

## **A DOLL'S HOUSE**

### **WORKSHOP TEXT – ACT 1**

*A bell rings in the hall outside. After a moment we hear the front door being opened. NORA enters the room, humming contentedly to herself. She is wearing outdoor clothes and carrying a lot of parcels, which she puts down on the table right. She leaves the door to the hall open; through it, we can see a PORTER carrying a Christmas tree and a basket. He gives these to the MAID, who has opened the door for them*

NORA. Hide that Christmas tree away, Helen. The children mustn't see it before I've decorated it this evening. (*To the PORTER, taking out her purse*) How much— ?

PORTER. A shilling.

NORA. Here's a pound. No, keep it.

*The PORTER touches his cap and goes. NORA closes the door. She continues to laugh happily to herself as she removes her coat, etc. She takes from her pocket a bag containing macaroons and eats a couple. Then she tiptoes across and listens at her husband's door.*

NORA. Yes, he's here. (*Starts humming again as she goes over to the table, right.*)

HELMER (*from his room*). Is that my skylark twittering out there?

NORA (*opening some of the parcels*). It is!

HELMER. Is that my squirrel rustling?

NORA. Yes!

HELMER. When did my squirrel come home?

NORA. Just now. (*Pops the bag of macaroons in her pocket and wipes her mouth.*) Come out here, Torvald, and see what I've bought.

HELMER. You mustn't disturb me!

*Short pause; then he opens the door and looks in, his pen in his hand.*

HELMER. Bought, did you say? All that? Has my little squander-bird been overspending again?

NORA. Oh, Torvald, surely we can let ourselves go a little this year! It's the first Christmas we don't have to scrape.

HELMER. Well, you know, we can't afford to be extravagant.

NORA. Oh yes, Torvald, we can be a little extravagant now. Can't we? Just a tiny bit? You've got a big salary now, and you're going to make lots and lots of money.

HELMER. Next year, yes. But my new salary doesn't start till April.

NORA. Pooh; we can borrow till then.

HELMER. Nora! (*Goes over to her and takes her playfully by the ear.*) What a little spendthrift you are! Suppose I were to borrow fifty pounds today, and you spent it all over Christmas, and then on New Year's Eve a tile fell off a roof on to my head —

NORA (*puts her hand over his mouth*). Oh, Torvald! Don't say such dreadful things!

HELMER. Yes, but suppose something like that did happen? What then?

NORA. If anything as frightful as that happened, it wouldn't make much difference whether I was in debt or not.

HELMER. But what about the people I'd borrowed from?

NORA. Them? Who cares about them? They're strangers.

HELMER. Oh, Nora, Nora, how like a woman! No, but seriously, Nora, you know how I feel about this. No debts! Never borrow! A home that is founded on debts and borrowing can never be a place of freedom and beauty. We two have stuck it out bravely up to now; and we shall continue to do so for the few weeks that remain.

NORA (*goes over towards the stove*). Very well, Torvald. As you say.

HELMER (*follows her*). Now, now! My little songbird mustn't droop her wings. What's this? Is little squirrel sulking? (*Takes out his purse.*) Nora; guess what I've got here!

NORA (*turns quickly*). Money!

HELMER. Look. (*Hands her some banknotes.*) I know how these small expenses crop up at Christmas.

NORA (*counts them*). One — two — three — four. Oh, thank you, Torvald, thank you! I should be able to manage with this.

HELMER. You'll have to.

***Shortly after this opening scene, Christine Linde arrives. She is Nora's old school friend but they haven't seen each other for several years...***

NORA. Oh yes, that's Dr Rank, but he doesn't come because anyone's ill. He's our best friend, and he looks us up at least once every day. No, Torvald. hasn't had a moment's illness since we went away. And the children are fit and healthy and so am I. (*Jumps up and claps her hands.*) Oh, God, oh God, Christine, isn't it a wonderful thing to be alive and happy! Oh, but how beastly of me! I'm only talking about myself. (*Sits on a footstool and rests her arms on MRS LINDE's knee.*) Oh, please don't be angry with me! Tell me, is it really true you didn't love your husband? Why did you marry him, then?

MRS LINDE. Well, my mother was still alive; and she was helpless and bedridden. And I had my two little brothers to take care of. I didn't feel I could say no.

NORA. Yes, well, perhaps you're right. He was rich then, was he?

MRS LINDE. Quite comfortably off, I believe. But his business was unsound, you see, Nora. When he died it went bankrupt and there was nothing left.

NORA. What did you do?

MRS LINDE. Well, I had to try to make ends meet somehow, so I started a little shop, and a little school, and anything else I could turn my hand to. These last three years have been just one endless slog for me, without a moment's rest. But now it's over, Nora. My poor dead mother doesn't need me any more; she's passed away. And the boys don't need me either; they've got jobs now and can look after themselves.

NORA. How relieved you must feel —

MRS LINDE. No, Nora. Just unspeakably empty. No one to live for any more. (*Gets up restlessly.*) That's why I couldn't bear to stay out there any longer, cut off from the world. I thought it'd be easier to find some work here that will exercise and occupy my mind. If only I could get a regular job — office work of some kind —

NORA. Oh but, Christine, that's dreadfully exhausting; and you look practically finished already. It'd be much better for you if you could go away somewhere.

MRS LINDE (*goes over to the window*), I have no pappa to pay for my holidays, Nora.

NORA (*gets up*). Oh, please don't be angry with me.

MRS LINDE. My dear Nora, it's I who should ask you not to be angry. That's the worst thing about this kind of situation — it makes one so bitter. One has no one to work for; and yet one has to be continually sponging for jobs. One has to live; and so one becomes completely egocentric. When you told me about this luck you've just had with Torvald's new job — can you imagine? — I was happy not so much on your account, as on my own.

NORA. How do you mean? Oh, I understand. You mean Torvald might be able to do something for you?

MRS LINDE. Yes, I was thinking that.

NORA. He will too, Christine. Just you leave it to me. I'll lead up to it so delicately, so delicately; I'll get him in the right mood. Oh, Christine, I do so want to help you.

MRS LINDE. It's sweet of you to bother so much about me, Nora. Especially since you know so little of the worries and hardships of life.

NORA. I? You say I know little of— ?

MRS LINDE (*smiles*). Well, good heavens — those bits of fancy-work of yours — well, really ! You're a child, Nora.

NORA (*tosses her head and walks across the room*). You shouldn't say that so patronizingly.

MRS LINDE. Oh?

NORA. You're like the rest. You all think I'm incapable of getting down to anything serious —

MRS LINDE. My dear —

NORA. You think I've never had any worries like the rest of you.

MRS LINDE. Nora dear, you've just told me about all your difficulties

NORA. Pooh — that! (*Quietly*) I haven't told you about the big thing.

MRS LINDE. What big thing? What do you mean?

NORA. You patronize me, Christine; but you shouldn't. You're proud that you've worked so long and so hard for your mother.

MRS LINDE. I don't patronize anyone, Nora. But you're right, I am both proud and happy that I was able to make my mother's last months on earth comparatively easy.

NORA. And you're also proud at what you've done for your brothers.

MRS LINDE. I think I have a right to be.

NORA. I think so too. But let me tell you something, Christine. I too have done something to be proud and happy about.

MRS LINDE. I don't doubt it. But how do you mean?

***Whereupon Nora explains that she secretly borrowed money (£250 – a lot) in order that she and Helmer could go to Italy, ostensibly so that Helmer could escape death from an illness that required a spell in warmer climes. Only thing is, Helmer is told that she inherited the money. So now she has to pay it back. In troublesome instalments...***

MRS LINDE. And you've never told your husband about this?

NORA. For heaven's sake, no! What an idea! He's frightfully strict about such matters. And besides - he's so proud of being a man - it'd be so painful and humiliating for him to know that he owed anything to me. It'd completely wreck our relationship. This life we have built together would no longer exist.

MRS LINDE. Will you never tell him ?

NORA (*thoughtfully, half-smiling*). Yes - some time, perhaps. Years from now, when I'm no longer pretty. You mustn't laugh! I mean, of course, when Torvald no longer loves me as he does now; when it no longer amuses him to see me dance and dress up and play the fool for him. Then it might be useful to have something up my sleeve. (*Breaks off.*) Stupid, stupid, stupid! That time will never come. Well, what do you think of my big secret, Christine? I'm not completely useless, am I? Mind you, all this has caused me a frightful lot of worry. It hasn't been easy for me to meet my obligations punctually. In case you don't know, in the world of business there are things called quarterly instalments and interest, and they're a terrible problem to cope with. So I've had to scrape a little here and save a little there, as best I can. I haven't been able to save much on the housekeeping money, because Torvald likes to live well; and I couldn't let the children go short of clothes - I couldn't take anything out of what he gives me for them. The poor little angels!

MRS LINDE. So you've had to stint yourself, my poor Nora?

NORA. Of course. Well, after all, it was my problem. Whenever Torvald gave me money to buy myself new clothes, I never used more than half of it; and I always bought what was cheapest and plainest. Thank heaven anything suits me, so that Torvald's never noticed. But it made me a bit sad sometimes, because it's lovely to wear pretty clothes. Don't you think?

MRS LINDE. Indeed it is.

NORA. And then I've found one or two other sources of income. Last winter I managed to get a lot of copying to do. So I shut myself away and wrote every evening, late into the night. Oh, I often got so

tired, so tired. But it was great fun, though, sitting there working and earning money. It was almost like being a man.

MRS LINDE. But how much have you managed to pay off like this?

NORA. Well, I can't say exactly. It's awfully difficult to keep an exact check on these kind of transactions. I only know I've paid everything I've managed to scrape together. Sometimes I really didn't know where to turn. (*Smiles.*) Then I'd sit here and imagine some rich old gentleman had fallen in love with me —

MRS LINDE. What! What gentleman?

NORA. Silly! And that now he'd died and when they opened his will it said in big letters: 'Everything I possess is to be paid forthwith to my beloved Mrs Nora Helmer in cash.'

MRS LINDE. But, Nora dear, who was this gentleman?

NORA. Great heavens, don't you understand? There wasn't any old gentleman; he was just something I used to dream up as I sat here evening after evening wondering how on earth I could raise some money. But what does it matter? The old bore can stay imaginary as far as I'm concerned, because now I don't have to worry any longer! (*Jumps up.*) Oh, Christine, isn't it wonderful? I don't have to worry any more! No more troubles! I can play all day with the children, I can fill the house with pretty things, just the way Torvald likes. And, Christine, it'll soon be spring, and the air'll be fresh and the skies blue - and then perhaps we'll be able to take a little trip somewhere. I shall be able to see the sea again. Oh, yes, yes, it's a wonderful thing to be alive and happy!

**... Which statement is the kiss of death in Ibsen-land... Enter Krogstad. An employee of Helmers, he has come to speak to his boss. Then he finds Nora...**

NORA (*uneasy, tense*). You want to speak to me?

KROGSTAD. Yes.

NORA. Today? But it's not the first of the month yet.

KROGSTAD, No, it is Christmas Eve. Whether or not you have a merry Christmas depends on you.

NORA. What do you want? I can't give you anything today -

KROGSTAD. We won't talk about that for the present. There's something else. You have a moment to spare?

NORA. Oh, yes. Yes, I suppose so — though -

KROGSTAD. Good, I was sitting in the café down below and I saw your husband cross the street -

NORA. Yes.

KROGSTAD. With a lady.

NORA. Well?

KROGSTAD. Might I be so bold as to ask; was not that lady a Mrs Linde?

NORA. Yes.

KROGSTAD. Recently arrived in town?

NORA. Yes, today.

KROGSTAD. She is a good friend of yours, is she not?

NORA. Yes, she is. But I don't see -

KROGSTAD. I used to know her, too, once.

NORA. I know.

KROGSTAD. Oh? You've discovered that. Yes, I thought you would. Well then, may I ask you a straight question: is Mrs Linde to be employed at the bank?

NORA. How dare you presume to cross-examine me, Mr Krogstad? You, one of my husband's employees? But since you ask, you shall have an answer. Yes, Mrs Linde is to be employed by the bank. And I arranged it, Mr Krogstad. Now you know.

KROGSTAD. I guessed right, then.

NORA (*walks up and down the room*). Oh, one has a little influence, you know. Just because one's a woman it doesn't necessarily mean that — When one is in a humble position, Mr Krogstad, one should think twice before offending someone who — hm !

KROGSTAD. - who has influence?

NORA. Precisely.

KROGSTAD (*changes his tone*). Mrs Helmer, will you have the kindness to use your influence on my behalf?

NORA. What? What do you mean?

KROGSTAD. Will you be so good as to see that I keep my humble position at the bank?

***It is of course Krogstad who supplied the £250 loan and Nora is desperate that Helmer should not find out about this. But Krogstad knows something else about Nora's loan and threatens to expose all ...***

NORA. That'd be a filthy trick! (*Almost in tears.*) This secret that is my pride and my joy — that he should hear about it in such a filthy, beastly way — hear about it from you! It'd involve me in the most dreadful unpleasantness -

KROGSTAD. Only - unpleasantness?

NORA (*vehemently*). All right, do it! You'll be the one who'll suffer. It'll show my husband the kind of man you are, and then you'll never keep your job.

KROGSTAD. I asked you whether it was merely domestic un-pleasantness you were afraid of.

NORA. If my husband hears about it, he will of course immediately pay you whatever is owing. And then we shall have nothing more to do with you.

KROGSTAD (*takes a step closer*). Listen, Mrs Helmer. Either you've a bad memory or else you know very little about financial transactions. I had better enlighten you.

NORA. What do you mean?

KROGSTAD. When your husband was ill, you came to me to borrow two hundred and fifty pounds.

NORA. I didn't know anyone else.

KROGSTAD. I promised to find that sum for you -

NORA. And you did find it.

KROGSTAD. I promised to find that sum for you on certain conditions. You were so worried about your husband's illness and so keen to get the money to take him abroad that I don't think you bothered much about the details. So it won't be out of place if I refresh your memory. Well — I promised to get you the money in exchange for an IOU which I drew up.

NORA. Yes, and which I signed.

KROGSTAD. Exactly. But then I added a few lines naming your father as security for the debt. This paragraph was to be signed by your father.

NORA. Was to be? He did sign it.

KROGSTAD. I left the date blank for your father to fill in when he signed this paper. You remember, Mrs Helmer?

NORA. Yes, I think so -

KROGSTAD. Then I gave you back this I.O.U. for you to post to your father. Is that not correct?

NORA. Yes.

KROGSTAD. And of course you posted it at once; for within five or six days you brought it along to me with your father's signature on it. Whereupon I handed you the money.

NORA. Yes, well. Haven't I repaid the instalments as agreed?

KROGSTAD. Mm — yes, more or less. But to return to what we were speaking about - that was a difficult time for you just then, wasn't it, Mrs Helmer?

NORA. Yes, it was.

KROGSTAD. Your father was very ill, if I am not mistaken.

NORA. He was dying.

KROGSTAD. He did in fact die shortly afterwards?

NORA. Yes.

KROGSTAD, Tell me, Mrs Helmer, do you by any chance remember the date of your father's death? The day of the month, I mean.

NORA. Pappa died on the twenty-ninth of September.

KROGSTAD. Quite correct; I took the trouble to confirm it. And that leaves me with a curious little problem - (*Takes out a paper.*)- which I simply cannot solve.

NORA. Problem? I don't see—

KROGSTAD. The problem, Mrs Helmer, is that your father signed this paper three days after his death.

NORA. What? I don't understand —

KROGSTAD. Your father died on the twenty-ninth of September. But look at this. Here your father has dated his signature the second of October. Isn't that a curious little problem, Mrs Helmer ?

*NORA is silent.*

KROGSTAD. Can you suggest any explanation?

*She remains silent.*

KROGSTAD. And there's another curious thing. The words 'second of October' and the year are written in a hand which is not your father's, but which I seem to know. Well, there's a simple explanation to that. Your father could have forgotten to write in the date when he signed, and someone else could have added it before the news came of his death. There's nothing criminal about that. It's the signature itself I'm wondering about. It is genuine, I suppose, Mrs Helmer? It was your father who wrote his name here?

NORA (*after a short silence, throws back her head and looks defiantly at him*). No, it was not. It was I who wrote pappa's name there.

KROGSTAD. Look, Mrs Helmer, do you realize this is a dangerous admission?

NORA. Why? You'll get your money.

KROGSTAD. May I ask you a question? Why didn't you send this paper to your father?

NORA. I couldn't. Pappa was very ill. If I'd asked him to sign this, I'd have had to tell him -what the money was for. But I couldn't have told him in his condition that my husband's life was in danger. I couldn't have done that!

KROGSTAD. Then you would have been wiser to have given up your idea of a holiday.

NORA. But I couldn't! It was to save my husband's life. I couldn't put it off.

KROGSTAD. But didn't it occur to you that you were being dishonest towards me?

NORA. I couldn't bother about that. I didn't care about you. I hated you because of all the beastly difficulties you'd put in my way when you knew how dangerously ill my husband was.

KROGSTAD. Mrs Helmer, you evidently don't appreciate exactly what you have done. But I can assure you that it is no bigger nor worse a crime than the one I once committed and thereby ruined my whole social position.

NORA. You? Do you expect me to believe that you would have taken a risk like that to save your wife's life?

KROGSTAD The law does not concern itself with motives.

NORA. Then the law must be very stupid.

KROGSTAD. Stupid or not, if I show this paper to the police, you will be judged according to it.

NORA. I don't believe that. Hasn't a daughter the right to shield her father from worry and anxiety when he's old and dying? Hasn't a wife the right to save her husband's life? I don't know much about the law, but there must be something somewhere that says that such things are allowed. You ought to know that, you're meant to be a lawyer, aren't you? You can't be a very good lawyer, Mr Krogstad.

KROGSTAD Possibly not. But business, the kind of business we two have been transacting — I think you'll admit I understand something about that? Good. Do as you please. But I tell you this. If I get thrown into the gutter for a second time, I shall take you with me.

*He bows and goes out through the hall. A following scene with Torvald...*

NORA (*still leaning over his chair, slowly strokes the back of his head*). If you hadn't been so busy, I was going to ask you an enormous favour, Torvald.

HELMER. Well, tell me. What was it to be?

NORA. You know I trust your taste more than anyone's. I'm so anxious to look really beautiful at the fancy-dress ball. Torvald, couldn't you help me to decide what I shall go as, and what kind of costume I ought to wear?

HELMER. Aha! So little Miss Independent's in trouble and needs a man to rescue her, does she?

NORA. Yes, Torvald. I can't get anywhere without your help.

HELMER. Well, well, I'll give the matter thought. We'll find something.

NORA. Oh, how kind of you! (*Goes back to the tree. Pause.*) How pretty these red flowers look! But, tell me, is it so dreadful, this thing that Krogstad's done?

HELMER. He forged someone else's name. Have you any idea what that means?

NORA. Mightn't he have been forced to do it by some emergency?

HELMER. He probably just didn't think — that's what usually happens. I'm not so heartless as to condemn a man for an isolated action.

NORA. No, Torvald, of course not!

HELMER. Men often succeed in re-establishing themselves if they admit their crime and take their punishment.

NORA. Punishment?

HELMER. But Krogstad didn't do that. He chose to try and trick his way out of it. And that's what has morally destroyed him.

NORA. You think that would — ?

HELMER. Just think how a man with that load on his conscience must always be lying and cheating and dissembling — how he must wear a mask even in the presence of those who are dearest to him, even his own wife and children! Yes, the children. That's the worst danger, Nora.

NORA. Why?

HELMER. Because an atmosphere of lies contaminates and poisons every corner of the home. Every breath that the children draw in such a house contains the germs of evil.

NORA (*comes closer behind him*). Do you really believe that?

HELMER. Oh, my dear, I've come across it so often in my work at the bar. Nearly all young criminals are the children of mothers who are constitutional liars.

... *End of Act 1...*

## WORKSHOP TEXT – ACT 2

*Nora continues to fret when Christine arrives. Christine suggests that it was Dr Rank that lent her the money. Nora denies this but Christine realises she is hiding something and stays to hear what Nora has to say. Helmer enters and interrupts, however...*

NORA. Torvald.

HELMER (stops). Yes.

NORA. If little squirrel asked you really prettily to grant her a wish —

HELMER. Well?

NORA. Would you grant it to her?

HELMER. First I should naturally have to know what it was.

NORA. Squirrel would do lots of pretty tricks for you if you granted her wish.

HELMER. Out with it, then.

NORA. Your little skylark would sing in every room —

HELMER. My little skylark does that already.

NORA. I'd turn myself into a little fairy and dance for you in the moonlight, Torvald.

HELMER. Nora, it isn't that business you were talking about this morning?

NORA (*comes closer*). Yes, Torvald — oh, please! I beg of you!

HELMER. Have you really the nerve to bring that up again?

NORA. Yes, Torvald, yes, you must do as I ask! You must let Krogstad keep his place at the bank!

HELMER. My dear Nora, his is the job I'm giving to Mrs Linde.

NORA. Yes, that's terribly sweet of you. But you can get rid of one of the other clerks instead of Krogstad.

HELMER. Really, you're being incredibly obstinate. Just because you thoughtlessly promised to put in a word for him, you expect me to —

NORA. No, it isn't that, Helmer. It's for your own sake. That man writes for the most beastly newspapers — you said so yourself. He could do you tremendous harm. I'm so dreadfully frightened of him —

HELMER. Oh, I understand. Memories of the past. That's what's frightening you.

NORA. What do you mean?

HELMER. You're thinking of your father, aren't you?

NORA. Yes, yes. Of course. Just think what those dreadful men wrote in the papers about papa! The most frightful slanders. I really believe it would have lost him his job if the Ministry hadn't sent you down to investigate, and you hadn't been so kind and helpful to him.

HELMER. But, my dear little Nora, there's a considerable difference between your father and me. Your father was not a man of unassailable reputation. But I am. And I hope to remain so all my life.

NORA. But no one knows what spiteful people may not dig up. We could be so peaceful and happy now, Torvald — we could be free from every worry - you and I and the children. Oh, please, Torvald, please - !

HELMER. The very fact of your pleading his cause makes it impossible for me to keep him. Everyone at the bank already knows that I intend to dismiss Krogstad. If the rumour got about that the new vice-president had allowed his wife to persuade him to change his mind -

NORA. Well, what then?

HELMER. Oh, nothing, nothing. As long as my little Miss Obstinate gets her way - ! Do you expect me to make a laughing-stock of myself before my entire staff - give people the idea that I am open to outside influence? Believe me, I'd soon feel the consequences! Besides - there's something else that makes it impossible for Krogstad to remain in the bank while I am its manager.

NORA. What is that?

HELMER. I might conceivably, have allowed myself to ignore his moral obloquies -

NORA. Yes, Torvald, surely?

HELMER. And I hear he's quite efficient at his job. But we, well, we were school friends. It was one of those friendships that one enters into over-hastily and so often comes to regret later in life. I might as well confess the truth. We - well, we're on Christian name terms. And the tactless idiot makes no attempt to conceal it when other people are present. On the contrary, he thinks it gives him the right to be familiar with me. He shows off the whole time, with Torvald this', and 'Torvald that'. I can tell you, I find it damned annoying. If he stayed, he'd make my position intolerable.

NORA. Torvald, you can't mean this seriously.

HELMER. Oh? And why not?

NORA. But it's so petty.

HELMER. What did you say? Petty? You think I am petty?

NORA. No, Torvald dear, of course you're not. That's just why I must be petty too. Petty! I see. Well, I've had enough of this. (*Goes to the door and calls into the hall.*) Helen!

NORA. What are you going to do?

HELMER (*searching among his papers*). I'm going to settle this matter once and for all.

*The MAID enters.*

HELMER. Take this letter downstairs at once. Find a messenger and see that he delivers it. Immediately! The address is on the envelope. Here's the money.

MAID. Very good, sir. (*Goes out with the letter.*)

HELMER (*putting his papers in order*). There now, little Miss Obstinate.

NORA (*tensely*). Torvald - what was in that letter?

HELMER. Krogstad's dismissal.

NORA. Call her back. Torvald! There's still time. Oh, Torvald, call her back! Do it for my sake - for your own sake - for the children! Do you hear me, Torvald? Please do it! You don't realize what this may do to us all!

HELMER. Too late.

NORA. Yes. Too late.

*Dr Rank, who we met in Act 1, visits again. The evening draws in. After morosely describing his ailing health and contemplating his imminent demise...*

NORA. Suppose I were to ask you to — ? No —

RANK. To do what?

NORA. To give me proof of your friendship —

RANK. Yes, yes?

NORA. No, I mean — to do me a very great service —

RANK. Would you really for once grant me that happiness?

NORA. But you've no idea what it is.

RANK. Very well, tell me, then.

NORA. No, but, Dr Rank, I can't. It's far too much — I want your help and advice, and I want you to do something for me.

RANK. The more the better. I've no idea what it can be. But tell me. You do trust me, don't you?

NORA. Oh, yes, more than anyone. You're my best and truest friend. Otherwise I couldn't tell you. Well then, Dr Rank, there's something you must help me to prevent. You know how

much Torvald loves me - he'd never hesitate for an instant to lay down his life for me —

RANK (*leans over towards her*). Nora - do you think he is the only one - ?

NORA (*with a slight start*). What do you mean?

RANK. Who would gladly lay down his life for you?

NORA (*sadly*), Oh, I see.

RANK. I swore to myself I would let you know that before I go. I shall never have a better opportunity. . . . Well, Nora, now you know that. And now you also know that you can trust me as you can trust nobody else.

NORA (*rises; calmly and quietly*). Let me pass, please

RANK (*makes room for her but remains seated*). Nora —

NORA (*in the doorway to the hall*). Helen, bring the lamp. (*Goes over to the stove.*) Oh; dear, Dr Rank, this was really horrid of you.

RANK (*gets up*). That I have loved you as deeply as anyone else has ? Was that horrid of me ?

NORA. No - but that you should go and tell me. That was quite unnecessary —

RANK. What do you mean? Did you know, then - ?

*The MAID enters with the lamp, puts it on the table and goes out.*

RANK. Nora - Mrs Helmer ! I am asking you, did you know this ?

NORA. Oh, what do I know, what did I know, what didn't I know - ? I really can't say. How could you be so stupid, Dr Rank? Everything was so nice.

RANK. Well, at any rate, now you know that I am ready to serve you, body and soul. So - please continue.

NORA (*looks at him*). After this?

RANK. Please tell me what it is.

NORA. I can't possibly tell you now.

RANK. Yes, yes! You mustn't punish me like this. Let me be allowed to do what I can for you.

NORA. You can't do anything for me now. Anyway, I don't need any help. It was only my imagination - you'll see. Yes, really. Honestly. (*Sits in the rocking-chair, looks at him and smiles.*) Well, upon my word you are a fine gentleman, Dr Rank. Aren't you ashamed of yourself, now that the lamp's been lit?

RANK. Frankly, no. But perhaps I ought to say - adieu?

NORA. Of course not. You will naturally continue to visit us as before. You know quite well how Torvald depends on your company.

RANK. Yes, but you?

*Dr Rank leaves. Krogstad arrives...*

KROGSTAD. I suppose you know I've been given the sack.

NORA. I couldn't stop it, Mr Krogstad. I did my best for you, but it didn't help.

KROGSTAD. Does your husband love you so little? He knows what I can do to you, and yet he dares to —

NORA. Surely you don't imagine I told him?

KROGSTAD. No, I didn't really think you had. It wouldn't have been like my old friend Torvald Helmer to show that much courage —

NORA. Mr Krogstad, I'll trouble you to speak respectfully of my husband.

KROGSTAD. Don't worry, I'll show him all the respect he deserves. But since you're so anxious to keep this matter hushed up, I presume you're better informed than you were yesterday of the gravity of what you've done?

NORA. I've learned more than you could ever teach me.

KROGSTAD. Yes, a bad lawyer like me —

NORA. 'What do you want from me?

KROGSTAD. I just wanted to see how things were with you, Mrs Helmer. I've been thinking about you all day. Even dums and hack journalists have hearts, you know.

.....

KROGSTAD. I'm not asking your husband for money.

NORA. What do you want, then?

KROGSTAD. I'll tell you. I want to get on my feet again, Mrs Helmer. I want to get to the top. And your husband's going to help me. For eighteen months now my record's been clean. I've been in hard straits all that time: I was content to fight my way back inch by inch. Now I've been chucked back into the mud, and I'm not going to be satisfied with just getting back my job. I'm going to get to the top, I tell you. I'm going to get back into the bank, and it's going to be higher up. Your husband's going to create a new job for me —

NORA. He'll never do that!

KROGSTAD. Oh yes, he will. I know him. He won't dare to risk a scandal. And once I'm in there with him, you'll see! Within a year I'll be his right-hand man. It'll be Nils Krogstad who'll be running that bank, not Torvald Helmer !

NORA. That will never happen.

KROGSTAD. Are you thinking of ?

NORA. Now I have the courage.

KROGSTAD. Oh, you can't frighten me. A pampered little pretty like you —

NORA. You'll see! You'll see!

KROGSTAD. Under the ice? Down in the cold, black water? And then, in the spring, to float up again, ugly, unrecognizable, hairless — ?

NORA. You can't frighten me.

KROGSTAD. And you can't frighten me. People don't do such things, Mrs Helmer. And anyway, what'd be the use? I've got him in my pocket.

NORA. But afterwards? When I'm no longer — ?

KROGSTAD. Have you forgotten that then your reputation will be in my hands?

*She looks at him speechlessly.*

KROGSTAD. Well, I've warned you. Don't do anything silly. When Helmer's read my letter, he'll get in touch with me. And remember, it's your husband who has forced me to act like this. And for that I'll never forgive him. Goodbye, Mrs Helmer. *(He goes out through the hall.)*

NORA *(runs to the hall door, opens it a few inches and listens)*. He's going. He's not going to give him the letter. Oh, no, no, it couldn't possibly happen. *(Opens the door, a little wider.)* What's he doing? Standing outside the front door. He's not going downstairs. Is he changing his mind? Yes, he — !

*A letter falls into the letter-box. KROGSTAD'S footsteps die away down the stairs.*

HELMER. But, my dear Nora, you look quite worn out. Have you been practising too hard?

NORA. No, I haven't practised at all yet.

HELMER. Well, you must.

NORA. Yes. Torvald. I must, I know. But I can't get anywhere without your help. I've completely forgotten everything.

HELMER. Oh, we'll soon put that to rights.

NORA. Yes, help me, Torvald. Promise me you will? Oh, I'm so nervous. All those people - ! You must forget everything except me this evening. You mustn't think of business - I won't even let you touch a pen. Promise me, Torvald?

HELMER. I promise. This evening I shall think of nothing but you - my poor, helpless little darling. Oh, there's just one thing I must see to - *(Goes towards the hall door.)*

NORA. What do you want out there?

HELMER. I'm only going to see if any letters have come.

NORA. No, Torvald, no!

HELMER. Why what's the matter?

NORA. Torvald, I beg you. There's nothing there.

HELMER. Well, just make sure.

*He moves towards the door. NORA runs to the piano and plays the first bars of the Tarantella.*

HELMER *(at the door, turns)*, Aha!

NORA. I can't dance tomorrow if I don't practise with you now.

HELMER *(goes over to her)*. Are you really so frightened, Nora dear ?

NORA. Yes terribly frightened. Let me start practising now, at once - we've still time before dinner. Oh, do sit down and play for me, Torvald dear. Correct me, lead me, the way you always do.

HELMER. Very well, my dear, if you wish it.

*He sits down at the piano. NORA seizes the tambourine and a long multi-coloured shawl from the cardboard box, wraps the shawl hastily around her, then takes a quick leap into the centre of the room and cries.*

NORA. Play for me! I want to dance!

*HELMER plays and NORA dances. DR RANK stands behind*

HELMER at the piano and watches her.

HELMER (*as he plays*). Slower, slower!

NORA. I can't!

HELMER Not so violently, Nora.

NORA. I must!

HELMER (*stops playing*). No, no, this won't do at all.

NORA (*laughs and swings her tambourine*). Isn't that what I told you?

RANK. Let me play for her.

HELMER (*gets up*). Yes, would you? Then it'll be easier for me to show her.

*RANK sits down at the piano and plays. NORA dances more and more wildly. HELMER has stationed himself by the stove and tries repeatedly to correct her, but she seems not to hear him. Her hair works loose and falls over her shoulders; she ignores it and continues to dance. MRS LINDE enters.*

MRS LINDE (*stands in the doorway as though tongue-tied*). Ah !

NORA (*as she dances*). Oh, Christine, we're having such fun!

HELMER. But, Nora darling, you're dancing as if your life depended on it.

NORA. It does.

HELMER. Rank, stop it ! This is sheer lunacy. Stop it, I say !

*RANK ceases playing. NORA suddenly stops dancing.*

HELMER (*goes over to her*). I'd never have believed it. You've forgotten everything I taught you.

NORA (*throws away the tambourine*). You see!

HELMER. I'll have to show you every step.

NORA. You see how much I need you! You must show me every step of the way. Right to the end of the dance. Promise me you will, Torvald?

HELMER. Never fear. I will.

NORA. You mustn't think about anything but me - today or tomorrow. Don't open any letters - don't even open the letter-box —

HELMER. Aha, you're still worried about that fellow—

NORA. Oh, yes, yes, him too.

HELMER. Nora, I can tell from the way you're behaving, there's a letter from him already lying there.

NORA. I don't know. I think so. But you mustn't read it now. I don't want anything ugly to come between us till it's all over.

RANK (*quietly to HELMER*). Better give her her way.

HELMER (puts his arm round her). My child shall have her way.

But tomorrow night, when your dance is over —

NORA. Then you will be free.

MAID (*appears in the doorway, right*). Dinner is served, madam.

NORA. Put out some champagne, Helen.

MAID. Very good, madam. (*Goes.*)

HELMER. I say! What's this, a banquet?

NORA. We'll drink champagne until dawn! (*Calls.*) And, Helen! Put out some macaroons! Lots of macaroons - for once!

HELMER (*takes her hands in his*). Now, now, now. Don't get so excited. Where's my little songbird, the one I know?

NORA. All right. Go and sit down - and you, too, Dr Rank. I'll be with you in a minute. Christine, you must help me put my hair up.

RANK (*quietly, as they go*). There's nothing wrong, is there? I mean, she isn't - er - expecting - ?

HELMER. Good heavens no, my dear chap. She just gets scared like a child sometimes - I told you before -

*They go out, right.*

NORA. Well?

MRS LINDE. He's left town.

NORA. I saw it from your face.

MRS LINDE. He'll be back tomorrow evening. I left a note for him.

NORA. You needn't have bothered. You can't stop anything now.

Anyway, it's wonderful really, in a way - sitting here and waiting for the miracle to happen.

MRS LINDE. Waiting for what?

NORA. Oh, you wouldn't understand. Go in and join them. I'll be with you in a moment.

*MRS LINDE goes into the dining-room.*

NORA (*stands for a moment as though collecting herself. Then she looks at her watch*). Five o'clock. Seven hours till midnight. Then another twenty-four hours till midnight tomorrow. And then the tarantella will be finished. Twenty-four and seven? Thirty-one hours to live.

HELMER (*appears in the doorway, right*). What's happened to my little songbird?

NORA (*runs to him with her arms wide*). Your songbird is here!

*End of Act 2*

**WORKSHOP TEXT – ACT 3**

*Christine receives Krogstad while the Helmers are having their party upstairs...*

...

MRS LINDE. Well, Krogstad. You and I must have a talk together.

KROGSTAD. Have we two anything further to discuss?

MRS LINDE. We have a great deal to discuss.

KROGSTAD. I wasn't aware of it.

MRS LINDE. That's because you've never really understood me.

KROGSTAD. Was there anything to understand? It's the old story, isn't it — a woman chucking a man because something better turns up?

MRS LINDE. Do you really think I'm so utterly heartless? You think it was easy for me to give you up?

KROGSTAD. Wasn't it?

MRS LINDE. Oh, Nils, did you really believe that?

KROGSTAD. Then why did you write to me the way you did?

MRS LINDE. I had to. Since I had to break with you, I thought it my duty to destroy all the feelings you had for me.

KROGSTAD (*clenches his fists*). So that was it. And you did this for money!

MRS LINDE. You mustn't forget I had a helpless mother to take care of, and two little brothers. We couldn't wait for you, Nils. It would have been so long before you'd have had enough to support us.

KROGSTAD. Maybe. But you had no right to cast me off for someone else.

MRS LINDE. Perhaps not. I've often asked myself that.

KROGSTAD (*more quietly*). When I lost you, it was just as though all solid ground had been swept from under my feet. Look at me. Now I'm a shipwrecked man, clinging to a spar.

...

MRS LINDE. I'm in the same position as you. No one to care about, no one to care for.

KROGSTAD. You made your own choice.

MRS LINDE. I had no choice - then.

KROGSTAD. Well?

MRS LINDE. Nils, suppose we two shipwrecked souls could join hands?

KROGSTAD. What are you saying?

MRS LINDE. Castaways have a better chance of survival together than on their own.

KROGSTAD. Christine!

MRS LINDE. Why do you suppose I came to this town?

KROGSTAD. You mean - you came because of me?

MRS LINDE. I must work if I'm to find life worth living. I've always worked, for as long as I can remember. It's been the greatest joy of my life - my only joy. But now I'm alone in the world, and I feel so dreadfully lost and empty. There's no joy in working just for oneself. Oh, Nils, give me something - someone - to work for.

...

MRS LINDE. I need someone to be a mother to; and your children need a mother. And you and I need each other. I believe in you, Nils. I am afraid of nothing - with you.

KROGSTAD (*clasps her hands*). Thank you, Christine - thank you! Now I shall make the world believe in me as you do! Oh - but I'd forgotten -

MRS LINDE (*listens*). Ssh! The tarantella! Go quickly, go!

KROGSTAD. Why? What is it?

MRS LINDE. You hear that dance? As soon as it's finished, they'll be coming down.

KROGSTAD. All right, I'll go. It's no good, Christine. I'd forgotten - you don't know what I've just done to the Helmers.

...

MRS LINDE. No, Nils, you mustn't ask for that letter back.

KROGSTAD. But — tell me — wasn't that the real reason you asked me to come here?

MRS LINDE. Yes — at first, when I was frightened. But a day has passed since then, and in that time I've seen incredible things happen in this house. Helmer must know the truth. This unhappy secret of Nora's must be revealed. They must come to a full understanding. There must be an end of all these shiftings and evasions.

KROGSTAD. Very well. If you're prepared to risk it. But one thing I can do and at once —

MRS LINDE (*listens*). Hurry! Go, go! The dance is over. We aren't safe here another moment.

KROGSTAD. I'll wait for you downstairs.

MRS LINDE. Yes, do. You can see me home.

KROGSTAD. I've never been so happy in my life before!

*He goes out through the front door. The door leading from the room into the hall remains open.*

MRS LINDE (*tidies the room a little and gets her hat and coat*). What a change! Oh, what a change! Someone to work for — to live for! A home to bring joy into! I won't let this chance of happiness slip through my fingers. Oh, why don't they come? (*listens*.) Ah, here they are. I must get my coat on.

*She takes her hat and coat. HELMER'S and NORA'S voices become audible outside. A key is turned in the lock and HELMER leads NORA almost forcibly into the hall. She is dressed in an Italian costume with a large black shawl. He is in evening dress, with a black coat.*

NORA (*still in the doorway, resisting him*). No, no, no — not in here! I want to go back upstairs. I don't want to leave so early.

HELMER. But my dearest Nora -

NORA. Oh, please, Torvald, please! Just another hour !

HELMER. Not another minute, Nora, my sweet. You know what we agreed. Come along, now. Into the drawing-room. You'll catch cold if you stay out here.

*He leads her, despite her efforts to resist him, gently into the room.*

MRS LINDE. Good evening.

NORA. Christine!

HELMER. Oh, hullo, Mrs Linde. You still here?

MRS LINDE. Please forgive me. I did so want to see Nora in her costume.

NORA. Have you been sitting here waiting for me?

MRS LINDE. Yes. I got here too late, I'm afraid. You'd already gone up. And I felt I really couldn't go home without seeing you.

HELMER (*takes off Nora's shawl*). Well, take a good look at her. She's worth looking at, don't you think? Isn't she beautiful; Mrs Linde?

MRS LINDE. Oh, yes, indeed —

HELMER . Isn't she unbelievably beautiful? Everyone at the party said so. But dreadfully stubborn she is, bless her pretty little heart. What's to be done about that? Would you believe it, I practically had to use force to get her away!

...

What's this? It's dark in here. Ah, yes, of course — excuse me. (*Goes in and lights a couple of candles.*)

NORA (*whispers softly, breathlessly*). Well?

MRS LINDE (*quietly*). I've spoken to him.

NORA. Yes?

MRS LINDE. Nora — you must tell your husband everything.

NORA (*dully*). I knew it.

MRS LINDE. You have nothing to fear from Krogstad. But you must tell him.

NORA. I shan't tell him anything.

MRS LINDE. Then the letter will.

NORA. Thank you, Christine. Now I know what I must do. Ssh !

HELMER (*returns*). Well, Mrs Linde, finished admiring her?

MRS LINDE. Yes. Now I must say good night.

...

MRS LINDE. Well, good night, Nora. And stop being stubborn! Remember !

HELMER. Quite right, Mrs Linde !

MRS LINDE. Good night, Mr Helmer.

HELMER (*accompanies her to the door*). Good night, good night! I'd gladly — but you haven't far to go, have you? Good night, good night.

*She goes. He closes the door behind her and returns, obviously feeling very desirous of his wife...*

HELMER. And then when we're about to go, and I wrap the shawl round your lovely young shoulders, over this wonderful curve of your neck - then I pretend to myself that you are my young bride, that we've just come from the wedding, that I'm taking you to my house for the first time - that, for the first time, I am alone with you - quite alone with you, as you stand there young and trembling and beautiful. All evening I've had no eyes for anyone but you. When I saw you dance the tarantella, like a huntress, a temptress, my blood grew hot, I couldn't stand it any longer! That was why I seized you and dragged you down here with me —

NORA. Leave me, Torvald! Get away from me! I don't want all this.

HELMER. What? Now, Nora, you're joking with me. Don't want, don't want - ? Aren't I your husband?

*There is a knock on the front door.*

NORA (*starts*). What was that?

HELMER (*goes towards the hall*). Who is it?

DR RANK (*outside*). It's me. May I come in for a moment?

HELMER (*quietly, annoyed*). Oh, what does he want now? (*Calls.*) Wait a moment. (*Walks over and opens the door.*) Well! Nice of you not to go by without looking in.

RANK. I thought I heard your voice, so I felt I had to say goodbye. (*His eyes travel swiftly around the room.*) Ah, yes - these dear rooms, how well I know them. What a happy, peaceful home you two have.

HELMER. You seemed to be having a pretty happy time yourself upstairs.

...

NORA. Tell me. What shall we two wear at the next masquerade?

HELMER. You little gadabout! Are you thinking about the next one already?

RANK. We two? Yes, I'll tell you. You must go as the Spirit of Happiness —

HELMER. You try to think of a costume that'll convey that.

RANK. Your wife need only appear as her normal, everyday self —

HELMER. Quite right! Well said! But what are you going to be? Have you decided that?

RANK. Yes, my dear friend. I have decided that.

HELMER. Well?

RANK. At the next masquerade, I shall be invisible.

HELMER. Well, that's a funny idea.

RANK. There's a big, black hat — haven't you heard of the invisible hat? Once it's over your head, no one can see you any more.

HELMER (*represses a smile*). Ah yes, of course.

*Rank eventually leaves...*

HELMER (*walks up and down*). He was so much a part of our life. I can't realize that he's gone. His suffering and loneliness seemed to provide a kind of dark background to the happy sunlight of our marriage. Well, perhaps it's best this way. For him, anyway. (*Stops walking.*) And perhaps for us too, Nora. Now we have only each other. (*Embraces her.*) Oh, my beloved wife - I feel as though I could never hold you close enough. Do you know, Nora, often I wish some terrible danger might threaten you, so that I could offer my life and my blood, everything, for your sake.

NORA (*tears herself loose and says in a clear, firm voice*). Read your letters now, Torvald.

HELMER. No, no. Not tonight. Tonight I want to be with you, my darling wife -

NORA. When your friend is about to die - ?

HELMER. You're right. This news has upset us both. An ugliness has come between us; thoughts of death and dissolution. We must try to forget them. Until then - you go to your room; I shall go to mine.

NORA (*throws her arms round his neck*). Good night, Torvald! Good night!

HELMER (*kisses her on the forehead*). Good night, my darling

little songbird. Sleep well, Nora. I'll go and read my letters.

*He goes into the study with the letters in his hand, and closes the door.*

NORA (*wild-eyed, fumbles around, seizes HELMER'S cloak, throws it round herself and whispers quickly, hoarsely*). Never see him again. Never. Never. Never. (*Throws the shawl over her head.*) Never see the children again. Them, too. Never. Never. Oh - the icy black water! Oh - that bottomless - that - ! Oh, if only it were all over! Now he's got it - he's reading it. Oh no, no! Not yet! Goodbye Torvald! Goodbye my darlings !

*She turns to run into the hall. As she does so, HELMER throws open his door and stands there with an open letter in his hand.*

HELMER. Nora!

NORA (*shrieks*). Ah !

HELMER. What is this? Do you know what is in this letter?

NORA. Yes, I know. Let me go! Let me go!

HELMER (*holding her back*). Go? Where?

NORA (*tries to tear herself loose*). You mustn't try to save me, Torvald!

HELMER (*staggering back*). Is it true? Is it true, what he writes? Oh, my God! No, no - it's impossible, it can't be true!

NORA. It is true. I've loved you more than anything else in the world.

HELMER. Oh, don't try to make silly excuses.

NORA (*takes a step towards him*). Torvald —

HELMER. Wretched woman! What have you done?

NORA. Let me go! You're not going to suffer for my sake. I won't let you!

HELMER. Stop being theatrical. (*Locks the front door.*) You're going to stay here and explain yourself. Do you understand what you've done? Answer me! Do you understand?

NORA (*looks unflinchingly at him and, her expression growing colder, says*). Yes. Now I am beginning to understand.

... a lot of critical dialogue between the two of them here, ending with ...

HELMER. Nora, I would gladly work for you night and day, and endure sorrow and hardship for your sake. But no man can be expected to sacrifice his honour, even for the person he loves. NORA. Millions of women have done it.

HELMER. Oh, you think and talk like a stupid child.

NORA. That may be. But you neither think nor talk like the man I could share my life with. Once you'd got over your fright -and you weren't frightened of what might threaten me, but only of what threatened you - once the danger was past, then as far as you were concerned it was exactly as though nothing had happened. I was your little songbird just as before - your doll whom henceforth you would take particular care to protect from the world because she was so weak and fragile. (*Gets up.*) Torvald, in that moment I realized that for eight years I had been living here with a complete stranger, and had borne him three children - I Oh, I can't bear to think of it! I could tear myself to pieces!

HELMER (*sadly*). I see it, I see it. A gulf has indeed opened between us. Oh, but Nora - couldn't it be bridged?

NORA. As I am now, I am no wife for you.

HELMER. I have the strength to change.

NORA. Perhaps - if your doll is taken from you.

HELMER. But to be parted - to be parted from you! No, no, Nora, I can't conceive of it happening!

NORA (*goes into the room, right*). All the more necessary that it should happen.

*She comes back with her outdoor things and a small travelling-bag, which she puts down on a chair by the table.*

HELMER. Nora, Nora, not now! Wait till tomorrow!

NORA (*puts on her coat*). I can't spend the night in a strange man's house.

HELMER. But can't we live here as brother and sister, then - ?

NORA (*fastens her hat*). You know quite well it wouldn't last. (*Puts on her shawl.*) Goodbye, Torvald. I don't want to see the children. I know they're in better hands than mine. As I am now, I can be nothing to them.

HELMER. But some time, Nora - some time - ?

NORA. How can I tell? I've no idea what will happen to me.

HELMER. But you are my wife, both as you are and as you will be.

NORA. Listen, Torvald. When a wife leaves her husband's house, as I'm doing now, I'm told that according to the law he is freed of any obligations towards her. In any case, I release you from any such obligations. You mustn't feel bound to me in any way however small, just as I shall not feel bound to you. We must both be quite free. Here is your ring back. Give me mine.

HELMER. That too?

NORA. That too.

HELMER. Here it is.

NORA. Good. Well, now it's over. I'll leave the keys here. The servants know about everything to do with the house - much better than I do. Tomorrow, when I have left town; Christine will come to pack the things I brought here from home. I'll have them sent on after me.

HELMER. 'This is the end, then! Nora, will you never think of me any more?

NORA. Yes, of course. I shall often think of you and the children and this house.

HELMER. May I write to you, Nora?

NORA. No. Never. You mustn't do that.

HELMER. But at least you must let me send you -

NORA. Nothing. Nothing.

HELMER. But if you should need help ?

NORA. I tell you, no. I don't accept things from strangers.

HELMER. Nora — can I never be anything but a stranger to you?

NORA (*picks up her bag*). Oh, Torvald! Then the miracle of miracles would have to happen.

HELMER. The miracle of miracles !

NORA. You and I would both have to change so much that — oh, Torvald, I don't believe in miracles any longer.

HELMER. But I want to believe in them. Tell me. We should have to change so much that — !

NORA. That life together between us two could become a marriage. Goodbye.

*She goes out through the hall.*

HELMER (*sinks down on a chair by the door and buries his face in his hands*). Nora! Nora! (*Looks round and gets up.*) Empty! She's gone! (*A hope strikes him.*) The miracle of miracles — ?

*The street door is slammed shut downstairs...*