I'm here to ruin Nora and Torvald's life. What are you doing here?

CHRISTINE. I live here.

KROGSTAD. Oh, yes.

CHRISTINE. Are you really so heartless, Krogstad?

KROGSTAD. Quite.

CHRISTINE. Are you really so hideous?

KROGSTAD. I'm disgusting.

CHRISTINE. I love you.

KROGSTAD. I love you.

CHRISTINE. You are the most miserable creature I have ever met.

KROGSTAD. You are so weathered and old. I cannot resist you.

CHRISTINE. Come to me.

(KROGSTAD and CHRISTINE embrace.)

KROGSTAD. Now that I have you in my life, I no longer feel the need to ruin the lives of others.

CHRISTINE. Will you not tell Torvald what Nora has done?

KROGSTAD. Alas, I have already emailed him. All is lost. This world is crap.

CHRISTINE. Say it again.

KROGSTAD. This world is a stinking mess.

CHRISTINE. I love you.

(They embrace again. NORA enters from upstairs.)

NORA. Christine!

CHRISTINE. Nora!

NORA. Krogstad!

KROGSTAD. Nora!

NORA. What is going on?

CHRISTINE. This world is a big stinking mess. We are in love.

NORA. In love?

KROGSTAD. Yes, and I have decided not to tell Torvald. Were you able to erase the email?

NORA. No.

KROGSTAD. So the password isn't your name?

NORA. No.

CHRISTINE. So he's going to find out?

NORA. Yes. Life is crap.

KROGSTAD / CHRISTINE. *(Smiling:)* It is.

(They kiss.)

CHRISTINE. Disgusting Krogstad, would you like to come to my room to brood with me?

KROGSTAD. I would love to.

(KROGSTAD and CHRISTINE begin to exit.)

KROGSTAD. *(As the awkward teenager:)* Oh, uh, sorry about the whole email thing. I hope everything works out okay. Well, good-night.

(KROGSTAD and CHRISTINE exit.)

NORA. My life is over.

(NORA goes to the couch. She finds a bag of cookies. She reaches her hand in but the bag is empty. NORA begins to weep. After a moment, TORVALD enters.)

TORVALD. My little dulce de leche, how are you on this fine evening?

NORA. *(Clearly in tears:)* Fine.

TORVALD. We can talk in a moment, but first I must check my email.

NORA. No, Torvald, don't.

TORVALD. Now, my little pumpkin pie, I haven't checked my email in a half-hour. I cannot wait any longer. You understand.

NORA. You mustn't.

TORVALD. Yes...I must.

NORA. But it will ruin us.

TORVALD. It's just my email. Settle down, my little pound-cake-drizzled-with-raspberry-topping.

NORA. Torvald, please!

TORVALD. Enough! I am sick of your womanly protests.

(TORVALD exits upstairs. MAID enters from the hallway.)

NORA. What a horrible turn of events!

MAID. Please say you have cancer.

NORA. My life is all but over. I fear that Torvald will soon dump me and I will no longer be welcome in this house.

MAID. *(Falling to her knees:)* Thank you, Lord. Oh, thank you!

NORA. Yes, Maid, pray for me. Pray for poor little Nora.

MAID. This is the happiest day of my life. Now I just need to get rid of the other two kids.

(A scream is heard from upstairs. TORVALD comes rushing down the stairs.)

TORVALD. Nora, how could you?

NORA. I did it for you, dearest Torvald. Your popularity was at an all time low. If you lost the election you would have been devastated. I did what I thought was right. I did it because I love you.

TORVALD. You forged two thousand ballots because you love me? There aren't even two thousand kids in the school. It's a miracle that no one has found out already.

NORA. I was trying to protect you...protect you from the horrors of not being popular.

TORVALD. You have ruined me. I am nothing now. I am a president who has been elected under false pretenses. Do you know what they do to people like that?

MAID. Nothing. They don't do anything.

NORA. But Torvald, I had to. I had to save you. I had no choice.

TORVALD. I'm afraid that I'm going to have to end our relationship, Nora. I can no longer trust you.

NORA. Torvald, you...

TORVALD. Don't you dare say that I mustn't.

NORA. Well...then you...shouldn't.

TORVALD. I already have. Goodbye, Nora.

(TORVALD exits upstairs. NORA begins to weep.)

MAID. Oh, such beautiful tears. If only I could taste them. I should get my camera. This is just too good to be true.

NORA. What will I do now Maid? I am nothing without my Torvald. Can't he see that I did it all for him? It's not fair. Why doesn't he understand?

MAID. I think I will get my camera. Don't stop crying now.

(MAID exits through the hallway. TORVALD comes rushing down the stairs, a smile across his face.)

TORVALD. Nora, my dearest little crumb cake, the greatest thing has happened. That Krogstad has sent another email stating that he will not tell anyone about your shameful secret and he will destroy all the evidence. We are saved.

NORA. Oh, thank God!

**PAGES HAVE BEEN CUT FROM THIS SCENE.
THE PLAY CONTINUES ON THE NEXT PAGE.**

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INTERMISSION

Cast of Characters

CHRISTOPHER MARLOWE

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

SOPHOCLES

EURIPIDES

FANCY MAN

(Two MEN enter from upstage. They are dressed in baggy shorts, goggles, basketball jerseys. Think Ali G. They address the audience.)

CHRISTOPHER MARLOWE. *(Thick British accents:)* Allo! I be Christopher Marlowe. An dis ere be Billy Shakespeare.

SHAKESPEARE. And we be da fathers of all drama.

MARLOWE. Dose other blokes don't know nuffin' about theater.

SHAKESPEARE. Dey wouldn't even been writin' plays if it weren't for us.

MARLOWE. We practically invented what plays is.

VOICE FROM OFFSTAGE. *(Bad Greek or Mediterranean accent:)* Actually, we did that.

(Two MEN enter from SL. They are dressed in 80s break dancing gear. For reference, see the wonderful film Breakin'. One of the men is carrying a boom-box.)

MARLOWE. Well, if it isn't the Greeks!

SHAKESPEARE. Sophocles and Euripides.

SOPHOCLES. We hear you boys are trying to take over our territory.

EURIPIDES. We're the real fathers of drama.

SOPHOCLES. There wouldn't even be the word 'drama' if it weren't for us Greeks.

MARLOWE. Nobody even does your plays no more.

SHAKESPEARE. Our plays is done all over the world. Every day.

EURIPIDES. There's only one way to settle this.

SOPHOCLES. Break dance battle.

(SOPHOCLES sets the boom-box on stage and turns on the music, whatever break-dance music you prefer. The break dance battle begins. First the GREEKS then MARLOWE and SHAKESPEARE. Back and forth for as long as you feel necessary. Eventually a MAN appears Upstage Center. He is dressed in an expensive suit, nicely shined shoes and sunglasses. He has money pouring from his pockets, his suit jacket, maybe even his shoes.)

FANCY MAN. Gentlemen, please, enough with the theatrics.

(MARLOWE, SHAKESPEARE, and the GREEKS stop their dancing and look at FANCY MAN.)

MARLOWE. Who the heck is you?

FANCY MAN. Break-dance battling over who is the better playwright? It's all so unnecessary.

EURIPIDES. What's it to you, fancy man?

SHAKESPEARE. Get lost you pansy.

FANCY MAN. This is the twenty-first century; no one even cares about playwrights.

(MARLOWE advances on FANCY MAN. SHAKESPEARE holds him back.)

MARLOWE. You betta watch your mouth, you filthy swine.

FANCY MAN. Why waste your time bothering with plays that no one's going to see when you could be making millions of dollars?

SOPHOCLES. What do you mean?

EURIPIDES. Who are you?

FANCY MAN. I'm an agent...

(MARLOWE, SHAKESPEARE *and the GREEKS are speechless.*)

FANCY MAN. ...from Hollywood.

SHAKESPEARE. You mean like, da movies?

FANCY MAN. Movies, television, millions of dollars, mansions, nice cars. You name it, it's yours.

MARLOWE. A real life agent from Hollywood, and ere I am callin' you a filthy swine.

FANCY MAN. It's okay. We all make mistakes.

SOPHOCLES. So you're gonna make us rich?

FANCY MAN. Gentleman, with my help, everyone in the world will know the names Shakespeare, Marlowe, Euripides, and Sophocles.

SHAKESPEARE. Where do I sign?

FANCY MAN. The contracts are in my limo. Join me.

(MARLOWE, SHAKESPEARE, *and the GREEKS follow FANCY MAN.*)

MARLOWE. Do you know the bloke who wrote *Deuce Bigalow*?

(*Instead of "Deuce Bigalow" feel free to use a more relevant, equally bad movie.*)

FANCY MAN. He's a client of mine. I'll introduce you.

MARLOWE. Dis is a dream come true.

(*They exit.*)

(*Lights out.*)

I HATE HEDDA

Cast of Characters

HEDDA GABLER, a high school student.

GEORGE TESMAN, her college boyfriend.

AUNT JULIA, George's Aunt.

EILERT LOVBORG, a college student. A musical genius.

THEA ELVSTED, Eilert's girlfriend/collaborator. Former schoolmates with Hedda.

BRACK, local party animal.

Scene 1

(Early summer.)

(The living room in a small apartment. A tiny kitchen to the back. A door SR leading outside. A hallway SL leading to the rest of the apartment. It's the apartment of a college student, male. Use your imagination. GEORGE TESMAN, a college student, stands center stage, hands on hips. He looks around his humble castle. He's a proud young man. AUNT JULIA sits on the couch. She's wearing a neon pink jump suit with a fanny pack around her waist.)

TESMAN. Isn't it marvelous?

AUNT JULIA. It's simply delightful, George. And is young Miss Gabler excited to hear that you have your own apartment for the summer?

TESMAN. I'm pretty sure she thinks it's the greatest thing in the world. Someday I'm going to marry her, Aunt Julia.

AUNT JULIA. But you've only just completed your first year in college, George. Do you really need to be thinking of marriage?

TESMAN. I'm in love. I've found the most beautiful, wonderful, magical woman in the world. I can't wait to be married.

AUNT JULIA. And that suits Miss Gabler?

TESMAN. Of course it does. Why do you ask?

AUNT JULIA. She is a bit...particular about things.

TESMAN. You worry too much, Aunt Julia.

AUNT JULIA. It's just that she can sometimes be...well she's...let's just say she's vocal. Yes, she's not afraid to speak her mind.

TESMAN. Don't you love that about her?

AUNT JULIA. Well...sure, darling. But do you really plan on marrying her? She's still in high school, and you're a college man now. Didn't you meet any girls when you were away at school?

TESMAN. Hedda is the only girl for me.

AUNT JULIA. You're too young to settle on one girl. You're still a boy.

TESMAN. Look at this, look at all this, a place of my own all summer long. I'm a man, Aunt Julia.

AUNT JULIA. *(A sigh:)* I guess you're happy. You seem happy. I can't deny that.

TESMAN. I'm on top of the world.

AUNT JULIA. Is she going to be much longer?

TESMAN. She's checking out the rest of the apartment. She's probably overwhelmed with joy.

AUNT JULIA. I bet she is.

(AUNT JULIA removes her fanny pack and throws it on the coffee table.)

AUNT JULIA. We'd better get going soon. I left Aunt Rita in the car. I hope I cracked the window.

TESMAN. *(A bit shocked:)* I thought she was with Hedda.

AUNT JULIA. She likes it in the car. And besides, you live in a seven story walk up, how do you expect me to drag her up all those flights?

TESMAN. I guess you're right.

AUNT JULIA. She'll be fine so long as I cracked the windows.

TESMAN. Well, did you?

AUNT JULIA. I don't know.

TESMAN. I'll see if she's ready.

(TESMAN goes to the hallway entrance.)

TESMAN. Hedda, are you almost ready?

(HEDDA GABLER enters from the hallway.)

HEDDA. Are you rushing me, George?

TESMAN. Well...I...you see, Aunt Rita is in the car and...no I wasn't rushing you. Take your time.

(HEDDA walks past GEORGE and goes to the kitchen.)

AUNT JULIA. Do you like Georgie's place, Hedda?

HEDDA. I'm not sure like is the word.

TESMAN. *(To JULIA:)* She loves it.

AUNT JULIA. Could you see yourself living here some day?

HEDDA. *(Coming back into the living room:)* Oh Aunt Julia, you sure are a funny creature.

(HEDDA sees the fanny pack on the coffee table.)

HEDDA. I assume that hideous thing was left here by the crazy woman that lived here before you.

TESMAN. Actually, that's Aunt Julia's fanny pack.

HEDDA. *(Not feeling awkward at all:)* Isn't that awkward. Well, she'll be taking it with her so I guess I shouldn't get too upset. May ask something of you, Aunt Julia?

AUNT JULIA. Certainly, you...

HEDDA. If you and I are out in public together, would you mind not wearing that fanny thing or whatever you call it?

TESMAN. Hedda, please.

HEDDA. Was I talking to you, George? I really don't remember saying anything to you.

TESMAN. I was just...

HEDDA. There you go again. Who asked you to speak?

TESMAN. But you just...

HEDDA. George, do you want me to get angry? Is that what you want? Because you know what happens when I get angry.

TESMAN. You shoot your pistols.

HEDDA. That's right, I shoot my pistols. Now, do you want me to get my guns?

TESMAN. No, ma'am.

HEDDA. Now, Aunt Julie, as I was saying, would you mind not wearing your disgusting fanny thing when I am in your presence?

AUNT JULIA. Anything for my nephew's fiancée.

HEDDA. Such a sweet old coot you are.

TESMAN. Well, I guess we should get going. Aunt Rita is locked in the car, and our Olive Garden reservation is for seven.

HEDDA. I think I'll stay here and tidy up a bit.

TESMAN. But I thought you said...

HEDDA. Pistols, George.

TESMAN. Okay, see you later. Aunt Julia, are you ready?

AUNT JULIA. Please get me out of here.

(AUNT JULIA gets up from the couch, grabs her fanny pack and heads for the door. GEORGE leans in to HEDDA for a kiss,

HEDDA *gives him her cheek instead. She has a disgusted look on her face as he kisses her.*)

TESMAN. Goodbye, my love.

HEDDA. Yeah, yeah.

(TESMAN and AUNT JULIA exit. HEDDA grabs a garbage bag from the kitchen. She walks around the apartment throwing away an assortment of George's things. She removes posters from the wall, throws away CD's, etc. After a moment, a knock is heard at the door. After a few knocks, HEDDA sighs and answers the door. THEA ELVSTED stands in the doorway. She is a pale young woman, almost sickly.)

THEA. Oh, Hedda Gabler, what a pleasant surprise!

HEDDA. Who the hell are you?

THEA. It's me, Thea, Thea Elvsted. We used to go to school together.

HEDDA. You're gonna have to give me more than that.

THEA. You used to pull my hair, and one time you even lit it on fire.

HEDDA. Still not ringing a bell.

THEA. One time I rode past your house on my bike and I waved at you and you shot at me with a gun.

HEDDA. Yeah, I did that a lot. I don't...

THEA. I got a car when I turned sixteen and you stole it and crashed it into my house, and then you blamed it on me.

HEDDA. Thea, is that really you?

THEA. Yes, Hedda, it is your old friend, Thea Elvsted.

HEDDA. It's so good to see you. Come in.

THEA. I was actually looking for George Tesman. I was told that he was living here.

HEDDA. Yes, my George has decided to waste his money on this dump.

THEA. You and George are...?

HEDDA. We're engaged.

THEA. Congratulations.

HEDDA. Oh, I don't love him or anything, but he is attending Prestigious University and I'm still in high school. Basically I was bored and he's older. It just made sense at the time.

THEA. You're still in high school?

HEDDA. Apparently if you don't go to class they make you repeat. Plus there were some vandalism incidents and a bit of confusion over a flood in the principle's office. I'd drop out, but then I wouldn't have anywhere to avoid going to.

THEA. *(A bit confused:)* I see... Is George here?

HEDDA. He's off with his crazy aunts. They'll be back later.

THEA. I must see him immediately. It's a life or death situation. He is the only one I can trust with this matter.

HEDDA. You can certainly trust me, dear Thea. We were old school friends.

THEA. Oh thank you, dear Hedda. You've always been so kind to me.

HEDDA. So what's the problem.

THEA. Well, my problem is Eilert Lovborg.

HEDDA. Eilert Lovborg!

THEA. Yes, Eilert Lovborg.

HEDDA. Is Eilert back in town?

THEA. Yes, you see that's exactly my problem. Ever since Eilert and I went off to State College, he has become a new man. Eilert Lovborg is now the hit sensation. DJ LUV. His dance re-mixes are all the rage on college campuses nationwide. With the campus closed for the summer, Eilert has decided to come back home, and I fear that he will slip back into his old ways.

HEDDA. His old ways?

THEA. His troubled past.

HEDDA. His past behavior that we must only allude to, but never explicitly talk about?

THEA. Yes, that exactly.

HEDDA. I'm sure you have nothing to worry about. George and I will make sure he doesn't get into any trouble.

THEA. But there's more.

HEDDA. More?

THEA. Yes, you see Eilert often spoke of a girl who once broke his heart, a girl he has not quite gotten over.

HEDDA. Who is this girl?

THEA. He won't tell me her name but I do know that she once threatened to shoot him with a gun. I think she lives nearby.

HEDDA. Whoever could she be?

THEA. I have no idea.

HEDDA. Oh, Thea, my dear friend, my old companion, you have nothing to worry about. I'm sure Eilert won't run into this old flame and he won't slip back into his old ways.

THEA. I'm so lucky to have such a friend as you.

(HEDDA lights a lighter near THEA's hair.)

THEA. What are you doing?

HEDDA. *(Quickly putting the lighter away:)* Nothing.

(A smile.)

THEA. I cannot thank you enough for your help.

HEDDA. What are friends for?

(Lights out.)

Scene 2

(The living room. Later that night. HEDDA is chasing THEA around the apartment. HEDDA is wielding an electric shaver.)

HEDDA. But Thea, we're friends.

THEA. But I don't want you to shave my head.

(TESMAN enters through the front door. He's wearing headphones. He goes to the couch, not noticing HEDDA and THEA. He sits with his eyes closed, listening to the music. After a moment, THEA runs to TESMAN for protection. HEDDA puts the electric razor behind her back.)

THEA. Please stop her, George.

TESMAN. Thea, what are you doing here?

HEDDA. We were just playing. How was dinner?

TESMAN. It was the Olive Garden. It's always great.

THEA. Please, don't let her shave my head.

TESMAN. What are you taking about? I thought you were away at State College.

THEA. I was but...

HEDDA. But she's back here to save DJ LUV.

TESMAN. DJ what?

THEA. Eilert Lovborg.

TESMAN. Eilert Lovborg!

HEDDA. Eilert, DJ LUV, Lovborg.

TESMAN. So he is back!

THEA. Yes, and I am ever so worried about him. Ever since he has gone to State and become a moderately successful DJ he has become a new man. But now that he is back home...

TESMAN. I see...you are worried that he'll fall back on old habits.

THEA. Yes, ones that we can make reference to but never specifically talk about.

TESMAN. Those are the worst kind.

THEA. I know.

(HEDDA gets on the ground and bites THEA's leg.)

THEA. Ouch!

HEDDA. I'm sorry, I just got bored.

TESMAN. She bites when she's bored.

HEDDA. I can't help it.

THEA. Oh, but George, will you help me make sure that Eilert stays out of trouble?

TESMAN. Of course I will. I'm going over to a wild party at Brack's place tonight. I'll be sure to invite Eilert. No harm will come to him there. I'll give him a call.

HEDDA. No need. I've already called him.

THEA. You did?

HEDDA. When I had you tied up a little while ago, I stole your phone and called. Boy was he surprised when he picked up the phone and instead of you he was talking to the very woman who broke his heart and nearly shot him.

THEA. Excuse me?

HEDDA. Nothing. He should be here any minute.

THEA. Oh, I'm so lucky to have friends such as you.

HEDDA. Yes...you are.

TESMAN. This is so exciting. Eilert, a famous DJ, and me a music major at Prestigious University. We will become collaborators. We will be the next Lennon and McCarthy, the next Sonny and Cher, the next Kid n' Play, the next...

HEDDA. We get it, we get it.

TESMAN. I hope he gets here soon.

(A knock is heard at the door.)

TESMAN. Who could that be?

THEA. Are you expecting anyone?

TESMAN. Don't think so.

HEDDA. It's Eilert, you morons.

TESMAN. DJ LUV, himself?

HEDDA. If you don't get the door, I'll get my pistols.

(TESMAN quickly gets up and opens the door. EILERT LOVBORG stands in the doorway. He's carrying a bag over his shoulder. He's a dreamboat.)

TESMAN. Eilert Lovborg.

LOVBORG. What's up, Tesman?

TESMAN. Come on in. It's so good to see you.

(LOVBORG enters.)

LOVBORG. Thea? What are you doing here?

THEA. I followed you back. I couldn't stand to be apart from you.

LOVBORG. Cool, baby.

HEDDA. Hello, Eilert Lovborg.

LOVBORG. Hedda, I see you're still a cold and heartless...

TESMAN. So we hear that you have become quite a success as DJ LUV.

LOVBORG. Yeah, it's been cool, but when my new album drops, that's when I'll really take off.

TESMAN. You say you have a new album?

LOVBORG. It's all in here. *(He pulls a laptop from his bag:)* The music in here is gonna change everything.

THEA. Eilert and I have been working on it for months.

TESMAN. Like Sonny and Cher.

LOVBORG. (*Gives TESMAN a weird look:*) Sonny and Cher?

TESMAN. Well...they had some...good stuff.

THEA. With this new album, Eilert will finally be able forget his former self, once and for all.

TESMAN. You must play it for me. Come with me to the party at Brack's place tonight. There we will premiere your new masterpiece.

LOVBORG. I don't know if I should.

TESMAN. You must. Brack will be here any moment, and you will join us. It will be a grand old time. Just like the old days in high school.

THEA. I don't think he...

HEDDA. Eilert will stay with me tonight.

TESMAN. But my dear, Eilert must play his album for me.

HEDDA. Are you talking back to me? Did you just question me?

TESMAN. No...I...

HEDDA. 'Cause it sounded like you were giving me lip. You know what happens when you give me lip.

TESMAN. Eilert, you should stay here with Hedda and Thea.

(A knock is heard.)

TESMAN. Who could that be? Are we expecting...?

HEDDA. It's Brack, you idiot.

TESMAN. Oh, yes.

(TESMAN answers the door. BRACK enters. He's laid back and easy going.)

BRACK. Hey.

TESMAN. Brack, my dear friend. We were just talking about your party tonight.

BRACK. It's gonna be lively, no doubt.

TESMAN. Sounds like a good old time. I've invited Eilert here to join us, but he's going to stay behind with the ladies.

BRACK. Eilert? Eilert Lovborg? Ain't that the crazy dude who once...

TESMAN. Shhhhhh! *(In a loud whisper:)* We only *allude* to what he's done in the past.

BRACK. I'm just saying, he was one lively dude.

TESMAN. Oh, Brack, you are a cut up. Will you join us for a moment before we head off? I'd like to show you the apartment?

(TESMAN leads BRACK into the living room.)

HEDDA. Hello Brack.

BRACK. How you doin', baby? You lookin' good, huh?

(He mouths a kiss.)

TESMAN. This is the living room.

BRACK. *(To HEDDA:)* Call me.

TESMAN. Maybe we should go see the rest of the apartment.

(TESMAN leads BRACK to the hallway. BRACK takes another peek at HEDDA before exiting.)

HEDDA. Shall we sit?

(HEDDA, THEA and LOVBORG take seats.)

THEA. I'm so happy that everything is working out. I'm so lucky to have such good friends in my life.

HEDDA. So you need a woman to protect you, huh Eilert?

LOVBORG. Excuse me?

HEDDA. You can't handle being here on your own, so you send Thea to pave the way, make sure you don't get into trouble?

LOVBORG. Thea, what is she talking about?

THEA. Hedda, please stop.

HEDDA. She came over here and asked George and I to keep an eye on you, make sure you don't get into any trouble while you're here.

LOVBORG. Thea, how could you?

THEA. Hedda, why are you doing this? I thought I could trust you.

LOVBORG. So this is how you treat me? No faith at all? After all we've been through, Thea.

HEDDA. This is perfect. This is just how I wanted it. Now, Thea, you start crying.

(THEA starts to cry.)

THEA. Eilert, I was just trying to help.

HEDDA. Now, Eilert, I want you to pound your fist on the coffee table and tell Thea that you want her out of your sight.

LOVBORG. *(He pounds his fist on the coffee table:)* Get out of my sight, Thea. I can't believe you would do this to me. After all the work I did to improve. You disgust me.

HEDDA. Now, Thea, run off into the hallway calling out Eilert's name.

THEA. *(Running off into the hallway:)* Oh, Eilert! Eilert!

HEDDA. *(Wiping a single tear from her eye:)* That was just perfect. *(She sighs with a smile:)* So, Eilert, how ya been?

LOVBORG. You're an evil creature, but of course I cannot resist you.

HEDDA. Few can.

LOVBORG. Why do you insist on ruining my life?

HEDDA. I get bored easily.

LOVBORG. You should have shot me all those years ago. You should have ended it then.

HEDDA. I tried. I really wanted to, but I was at the petting zoo earlier that day, and I ran out of bullets.

LOVBORG. It was love that made you want to shoot me.

HEDDA. No, I just got tired of you.

LOVBORG. But I poured my heart out to you, Hedda.

HEDDA. I know. It was pathetic. And all that crying. It was really disgusting.

LOVBORG. You will be the death of me, Hedda Gabler.

HEDDA. Probably.

LOVBORG. I love you.

HEDDA. Lame!

LOVBORG. I can't go on like this. I'm going to Brack's party. I am a new man no more.

HEDDA. Suit yourself.

(BRACK and TESMAN enter from the hallway.)

BRACK. That crazy girl that's crying back there...she's pretty cute.

TESMAN. Yes, Thea is a nice young woman... Ah, Lovborg, have you changed your mind about the party?

LOVBORG. I will join you. And I will play my masterpiece.

TESMAN. Excellent.

BRACK. This party's gonna be lively. No doubt.

TESMAN. That it is, good Brack, that it is.

LOVBORG. Shall we be off?

TESMAN. Hedda, will you be all right? Do you need a ride anywhere?

HEDDA. I have Thea to keep me company. You boys have your fun.

BRACK. You sure you don't wanna join us, you fine woman? If you ever dump this dude you give Brack a call.

TESMAN. Well, goodbye, Hedda.

(TESMAN leans in for a kiss.)

HEDDA. I told you, you can kiss me on the forehead, and if you're good, on the cheek. Don't push it.

TESMAN. Yes, dear.

(He kisses her forehead.)

(TESMAN, BRACK, and LOVBORG begin to exit.)

BRACK. *(Putting his arm around LOVBORG:)* Ol' Eilert Lovborg, you crazy dude, didn't you once...

(LOVBORG and BRACK exit.)

TESMAN. *(Turning at the door:)* Don't wait up for me.

HEDDA. I wasn't planning on it.

(TESMAN exits. HEDDA looks around for a moment, not sure what to do. She gets up and walks over to a corner of the living room and begins to pull up the carpet. She smiles.)

(Lights out.)

Scene 3

(The living room. Early the next morning.)

(HEDDA sits on the couch, something is under her. We hear a muffled voice.)

HEDDA. What was that?... I can't hear you... You're going to have to speak up...oh fine.

(HEDDA gets up from the couch. THEA gets up from under her.)

HEDDA. What was it you said?

THEA. I said they've been gone an awful long time.

HEDDA. I've been sitting here just as long as you.

(HEDDA points at the couch. THEA lays back down. HEDDA once again sits on top of her.)

HEDDA. I would have gotten some sleep if you didn't move so much... What did you say? Don't complain. It's unattractive... Speak up, I can barely...oh, forget it.

(HEDDA once again gets up, as does THEA.)

HEDDA. What is it now?

THEA. I'm dreadfully worried about Eilert.

HEDDA. What's to worry about? He's probably already dead.

THEA. Hedda, don't say that. You mustn't.

HEDDA. I'm bored. You've woken me, and now I'm bored. Entertain me.

THEA. But, Hedda, the men?

HEDDA. They're probably all dead. Forget about them.

THEA. Must you be so morbid?

HEDDA. Yes, I must. I simply must.

THEA. I'm beginning to think that we're not friends.

HEDDA. How could you say such a thing?

THEA. No...you're right. I'm sorry. We will always be friends.

HEDDA. Let's not get carried away.

THEA. You're my only friend. You're the only person I can trust.

HEDDA. That's really pathetic.

THEA. We shall never be apart, ever again.

HEDDA. I'm going to have to shoot you if you don't calm down.

THEA. Hug me, Hedda.

HEDDA. Where are my pistols?

(The front door opens and TESMAN enters. He is carrying something under his arm.)

TESMAN. Hedda!

HEDDA. George!

TESMAN. What are you doing here?

THEA. We stayed up waiting for you. What is the news of Eilert?

TESMAN. He is...he is...

THEA. Damn it man, spit it out.

TESMAN. Eilert Lovborg is at Denny's.

THEA. (*Shocked:*) So it's true. There's only one reason a man of his age would go to Denny's at this hour. Eilert has fallen back into his old ways.

TESMAN. I'm afraid it is so.

THEA. I must find him.

TESMAN. Don't do it, Thea. A delicate woman such as yourself should not go near a place the likes of Denny's at this hour. The horrid smell alone would send your system into shock.

THEA. But I must.

TESMAN. No, Thea, it's too dangerous.

THEA. But, George, I love him.

TESMAN. Then you must go, for love is the only thing that can tame a Denny's at this hour. Good luck.

THEA. Thank you, George.

(THEA goes to the front door. TESMAN stops her.)

TESMAN. You must promise me something, Thea.

THEA. Anything.

TESMAN. Promise me you won't get a Grand Slam meal. No matter how tempted you are, no matter how much the waitress pushes it on you, resist! You must resist! Do you understand me (*He begins to shake THEA.*) You must not order a Grand Slam.

THEA. George, you're hurting me.

TESMAN. For the love of God, don't eat the bacon.

THEA. George!

TESMAN. (*Calming down:*) I'm sorry, Thea. You must go now. God-speed.

(*THEA exits.*)

TESMAN. Well, I'm off to bed.

HEDDA. Where the hell have you been?

TESMAN. Oh, you know Brack and his lively parties.

HEDDA. What happened with Eilert?

TESMAN. Oh yes, Eilert. I almost forgot. Eilert Lovborg is...he is...Eilert is...

HEDDA. (*Punches TESMAN:*) Out with it.

TESMAN. He is a musical genius. He played his album for me... I wept, can you believe that, Hedda? I wept. This album is going to make him a major success.

HEDDA. What are you carrying?

TESMAN. Oh, this...this is just Eilert's laptop with all of his music on it, including the only recording for his new album. Now, I must go to bed.

HEDDA. All of his music?

TESMAN. Yes, all of it. And I believe the recordings in here are the only ones he has. He must be going crazy looking for it. Can you believe that he just left it at the party? Fortunately, I spotted it and took it with me. By then the crowd was off to Denny's. I decided to take a stroll and come home.

HEDDA. Give it to me.

TESMAN. I think I'd better...

HEDDA. Give it to me, George.

TESMAN. But Hedda, it's...

HEDDA. I will beat the crap out of you if you don't give it to me right now, George Tesman.

TESMAN. *(Handing the laptop to HEDDA:)* Here you go, my love.

HEDDA. Thank you, Georgie.

TESMAN. You wish to listen to his music. I tell you, my dear, it will change your life.

HEDDA. Whatever.

(A knock is heard at the door.)

TESMAN. Ah, that must be Brack.

HEDDA. Are you expecting him?

TESMAN. No, just a guess.

(TESMAN opens the door. BRACK enters.)

BRACK. Yo Tesman, man, that crazy dude Lovborg went psycho over there at Denny's. Dude threw Grand Slams all over the joint. Five-O rolled in and hauled him off to jail.

TESMAN. Brack, how did you find this out?

BRACK. I was there watching the whole thing. I told him, I said, "Hey man, you should go psycho up in this joint and start throwin' Grand Slams around," and he got up and did it. It was hilarious.

TESMAN. Brack, we must go plead his case. Eilert Lovborg needs us now.

BRACK. I got a cousin that's five-o. He'll take care of it.

TESMAN. You're a good man, Brack.

BRACK. Yeah, I know.

HEDDA. But George, I'll be all by myself.

TESMAN. You'll have Eilert's music to keep you company.

BRACK. I'll stay with you, baby. Brackie'll show you a good time.

(He licks his lips.)

TESMAN. We must be going, Brack. Have no fear, dearest Hedda, I'll take care of our dear friend Eilert.

(TESMAN exits. HEDDA looks around for a moment, not knowing what to do with herself. She opens the laptop, hesitates as if she's going to turn it on, stops herself and tosses it into the air. She does this a few times, as she prances around the apartment. After a moment she stops and looks into the kitchen. She goes into the kitchen and puts the laptop into the oven, or possibly the microwave, whichever works best. She turns it on and laughs. She quickly gets bored watching it burn/melt and she heads back to the living room. The door opens and THEA enters.)

HEDDA. You again?

THEA. Something has happened. I couldn't find Eilert at Denny's, and the place was a mess. Is it always like that?

HEDDA. Well, yes, it is, but Eilert made even more of a mess there.

THEA. What do you mean?

HEDDA. He threw a fit there and got arrested.

THEA. Heavens no.

HEDDA. Heavens yes, he did.

THEA. So he is in jail?

HEDDA. Brack and George are trying to get him out.

THEA. The end is in sight. I just know it.

(The door opens and EILERT enters.)

THEA. Eilert!

LOVBORG. Thea!

HEDDA. Eilert!

LOVBORG. Hedda!

THEA. Hedda!

HEDDA. What?

THEA. Oh...nothing... I just got excited.

HEDDA. What are you doing here? I thought you were in jail.

LOVBORG. They let me off because it was a Denny's. They couldn't tell if someone had trashed it, or if it just always looks that way.

THEA. Thank God you're safe.

LOVBORG. Safe? Safe you say? How can I be safe if I've lost the only thing in the world that mattered to me?

THEA. But I'm right here.

LOVBORG. I was talking about my laptop.

THEA. Your laptop? What happened to it?

LOVBORG. I destroyed it.

HEDDA. You did what?

LOVBORG. I smashed it into a thousand pieces.

THEA. You're lying.

LOVBORG. No, Thea, it's the truth. And now my life is over.

THEA. How could you? After all the time we spent on that album, how could you? You're a monster.

(THEA exits outside, hysterically crying.)

LOVBORG. She'll be...she'll be fine.

HEDDA. So you say you destroyed it.

LOVBORG. Actually, I just lost it, but I couldn't tell her that. She'd think I was an idiot. It's no use anyway. It's lost forever. I might as well have destroyed it.

HEDDA. George found it.

LOVBORG. He what?

HEDDA. He found it last night.

LOVBORG. This is a miracle. Where is it?

HEDDA. In the oven.

LOVBORG. Excuse me?

HEDDA. I put it in the oven and turned it on high. It should be nicely melted by now.

LOVBORG. You melted my laptop?

HEDDA. Uh huh.

LOVBORG. With all my music.

HEDDA. Yup.

LOVBORG. Why would you do that?

HEDDA. Because it's all so boring. Everyone, you're all so boring. If people would just pay attention to me, if people would entertain me then I wouldn't have to do things like that. George left me alone with your laptop, and I did what anyone would do, I put it in the oven. Is it really that hard to understand. I'm beautiful. I deserve attention. What don't you get?

LOVBORG. I see.

HEDDA. Plus I just thought it would be funny to see your face when I told you I destroyed your life's work.

LOVBORG. There's a special place in hell for you, Hedda.

HEDDA. Blah...every man I've ever known has said that to me. Big deal.

LOVBORG. I must leave now.

HEDDA. Take my pistols.

LOVBORG. Your pistols?

HEDDA. Yeah, I think I'm gonna get a machine gun, so I won't need them anymore.

(HEDDA quickly exits to the hallway. After a moment she comes back with a box.)

HEDDA. I figure you can get better use out of them now.

LOVBORG. You mean for me to...you know.

HEDDA. Yeah, whatever.

LOVBORG. I hate you.

HEDDA. And I hate everyone, *(A shrug)* whaddaya gonna do?

(LOVBORG exits out the front door.)

(Lights out.)

Scene 4

(The living room, about an hour later.)

(HEDDA is asleep on the couch. TESMAN enters and begins to frantically search the apartment for HEDDA, not seeing her on the couch.)

TESMAN. Hedda! Hedda! Where are you?

(HEDDA sits up and stares at TESMAN as he frantically searches for her.)

TESMAN. Hedda! Where could you be? *(Sees HEDDA:)* Oh, you're on the couch. Good.

HEDDA. I was sleeping. You woke me.

TESMAN. Have you seen Eilert?

HEDDA. I finally was able to get some rest and you woke me.

TESMAN. Eilert...have you seen him?

HEDDA. *(Screaming:)* Why did you wake me?

TESMAN. I need to find Eilert.

HEDDA. He's probably dead.

TESMAN. Why would you say such a thing?

HEDDA. Because, you idiot, I burned his laptop and I gave him my pistols.

TESMAN. You did what?

HEDDA. Maybe if you paid a little attention to me, Eilert would still be alive.

TESMAN. How could you, Hedda?

HEDDA. Oh, stop that. Is it really that much of a surprise? I'm Hedda Gabler.

TESMAN. Well, I guess it does sound like something you would do.

HEDDA. Now, as I was saying, you woke me. What did I tell you about waking me when I'm not ready?

TESMAN. You said that if I ever woke you when you didn't want to be woken, you'd shoot me.

HEDDA. Exactly.

TESMAN. But you also said you gave your pistols to Eilert.

HEDDA. I...oh...well...

TESMAN. So you can't shoot me.

HEDDA. Shut up.

TESMAN. You can't do anything to me.

HEDDA. Stop it, George.

TESMAN. You're powerless.

HEDDA. I'll...I'll...

TESMAN. I could say anything to you right now.

HEDDA. George...

TESMAN. You're getting fatter.

HEDDA. Excuse me?

(HEDDA gets up.)

TESMAN. Your hair has no volume.

HEDDA. How dare...

(HEDDA moves towards the kitchen.)

TESMAN. Thea is prettier than you.

HEDDA. I'll kill you.

TESMAN. With what?

(HEDDA quickly grabs a large knife from the kitchen.)

HEDDA. With this.

TESMAN. Oh.

HEDDA. Now, what was that you said?

TESMAN. I think I said I love you.

HEDDA. I'll cut out your tongue.

TESMAN. I'll buy you a car.

HEDDA. Come here, George.

TESMAN. Stay away from me.

(THEA enters in a hurry.)

HEDDA. Oh, Thea...welcome.

THEA. Have you seen Eilert?

HEDDA. Why yes, I have.

THEA. Where is he?

HEDDA. After I burned his laptop and gave him my pistols, he just up an left. Very rude.

THEA. How could you?

TESMAN. That's what I said.

THEA. *(Grabbing another knife from the kitchen:)* I'm going to kill you, Hedda Gabler.

TESMAN. Ladies, maybe you should...

HEDDA. Stay out of this, George.

THEA. I'm gonna cut out your cold, dark heart.

HEDDA. I'm gonna cut you into little bits and feed you to George.

THEA. Bring it on.

(A knock is heard at the door.)

HEDDA. What now?

TESMAN. It's probably Brack come to tell us some surprising news.

(TESMAN opens the door. BRACK enters.)

BRACK. Yo, Tesman, man, I saw that crazy dude Lovborg.

TESMAN. You saw, Eilert? Is he okay?

BRACK. Not really.

THEA. Then he has gone and done it. The end has finally come.

HEDDA. So beautiful.

THEA. Oh, Eilert, how could you?

TESMAN. So he killed himself, did he? Poor Eilert.

BRACK. Nah, man, he got a job stocking CDs at Wal-Mart. They got him wearing that ugly blue vest. It's just sad.

TESMAN. *(Falling to his knees:)* Why Eilert? Why?

THEA. Not Wal-Mart. Anything but that.

HEDDA. Even I'm depressed.

TESMAN. With his music destroyed, there is nothing left of our dear friend.

BRACK. It's only a couple blocks away. You could just go see him.

TESMAN. He's gone now, Brack.

BRACK. But he's...

TESMAN. Let him go.

BRACK. Y'all some crazy people, if you ask me.

TESMAN. If only there were a way to preserve his legacy. Some way to bring his music to the world.

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