

# GHOSTS

by

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# Ghosts

## CHARACTERS.

MRS. HELEN ALVING, widow of Captain Alving.

OSWALD ALVING, her son, a painter.

PASTOR MANDERS.

JACOB ENGSTRAND, a carpenter.

REGINA ENGSTRAND, Mrs. Alving's maid.

The action takes place at Mrs. Alving's country house, beside one of the large fjords in Western Norway.

## ACT I

*A spacious garden-room. There is a table and chairs and a small sofa. On the table lie several books. At the rear of the room there is a door leading to the garden. Through the window next to the door the gloomy outline of the fjord can be seen. REGINA is standing at the table folding the table cloth. ENGSTRAND enters through the garden door. He walks with the aid of a stick.*

**REGINA:** *(Quietly.)* What do you want? Stop where you are. You're positively dripping.

**ENGSTRAND:** It's the Lord's own rain, my girl.

**REGINA:** It's the devil's rain, if you ask me.

**ENGSTRAND:** Child, the things you say! *(Limps a step or two forward into the room.)* I came to talk to you...

**REGINA:** Don't clatter about with that stick of yours! The young master's asleep upstairs.

**ENGSTRAND:** Asleep? In the middle of the day?

**REGINA:** It's no business of yours.

**ENGSTRAND:** I was out on the booze last night...

**REGINA:** No surprise there.

**ENGSTRAND:** We are feeble creatures, all of us...

**REGINA:** So it seems.

**ENGSTRAND:**...and temptations are many. But all the same, I was hard at work at half-past five this morning.

**REGINA:** Yes, yes, but be gone. I don't wish to rendezvous with you.

**ENGSTRAND:** You don't wish to what?

**REGINA:** I don't want anyone to see you here, now get out.

**ENGSTRAND:** Not before I have a word with you. This afternoon I shall have finished my work at the orphanage, and then I shall be on the boat back to town.

**REGINA:** I hope you have a pleasant journey.

**ENGSTRAND:** Thank you. Tomorrow the orphanage is to be opened. There will be lots of high spirits and intoxicating liquor but I shall stay away. No one will be able to say that Jacob Engstrand cannot resist temptation when he puts his mind to it.

**REGINA:** Is that so?

**ENGSTRAND:** There will be lots of influential people here tomorrow. Pastor Manders, himself, is coming from town.

**REGINA:** He's coming today.

**ENGSTRAND:** Well, there you are. I shall have to careful not to put my foot in it with him.

**REGINA:** (*Glancing at her father's bad leg.*) Oh. So, that's your game.

**ENGSTRAND:** What's my game?

**REGINA:** What are you going to fool Pastor Manders into doing, this time?

**ENGSTRAND:** Are you crazy? Fool Pastor Manders? Oh no! Pastor Manders has been good a friend to me. He is my Guardian Angel. I just wanted to say that I will be getting the ferry later...

**REGINA:** The sooner the better.

**ENGSTRAND:** Yes, but I want you to come home with me, Regina.

**REGINA:** What? Are you mad? Never in this world will I go home with you.

**ENGSTRAND:** Oh, we'll see about that.

**REGINA:** No, we will not. Mrs Alving has taught me how to behave like a lady. I am treated like I am a member of the family and you want me to live with you in that dump you call home? You are out of your mind.

**ENGSTRAND:** How dare you? Is that any way for a girl to speak to her poor father?

**REGINA:** You've said often enough I was no concern of yours.

**ENGSTRAND:** Rubbish!

**REGINA:** How many times have you called me a bastard child?

**ENGSTRAND:** I would never use such a word.

**REGINA:** I remember it well.

**ENGSTRAND:** All right, but only after I'd had a few drinks. Besides, it was whenever your mother was nagging. Taking on heirs and graces just because she'd worked for Captain Alving. I had to find some way to bring her down.

**REGINA:** My poor mother! You drove her to her grave.

**ENGSTRAND:** That's right. Blame everything on me.

**REGINA:** Nothing is ever your fault is it? (*ENGSTRAND looks hurt. A beat.*) What is it you want with me?

**ENGSTRAND:** Only what any poor widowed father would want from his only child.

**REGINA:** Don't try that nonsense with me. What do you want?

**ENGSTRAND:** It's like this. I'm been thinking of setting up in a new line of business.

**REGINA:** Another disaster, no doubt.

**ENGSTRAND:** Hear me out. I've managed to put aside quite a bit of the money I have earned from this orphanage job.

**REGINA:** Congratulations.

**ENGSTRAND:** There's nothing to spend money on this Godforsaken island. So, I thought I'd invest it in a sailor's tavern in the town.

**REGINA:** There are enough of those already.

**ENGSTRAND:** This will be a high-class establishment. Exclusively for captains and first mates.

**REGINA:** And what would be my role in this "high class establishment"?

**ENGSTRAND:** Oh, you wouldn't have to do very much, but you know what sailors are like. They like to have a bit of skirt around in the evenings. A bit of singing and dancing after their weary life at sea. What's to become of you stuck out here? Do you want to spend the rest of your life looking after snotty little kids in the orphanage?

**REGINA:** It needn't be so. If things go my way.

**ENGSTRAND:** What do you mean by that?

**REGINA:** Never you mind. How much money have you saved?

**ENGSTRAND:** It's enough to make a start with.

**REGINA:** Aren't you thinking of giving me any?

**ENGSTRAND:** Christ, no!

**REGINA:** Not even enough for a new dress?

**ENGSTRAND:** Come home with me and you can have all the new dresses you want.

**REGINA:** No, thanks. I will manage on my own.

**ENGSTRAND:** No, what you need is a father's guiding hand, Regina. I've got my eye on a house in Little Harbour Street. They don't want much deposit and it is just perfect for a sailor's home from home.

**REGINA:** I will not live with you! I will have nothing whatever to do with you. Now be off!

**ENGSTRAND:** You wouldn't stay with me for very long if you play your cards right. You've a fine figure. Yes, you have filled out very nicely.

**REGINA:** What are you trying to say?

**ENGSTRAND:** You wouldn't have to wait long until a mate, or maybe even a captain...

**REGINA:** I would never marry a sailor.

**ENGSTRAND:** I never said anything about marrying them. You can still do pretty well. That Englishman, the one with the yacht, he paid a small fortune, and she wasn't even as pretty as you.

**REGINA:** (*Going for him*) Out!

**ENGSTRAND:** You wouldn't strike your poor father, I hope?

**REGINA:** Yes, I would, if you dare talk about my mother in that way. Get out and don't slam the doors. Young Mr. Alving...

**ENGSTRAND:** He's asleep, I know. You're very concerned about him. Oh. I see. It's him...

**REGINA:** Out! Now! Not that way. Here comes Pastor Manders. Go out through the kitchen.

**ENGSTRAND:** (*As he exits.*) I'm going, I'm going. But mind you speak to him about a child's duty to her father. And I am your father. I can prove it in the parish register.

*PASTOR MANDERS enters from the garden wearing an overcoat and carrying a briefcase.*

**MANDERS:** Good morning, Miss Engstrand.

**REGINA:** Oh, Pastor Manders. Is the steamer in already?

**MANDERS:** Just arrived. Terrible weather we're having.

**REGINA:** Good for the farmers.

**MANDERS:** You are right. We townfolk never think of that. (*He takes off his overcoat.*)

**REGINA:** I'll hang that in the hall.

*She exits with the overcoat. The conversation continues.*

**MANDERS:** It's good to get out of the rain. I trust everything is well?

**REGINA:** (*Off.*) Yes, thank you, sir.

**MANDERS:** You have your hands full, I suppose, getting ready for tomorrow?

**REGINA:** (*Off.*) There is plenty to do.

**MANDERS:** Is Mrs. Alving is at home?

**REGINA:** (*Returning*) Oh, yes. She's just upstairs, waiting for the young master to wake up.

**MANDERS:** I heard that Oswald had arrived.

**REGINA:** Yes, he came the day before yesterday. We didn't expect until today.

**MANDERS:** He's not ill, I hope?

**REGINA:** Just tired, I think. He came all the way from Paris in one go. We had better be quiet whilst he sleeps.

**MANDERS:** We shall be like mice.

**REGINA:** Do sit down, Pastor Manders.

**MANDERS:** Thank you. *(He sits.)* Do you know, Miss Engstrand, I believe you have grown since I last saw you.

**REGINA:** *(Pleased that he has noticed.)* I'm told that I have filled out.

**MANDERS:** *(Embarrassed. That wasn't what he meant.)* Oh. Well, perhaps.

*A beat*

**REGINA:** Shall I tell Mrs. Alving that you are here?

**MANDERS:** No hurry. Oh, by the way, your father called on me last time he was in town.

**REGINA:** He's always pleased to have the opportunity to talk to you.

**MANDERS:** Do you visit him often?

**REGINA:** Well, when I have time, I...

**MANDERS:** Your father is not a man of strong character, Miss Engstrand. He often needs a guiding hand.

**REGINA:** I daresay he does.

**MANDERS:** He needs someone with him whom he loves and trusts. He told me, himself.

**REGINA:** But I don't think Mrs. Alving could spare me; especially with the new orphanage. And she has always been so kind to me.

**MANDERS:** We would have to get your mistress's consent, but a daughter's duty...

**REGINA:** But I don't know whether it would be proper for me, at my age, to keep house for a single man.

**MANDERS:** But he is your father!

**REGINA:** Yes, but all the same. Now, if it were a nice house, and with a real gentleman...

**MANDERS:** Regina...

**REGINA:** One I could love and respect...

**MANDERS:** Dear child...

**REGINA:** Then I should be happy to go to town. It can get very lonely out here and you know, yourself, what it is like to be alone in the world. Can you think of any such place for me, sir?

**MANDERS:** Me? No, I...

**REGINA:** But you would think of me if...

**MANDERS:** *(Standing.)* Would you be so kind as to tell your mistress I am here?

**REGINA:** *(Defeated.)* At once, sir. *(She exits.)*

*MANDERS walks over the table, places his briefcase at the side, picks up a couple of books and grunts, disapprovingly. MRS. ALVING enters followed by REGINA who crosses the room and exits from the opposite door.*

**MRS. ALVING:** Welcome, Pastor.

**MANDERS:** How do you do, Mrs. Alving? Here I am as promised.

**MRS. ALVING:** Punctual, as always.

**MANDERS:** It isn't always easy to get away, what with all the boards and committees...

**MRS. ALVING:** How kind of you to come so early. Now we can finish our business before lunch. But where is your suitcase?

**MANDERS:** I left it in the village. I shall sleep at the inn tonight.

**MRS. ALVING:** Can I still not persuade you to spend the night in my house?

**MANDERS:** Thank you, but the inn is so convenient for the ferry tomorrow.

**MRS. ALVING:** Have your way. But I really would have thought that two old cronies like us...

**MANDERS:** Now you are making fun of me. I see that you are in high spirits with Oswald's return.

**MRS. ALVING:** It is such a joy. It is two years since he was last home, and he has promised to stay the whole winter!

**MANDERS:** He is very dutiful. The attractions of Paris and Rome must be great

**MRS. ALVING:** Yes, but he loves his mother.

**MANDERS:** Of course. It would be sad if his fondness for art interfered with his natural instincts.

**MRS. ALVING:** There is no danger of that, as you will see for yourself. I am curious to see if you recognise him, but we will have to wait for him to come down. He is having a little nap after his travels. Shall we? *(She indicates the table and the two of them sit.)*

**MANDERS:** Tell me, Mrs. Alving, how do these books come to be here?

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

**MANDERS:** You read this sort of thing? Books that question the sanctity of marriage or promote the emancipation of women?

**MRS. ALVING:** Certainly, I do.

**MANDERS:** Do they make you happy?

**MRS. ALVING:** They make me feel more confident.

**MANDERS:** How?

**MRS. ALVING:** Well, they explain and confirm things that I was thinking. The great thing is that there is nothing new in these books. They just put into words what most people already believe.

**MANDERS:** Most people?

**MRS. ALVING:** Yes.

**MANDERS:** But not people like us, surely.

**MRS. ALVING:** Why do you object?

**MANDERS:** Object? You don't believe I waste my time reading things like this?

**MRS. ALVING:** If you haven't read them, how can you condemn them?

**MANDERS:** I have heard enough about them.

**MRS. ALVING:** Yes, but what about having an opinion of your own.

**MANDERS:** Mrs. Alving, there are times when we must rely on the opinions of others. That is how society works.

**MRS. ALVING:** I can't argue with that.

**MANDERS:** I don't blame you for wanting to know what the so-called intellectuals are talking about, especially as your son has strayed into that world, but...

**MRS. ALVING:** Yes?

**MANDERS:** Keep it to yourself. Don't allow your views to become public.

**MRS. ALVING:** Of course not; I quite agree with you.

**MANDERS:** Think of the orphanage. I believe that the idea came to you when your views were quite different to what they are now...

**MRS. ALVING:** Yes. We are here to talk about the orphanage.

**MANDERS:** Er. Yes. The orphanage.

**MRS. ALVING:** You have the documents?

**MANDERS:** Yes, and in perfect order. It was a struggle to get them in time. The authorities seem to delight in dragging their feet, but here they are at last. (*He takes them out of his briefcase.*) Here we are. The formal deed for the gift of the land, with all the newly constructed buildings, schoolrooms, master's house, and chapel. And here the legal document for the Children's Home to be known as 'Captain Alving's Foundation.'" I thought "Captain" rather than "Chamberlain.", "Captain" looks less pretentious.

**MRS. ALVING:** Whichever you think is best.

**MANDERS:** And here are the details for the bank account

**MRS. ALVING:** Thank you. I think it best you keep all that.

**MANDERS:** With pleasure. But there is one thing more which I have several times been intending to ask you.



**MRS. ALVING:** And what is that?

**MANDERS:** Shall the orphanage buildings be insured or not?

**MRS. ALVING:** Of course, they must be insured.

**MANDERS:** Well, wait a moment, Mrs. Alving. Let us look into the matter a little more closely.

**MRS. ALVING:** I have everything insured; buildings, stock, crops. Everything.

**MANDERS:** Yes, of course. Your own estate must be insured but the orphanage is different. You see, the orphanage is to be consecrated, as it were, to a higher purpose.

**MRS. ALVING:** Yes, but that's no reason...

**MANDERS:** For my own part, I see no reason why you shouldn't take every precaution but what is the general feeling in the neighbourhood? Are there influential people whose opinion must be acknowledged?

**MRS. ALVING:** Well, yes. There are several people of that sort around here.

**MANDERS:** There you are, you see! In town we have many such people. People would be only too ready to interpret our action as a sign that neither you nor I had faith in the Lord to protect us.

**MRS. ALVING:** That is ridiculous!

**MANDERS:** Yes, I know, But I have to be conscious of the difficult position I might find myself in, as your business advisor, should any of the more fanatical ones decide to offend.

**MRS. ALVING:** I see,

**MANDERS:** Not to mention what might be printed in the newspapers.

**MRS. ALVING:** Enough. We cannot allow that to happen.

**MANDERS:** You do not wish the orphanage to be insured?

**MRS. ALVING:** No. We shall have to leave it.

**MANDERS:** But if disaster were to strike would you be able to pay to make good the damage?

**MRS. ALVING:** No, of course not.

**MANDERS:** Then we are taking on a great responsibility.

**MRS. ALVING:** Do we have a choice?

**MANDERS:** No, that is the point; we have no choice. And we should trust that such an institution has fortune on its side.

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

**MANDERS:** Then the matter is settled?

**MRS. ALVING:** Yes.

**MANDERS:** Very well. If that is your choice, no insurance.

**MRS. ALVING:** It's a coincidence that you mention it today. We nearly had a fire yesterday but it was just few wood shavings in the carpenter's workshop.

**MANDERS:** Where Engstrand works?

**MRS. ALVING:** Yes. They say that he's often careless with matches.

**MANDERS:** He has so much on his mind, but he is trying to lead a good life, and he is a good worker.

**MRS. ALVING:** When he is sober!

**MANDERS:** It is the pain from his leg that drives him to drink. Last time he was in town he came to see me and thanked me from the bottom of his heart for getting him the job here so that he could be close to Regina. It was quite touching.

**MRS. ALVING:** He doesn't see that much of her.

**MANDERS:** He sees her every day. He told me so himself.

**MRS. ALVING:** Well, maybe.

**MANDERS:** I can't help but like the man. He was so open with me about his own shortcomings and how he desperately needs someone to keep him on the straight and narrow whenever temptation raises its ugly head. Mrs Alving, suppose that Regina were to return to his home...

**MRS. ALVING:** Regina! Never!

**MANDERS:** You shouldn't forbid it.

**MRS. ALVING:** I shall forbid it. Besides, she has a job at the orphanage.

**MANDERS:** He is her father.

**MRS. ALVING:** Oh, I know what sort of a father he has been to her. I have given Regina a home and here she shall stay. Now, hush. I believe Oswald is coming down the stairs.

*OSWALD stops in the doorway. He has an unlit meerschaum pipe in his mouth, is wearing a light overcoat and carrying a hat.*

**OSWALD:** Oh, I beg your pardon; I thought you were in the study. Oh, it's you, Pastor Manders. (*He enters.*)

**MANDERS:** (*Staring.*) I can hardly believe it.

**MRS. ALVING:** What do you think of him?

**MANDERS:** Can it really be?

**OSWALD:** The Prodigal Son, returns. Or should that be the Lost Sheep?

**MRS. ALVING:** Do you remember you were so set against him becoming a painter?

**MANDERS:** Well, yes but Oswald; may I still call you Oswald?

**OSWALD:** What else would you call me?

**MANDERS:** It is just that it is so easy to become corrupted when one enters the world of art. That is not to say that many remain untarnished, of course.

**OSWALD:** Let us hope so.

**MRS. ALVING:** I know one who has remained untarnished. Just look at him, Mr. Manders.

**OSWALD:** Oh, mother!

**MANDERS:** Yes, indeed. And you have become famous. I have often read of you in the newspapers, though I haven't seen anything in a while.

**OSWALD:** I haven't been able to paint much recently.

**MRS. ALVING:** Even a painter needs a little rest now and then.

**MANDERS:** Preparing yourself for your great work, no doubt.

**OSWALD:** Yes. Mother, when will lunch be ready?

**MRS. ALVING:** Soon, Darling. He has a splendid appetite.

**MANDERS:** And a taste for tobacco, I see.

**OSWALD:** It is my father's pipe. I found it upstairs.

**MANDERS:** That explains it.

**MRS. ALVING:** Explains what?

**MANDERS:** When Oswald appeared in the doorway, with that pipe in his mouth, he was the very image of his father.

**MRS. ALVING:** I think he looks like me.

**MANDERS:** Yes, but the shape of his mouth with the pipe.

**MRS. ALVING:** Not at all. I think it makes him look rather like a clergyman. Anyway, please put the pipe down. I don't want you smoking in the house.

**OSWALD:** (*He does so.*) As you wish. I just wanted to remember the taste. I smoked it once when I was a child

**MRS. ALVING:** I don't think so.

**OSWALD:** It was in Father's study. I must have been about four or five.

**MRS. ALVING:** You couldn't possibly remember something from when you were so young.

**OSWALD:** I remember it well. He put me on his knee and told me to smoke it like a man. And I smoked as hard as I could until I started sweating and feeling sick, and he then burst out laughing.

**MRS. ALVING:** It must have been a dream.

**OSWALD:** It wasn't a dream. Don't you remember? You came in and carried me to the nursery. Then I was sick and saw that you were crying. Did he often play practical jokes?

**MANDERS:** As a young man he was full of mischief.

**OSWALD:** And yet he achieved so much.

**MANDERS:** No doubt your father's good name will inspire you to do great things.

**OSWALD:** It should do.

**MANDERS:** It was good of you to come home for the ceremony in his honour.

**OSWALD:** I could do no less for my father.

**MRS. ALVING:** And I have done well to keep him so long.

**MANDERS:** You are staying for the winter, I hear.

**OSWALD:** My stay is indefinite. But it is good to be at home!

**MRS. ALVING:** Yes, isn't it? *(They embrace, a little awkwardly.)*

**MANDERS:** You were very young when you went out into the world, Oswald.

**OSWALD:** Perhaps too young.

**MRS. ALVING:** Nonsense. An only child can easily get spoiled if he stays at home.

**MANDERS:** But, surely a child's place is with his parents, Mrs. Alving.

**OSWALD:** I agree.

**MANDERS:** I don't mind saying this to your face, Oswald. You are, what, twenty-six or twenty-seven but never had chance to live in a proper home.

**OSWALD:** Well, there you're quite mistaken.

**MANDERS:** Really? I thought you had always lived with artists.

**OSWALD:** That is true.

**MANDERS:** Mostly young artists, so called "Bohemians".

**OSWALD:** Yes.

**MANDERS:** But my understanding is that few of these fellows could afford to set up a home and start a family.

**OSWALD:** It is true that there aren't many who could afford to get married.

**MANDERS:** Well, there you are.

**OSWALD:** But that doesn't mean they don't have a home. Many of them are very pleasant.

*MRS. ALVING follows the conversation with great interest.*

**MANDERS:** I don't mean a bachelor's flat. By a "home" I mean a house where a man lives with his wife and children.

**OSWALD:** Or with his children and their mother.

**MANDERS:** His children's mother!

**OSWALD:** Would you prefer it if they lived without their mother?

**MANDERS:** But these are illegitimate children. The product of an illicit relationship. Their parents are living in sin!

**OSWALD:** I have never noticed anything particularly sinful about the way they live.

**MANDERS:** But how can they live that way, for all the world to see?

**OSWALD:** What are they to do? They are young and marriage is expensive

**MANDERS:** What are they to do? I'll tell you what they should do. They should exercise self-restraint. That's what they should do.

**OSWALD:** Talking like that won't get you very far with young people in love.

**MRS. ALVING:** No, quite.

**MANDERS:** I am horrified that these people are allowed walk about in broad daylight. (*To MRS. ALVING.*) Was I not right to be concerned about your son living within such an immoral society?

**OSWALD:** I'll tell you something, Pastor Manders. I visited the homes of such families most Sundays and...

**MANDERS:** Sunday of all days!

**OSWALD:** Isn't that the day of relaxation? And I never heard an offensive word or witnessed anything that you might call immoral. But shall I tell you where I have witnessed immorality? Do you want to know?

**MANDERS:** No, I do not!

**OSWALD:** It is when respectable men; husbands and fathers from places like this, come to Paris and condescend to visit us in our humble homes. Well, let me tell you they know a thing or two about immorality. They talk about things we couldn't even imagine.

**MANDERS:** You mean men from this district?

**OSWALD:** Have you never heard our local model citizens verbalising about the depravity of foreign cities?

**MANDERS:** Well, yes.

**MRS. ALVING:** I have too.

**OSWALD:** Then you may take their word for it. They know what they are talking about, all right. They have practical experience! (*He puts his head in his hands.*) I can't bear it. That such hypocrites should defile our beautiful, free and glorious life out there.

**MRS. ALVING:** You mustn't get excited, Oswald. It's not good for you.

**OSWALD:** You are right, Mother. It is this terrible feeling of being tired the whole time. I think I will go and get some fresh air before lunch. I'm sorry, Pastor Manders, I know you cannot agree with me, but I had to say my piece. (*He exits.*)

**MRS. ALVING:** My poor boy!

**MANDERS:** This is what he has become. The Prodigal Son, indeed! What do you say about all of this?

**MRS. ALVING:** I say that he is right.

**MANDERS:** Right? Right! Did you hear him?

**MRS. ALVING:** Here, in my loneliness, I have come to think the same. I have never dared to say anything, but now my boy shall speak for me.

**MANDERS:** I pity you, Mrs. Alving. I must speak to you, not as your business adviser or as a friend of both you and your husband but as a priest. The same priest who spoke to you all those years ago when you were first married.

**MRS. ALVING:** And what does the priest have to say?

**MANDERS:** Tomorrow will be the tenth anniversary of your husband's death. Tomorrow the memorial in his honour will be unveiled. Tomorrow I shall have to speak to the whole assembled multitude. But today I speak to you alone.

**MRS. ALVING:** Very well.

**MANDERS:** Do you remember that after less than a year of marriage you stood on the verge of an abyss? That you forsook your home and fled from your husband? Then refused to return to him, however much he begged?

**MRS. ALVING:** Have you forgotten how miserable I was in that first year?

**MANDERS:** What right have we to happiness? We have simply to do our duty, Mrs. Alving! And your duty was to stick with the man you had once chosen, and to whom you were bound by holy ties.

**MRS. ALVING:** You know very well what sort of life Alving was leading.

**MANDERS:** I heard the rumours, of course, and, if they are true then I am the last to approve, but a wife is not appointed to be her husband's judge. It was your duty to bear the cross with humility, but instead you threw away the cross and risked your reputation along with others.

**MRS. ALVING:** By "others" you mean you.

**MANDERS:** It was incredibly reckless of you to seek refuge with me.

**MRS. ALVING:** You were our priest. A close friend. Have you forgotten my feelings?

**MANDERS:** Yes, and on that account you can thank God that I had the strength to dissuade you from your intention and lead you back to your path of duty and the home of your husband.

**MRS. ALVING:** Yes, Pastor Manders, you certainly did that.

**MANDERS:** I was just a poor instrument in a Higher Hand. But what a blessing it proved to be. Did not things turn out exactly as I had predicted? Alving mended his ways and lived without sin for the rest of his days. And, not only was he a great benefactor to the whole district, but he included you in his undertakings so that you could share the public gratitude for his work. But now I must come to the second great mistake you made in your life.

**MRS. ALVING:** What do you mean?

**MANDERS:** Just as you disowned a wife's duty, you disowned a mother's too.

**MRS. ALVING:** Ah!

**MANDERS:** You have, your whole life, allowed yourself to be dominated by your free spirit. You have no self-discipline or control. You have cast of anything that was a burden to you. If it no longer pleased you to be a wife, then you left your husband. If you found it troublesome to be a mother then you sent your son away to be brought up by strangers.

**MRS. ALVING:** I sent him away, yes.

**MANDERS:** And, as a result, you have become a stranger to him.

**MRS. ALVING:** No! It is not true.

**MANDERS:** It is true. You sinned against your husband and you now recognise that by building a memorial to him. But recognise that you have also sinned against your son. But it isn't too late. You can still lead him back to the correct path. Save yourself so that you might also save him. Be a proper and decent mother to him. It has been my painful duty to say all this to you.

*A beat.*

**MRS. ALVING:** (*Slowly and with self-control.*) You have had your say, and tomorrow you are to speak publically in memory of my husband. I shall not speak tomorrow, but I shall speak frankly now as you have spoken frankly to me.

**MANDERS:** I suppose I must allow you to make your excuses.

**MRS. ALVING:** Not excuses, but I do have something to say.

*A beat.*

**MANDERS:** Well?

**MRS. ALVING:** All that you have just said about my husband and me, and our life after you had brought me back to the path of duty, as you called it, about all of that, you know nothing from personal observation. From that moment you never set foot in our house again.

**MANDERS:** You and your husband left the town and came out here.

**MRS. ALVING:** In my husband's lifetime you never, once, came to see us. It was business that forced you to visit me when you had to see me about the orphanage.

**MANDERS:** (*Softly and hesitatingly.*) Helen, if that is meant as a reproach then I would beg you to bear in mind...

**MRS. ALVING:** -Your position. Yes, of course, I was a runaway wife. One can never be too careful when it comes to reckless women.

**MANDERS:** That is an exaggeration.

**MRS. ALVING:** Well, perhaps, but my point is that your judgment with regard to my married life is founded upon nothing public opinion.

**MANDERS:** What of it?

**MRS. ALVING:** Well, then, Pastor Manders. I will tell you the truth. I have sworn to myself that one day you should know it. And you alone!

**MANDERS:** Then, what is the truth?

**MRS. ALVING:** The truth is that my husband was as depraved when he died as he had been all his life.

**MANDERS:** What do you say?

**MRS. ALVING:** After nineteen years of marriage, as depraved, in thought at least, as he was before you married us.

**MANDERS:** He sowed his wild oat as a young man, of course I acknowledge that, but to use the word "depraved"

**MRS. ALVING:** That was the word the doctor used.

**MANDERS:** The doctor?

**MRS. ALVING:** Yes.

**MANDERS:** I don't understand.

**MRS. ALVING:** You don't need to.

**MANDERS:** It almost makes me dizzy. Your whole married life was just a facade?

**MRS. ALVING:** Now you know the truth,

**MANDERS:** This is... It is just beyond me how you managed to keep this secret.

**MRS. ALVING:** That was my battle, day after day. Things did improve, for a while, after Oswald was born, but it didn't last long. After that, things were twice as bad as I fought to prevent people knowing what sort of a man the boy had for a father. You know how he could charm people, no one would believe anything bad about him, so I had to put up with it whatever the cost. But then he did the most repulsive thing of all.

**MANDERS:** More repulsive than what you have told me already?

**MRS. ALVING:** I could just about tolerate his behaviour in town, but when he brought it to within these walls...

**MANDERS:** Here!

**MRS. ALVING:** Yes. Here in our own home. There in the dining room (*She points.*) I came in from the garden and I could hear the housemaid in there because the door was slightly ajar. Then I heard my husband enter the dining room and he said something to her, I couldn't quite hear what, but she gave a little giggle, there was a scrape of a chair and she said "Oh, Mr Alving, you mustn't. Let me go".

**MANDERS:** Just a bit of horseplay, surely.

**MRS. ALVING:** I soon found out what it was, Pastor Manders. He had his way with her, more than once and there were consequences.

**MANDERS:** Such things in this very house.



**MRS. ALVING:** I've put up with a lot in this house. To keep him at home I had to sit in his study with him whilst he drank himself silly and boasted of his foul sexual exploits. Then he would get violent and I would have to drag him to bed. That was my life, night after night.

**MANDERS:** How could you bear it?

**MRS. ALVING:** I had to, for Oswald. But the housemaid was the last straw. I swore that it had to come to an end and I took the reins in my own hands. I took control, over him and everything else. I sent Oswald away. He was seven and starting to ask questions. It seemed to me that he would be poisoned just by breathing the air in this polluted house. So, I made sure he never entered this house again whilst his father was alive.

**MANDERS:** Such an ordeal. I had no idea.

**MRS. ALVING:** I wouldn't have survived if it wasn't for my work. And how I have worked! All the additions to the estate. All the improvements. All the things that earned my husband so much praise. Do you imagine he had the energy? No! He just lay on the sofa reading books about nobility. If he was going through one of his better periods it was I that urged him on. And when he sank back into drinking and womanising it was I who had to do everything.

**MANDERS:** And this man to whom you raise a memorial?

**MRS. ALVING:** The power of a bad conscience.

**MANDERS:** How do you mean?

**MRS. ALVING:** I always feared that the truth might come out, so I built the orphanage to kill any rumours. Besides...

**MANDERS:** What?

**MRS. ALVING:** I was determined that Oswald should inherit nothing from his father. The cost of the orphanage is exactly the fortune that Lieutenant Alving possessed when he married me. The fortune that made him such a good match in the eyes of my parents. Oswald shall not inherit that, but he will have everything that I have made since. Everything.

*OSWALD enters.*

**MRS. ALVING:** Back again already?

**OSWALD:** What can a man do when it rains the whole time? But I hear that dinner is ready. That's splendid.

*REGINA enters with a parcel.*

**REGINA:** A parcel has come for you, Mrs. Alving. *(She hands it to her.)* And dinner is ready.

**MRS. ALVING:** We'll be there in a moment.

**REGINA:** *(To OSWALD.)* Would Mr. Alving like red or white wine?

**OSWALD:** Rouge ou blanc? Both, I think.

**REGINA:** Tres Bien. Merci Monsieur. *(She exits.)*

**OSWALD:** I will help her open the bottles. *(He exits leaving the door slightly ajar.)*

**MRS. ALVING:** *(Who has opened the parcel.)* The sheet music for tomorrow.

**MANDERS:** I don't know how I shall be able to make my speech.

**MRS. ALVING:** You will get through it somehow.

**MANDERS:** Yes. I suppose I must.

**MRS. ALVING:** Then this hateful comedy will be at an end. Once the corpse has left this house it will be just my son and me.

*From the dining room we hear REGINA giggle, followed by the scrape of a chair.*

**REGINA:** (*Off.*) Oh, Mr Alving, you mustn't. Let me go.

**MRS. ALVING:** (*In distress.*) Oh!

*She stares at the half-open door. OSWALD is heard laughing. A bottle is uncorked.*

**MRS. ALVING:** Ghosts!

**MANDERS:** Is it possible! Regina? Is she?

**MRS. ALVING:** Yes. Yes, she is. Come. Not a word!

*She seizes MANDERS by the arm and they exit*

End of ACT I

## ACT II

*The same room. MANDERS and MRS. ALVING enter from the dining-room.*

**MRS. ALVING:** (*Looking back.*) Aren't you joining us Oswald?

**OSWALD:** (*Off.*) No, thank you. I think I shall go for a walk.

**MRS. ALVING:** Yes, it does seem a little brighter. Regina!

**REGINA:** (*Off.*) Yes, Mrs. Alving?

**MRS. ALVING:** Go down to the laundry, and help with the decorations for tomorrow.

**REGINA:** Yes, Mrs. Alving.

*MRS. ALVING closes the door.*

**MANDERS:** I am still quite upset. I don't know how I managed to eat single bite.

**MRS. ALVING:** I am the same. But what is to be done now?

**MANDERS:** I am really at quite a loss. I have no experience of this sort of thing.

**MRS. ALVING:** Well, I am sure that he has not yet done anything other than flirt with her. Thank heavens for that.

**MANDERS:** Indeed.

**MRS. ALVING:** So, she must leave this house immediately.

**MANDERS:** Yes, of course. She must go to her father.

**MRS. ALVING:** But he is not her father.

**MANDERS:** Are you absolutely certain that you are not mistaken?

**MRS. ALVING:** There is no doubt about it. Johanna confessed everything and Alving didn't even try to deny it. We just had to hush it up.

**MANDERS:** Yes, I see.

**MRS. ALVING:** I gave her a tidy sum of money to keep quiet. Everything else was down to her. She was already acquainted with Engstrand and told him some story about a foreign visitor who had got her pregnant and paid her well the keep quiet. So with an eye on the money Engstrand came to see you, told you that he had got the girl into trouble himself and that he needed to marry her in haste.

**MANDERS:** He begged me to marry them. He seemed so full of remorse and, yet, it was only for the money. Was it a large sum?

**MRS. ALVING:** Three hundred dollars.

**MANDERS:** Just think of it. To marry a fallen woman for three hundred miserable dollars.

**MRS. ALVING:** I married a fallen man.

**MANDERS:** That's different.

**MRS. ALVING:** Only the price was different.

**MANDERS:** Nonsense. You were following your heart.

**MRS. ALVING:** I thought you understood where my heart had strayed to at the time.

**MANDERS:** Had I understood anything of the sort, I would not have been a daily visitor in your husband's house.

**MRS. ALVING:** At any rate, let us agree that I was not following my heart.

**MANDERS:** Well then, you were taking the advice of your family.

**MRS. ALVING:** Yes, that is true. They added up his total worth and told me that it would be madness to turn it down. If only they could see how things worked out.

**MANDERS:** Nobody can be held responsible for the result. At least your marriage was legal and above board.

**MRS. ALVING:** Legal and above board! With those words you describe the root cause of half the misery in this world.

**MANDERS:** That is a terrible thing to say.

**MRS. ALVING:** I'm learning to speak freely

**MANDERS:** What do you mean?

**MRS. ALVING:** I should never have tried to hide my husband's secret, but I was afraid of what people would say about me. I was such a coward.

**MANDERS:** A coward?

**MRS. ALVING:** I was afraid that people would take pity on the poor man with the runaway wife.

**MANDERS:** They would have some justification in saying that.

**MRS. ALVING:** (*Looking at him sternly.*) If I were not such a coward I would tell Oswald that his father was a drunk and a philander.

**MANDERS:** Heavens above!

**MRS. ALVING:** And then I should tell him everything I have told you. Every word.

**MANDERS:** I'm shocked.

**MRS. ALVING:** But I am too much of a coward.

**MANDERS:** What you call cowardice is your duty as a mother. Have you forgotten that a son is supposed to honour and respect his father?

**MRS. ALVING:** In general terms, I agree but what about Captain Alving?

**MANDERS:** Is there no voice in your mother's heart that forbids you to shatter your son's ideals?

**MRS. ALVING:** But what about the truth?

**MANDERS:** But what about the ideals?

**MRS. ALVING:** Oh, ideals, ideals! If only I were not such a coward!

**MANDERS:** Do not despise ideals, Mrs. Alving. Your son may not believe in much, but he does, at least, believe in his father.

**MRS. ALVING:** I suppose that is true.

**MANDERS:** And you encouraged that with your letters. You have established a happy illusion in your son's heart. You should be proud of that.

**MRS. ALVING:** I'm not sure about that. Anyway, whatever happens we must not let him ruin Regina's life.

**MANDERS:** Absolutely.

**MRS. ALVING:** If I were not such a coward I would tell him to marry her or leave her alone.

**MANDERS:** Marry her! His own half-sister?

**MRS. ALVING:** As you well know, that is not as uncommon as people like to think.

**MANDERS:** But you are his mother! Surely you couldn't contemplate such a thing.

**MRS. ALVING:** No, because I am a coward.

**MANDERS:** Are you telling me that, if it were not for your cowardice, you would allow such a relationship?

**MRS. ALVING:** Are we not all descended from such a relationship, Pastor Manders?

**MANDERS:** I have no intention of discussing such things with you. You are not in the right frame of mind. But, I am shocked that you call your misgivings cowardice.

**MRS. ALVING:** Let me tell you what I mean. I am timid and faint-hearted because of the ghosts that hang about me. Ghosts that I can never quite shake off.

**MANDERS:** Ghosts?

**MRS. ALVING:** Yes, ghosts. When I heard Regina and Oswald in there, it was as though I could see ghosts right in front of me. But I almost think we are all ghosts, Pastor Manders. It is not just what we have inherited from our parents that haunts us but all manner of outdated ideas and beliefs. They might not be real, but they are lodged within us, and we cannot shake them off. Whenever I pick up a newspaper, I see ghosts between the lines. There must be ghosts all over the country, as numerous as grains of sand in the sea, and here we all are, afraid to go into the light.

**MANDERS:** This is what you get from reading those disgusting books of yours.

**MRS. ALVING:** You are wrong. It has come from you.

**MANDERS:** Me!

**MRS. ALVING:** Yes. You are the one who forced me to accept my obligations. Forced me back to my husband. Told me that I had to do the right thing when I knew in my heart that it was wrong. That is when I started picking at the seams and the whole thing unravelled in front of me.

**MANDERS:** Is this my reward for the hardest battle of my life?

**MRS. ALVING:** Call it your most pitiful defeat.

**MANDERS:** It was my greatest victory, Helen. The victory over temptation.

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

**MANDERS:** Was it a crime to tell you to go back to your husband when you threw yourself at me?

**MRS. ALVING:** Yes, I think so.

**MANDERS:** We do not understand each other.

**MRS. ALVING:** Not anymore.

**MANDERS:** Not ever. Never have I thought of you as anything other than another man's wife.

**MRS. ALVING:** Really?

**MANDERS:** Helen!

**MRS. ALVING:** How easily people forget how they used to be.

**MANDERS:** Not me. I am the same as I have always been.

**MRS. ALVING:** Well. There is no point in dwelling on the past. These days you are up to your ears in your committees, and I am doing battle with my ghosts.

**MANDERS:** At least I can help you with that. After everything that I have heard from you today, I cannot allow that girl to remain in this house.

**MRS. ALVING:** Don you think the best plan would be to arrange a good marriage?

**MANDERS:** Without doubt, but in the meantime, she ought to be at home with her father. Oh, but Engstrand isn't her father. To think how that man deceived me!

*There is a knock at the door from the garden.*

**MRS. ALVING:** Who can this be? Come in!

*ENGSTRAND enters wearing his Sunday best.*

**ENGSTRAND:** I'm begging your pardon, there were no servants around, so I took the liberty of knocking myself.

**MRS. ALVING:** Yes, yes. What do you want?

**ENGSTRAND:** I wondered if I might have a word or two with his Reverence.

**MANDERS:** With me?

**ENGSTRAND:** Yes. I was just thinking now that we have finished down at the orphanage it might be nice if we had a service to mark the occasion.

**MANDERS:** A service?

**ENGSTRAND:** I mean, if you don't think it proper...

**MANDERS:** Of course it is proper, but...

**ENGSTRAND:** I've been in the habit of holding a little prayer meeting in the evenings, myself...

**MRS. ALVING:** You?

**ENGSTRAND:** Yes, every now and then. But I am just poor, common man and I thought that as Pastor Manders happens to be here...

**MANDERS:** Well, yes, but first I must ask you if you are in the right frame of mind for a service. Is your conscience clear?

**ENGSTRAND:** Oh, Goodness. Let us not talk of conscience.

**MANDERS:** That is precisely what I do want to talk about.

**ENGSTRAND:** Well, a man's conscience can be bad enough now and then.

**MANDERS:** At least you admit it. Now, perhaps you would like a clean breast of it and tell me the truth about Regina.

**MRS. ALVING:** Pastor Manders!

**MANDERS:** Please allow me.

**ENGSTRAND:** About Regina! Lord, is there something wrong with her?

**MANDERS:** We hope not. What I mean is that you claim she is your daughter.

**ENGSTRAND:** Er. Well, you know about me and poor Johanna.

**MANDERS:** I know what you told me but now I know what Johanna told Mrs Alving before she left her service.

**ENGSTRAND:** She told her?

**MANDERS:** The whole story.

**ENGSTRAND:** The Lord forgive her. She took an oath never to tell.

**MANDERS:** You have hidden the truth from me all these years.

**ENGSTRAND:** I can't deny it.

**MANDERS:** This is how you reward me after everything I have done for you. Well, that's it. I'm done with you.

**ENGSTRAND:** Pastor Manders, I beg you.

**MANDERS:** How can you possibly justify yourself?

**ENGSTRAND:** If put yourself in poor Johanna's position.

**MANDERS:** Me?

**ENGSTRAND:** What I mean is that we should not judge a poor woman so harshly.

**MANDERS:** I am not. It is you that I am admonishing.

**ENGSTRAND:** Might I ask you a question?

**MANDERS:** If you must.

**ENGSTRAND:** Isn't it right and proper for a man to raise up the fallen?

**MANDERS:** Most certainly it is.

**ENGSTRAND:** And isn't a man bound to keep his sacred word?

**MANDERS:** Well, of course, but...

**ENGSTRAND:** When Johanna had got into trouble through that foreign visitor it was me that she turned to. I had asked her once or twice before, but what with my gammy leg she'd always turned me down. You will recall how I got thrown down the stairs by a group of drunken sailors whilst I was trying to show them the errors of their ways.

**MANDERS:** Yes, yes. Go on.

**ENGSTRAND:** Well, she confessed to me but I couldn't help but take pity on her and make an honest woman of her so that people would never know that she had gone astray.

**MANDERS:** Yes, that's all very well. But what about the money?

**ENGSTRAND:** Money? What money?

**MANDERS:** (*Looking at MRS. ALVING*) I am given to understand...

**ENGSTRAND:** Oh, wait a minute! Yes, Johanna did mention a sum of money. I told her to throw it back in the fellow's face, but he was already gone so there was no point in that. So, I told her I wanted nothing to do with it, and she should use it for the poor child's education. And, as far as I know, she did. Every penny of it.

**MANDERS:** I see. Well that does change things.

**ENGSTRAND:** I've done my best to be a loving husband and good father but just because I've done a good deed I am not the type to boast. Besides, when I do have the honour of seeing you I have precious little time and so many sins to confess. A man's conscience, Pastor Manders...

**MANDERS:** Give me your hand, Jacob Engstrand. (*He does.*) There. I have misjudged you.

**ENGSTRAND:** Please forgive me, Pastor Manders.

**MANDERS:** No, it is you who should forgive me for misunderstanding you. I just wish there was something I could do to show my regret.

**ENGSTRAND:** You would do something for me?

**MANDERS:** With all my heart.

**ENGSTRAND:** Well, there is something, but no. I shouldn't ask you.

**MANDERS:** Please do. I beg you.

**ENGSTRAND:** Well then, it's just this. With the bit of money I've saved here, I was thinking I might set up a Sailors' Home down in the town.



**MRS. ALVING:** You?

**ENGSTRAND:** Yes. A kind of refuge. There are so many temptations facing a sailor when he comes ashore, I had an idea of providing a kind of home from home where they might live under a father's watchful eye, so to speak.

**MANDERS:** What do you say to this, Mrs. Alving?

**ENGSTRAND:** I have a little to start, but if I could be given a helping hand...

**MANDERS:** It sounds like a wonderful idea. I'll come down to the orphanage and talk it over with you shortly. You may go and prepare for the service. I believe you are in the right frame of mind.

**ENGSTRAND:** I am, Pastor Manders, I am. Goodbye, Mrs Alving and thank you kindly. Take good care of Regina for me.

*ENGSTRAND wipes away a tear and exits.*

**MANDERS:** Well, what do you say of that man now, Mrs. Alving? That was a very different account of matters, was it not?

**MRS. ALVING:** Yes, it certainly was.

**MANDERS:** It just goes to show how careful one has to be when judging our fellow creatures. But what a joy to find out that we were wrong. Don't you think so?

**MRS. ALVING:** I think you are, and will always be, a great big baby, Manders.

**MANDERS:** Me?

**MRS. ALVING:** *(Laying her hands upon his shoulders.)* And I could hug you right now.

**MANDERS:** *(Stepping back.)* Goodness, no! What an idea!

**MRS. ALVING:** You don't need to be afraid of me.

**MANDERS:** You have sometimes have an extravagant way of expressing yourself. I'm going down to the orphanage. I will look in again later.

*MANDERS collects his documents and exits to the garden. MRS. ALVING watches him leave and is about to exit to the dining room when she stops at the door and gasps.*

**MRS. ALVING:** Oswald, I thought you had gone out.

**OSWALD:** *(Off.)* I'm was finishing my cigar.

**MRS. ALVING:** I thought you had gone for a little walk.

**OSWALD:** *(Off.)* In weather like this?

*A glass clinks.*

**OSWALD:** *(Off.)* Wasn't that Pastor Manders that went out just now?

**MRS. ALVING:** Yes; he went down to the orphanage.

*Another clink*

**MRS. ALVING:** Oswald, be careful with that liqueur. It is quiet strong.

**OSWALD:** (*Off.*) It keeps out the damp.

**MRS. ALVING:** Wouldn't you rather be in here with me?

**OSWALD:** (*Off.*) Oh, all right then. Just a tiny drop more. There! (*He enters closing the door behind him.*) Where has the pastor gone?

**MRS. ALVING:** I have just told you; he went down to the orphanage.

*MRS. ALVING sits on the sofa.*

**OSWALD:** Oh, yes; so you did.

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

**OSWALD:** But it is such a joy to sit at my mother's table and eat my mother's food.

**MRS. ALVING:** My darling boy!

**OSWALD:** There is nothing else I can do. It's not as if I could paint.

**MRS. ALVING:** Why not?

**OSWALD:** In this sort of weather? There hasn't been a speck of sunshine! Oh, God. Not being able to work!

**MRS. ALVING:** Perhaps you shouldn't have come.

**OSWALD:** I had to.

**MRS. ALVING:** I would rather sacrifice the joy of having you here than see you...

**OSWALD:** Does it really make you so happy to have me at home?

**MRS. ALVING:** Of course it does.

**OSWALD:** Really? I wouldn't have thought it would make much difference to you either way?

**MRS. ALVING:** That;s a terrible thing to say!

**OSWALD:** But you've managed to get by without me all this time.

**MRS. ALVING:** I have managed, yes.

*A beat.*

**OSWALD:** May I sit beside you?

**MRS. ALVING:** (*Makes room for him.*) Of course.

**OSWALD:** (*Sits down.*) There is something I have to tell you.

**MRS. ALVING:** What?

**OSWALD:** I can't go on hiding it any longer.

**MRS. ALVING:** Hiding what? What is it?

**OSWALD:** I could never bring myself to write to you about it.

**MRS. ALVING:** Oswald, what is it? What's the matter?

**OSWALD:** Since I came home I have tried to put it out of my mind, but...

**MRS. ALVING:** (*Rising.*) What is it Oswald? You must tell me everything.

**OSWALD:** (*Takes her hand and gently pulls her down.*) Sit down and stay calm and I will. When I complained that I was tired after my journey. Well, it isn't just normal fatigue that anyone might get.

**MRS. ALVING:** (*Tries to jump up but OSWALD still has her hand.*) Are you ill?

**OSWALD:** Be still, mother. I'm not ill in the general sense. I'm not what people would normally call ill, but it is like I have lost the will to do anything. I just can't... I don't want to... I can't do anything. I'll never work again. Never. (*He buries his head in his hands.*)

**MRS. ALVING:** Oswald! Look at me! What is the matter?.

**OSWALD:** (*Sits up*) I feel like a walking corpse.

**MRS. ALVING:** But, why? How did this happen?

**OSWALD:** I don't know. That's what I don't understand. I don't feel like I have been reckless.

**MRS. ALVING:** I am sure you haven't.

**OSWALD:** I have lived a moderate life but still I am affected like this.

**MRS. ALVING:** But, I'm sure it will pass, my darling. It is just exhaustion. You have been working too hard.

**OSWALD:** That's what I thought, at first, but it is not that.

**MRS. ALVING:** Tell me everything,

**OSWALD:** It started after the last time I visited. As soon as I got back to Paris I began to have violent headaches, as though someone had my head in a vice and was slowly tightening it. Initially, I thought it was just a really bad version of the headaches I used to get as a child,

**MRS. ALVING:** Yes, I remember.

**OSWALD:** But I soon found it was not the same at all. I couldn't concentrate, I couldn't work. I had no energy. I felt dizzy. Finally, I went to see a doctor. Then I learned the truth.

**MRS. ALVING:** What is it, child?

**OSWALD:** He was, supposedly, one of the finest doctors in Paris. I told him my symptoms, and then he set to started asking me lots of quite irrelevant questions until at last he said that there had been something "vermoulu" about me from birth.

**MRS. ALVING:** What?

**OSWALD:** worm-eaten.

**MRS. ALVING:** I know what the word means but what did he mean by it

**OSWALD:** When I asked him to explain he just said; "The sins of the fathers are visited upon the children."

**MRS. ALVING:** (*Rising slowly.*) The sins of the fathers!

**OSWALD:** I nearly punched him!

**MRS. ALVING:** (*Walks away across the room.*) The sins of the fathers.

**OSWALD:** I told him that it was impossible. I showed him your letters and translated for him the passages relating to my father, and he said that, in that case, I must have brought it on myself.

**MRS. ALVING:** No, it is not true.

**OSWALD:** There is no other explanation possible. There is no one to blame but me. I have ruined my own life through being irresponsible. I have thrown away my health and my happiness.

**MRS. ALVING:** I am sure it is not as bad as all that.

**OSWALD:** (*With a flash of anger.*) What do you know? (*Then.*) I'm sorry, I'm sorry. It would be easier if you didn't love me.

**MRS. ALVING:** You are the only thing I care about in the world.

**OSWALD:** I know. I see it every time I come home and that makes it all the more difficult. But now that I have told you the whole story we needn't talk about it again today. I need a drink.

**MRS. ALVING:** A drink? But, Oswald...

**OSWALD:** Don't refuse me, mother. I must have something to drown these thoughts. (*He goes to the window. MRS. ALVING pulls the bell cord.*) Oh, this ceaseless rain! I have never had a glimpse of sun any time I have ever come home.

**MRS. ALVING:** You are not thinking of leaving?

**OSWALD:** I'm not thinking of anything. I cannot think of anything.

**REGINA:** (*Off.*) Did you ring, ma'am?

**MRS. ALVING:** Yes, Would you bring in the lamp?

**REGINA:** (*Off.*) Yes, ma'am.

**MRS. ALVING:** (*Goes across to OSWALD*) Be honest with me.

**OSWALD:** I think I have already told you too much.

*REGINA brings the lamp and sets it upon the table.*

**MRS. ALVING:** Regina, would you bring us a small bottle of champagne?

**REGINA:** Yes, ma'am. (*She exits.*)

**OSWALD:** Thank you. I knew you wouldn't let me go thirsty.

**MRS. ALVING:** My poor Oswald; how could I deny you anything now?

**OSWALD:** Is that true? Do you mean it?

**MRS. ALVING:** What?

**OSWALD:** That you couldn't deny me anything.

**MRS. ALVING:** My dear Oswald...

**OSWALD:** Hush!

**REGINA:** (*Entering carrying a tray with a half-bottle of champagne and two glasses, which she sets on the table.*) Shall I open it?

**OSWALD:** No, thanks. I will do it myself.

*REGINA exits.*

**MRS. ALVING:** (*Sits at the table.*) What do you mean?

**OSWALD:** (*Opening the bottle.*) First let us have a glass or two.

**MRS. ALVING:** Thanks, but not for me.

**OSWALD:** Well, if you won't, I will

*He fills his glass, empties it, fills it again and empties it again.*

**MRS. ALVING:** Well?

**OSWALD:** I thought you and Pastor Manders seemed very quiet at dinner today.

**MRS. ALVING:** Did you notice?

**OSWALD:** Yes. (*A beat.*) What do you think of Regina?

**MRS. ALVING:** What do I think?

**OSWALD:** Yes; isn't she lovely?

**MRS. ALVING:** You don't know her like I do.

**OSWALD:** What do you mean?

**MRS. ALVING:** Regina, unfortunately, was allowed to stay at home too long. I should have brought her here sooner.

**OSWALD:** Yes, but isn't she such a good-looking girl?

**MRS. ALVING:** She has many faults.

**OSWALD:** Don't we all? (*He fills and empties his glass again.*)

**MRS. ALVING:** But I am fond of her and wouldn't want her to come to any harm.

**OSWALD:** (*Standing.*) She is my only hope!

**MRS. ALVING:** (*Standing.*) What do you mean by that?

**OSWALD:** I need her. I cannot go on alone.

**MRS. ALVING:** But you have me.

**OSWALD:** That is why I came home but I see now that I cannot bear to live here.

**MRS. ALVING:** But, Oswald, I can nurse you through your illness.

**OSWALD:** If it were just the illness, I would stay. You are my best friend in the world.

**MRS. ALVING:** Yes, I am.

**OSWALD:** But it's all the torment, the gnawing remorse. And the dread. The terrible feeling of dread.

**MRS. ALVING:** What dread?

**OSWALD:** Don't ask me. I can't describe it.

*MRS. ALVING pulls the bell chord.*

**OSWALD:** What is it you want?

**MRS. ALVING:** I want you to be happy.

*REGINA enters.*

**MRS. ALVING:** More champagne. A large bottle.

*REGINA nods and exits.*

**MRS. ALVING:** Do you think we don't know how to live?

**OSWALD:** Don't you think she is beautiful?

**MRS. ALVING:** Sit down, Oswald; let us talk quietly.

**OSWALD:** You won't know this, but there is something I must do for Regina.

**MRS. ALVING:** You!

**OSWALD:** You see, she has always been asking me about Paris and last time I was home I asked her if she would like to go. I'd forgotten all about it, but she has been teaching herself French ever since in the expectation that I would take her there.

**MRS. ALVING:** Take her to Paris?

**OSWALD:** I had never really noticed her before but then I saw her beauty and her innocence and her willingness to give herself to me and I realised that she was my salvation.

**MRS. ALVING:** Oswald!

**OSWALD:** She is so full of the joy of life, she is just what I need.

*REGINA enters.*

**REGINA:** I'm sorry to have been so long, but I had to go to the cellar.

**OSWALD:** Please bring another glass.

**REGINA:** Mrs. Alving has a glass.

**OSWALD:** Bring one for yourself, Regina.

**REGINA:** (*Hesitatingly.*) Is it Mrs. Alving's wish?

**MRS. ALVING:** Bring the glass, Regina.

*REGINA exits.*

**OSWALD:** Have you noticed how she walks? Such confidence.

**MRS. ALVING:** This can never be, Oswald!

**OSWALD:** It must be. Can't you see that? There is no point in denying it.

*REGINA enters with a glass, which she keeps in her hand.*

**OSWALD:** Sit down, Regina.

*REGINA looks at MRS. ALVING.*

**MRS. ALVING:** Sit down.

*REGINA sits on a chair by the dining room door, still holding the empty glass in her hand.*

**MRS. ALVING:** Oswald. What were you saying about the joy of life?

**OSWALD:** Ah, the joy of life, mother. That's something you don't know much about in these parts. I have never felt it here.

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

**OSWALD:** Never when I'm at home. But you wouldn't understand.

**MRS. ALVING:** I think I am beginning to understand. Tell me more.

**OSWALD:** Well, there is the joy of work. Round here people are brought up to believe that work is a curse and a punishment for sin, and that life is something miserable, something to be endured until it is over.

**MRS. ALVING:** I can't argue with that.

**OSWALD:** But no one believes that in the wider world anymore. People understand the joy of being alive! Have you noticed that everything I have painted celebrates the joy of life? There is light and sunshine and faces radiant with happiness. That is why I am afraid to stay here with you. I am scared that all that beauty will turn to ugliness.

**MRS. ALVING:** Do you think that is what would happen?

**OSWALD:** I am sure of it. I know it. Anyone who tried to live the same life here as abroad would find it just wouldn't be the same.

**MRS. ALVING:** Yes, I see.

**OSWALD:** What do you see?

**MRS. ALVING:** I see it now how it happened. And now I must speak.

**OSWALD:** I don't understand you.

**REGINA:** (*Rising.*) Perhaps I ought to go?

**MRS. ALVING:** No. Stay. I want you both to hear this then you must decide.

**OSWALD:** Hush! The Pastor is here.

*MANDERS enters.*

**MANDERS:** We have had a splendid time down there.

**OSWALD:** So have we.

**MANDERS:** We must support Engstrand with his Sailors' Home and Regina must go to help him.

**REGINA:** No thank you, sir.

**MANDERS:** (*Noticing her for the first time.*) What? You're here? And with a glass in your hand!

**REGINA:** (*Hastily putting the glass down.*) Excuse me.

**OSWALD:** Regina is going with me to Paris, Mr. Manders.

**MANDERS:** Going with you!

**OSWALD:** Yes. As my wife. If she wishes it.

**MANDERS:** Merciful God!

**OSWALD:** Or she'll stay here, if I stay.

**MANDERS:** I am appalled.

**MRS. ALVING:** They will do neither. There is something you both need to know.

**MANDERS:** You mustn't, Helen!

**MRS. ALVING:** I must and I will. Don't worry, nobody's principles will suffer from it.

**OSWALD:** Mother, what are you talking about?

*Shout are heard from the outside.*

**REGINA:** (*Crossing to look out of the window.*) The men are shouting.

**OSWALD:** (*Joining her.*) What's going on? Where is that light coming from?

**REGINA:** (*Cries out.*) It is the orphanage. It is on fire!



**MRS. ALVING:** (*Joining them.*) On fire!

**MANDERS:** On fire! Impossible! I've just come from there.

*OSWALD exits to the garden.*

**MRS. ALVING:** The whole place is in a blaze!

**MANDERS:** This is a judgment upon this house of wickedness.

**MRS. ALVING:** Oh yes, it is a punishment all right. Come, Regina. (*She and REGINA exit to garden.*)

**MANDERS:** And we left it uninsured! (*He exits to the garden.*)

SCENE TWO

*As before. MRS. ALVING looks out of the window. REGINA enters from dining room.*

**MRS. ALVING:** The whole thing burnt to the ground!

**REGINA:** The basement is still burning.

**MRS. ALVING:** Why doesn't Oswald come home? There's nothing to be saved.

**REGINA:** Shall I fetch him?

**MRS. ALVING:** I'll go myself. *(She exits to the garden. MANDERS enters from dining room.)*

**MANDERS:** Where is Mrs. Alving?

**REGINA:** She has just gone down the garden.

**MANDERS:** This is the worst night of my life.

**REGINA:** Yes; isn't it a terrible misfortune?

**MANDERS:** Oh, don't. I can hardly bear to think of it.

**REGINA:** How can it have happened?

**MANDERS:** How would I know? I've had enough of that from your father.

**REGINA:** Of what?

**ENGSTRAND:** *(Entering from the dining room.)* through the hall.] Pastor Manders.

**MANDERS:** Can't you leave me alone?

**REGINA:** What's the matter?

**ENGSTRAND:** *(Aside to REGINA.)* Now, we have him. *(Aloud.)* To think it is all my fault. I should never have asked you to bless our little prayer meeting.

**MANDERS:** I assure you, Engstrand--

**ENGSTRAND:** You are the only one ever to have laid a finger on the candles down there.

**MANDERS:** So you say, but I cannot remember handling any candles.

**ENGSTRAND:** But I saw as clear as day. You snuffed the wick and threw it away among the shavings.

**MANDERS:** You saw it.

**ENGSTRAND:** Yes. *(He secretly winks at REGINA.)*

**MANDERS:** I don't understand it. It has never been my habit to snuff candles with my fingers.

**ENGSTRAND:** It looked careless to me. And it wasn't insured?

**MANDERS:** No. I have already told you.

**ENGSTRAND:** Not insured and you set fire to it. What a misfortune.

**MANDERS:** Yes.

**ENGSTRAND:** The newspapers will have a field day. No doubt they will pointing the finger at you.

**MANDERS:** I'm sure there will be all sorts of accusations and insinuations.

**MRS. ALVING:** (*Entering from the garden.*) He cannot be persuaded to leave the fire.

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

**MRS. ALVING:** At least you no longer have to give your speech, Pastor Manders.

**MANDERS:** I would have happily...

**MRS. ALVING:** It is all for the best. That Orphanage would not have done anyone any good.

**MANDERS:** Don't you think so?

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

**MANDERS:** It is a terrible misfortune, all the same.

**MRS. ALVING:** Let us be businesslike about it. Are you waiting for Pastor Manders, Engstrand?

**ENGSTRAND:** Yes, ma'am.

**MRS. ALVING:** Then sit down.

**ENGSTRAND:** Thank you, but I'd rather stand.

**MRS. ALVING:** (*To MANDERS.*) I suppose you are going by the steamer?

**MANDERS:** Yes. It leaves in an hour.

**MRS. ALVING:** Then please all the papers with you. I don't want to hear another word about this affair, I have other things to think of. I will give you power of attorney so that you can take care of everything.

**MANDERS:** Of course. The land will still be of some use. And the interest on the money in the bank could be used for some other charitable cause.

**ENGSTRAND:** My Sailors' Home, perhaps?

**MANDERS:** I have to say, that is not a bad suggestion. That must be considered.

**ENGSTRAND:** To hell with considering, how about deciding! Oh! Lord forgive me!

**MANDERS:** I cannot tell how long I shall be able to retain control of these things. Public opinion may force me into retirement. It depends upon the result of the official inquiry into the fire.

**ENGSTRAND:** It doesn't have to be so. Because here stands old Jacob Engstrand.

**MANDERS:** Yes, but...

**ENGSTRAND:** And Jacob Engstrand isn't the man to desert a friend in need. Think of me as your guardian angel.

**MANDERS:** I couldn't possibly.

**ENGSTRAND:** It isn't the first time I have taken on the responsibility for a mistake someone else has made.

*A beat.*

**MANDERS:** Jacob! You are a very rare thing in this world. You shall get your money for the Sailor's Home. Come, let us walk to the ferry together.

**ENGSTRAND:** *(To REGINA.)* You come along too, my lass. You shall live as snug as the yolk in an egg.

**REGINA:** Je préférerais mourir. *(She exits.)*

**MANDERS:** Good-bye, Mrs. Alving.

**MRS. ALVING:** Good-bye, Pastor Manders.

*REGINA returns with MANDERS' coat and helps him into it. OSWALD returns from the garden.*

**ENGSTRAND:** *(To REGINA.)* Good-bye, my child. You know where to find me. *(To MRS. ALVING and OSWALD.)* The refuge shall be called "Captain Alving's Home" and I promise that it shall be worthy of the Captain's memory.

*ENGSTRAND and MANDERS exit.*

**OSWALD:** What is he talking about?

**MRS. ALVING:** Oh, a kind of Home that he and Pastor Manders want to set up.

**OSWALD:** It will burn down like the other.

**MRS. ALVING:** What makes you say that?

**OSWALD:** Everything will burn. Anything that recalls father's memory is doomed. Here am I, burning down myself

**MRS. ALVING:** You shouldn't have stayed down there so long..

**OSWALD:** You are probably right.

**MRS. ALVING:** Let me dry your face, Oswald; you are quite wet. *(She does so with her pocket handkerchief.)*

**OSWALD:** Thanks, mother.

**MRS. ALVING:** Are you not tired. Would you like to sleep?

**OSWALD:** No. I never sleep. I only pretend. That will come soon enough.

**MRS. ALVING:** You really are ill, my poor boy.

**REGINA:** Is Mr. Alving ill?

**OSWALD:** Oh, do shut all the doors! This terrible feeling of dread.

**MRS. ALVING:** Close the doors, Regina.

*REGINA shuts the doors. MRS. ALVING sits by OSWALD.*

**MRS. ALVING:** There now! I am going to sit beside you--

**OSWALD:** Yes, do. And Regina shall stay here too. Regina shall be with me always. You will come to the rescue, Regina, won't you?

**REGINA:** I don't understand, Sir.

**OSWALD:** When the need comes.

**MRS. ALVING:** Oswald, you have your mother to come to the rescue

**OSWALD:** You? No, you cannot bring the kind of rescue that I need. Regina, can't you call me Oswald?

**REGINA:** I don't think Mrs. Alving would approve.

**MRS. ALVING:** You shall do soon. Meanwhile, come and sit with us.

*REGINA hesitatingly sits close to them.*

**MRS. ALVING:** Now, my poor suffering boy, I am going to take the burden off your mind--

**OSWALD:** You, mother?

**MRS. ALVING:** All the gnawing remorse and self-reproach you speak of.

**OSWALD:** You think you can do that?

**MRS. ALVING:** A little while ago you spoke of the joy of life and suddenly everything became clear to me.

**OSWALD:** What became clear?

**MRS. ALVING:** You should have known your father when he was a young man. He was brimming over with the joy of life!

**OSWALD:** Yes, I know he was.

**MRS. ALVING:** He had such vitality. He was like a breezy summer day. But then this child of joy had to live in this miserable little town with nothing but official duties to occupy him. He had nothing and no one to share his joy so the inevitable happened.

**OSWALD:** The inevitable?

**MRS. ALVING:** You told me yourself what would become of you if you stayed at home.

**OSWALD:** Do you mean to say that father...

**MRS. ALVING:** Your poor father found no outlet for the overpowering joy of life that was in him. And I brought no brightness into his home.

**OSWALD:** Not even you?

**MRS. ALVING:** I had been taught me a great deal about duties. That was all I knew. Duty. I'm afraid I made his home unbearable, so he looked elsewhere.

**OSWALD:** Why have you never mentioned this in your letters?

**MRS. ALVING:** I didn't want you to know what sort of a man your father was, but now I realise that it was my fault. He was a broken man before you were born.

**MRS. ALVING:** And every day I dwell on the fact that Regina has as much right to live in this house as you.

**OSWALD:** Regina!

**MRS. ALVING:** Yes, now you both know.

**OSWALD:** Regina!

*A beat.*

**REGINA:** So mother was that kind of woman.

**MRS. ALVING:** Your mother had many good qualities, Regina.

**REGINA:** Maybe, but she was that sort of woman all the same. I've often suspected it. Excuse me, ma'am, but may I be permitted to go away at once?

**MRS. ALVING:** Is that what you want, Regina?

**REGINA:** Yes, I do.

**OSWALD:** Go away now? Your place is here.

**REGINA:** Thank you, Mr Alving, or I suppose I should call you Oswald, but this isn't at all what I expected.

**MRS. ALVING:** Regina, I have been frank with you.

**REGINA:** No, you haven't. You never told me that Oswald was sick. And now I learn that he is my brother! I have better things to do with my life than live out here in this miserable place nursing an invalid brother!

**OSWALD:** Not even one who is so fond of you?

**REGINA:** No. A poor girl must make the best of her young days, or she'll be left out in the cold before she knows it. I, too, have the joy of life in me, Mrs. Alving!

**MRS. ALVING:** Don't throw yourself away, Regina.

**REGINA:** Oh, what must be, must be. If Oswald takes after his father, I daresay that I take after my mother. May I ask, ma'am, if Pastor Manders knows all this about me?

**MRS. ALVING:** He knows.

**REGINA:** Well then, I'd better hurry to catch ferry. The Pastor is easy to deal with and I have as much right to a little of that money as that brute of a carpenter.

**MRS. ALVING:** You are welcome to it, Regina.

**REGINA:** I think you might have brought me up as a gentleman's daughter, ma'am; it would have suited me better. But what does it matter? I may get to drink champagne with the best of them yet!

**MRS. ALVING:** If you ever need a home, Regina, come to me.

**REGINA:** No, thank you, ma'am. Pastor Manders will look after me. And if the worst comes to the worst, there's always "Captain Alving's Home"

**MRS. ALVING:** You'll be ruined.

**REGINA:** Oh, well. Fuck it! (*She exits.*)

**OSWALD:** (*Looking out of the window.*) Has she gone?

**MRS. ALVING:** Yes.

**OSWALD:** I think this was a mistake.

**MRS. ALVING:** Has what I have said about your father shocked you?

**OSWALD:** Not really. It was all news to me, of course, but what difference does it make?

**MRS. ALVING:** What difference does it make? That he was so terribly unhappy?

**OSWALD:** I pity him, of course.

**MRS. ALVING:** Is that all? Your own father!

**OSWALD:** I never knew my father. All I can remember is him sitting me on his knee and making me sick.

**MRS. ALVING:** Surely a son is supposed to love his father.

**OSWALD:** When the son has nothing to thank him for? Never really knew him? Why do you cling that old-fashioned idea of duty?

**MRS. ALVING:** Is that all it is?

**OSWALD:** Surely you can see that? It's just one of many outdated notions.

**MRS. ALVING:** Ghosts!

**OSWALD:** Yes; you could call them that.

**MRS. ALVING:** Don't you love me, either?

**OSWALD:** At least I know you.

**MRS. ALVING:** Is that it?

**OSWALD:** And, of course, I know you are very fond of me. I'm very grateful to have you, now that I am ill.

**MRS. ALVING:** I hate to say it, but it almost makes me happy that you are ill because it has brought you home to me. Now I have the chance to earn your love.

**OSWALD:** Yes, but this is all just talk. I am sick. I know I am being selfish but I have to just think of myself.

**MRS. ALVING:** I can be patient,

**OSWALD:** And cheerful?

**MRS. ALVING:** Of course. Have you stopped feeling so guilty?

**OSWALD:** Yes, but I still have this terrible feeling of dread.

**MRS. ALVING:** Dread?

**OSWALD:** This fear. Regina could have helped me.

**MRS. ALVING:** I don't understand.

**OSWALD:** It's late.

**MRS. ALVING:** It's almost dawn. It looks like the weather is clearing. The sun will soon be up.

**OSWALD:** I'm glad of that. It will be good to see the sun even if I cannot work.

**MRS. ALVING:** You will soon be able to work. Now that you have rid yourself of those depressing thoughts.

**OSWALD:** Thank you for that, but there is one more thing.

**MRS. ALVING:** What?

**OSWALD:** Let us sit and talk.

**MRS. ALVING:** Yes, let's do that.

*They sit together.*

**OSWALD:** The sun will rise and you will know everything. Then I will no longer be frightened.

**MRS. ALVING:** What is it that you want to tell me?

**OSWALD:** Mother, you said that you could not deny me anything.

**MRS. ALVING:** Yes, I remember.

**OSWALD:** And you'll stick to that?

**MRS. ALVING:** You may rely on it. I have nothing to live for but you.

**OSWALD:** Very well, I shall tell you. But you must remain strong.

**MRS. ALVING:** What is it?

**OSWALD:** You mustn't scream and shout or get excited. You must promise me that.

**MRS. ALVING:** I promise.

**OSWALD:** Very well, this is what I need to tell you. This fatigue, this inability to even think about work, that is not the illness.

**MRS. ALVING:** Then what is it?

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**OSWALD:** The disease that I have inherited is in here. (*He points to his head.*)



**MRS. ALVING:** Oswald! No!

**OSWALD:** Don't scream and shout. I can't bear it. Yes, it is lurking in my head and can strike at any moment.

**MRS. ALVING:** It's not true. I don't believe it.

**OSWALD:** I had an attack in Paris. It was soon over but that is when the fear started and I knew that I had to come home.

**MRS. ALVING:** Oswald...

**OSWALD:** I wouldn't mind so much if I were terminally ill with an ordinary illness. I am not afraid of dying. But this! The doctor said it would settle in gradually, a softening of the brain. It almost sounds beautiful, like a soft fruit. But the reality is that I would be like a child needing constant care.

**MRS. ALVING:** A child has his mother to care for him.

**OSWALD:** That's exactly what I am afraid of. I can't bear the thought of becoming old and grey whilst reliant on you to feed and change me. And now you have taken Regina from me. She would have helped me.

**MRS. ALVING:** What would she do for you that I wouldn't?

**OSWALD:** After my attack in Paris the doctor told me that the next time, and there is certain to be a next time, then there is no hope.

**MRS. ALVING:** That was heartless of him.

**OSWALD:** I demanded that he told me. I told him I had to make preparations. And so I have. (*He takes a small box from his pocket and opens it.*) Do you see this?

**MRS. ALVING:** What is it?

**OSWALD:** Morphine.

**MRS. ALVING:** Oswald!

**OSWALD:** I've been saving them up. I have twelve tablets.

**MRS. ALVING:** Give me the box!

**OSWALD:** Not yet. (*He puts it back in his pocket.*)

**MRS. ALVING:** I cannot bear this!

**OSWALD:** You must. If Regina were here I would have told her what I have told you and begged her to come to my rescue. And she would have done it, I know she would.

**MRS. ALVING:** She wouldn't.

**OSWALD:** When she saw me lying there helpless, like a little new born baby, impotent, lost and beyond all hope.

**MRS. ALVING:** She would never have done it.

**OSWALD:** Yes, she would. You heard her. She wouldn't waste her life nursing a hopeless invalid like me.

**MRS. ALVING:** Then thank God she isn't here.

**OSWALD:** So, now it is you that must come to my rescue.

**MRS. ALVING:** Me!

**OSWALD:** Who else?

**MRS. ALVING:** Your mother!

**OSWALD:** For that very reason.

**MRS. ALVING:** I gave you life!

**OSWALD:** I never asked for it. And what sort of life have you given me? Now you must take it back.

**MRS. ALVING:** No!

*MRS. ALVING runs from the room. OSWALD runs after her.*

**OSWALD:** *(Off.)* Where are you going?

**MRS. ALVING:** *(Off.)* To fetch the doctor. Let me go.

**OSWALD:** *(Off.)* No. You shall not go out. And no one shall come in. I am locking the door.

*The sound of the key turning in the lock is heard. MRS. ALVING enters followed by OSWALD. She sits with her head in her hands. He sits beside her.*

**MRS. ALVING:** My child.

**OSWALD:** If you love me, how can you watch me suffer?

**MRS. ALVING:** *(After a moment's silence she puts out her hand.)* Here is my hand.

**OSWALD:** *(Placing his hand in hers.)* You'll do it?

**MRS. ALVING:** If it should ever be necessary. But I can't believe that it will.

**OSWALD:** Thank you.

*MRS. ALVING stands and goes to look out of the window. Day is breaking. The lamp on the table still burns. She comes up behind him and puts her hands on his shoulders.*

**MRS. ALVING:** Do you feel calmer now?

**OSWALD:** Yes.

**MRS. ALVING:** These terrible thoughts. They are just your imagination. You have had a lot of upset and it all became too much for you but you are safe now. You are here with your mother and you can rest and have anything you desire. The crisis is over.

*The sun has risen. It is the start of a glorious day. MRS. ALVING turns off the lamp.*

**MRS. ALVING:** Do you see the sunshine? It will be a beautiful day. The first of many.

*OSWALD sits motionless with his back to the window.*

**OSWALD:** Mother, give me the sun.

**MRS. ALVING:** What was that?

**OSWALD:** (*In a dull, toneless voice.*) The sun. The sun.

**MRS. ALVING:** Oswald, what is the matter?

*The room is now very bright. OSWALD'S head lolls to one side. His face is without expression, he stares without seeing.*

**MRS. ALVING:** What is this? (*Panicking.*) Oswald! What is the matter with you? (*Falls on her knees and shakes him.*) Oswald! Oswald! Look at me! Don't you know me?

**OSWALD:** (*Tonelessly, as before.*) The sun. The sun.

*MRS. ALVING stands and entwines her hands in her hair.*

**MRS. ALVING:** I cannot stand it. Never! Where does he have them?

*MRS. ALVING takes the pill box from OSWALD'S pocket and holds it in front of her staring at it in horror.*

**MRS. ALVING:** No! No! Yes! No!

**OSWALD:** The sun. The sun.

*Blackout.*

THE END