

# LEONARDA

Bjornstjerne M. Bjornson

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# LEONARDA

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- ACT I
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A PLAY IN FOUR ACTS

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

The BISHOP.

CORNELIA, his sister.

HAGBART, his nephew.

The GRANDMOTHER.

LEONARDA FALK.

AAGOT, her niece.

GENERAL ROSEN.

CHIEF JUSTICE ROST.

MRS. ROST.

PEDERSEN, agent to Mrs. Falk.

HANS.

A Maid.

## ACT I

(SCENE. A large room in LEONARDA FALK's house. At the back, folding doors which are standing open. Antique furniture. LEONARDA, dressed in a riding-habit, is standing beside a writing-desk on the left, talking to her agent PEDERSEN.)

**Leonarda.** It is a complete loss.

**Pedersen.** But, Mrs. Falk

**Leonarda.** A loss, every scrap of it. I can't sell burnt bricks. How much is there of it? Two kilns' full, that is 24,000 bricks at their present price about thirty pounds' worth. What am I to do with you? send you about your business?

**Pedersen.** Madam, it is the first time

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**Leonarda.** No, indeed it is not; that is to say, it is certainly the first time the bricks have been burnt, but your accounts have been wrong over and over again, so that I have been led into sending out faulty invoices. What is the matter with you?

**Pedersen.** Madam, I beg .

[Enter HANS.]

**Hans.** Your horse is saddled, madam, and the General is coming up the avenue.

**Leonarda.** Very well. (HANS goes out.) Have you taken to drink, Pedersen?

**Pedersen.** No, madam.

**Leonarda.** That wouldn't be like you. But what is it? You look quite changed. Pedersen! I believe I know! I saw you rowing back across the river last night, from the summer-house in the wood. Are you in love? (PEDERSEN turns away.) So that is it. And crossed in love? (She goes up to him, puts her hand on his shoulder and stands with her back turned to the audience, as he does.) Are you engaged to her?

**Pedersen.** Yes.

**Leonarda.** Then she is not treating you well? She is not true to you? (Stoops and looks into his face.) And you love her in spite of it? (Moves away from him.) Then you are a weak man, Pedersen. We cannot possibly love those who are false to us. (Draws on one of her gloves.) We may suffer horribly for a while; but love them no!

**Pedersen** (still turning away from her). It is easy for those to talk who have not experienced it.

**Leonarda.** Experienced it? You never can tell that. Come to me this evening at seven o'clock.

**Pedersen.** Yes, madam.

**Leonarda.** I will talk things over with you then. We will go for a stroll together.

**Pedersen.** Thank you, madam.

**Leonarda.** I believe I may be able to help you in your trouble, Pedersen. That is all right don't think any more about the bricks, or of what I said. Forgive me! (Holds out her hand to him.)

**Pedersen** (grasping her hand). Oh, madam!

[Enter GENERAL ROSEN.]

**Rosen.** Good morning! (PEDERSEN crosses the room.) Bless my soul, Pedersen, you look like a pat of melting butter! (PEDERSEN goes out. ROSEN turns to LEONARDA.) Have you been playing father confessor so early in the morning, and on such a fine day too? That is too bad. By the way, have you heard from Aagot?

**Leonarda** (putting on her hat). No, I don't know what has come over the child. It is close on a fortnight since

**Rosen.** She is enjoying herself. I remember when I was enjoying myself I never used to write letters.

**Leonarda** (looking at him). You were enjoying yourself last night, I rather think?

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**Rosen.** Do I show it? Dear, dear! I thought that after a bath and a ride

**Leonarda.** This sort of thing cannot go on!

**Rosen.** You know quite well that if I can't be here I have to go to my club.

**Leonarda.** But can't you go to your club without ? (Stops, with a gesture of disgust.)

**Rosen.** I know what you mean, worse luck. But they always give one a glass too much.

**Leonarda.** One glass? Say three!

**Rosen.** Three, if you like. You know I never was good at counting.

**Leonarda.** Well, now you can go for your ride alone.

**Rosen.** Oh, but

**Leonarda.** Yes, I am not going for a ride to-day with a man who was tipsy last night. (Takes off her hat.) Hans! (HANS is heard answering her from without.) Put my horse up for the present!

**Rosen.** You are punishing yourself as well as me, you know. You ought to be out on a day like this and it is a sin to deprive the countryside of the pleasure of seeing you!

**Leonarda.** Will nothing ever make you take things seriously?

**Rosen.** Yes. When the day comes that you are in need of anything, I will be serious.

**Leonarda.** And you propose to hang about here waiting, till I have some ill luck? You will have to wait a long time, I hope. (Goes to her desk.)

**Rosen.** I hope so too! because meanwhile I shall be able to continue coming here.

**Leonarda.** Till you get your orders from America.

**Rosen.** Of course till I get my orders from Sherman.

**Leonarda.** You have not had any orders, then?

**Rosen.** No.

**Leonarda.** It is beginning to look very suspicious. How long is it since I made you write to him?

**Rosen.** Oh, I am sure I forget.

**Leonarda.** It has just struck me . I suppose you did write?

**Rosen.** Of course I did. I always do what you tell me.

**Leonarda.** You stand there twirling your moustache and when you do that I always know there is some nonsense going on .

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**Rosen.** How can you suppose such a thing?

**Leonarda.** You have never written! Why on earth did that never strike me before?

**Rosen.** I have written repeatedly, I assure you!

**Leonarda.** But not to Sherman? You have not reported yourself for service again?

**Rosen.** Do you remember the Russian cigarettes I have so often spoken of? I have got some now. I brought a few with me to try; may I offer you one?

**Leonarda.** Are you not ashamed to look me in the face?

**Rosen.** I do everything you tell me

**Leonarda.** You have been putting me off with evasions for more than two months playing a perfect comedy with me! To think that an officer, who has been through the American war and won honours, rank, and a definite position, could throw away his time in this way and in other ways too for a whole year now

**Rosen.** Excuse me only eight months.

**Leonarda.** And isn't that long enough?

**Rosen.** Too long. But you know, better than any one, why I have done it!

**Leonarda.** Did I ask you to come here? Do you think you can tire me out?

**Rosen.** Leonarda! (She looks at him; he bows formally.) I beg your pardon. Mrs. Falk.

**Leonarda.** You shall write the letter here, now, and report yourself for immediate service.

**Rosen.** If you order me to.

**Leonarda.** I shall post it.

**Rosen.** Many thanks.

**Leonarda.** You are twirling your moustache again. What are you planning in your mind?

**Rosen.** I? Shall I write here? (Goes to the desk.)

**Leonarda.** Yes. (He takes up a pen.) Ah, I know what it is! As soon as you get home, you will write another letter recalling this one.

**Rosen.** Yes, naturally.

**Leonarda.** Ha, ha, ha! (Sits down.) Well, I give you up!

**Rosen.** Thank you! Then will you try one of my cigarettes?

**Leonarda.** No.

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**Rosen.** Nor come for a ride?

**Leonarda.** No.

**Rosen.** Am I to come here this evening?

**Leonarda.** I shall be engaged.

**Rosen.** But you will be riding to-morrow morning?

**Leonarda.** I don't know.

**Rosen.** Then I shall take the liberty of coming to ask I wish you a very good day.

**Leonarda.** Look, there is a strange man at the door (Gets up.)

**Rosen.** What? (Turns round.) He? Has he the face to come here? (Looks out of the open window.) Pst! Pst! Hans! Don't you see my horse has got loose? (Goes hurriedly out past the stranger, who bows to him.) Pst! Pst!

[Enter HAGBART.]

**Hagbart.** Madam! (Stops short.)

**Leonarda.** May I ask ?

**Hagbart.** You do not know me, then?

**Leonarda.** No.

**Hagbart.** I am Hagbart Tallhaug.

**Leonarda.** And you dare to tell me so with a smile on your lips?

**Hagbart.** If you will only allow me to

**Leonarda.** How is it you dare to come here?

**Hagbart.** If you will only allow me to

**Leonarda.** Not a word! Or can there be two men of that name?

**Hagbart.** No.

**Leonarda.** So it was you who came forward at the Philharmonic concert, when I was seeking admittance for myself and my adopted daughter, and spoke of me as a woman of doubtful reputation ? Is that so?

**Hagbart.** Yes, madam; and I must

**Leonarda** (interrupting him impetuously). Then get out of here! Hans! (HANS is heard answering her from without.)

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**Hagbart.** Mrs. Falk, first allow me to .

[Enter HANS.]

**Leonarda.** Hans, will you see this gentleman off my premises.

**Hans.** Certainly, ma'am.

**Hagbart.** Wait a moment, Hans!

**Hans.** Shall I, ma'am? (Looks at LEONARDA.)

**Hagbart.** It concerns your niece, Mrs. Falk.

**Leonarda.** Aagot! Has anything happened to her? I have had no letter from her!

**Hagbart.** Wait outside, Hans!

**Hans** (to LEONARDA). Shall I, ma'am?

**Leonarda.** Yes, yes! (HANS goes out.) What is it?

**Hagbart.** No bad news.

**Leonarda.** But how is it you are here on her behalf?

**Hagbart.** It is difficult to avoid people at a watering-place, you know although I must admit your niece did her best. She treated me as contemptuously as possible even went farther than that; but she could not prevent my talking to people she used to talk to, or my happening to be where she was; so that well she heard them talk about me, and heard me talk to them and in the end she talked to me herself.

**Leonarda.** Talked to you?

**Hagbart.** Yes, it is no good denying it she actually talked to me, and that more than once.

**Leonarda.** But what is the meaning of this visit to me?

**Hagbart.** If you will only allow me to

**Leonarda.** I want you to deliver your message briefly and concisely and not a word more than that.

**Hagbart.** But I cannot do that until you have allowed me to

**Leonarda.** Whether you can or not, I shall allow nothing else. I am not going to give you an excuse for saying that you have been holding conversations with me too.

**Hagbart.** If you have no objection, I am in love with your niece, Mrs. Falk.

**Leonarda.** You? With Aagot? It serves you right!

**Hagbart.** I know.

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**Leonarda.** Ha, ha! That is how the land lies.

[HANS appears at the open door.]

**Hans.** Can I go now, ma'am?

**Leonarda.** Ha, ha! Yes, you can go. (Exit HANS ) Well, what more have you to tell me? Have you given Aagot any hint of this?

**Hagbart.** Yes.

**Leonarda.** And what answer did you get? You are silent. Do you find it difficult to tell me?

**Hagbart.** I am very glad you take it so well, Mrs. Falk.

**Leonarda.** Yes, it's funny, isn't it? Well, what did Aagot say? She generally has plenty to say.

**Hagbart.** Indeed she has. We came here to-day by the same boat

**Leonarda.** By the same boat? Aagot and you? Have you been persecuting her?

**Hagbart.** Mrs. Falk, you cannot possibly understand if you will not allow me to

**Leonarda.** I wish to hear the rest of it from my niece, as I suppose she will be here directly.

**Hagbart.** Of course, but still

**Leonarda.** There will be no more of that sort of thing here! If you intend to persecute my niece with your attentions in the same way as you have persecuted me with your malice, you are at liberty to try. But you shall not come here! I can forbid it here.

**Hagbart.** But, my dear Mrs. Falk

**Leonarda.** I am really beginning to lose my patience, or rather I have lost it already. What have you come here for?

**Hagbart.** As there is no help for it well, I will tell you straight out, although it may be a shock to you I am here to ask for your niece's hand.

**Leonarda** (taking up her gloves). If I were a man, so that there should be nothing doubtful about my reply, I would strike you across the face with my gloves.

**Hagbart.** But you are a woman, so you will not.

[Enter HANS.]

**Hans.** Here is Miss Aagot, ma'am.

**Aagot** (from without). Aunt!

**Leonarda.** Aagot!

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[Enter AAGOT. HANS goes out.]

**Aagot.** Aunt! That wretched Hans! I was signalling to him I wanted to surprise you. (Throws herself into LEONARDA'S arms.)

**Leonarda.** Child, have you deceived me?

**Aagot.** Deceived you? I?

**Leonarda.** I knew it! (Embraces her.) Forgive me! I had a moment's horrible doubt but as soon as I looked at you it was gone! Welcome, welcome! How pretty you look! Welcome!

**Aagot.** Oh, aunt!

**Leonarda.** What is it?

**Aagot.** You know.

**Leonarda.** His shameless persecution of you? Yes! (Meanwhile HAGBART has slipped out.)

**Aagot.** Hush! Oh, he has gone! Have you been cross with him?

**Leonarda.** Not as cross as he deserved

**Aagot.** Didn't I tell him so?

**Leonarda** (laughing). What did you tell him?

**Aagot.** How hasty you could be! Were you really cruel to him?

**Leonarda.** Do you mean to say you have any sympathy with him?

**Aagot.** Have I any ? But, good heavens, hasn't he told you?

**Leonarda.** What?

**Aagot.** That he that I that we oh, aunt, don't look so dreadfully at me! You don't know, then?

**Leonarda.** No!

**Aagot.** Heaven help me! Aunt !

**Leonarda.** You don't mean to say that you ?

**Aagot.** Yes, aunt.

**Leonarda.** With him, who . In spite of that, you Get away from me!

**Aagot.** Dear, darling aunt, listen to me!

**Leonarda.** Go away to him! Away with you!

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**Aagot.** Have you looked at him, aunt? Have you seen how handsome he is?

**Leonarda.** Handsome? He!

**Aagot.** No, not a bit handsome, of course! Really, you are going too far!

**Leonarda.** To me he is the man who made a laughingstock of me in a censorious little town by calling me a woman of doubtful reputation. And one day he presents himself here as my adopted daughter's lover, and you expect me to think him handsome! You ungrateful child!

**Aagot.** Aunt!

**Leonarda.** I have sacrificed eight years of my life eight years in this little hole, stinting myself in every possible way; and you, for whom I have done this, are hardly grown up before you fly into the arms of a man who has covered me with shame. And I am supposed to put up with it as something quite natural! and to say nothing except that I think he is handsome! I I won't look at you! Go away!

**Aagot** (in tears). Don't you suppose I have said all that to myself, a thousand times? That was why I didn't write. I have been most dreadfully distressed to know what to do.

**Leonarda.** At the very first hint of such a thing you might to have taken refuge here with me if you had had a scrap of loyalty in you.

**Aagot.** Aunt! (Goes on her knees.) Oh, aunt!

**Leonarda.** To think you could behave so contemptibly!

**Aagot.** Aunt! It was just because he was so sorry for the way he had behaved to you, that I first

**Leonarda.** Sorry? He came here with a smile on his lips!

**Aagot.** That was because he was in such a fright, aunt.

**Leonarda.** Do people smile because they are in a fright?

**Aagot.** Others don't, but he does. Do you know, dear, he was just the same with me at first he smiled and looked so silly; and afterwards he told me that it was simply from fright.

**Leonarda.** If he had felt any qualms of conscience at all, as you pretend he did, he would at least have taken the very first opportunity to apologise.

**Aagot.** Didn't he do that?

**Leonarda.** No; he stood here beating about the bush and smiling

**Aagot.** Then you must have frightened the sense out of him, aunt. He is shy, you know. Aunt, let me tell you he is studying for the church.

**Leonarda.** Oh, he is that too, is he!

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**Aagot.** Of course he is. You know he is the bishop's nephew, and is studying for the church, and of course that is what made him so prejudiced. But his behaviour that day was just what opened his eyes because he is very kind-hearted. Dear, darling aunt

**Leonarda.** Get up! It is silly to lie there like that. Where did you learn that trick?

**Aagot** (getting up). I am sure I don't know. But you frighten me so. (Cries.)

**Leonarda.** I can't help that. You frightened me first, you know, child.

**Aagot.** Yes, but it is all quite different from what you think, aunt. He is no longer our enemy. He has reproached himself so genuinely for treating you as he did it is perfectly true, aunt. We all heard him say so. He said so first to other people, so that it should come round to me; and then I heard him saying so to them; and eventually he told me so, in so many words.

**Leonarda.** Why did you not write and tell me?

**Aagot.** Because you are not like other people, aunt! If I had as much as mentioned he was there, you would have told me to come home again at once. You aren't like others, you know.

**Leonarda.** But how in the world did it come about that you ?

**Aagot.** You know, dear, that if any one sings *your* praises, that is enough to make me their friend at once. And when, to crown all, this man did it who had behaved so unjustly to you, you can well believe that I went about singing for joy all day. That was the beginning of it

**Leonarda.** Yes, tell me the whole story.

**Aagot.** That would be simply impossible, aunt! It would take me days! But I can tell you this, that I had no idea what it was that was upsetting my nerves in such a manner.

**Leonarda.** If you felt like that, why did you not come away?

**Aagot.** That was just what I did! But that was also just what made the whole thing happen!

**Leonarda.** How? Try and tell me a little more calmly and consecutively!

**Aagot.** Thank you, aunt! It is good of you to listen to me! Good heavens, how I . (Bursts into tears.)

**Leonarda.** There there! Tell me all about it from beginning to end.

**Aagot.** Yes I was quite feverish for about a week I thought I was ill and the others kept asking what was the matter with me. And really I didn't know. There is a whole heap of things I could tell you about those few days but you wouldn't be able to understand.

**Leonarda.** Yes, I should.

**Aagot.** No, you couldn't possibly! I can't, either. I was so wretched then and now I am so happy

**Leonarda.** Well, tell me about it another time. But how did things come to a head?

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**Aagot.** He spoke to me straight out!

**Leonarda.** Proposed to you?

**Aagot.** Yes. Oh, I feel I am blushing again at the very thought of it.

**Leonarda.** And you looked foolish?

**Aagot.** I don't know what I looked like!

**Leonarda.** What did you do?

**Aagot.** I gave one scream a real good scream and ran; ran home, packed my trunk, and got on board the boat as quick as I could.

**Leonarda.** And was that all?

**Aagot.** All? It happened out of doors amongst all the people.

**Leonarda.** Aagot!

**Aagot.** It happened so frightfully unexpectedly. I never was so frightened in my life and so ashamed of myself afterwards. I did nothing but cry on the boat, all the way.

**Leonarda.** But he must have come by the same boat.

**Aagot.** Just fancy, he had travelled overland across the promontory and caught the boat on the other side. And I knew nothing about it till I saw him before my eyes! I thought I should sink through the deck. I wanted to run away then, but oh, aunt, I couldn't! He looked at me with such a wonderful look in his eyes, and took hold of my hands. He spoke to me, but I don't know what he said; everything seemed to be going round and round. And his eyes, aunt! Ah, you haven't looked at them, and that is why you took it so so

**Leonarda.** No, dear.

**Aagot.** There is something about his mere presence something so true. And when he looks at me and says not in words, you know, but still says all the same I love you so much, I tremble all over. Oh, aunt, kiss me! There! Thank heaven! Do you know what he said to-day?

**Leonarda.** No.

**Aagot.** That the woman who had fostered that was the word he used such a solemn word, but then he is studying for the church well, that the woman who had fostered such a girl he meant me, you know I thought of all my faults, but he will get to know them soon enough

**Leonarda.** Well? That the woman who had fostered such a girl as you

**Aagot.** as me, could not have her equal anywhere!

**Leonarda.** You must have been praising me up nicely?

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**Aagot.** On the contrary. It was afterwards when he said he would come here first, before me it was his duty, he said, to stand the first shock. For heaven's sake don't, I said; you don't know her, she will crush you!

**Leonarda.** Oh, Aagot!

**Aagot.** It was then that he said, No, the woman who has fostered such a girl, etcetera, etcetera. Ah, now I see you have been horrid to him.

**Leonarda.** I had been worried all the morning and I misunderstood

**Aagot.** You shall have no more worries after this. Because people are so kind, you know, and you are going to move about among them again. You, who are so good yourself

**Leonarda.** No, that is just what I am not.

**Aagot.** You? You are only so very difficult to understand, aunt! Oh, what is it, dear?

**Leonarda.** I am unhappy, Aagot!

**Aagot.** Why, aunt? About me?

**Leonarda.** You are the sunshine of my life; you have brought light and warmth and gentleness into it but it is just because of that

**Aagot.** Because of that? Aunt, I don't understand you.

**Leonarda.** I am clumsy, I am hard, I am suspicious wicked. I am a savage, with no more self-restraint than I ever had. What sort of a figure must I cut in his eyes and in yours? Tell me! Am I not a clumsy, ugly

**Aagot.** You are the sweetest woman in the whole work! It is only your indomitable strength and courage and youthfulness

**Leonarda.** No, no tell me the truth! I deserve it! Because, you know, it has been for your sake that for eight years I have only associated with work-people. All that I have will be yours. So have some respect for me, Aagot tell me the truth! Am I not what shall I say? Tell me what I am!

**Aagot.** Adorable!

**Leonarda.** No, no! I have never realised as strongly as I do now how I have buried myself all these eight years. All the books I have read about the great movements going on in the world outside have not really enlightened me. All that I have read and thought fades away before the first gleam of life that reaches me from the real world of men and women. I see new beauty merely in your new clothes, your fashionable hat the colours you are wearing the way they are blended. They mean something that I know nothing of. You bring a fragrance in with you a breath of freshness; you are so dainty and full of life; whereas everything here has become so old, so heavy, so disjointed and my life most of all.

**Aagot.** Well, I must tell you what he said, since you won't believe what I say.

**Leonarda.** But he knew nothing about me?

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**Aagot.** No it only indirectly referred to you. He said he had never wanted so much to get to know any one, as he wanted to get to know you, because seeing much of me had made him discover you that was the very expression he used! And it was an extraordinary chance that

**Leonarda.** Stop! I can't bear to think of it! To think it should be the very man whom we we

**Aagot.** Hated so! yes, isn't it extraordinary?

**Leonarda.** The very first time you have been away from me!

**Aagot.** Yes!

**Leonarda.** And you come back in a halo of reconciliation and affection for him!

**Aagot.** But who is responsible for that, I should like to know! And you talk about your life here having made you clumsy and ugly you, who can manufacture a goddess of victory like me!

**Leonarda.** No, I don't complain when I see you and hear you when I have you with me! That is worth paying a price for. It was selfish of me to think for a moment that the price was too high. You are in the springtime of your life while I

**Aagot.** You? What is wrong with your life?

**Leonarda.** I am beginning to think my life is over.

**Aagot.** Yours? Your life over? Oh, you pain me by saying such a thing.

**Leonarda.** I am very happy very happy about all this! Believe me that is so. But you know

**Aagot.** I know how tremendously and incomprehensibly you have changed!

**Leonarda.** Go, my child and bring him back!

**Aagot.** How delicious that sounds! Bring him back! (Gets up, then stops.) Thank you, my dear, sweet, darling aunt! (She runs out. LEONARDA falls into a chair by the table and buries her head in her hands. AAGOT'S voice is heard without: Yes, come along! and HAGBART'S, answering: Is it true? )

**Aagot** (coming in with HAGBART). Come along! (LEONARDA gets up, dries her eyes, and meets them with a smile.) Aunt, here he is!

**Hagbart.** Mrs. Falk!

**Leonarda.** Forgive me!

**Hagbart.** What? No, you must forgive me! I haven't been able to ask you to! I

**Aagot.** We can talk about that another time! Let aunt look at you now!

**Leonarda.** You two won't disappoint one another. I can see that.

**Aagot.** It is wonderfully sweet of you, aunt!

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**Leonarda.** Yes, love one another! Bring some beauty, some warmth, some colour into this cold house!

**Aagot.** Oh, aunt !

**Leonarda.** Have you kissed her yet? (AAGOT moves a little away from HAGBART.) Go on! (They embrace.)

**Aagot** (running from him to LEONARDA). But, dearest aunt, are you crying?

**Leonarda.** Don't bother about me! Have you told your uncle, the bishop, about it?

**Hagbart.** Not yet.

**Leonarda.** You haven't? Well, you have the worst of it before you yet, I am afraid.

**Hagbart.** No; now that I have got as far as this, nothing shall stand in my way!

**Aagot.** Do you hear that, aunt?

[Curtain.]

## ACT II

(SCENE. A room in the BISHOP's house, some weeks later. A door at the back of the room leads to another large room. Another door in the right-hand wall; windows in the left. Well forward, by one of the windows, a large easy-chair. Farther back, a writing-desk and chair. On the right, near the door, a couch, and chairs ranged along the wall. Chairs also alongside the door at the back. The Bishop is sitting on the couch, talking to HAGBART.)

**Bishop.** My dear Hagbart, you keep on telling me that you have acted up to your convictions. Very well, do you want to forbid my acting up to mine?

**Hagbart.** You know that all I ask, uncle, is that you will see her and talk to her first.

**Bishop.** But if that is exactly what I don't wish to do? You have made things difficult for us, you know, by choosing a wife out of your own class although at the same time we have grown fonder of her every day, and are ready to do anything for *her*. But farther than that we cannot go. Do you want to read my letter?

**Hagbart.** No.

**Bishop.** I think you should. It is quite a polite letter.

**Hagbart.** I know you can put things politely enough. But it is the fact, uncle the fact of your doing it!

**Bishop.** Yes I cannot alter that.

**Hagbart.** Could you not at all events postpone sending the letter?

**Bishop.** It is sent.

**Hagbart.** Sent?



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**Bishop.** This morning. Yes. So there is nothing more to be done.

**Hagbart.** Uncle, you are cruel!

**Bishop.** How can you say that, Hagbart? I have acquiesced in your giving up your clerical career and Heaven alone knows what a grief that is to me. (Gets up.) But I will not acquiesce in your bringing into my house a woman who does not even bear her husband's name. Do we as much as know who her husband was? She was both married and divorced abroad. And we don't know anything more about her life since then; it is scarcely likely it has been blameless. Since she came here she has never once been to church. She has led a most eccentric life, and lately has been allowing a man of very evil reputation to visit her.

**Hagbart.** General Rosen?

**Bishop.** Yes, General Rosen. He is next door to a drunkard. And he is a dissolute fellow in other ways, too.

**Hagbart.** He goes everywhere, all the same. He even comes here.

**Bishop.** Well, you see, he distinguished himself on military service; he has many sociable qualities, and he is well connected. It is the way of the world.

**Hagbart.** But Mrs. Falk is not to be received?

**Bishop.** She is a woman.

**Hagbart.** How long will this sort of thing be endured?

**Bishop.** Come, come are you getting those ideas into your head too? You seem to have imbibed a lot of new doctrines lately!

**Hagbart.** You should have seen her and talked to her once at least, before making up your mind.

**Bishop.** I will tell you something in confidence, Hagbart. Justice Rost, who lives out there in the country, has often seen General Rosen coming away from her house at most unseemly hours. I will have nothing to do with women of that sort.

**Hagbart.** What about men of that sort?

**Bishop.** Well, as I said, that is quite another matter.

**Hagbart.** Quite so. Mrs. Falk takes compassion on the General; she interests herself in him. That is all.

**Bishop.** Did she know him previously, then?

**Hagbart.** Very likely.

**Bishop.** Then she has her own private reasons for acting as she does.

**Hagbart.** Shall I tell you what it is? She has a kinder heart than any of us, and can make a sacrifice more willingly.

**Bishop.** So you know that?

LEONARDA

**Hagbart.** Yes. Hers is a finer nature than any of ours; it is more completely developed, intellectually and morally.

**Bishop.** I am listening to you with the profoundest amazement!

**Hagbart.** Oh, don't misunderstand me! She has her faults.

**Bishop.** Really, you admit that! I want to beg something of you earnestly, Hagbart. Go away for a little while.

**Hagbart.** Go away!

**Bishop.** Yes, to your uncle's, for instance. Only for a week or a fortnight. You need to clear your thoughts, badly about all sorts of things. Your brain is in a whirl.

**Hagbart.** That is true; but

**Bishop.** Speak out!

**Hagbart.** My brain has been in a whirl much longer than you have had any idea of. It has been so ever since that day in winter when I did Mrs. Falk such a horrible injustice.

**Bishop.** Not exactly an injustice, but

**Hagbart.** Yes, an injustice! It was a turning point in my life. To think that I should have given way to such a fanatical outburst! It ended in my being terrified at myself well, I won't bore you with the whole story of my long fight with myself. You saw nothing of it, because I was not here. But at last, when I got ill and had to go away and take the waters, and then happened to see Aagot the effect on me was more than anything I could have imagined. I seemed to see the truth; mankind seemed different, and I seemed to hear the voice of life itself at last. You cannot imagine the upheaval it caused in me. It must be that she had something within her that I lacked, and had always lacked! It was her wonderful naturalness; everything she did was done with more charm and gaiety than I found in any one else, and she was quite unconscious of it herself. I used to ask myself what was the reason of it how it could be that it had been her lot to grow up so free and wholesome. I realised that it was because I had been oblivious to what I lacked myself, that I had been so fanatically severe upon others. I knew it is humiliating to confess it, but it is true. I have always been blundering and impetuous. But what was I going to say?

**Bishop.** You were going to speak about Mrs. Falk, I presume.

**Hagbart.** Yes! My dear uncle, don't take it amiss. But all this time I have never been able to keep away from her.

**Bishop.** Then it is she you have been talking to?

**Hagbart.** Of course! and of course, that is to say, to Aagot too. You propose my going away. I cannot! If I could multiply myself by two, or if I could double the length of the days, I should never have enough of being with her! No, I have seen daylight now. On no account can I go away.

**Bishop.** And you call that seeing daylight! Poor boy!

**Hagbart.** I cannot discuss it with you. You would no more understand than you did that day when you took away those books of grandmother's from me and put them in the lumber-room.

**Bishop.** Oh, you are bringing that up again? Well, you are at liberty to do as you please. You shall not have the right to say I have exercised any compulsion.

LEONARDA

**Hagbart.** No, uncle, you are very good to me.

**Bishop.** But there is a new fact to be taken into consideration. I have noticed it for some days.

**Hagbart.** What do you mean?

**Bishop.** In all this conversation we have just had, you have only mentioned Aagot's name twice, at most.

**Hagbart.** But we were not talking about Aagot.

**Bishop.** Are you not in love with her any longer?

**Hagbart.** Not in love with Aagot? (Laughs.) Can you ask that? Do you mean to say ?

**Bishop.** Yes, I mean to say

**Hagbart** (laughing again). No, that is quite a misunderstanding on your part, uncle.

**Bishop.** Well, I say it again: go away for a week or a fortnight, Hagbart! Consider the situation from a distance both your own position and that of others!

**Hagbart.** It is impossible, absolutely impossible, uncle. It would be just as useful to say to me: Lie down and go to sleep for a week or a fortnight, Hagbart; it will do you good ! No. All my faculties are awake at last yes, at last so much so, that sometimes I can scarcely control myself.

**Bishop.** That is the very reason.

**Hagbart.** The very reason why I must go straight ahead, for once in my life! No, I must stay here now. Well, good morning, uncle! I must go out for a turn.

**Bishop.** Go to call on Mrs. Falk, you mean.

**Hagbart** (laughing). Unfortunately I haven't the face to do that till this afternoon; I was there the whole day yesterday. But our conversation has set all my thoughts agog again, and when I have no means of appeasing them I have to go out and walk. Thank you, uncle, for being so indulgent to me!

**Bishop.** Then you don't wish to read my letter?

**Hagbart.** Ah, that is true the letter! That upsets the whole thing again. I don't know how I came to forget that.

**Bishop.** You see for yourself how confused and distracted you are. You need to pull yourself together. Go away for a little!

**Hagbart.** It is impossible! Good-bye, uncle!

**Bishop.** Here is grandmother!

[Enter the GRANDMOTHER and CORNELIA.]

**Hagbart.** Good morning, grandmother! Have you slept well?

LEONARDA

**Grandmother** (coming forward on CORNELIA's arm). Excellently!

**Cornelia**. She slept well into the morning.

**Bishop**. I am delighted, grandmother. (Takes her other arm.)

**Grandmother**. You needn't shout so loud. It is a fine day to-day and I can hear very well. (To HAGBART.) You didn't come in to see me last night.

**Hagbart**. I came in too late, grandmother.

**Grandmother**. I tell you, you needn't talk so loud.

**Cornelia**. She always wants to make out that she can hear.

**Grandmother** (as they settle her in the big chair by the window). This is a nice seat

**Bishop**. And I am always delighted to see you sitting there.

**Grandmother**. The window and the mirror over there.

**Cornelia**. Yes, it enables you to see everything.

**Grandmother**. How you do shout, all you good people!

**Bishop**. I must go and change my things, if you will excuse me. (Goes out to the right.)

**Cornelia**. Do you want anything more?

**Grandmother**. No, thank you. (CORNELIA goes out at the back.)

**Hagbart**. Dear, good grandmother! You are the only one here who understands me!

**Grandmother** (trying to look round the room). Are we alone?

**Hagbart**. Yes.

**Grandmother**. Has your uncle called on Mrs. Falk?

**Hagbart**. No, worse luck; he has written her a letter.

**Grandmother**. I thought as much.

**Hagbart**. Isn't it shameful, grandmother! He won't see her once, or talk to her, before judging her.

**Grandmother**. They are all alike, these . Are we alone?

**Hagbart**. Yes, grandmother.

**Grandmother**. You must have patience, Hagbart! You used to be patient.

LEONARDA

**Hagbart.** Yes, grandmother.

**Grandmother.** I have seen so many generations so many different ways of behaving. In my day we were tolerant.

**Hagbart.** I enjoyed reading your books so much, grand mother!

**Grandmother.** Of course you did. Are we alone?

**Hagbart.** Yes, grandmother.

**Grandmother.** I am quite in love with your fiancee, Hagbart. She is like what girls were in my day.

**Hagbart.** Courageous, weren't they?

**Grandmother.** Yes, and independent. They seem quite different nowadays. Are we alone?

**Hagbart.** Yes.

**Grandmother.** You get married and I will come and live with you and her. Hush!

**Hagbart.** Do you mean it?

**Grandmother.** Hush! (Looks out of the window.) There is Justice Rost coming, with his wife. Go and tell your uncle!

**Hagbart.** Yes.

**Grandmother.** I might have expected it. They came up from the country yesterday.

**Hagbart.** Good-bye, then, grandmother!

**Grandmother.** Good-bye, my boy! (HAGBART goes out to the right. The door at the back is opened. CORNELIA ushers in ROST and MRS. ROST.)

**Cornelia.** Please walk in!

**Mrs. Rost.** Thank you! You must excuse us for calling so early. We came up from the country yesterday, and my husband has to go to the courts for a little while!

**Rost.** I have to go to the courts to-day. (The BISHOP conies in from the right.)

**Bishop.** Welcome!

**Rost and Mrs. Rost.** Thank you!

**Mrs. Rost.** You must excuse our calling so early; but we came up from the country yesterday, and my husband has to go to the courts to-day.

**Rost.** I have to go to the courts for a little while.

LEONARDA

**Bishop.** I know.

**Mrs. Rost.** And there is the old lady in her chair already!

**Rost.** Good morning, my dear madam!

**Mrs. Rost.** Good morning! No, please don't get up!

**Grandmother.** Oh, I can get up still.

**Rost.** Ah, I wish I were as active as you!

**Mrs. Rost.** My husband was saying to Miss Cornelia only last night

**Grandmother.** You need not strain yourself so. I can hear perfectly well. (The others exchange glances.)

**Rost.** I was saying to Miss Cornelia only last night we met for a few moments after the service

**Grandmother.** I know, I know.

**Rost.** I said I had never known any one of over ninety have all their faculties so remarkably clear

**Mrs. Rost.** so remarkably clear as yours! And such good health, too! My husband has suffered a great deal from asthma lately.

**Rost.** I have suffered a great deal from asthma lately.

**Mrs. Rost.** And I from a heart trouble, which

**Grandmother.** We did not know anything about such ailments in my day.

**Mrs. Rost.** Isn't she sweet! She doesn't remember that people were sometimes ill in her day.

**Bishop.** Lovely weather we are having!

**Rost.** Delightful weather! I cannot in the least understand how it is that I . (The BISHOP brings a chair forward for him.) Oh, please don't trouble, my lord! Allow me.

**Mrs. Rost.** My husband must have caught cold. (ROST sits down.)

**Cornelia.** It certainly was draughty in church last night.

**Rost.** But we sat in the corner farthest from the door.

**Mrs. Rost.** We sat in the corner farthest from the door. That was why we were not able to bid your lordship good evening afterwards.

**Bishop.** There was such a crowd.

**Rost, Mrs. Rost, and Cornelia.** Such a crowd!

LEONARDA

**Mrs. Rost.** These services must be a great help in your lordship's labours.

**Rost.** Yes, every one says that.

**Bishop.** Yes, if only the result were something a little more practical. We live in sad times.

**All three** (as before). Sad times!

**Mrs. Rost.** We only just heard yesterday and we met so many friends that I was prevented from asking your sister about it we have only just heard

**Rost.** And that is why we have come here to-day. We believe in being straightforward!

**Mrs. Rost.** Straightforward! That is my husband's motto.

**Bishop.** Probably you mean about Hagbart's engagement?

**Rost and Mrs. Rost.** To Miss Falk?

**Cornelia.** Yes, it is quite true.

**Mrs. Rost.** Really?

**Cornelia.** My brother came to the conclusion that he had no right to oppose it.

**Rost.** Quite so. It must have been a difficult matter for your lordship to decide.

**Bishop.** I cannot deny that it was.

**Mrs. Rost.** How Mr. Tallhaug has changed!

**Rost.** Yes, it seems only the other day he

**Bishop.** We must not be too severe on young people in that respect nowadays, Mrs. Rost.

**Rost.** It is the spirit of the time!

**Bishop.** Besides, I must say that the young lady is by no means displeasing to me.

**Cornelia.** My brother has a very good opinion of her although he finds her manner perhaps a little free, a little too impetuous.

**Mrs. Rost.** But her adoptive mother?

**Rost.** Yes, her adoptive mother!

**Cornelia.** My brother has decided not to call on her.

**Rost and Mrs. Rost.** Really!

**Mrs. Rost.** We are extremely glad to hear that!

LEONARDA

**Rost.** It was what we wanted to know! Everybody we met yesterday was anxious to know.

**Mrs. Rost.** Everybody! We were so concerned about it.

**Cornelia.** My brother has written to her, to make it quite clear to her.

**Rost.** Naturally!

**Mrs. Rost.** We are very glad to hear it!

**Grandmother** (looking out of the window). There is a carriage stopping at the door.

**Cornelia.** I thought I heard a carriage, too. (Gets up.)

**Grandmother.** There is a lady getting out of it.

**Mrs. Rost.** A lady? Good heavens, surely it is not ? (Gets up.)

**Rost.** What do you say? (Gets up.)

**Cornelia.** She has a veil on.

**Mrs. Rost.** I really believe ! (To her husband.) You look, my dear you know her.

**Rost.** It is she; I recognise her coachman Hans.

**Bishop** (who has got up). But perhaps it is Miss Aagot?

**Cornelia.** No, it is not Miss Aagot. She is in the house by this time. What are we to do?

**Mrs. Rost.** Has she not had your lordship's letter?

**Bishop.** Yes, this morning.

**Rost.** And in spite of that ?

**Bishop.** Perhaps for that very reason. Ahem! Cornelia, you must go down and

**Cornelia.** Not on any account! I refuse!

**Mrs. Rost** (to her husband). Come, dear! Be quick, let us get away. (Looks for her parasol.) Where is my parasol?

**Bishop** (in a low voice). Won't you wait a little while Mr. Rost?

**Rost.** Oho!

**Mrs. Rost.** My parasol! I can't find my parasol.

**Rost.** Because you have got it in your hand, my love!

**Mrs. Rost.** So I have! You see how upset I am. Make haste come along! Can we get out this way?



LEONARDA

**Rost.** Through the Bishop's bedroom!

**Mrs. Rost.** Oh! But if you come with me, my dear! Are we to meet this woman? Why do you stand still? Surely you don't want to ?

**Rost.** Let us wait a little.

**Mrs. Rost.** Wait? So that you may talk to her? Oh, you men you are all alike!

**Bishop.** But, you know, some one must . Cornelia!

**Cornelia.** Not for worlds! I am not going to stir an inch.

**Grandmother.** Gracchus!

**Bishop.** Yes, grandmother?

**Mrs. Rost.** Now the old lady is going to interfere. I thought as much!

**Grandmother.** Courtesy is a duty that every one must recognise.

**Bishop.** You are quite right. (Goes towards the back of the room; at the same time a knock is heard on the door). Come in! (The door opens, and LEONARDA enters.)

**Mrs. Rost.** It is she!

**Rost.** Be quiet!

**Mrs. Rost.** But wouldn't you rather ?

**Leonarda.** Excuse me, am I speaking to the Bishop?

**Bishop.** Yes, madam. Whom have I the honour to ?

**Leonarda.** Mrs. Falk.

**Bishop.** Allow me to introduce my sister and Mr. Justice Rost and Mrs. Rost and this is

**Leonarda.** Grandmamma of whom I have heard, I think!

**Bishop.** Yes. Let me present Mrs. Falk to you, grandmother.

**Grandmother** (getting up). I am very glad to see you, ma'am.

**Mrs. Rost and Cornelia.** What does she say?

**Grandmother.** As the oldest of the family which is the only merit I possess let me bid you welcome. (LEONARDA gives a start, then kneels down and kisses her hand.)

**Mrs. Rost.** Good gracious!

LEONARDA

**Cornelia.** Well!

**Mrs. Rost.** Let us go away!

**Rost** (in a low voice). Does your lordship wish ?

**Bishop** (in the same tone). No, thank you I must go through with it now.

**Rost.** Good morning, then!

**Bishop.** Many thanks for your visit and for being so frank with me.

**Mrs. Rost.** That is always our way, your lordship. Good morning!

**Cornelia** (as they advance to take leave of her). I will see you out.

**Rost** (to the GRANDMOTHER). I hope I shall always see you looking as well, madam!

**Mrs. Rost.** Good-bye, madam! No, please don't disturb yourself. You have over-exerted yourself just now you know.

**Grandmother.** The same to you.

**Rost and Mrs. Rost.** I beg your pardon?

**Bishop.** She thought you were wishing her good day or something of that sort.

**Rost and Mrs. Rost.** Oh, I see! (They laugh. They both ceremoniously in silence to LEONARDA as they pass her; CORNELIA and the BISHOP go with them to see them out, the BISHOP turning at the door and coming back into the room.)

**Bishop** (to LEONARDA). Won't you sit down?

**Leonarda.** Your lordship sent me a letter to-day. (She pauses for an answer, but without effect.) In it you give me to understand, as politely as possible, that your family does not wish to have any intercourse with me.

**Bishop.** I imagined, Mrs. Falk, that you had no such desire, either previously or now.

**Leonarda.** What it rally means is that you want me to make over my property to the two young people, and disappear.

**Bishop.** If you choose to interpret it in that way, Mrs. Falk.

**Leonarda.** I presume your nephew has told you that my means are not such as to allow of my providing for one establishment here and another for myself elsewhere.

**Bishop.** Quite so. But could you not sell your property?

**Leonarda.** And all three of us leave here, your lordship means? Of course that would be possible; but the property is just now becoming of some value, because of the projected railway and, besides, it has been so long in our family.

LEONARDA

**Bishop.** It is a very fine property.

**Leonarda.** And very dear to us.

**Bishop.** It pains me deeply that things should have taken this turn.

**Leonarda.** Then may I not hope that the fact may influence your lordship's decision in some degree?

**Bishop.** My decision, madam, has nothing to do with your property.

**Leonarda.** During all these eight years have I offended you in any way or any one here?

**Bishop.** Mrs. Falk, you know quite well that you have not.

**Leonarda.** Or is it on account of the way I have brought up my niece ?

**Bishop.** Your niece does you the greatest credit, madam.

**Leonarda.** Then perhaps some of my people have been laying complaints about me? or some one has been complaining of them?

**Bishop.** Not even the most censorious person, my dear madam, could pretend that you have been anything but exemplary in that respect.

**Leonarda.** Then what is it?

**Bishop.** You can scarcely expect me to tell a lady

**Leonarda.** I will help you out. It is my past life.

**Bishop.** Since you say it yourself yes.

**Leonarda.** Do you consider that nothing can expiate a past about which, moreover, you know nothing?

**Bishop.** I have not seen in you any signs of a desire to expiate it, Mrs. Falk.

**Leonarda.** You mean that you have not seen me at confession or in church?

**Bishop.** Yes.

**Leonarda.** Do you want me to seek expiation by being untrue to myself?

**Bishop.** No; but the way I refer to is the only sure one.

**Leonarda.** There are others. I have chosen the way hard work and duty.

**Bishop.** I said the only sure way, Mrs. Falk. Your way does not protect against temptation.

**Leonarda.** You have something definite in your mind when you say that, have you not? Shall I help you out again? It is General Rosen.

## LEONARDA

**Bishop.** Precisely.

**Leonarda.** You think I ought to send him away?

**Bishop.** Yes.

**Leonarda.** But it would be all up with him if I did. And there is a good deal of ability in him.

**Bishop.** I have neither the right nor the desire to meddle in affairs I know nothing of; but I must say that only a person of unimpeachable reputation should attempt the rescue of such a man as General Rosen.

**Leonarda.** You are quite right.

**Bishop.** You are paying too high a price for it, Mrs. Falk, and without any certainty of achieving anything.

**Leonarda.** Maybe. But there is one aspect of the matter that you have forgotten.

**Bishop.** And that is?

**Leonarda.** Compassion.

**Bishop.** Quite so. Yes. Of course, if you approach the matter from that point of view, I have nothing to say.

**Leonarda.** You don't believe it?

**Bishop.** I only wish the matter depended upon what I myself believe. But it does not, Mrs. Falk.

**Leonarda.** But surely you will admit that one ought to do good even at the risk of one's reputation?

**Bishop.** Undoubtedly.

**Leonarda.** Well, will your lordship not apply that maxim to yourself? It is quite possible that for a while your congregation's faith in you might be a little disturbed if you were to call upon me; but you know now, from my own lips, that the rumours you have heard are false, and that you ought rather to be all the more anxious to support me in what I am trying to do. And in that way you will do a good turn to these two young people, and to me, without driving me away. For some years now I have lived only for others. One does not do that without making some sacrifices, my lord especially when, as in my case, one does not feel that one's life is quite over.

**Bishop.** You look the picture of youth, Mrs. Falk!

**Leonarda.** Oh, no still I have not done it without a struggle. And now I want a little reward for it. Who would not? I want to spend my life with those for whom I have sacrificed myself; I want to see their happiness and make it mine. Do not rob me of that, my lord! It depends upon you!

**Bishop.** I do not quite see how it depends upon me.

**Leonarda.** It depends upon you for this reason; if my exile is to be the price paid for her marriage, my niece will never consent to wed your nephew.

**Bishop.** That would be very distressing to me, Mrs. Falk.

## LEONARDA

**Leonarda.** I made haste to come to you, before she should know anything about it. I have brought your letter with me. Take it back, my lord! (Searches in her pocket for the letter.)

**Bishop** (noticing her growing anxiety). What is wrong?

**Leonarda.** The letter! I laid it on my desk while I dressed to come out, meaning to bring it with me but in my hurry and anxiety I have forgotten it! And now Aagot is making out accounts at that very desk. If she sees your handwriting she will suspect something at once, because of course we have been expecting you every day.

**Bishop.** Well, I suppose there is nothing to be done?

**Leonarda.** Indeed there is. When she comes here for she will understand everything and come straight here could not your lordship meet her yourself, and say to her . (Stops short.)

**Bishop.** Say what?

**Leonarda.** I have been mistaken. People should be judged, not by their mistakes, but by what they have achieved; not by their beliefs, but by their efforts towards goodness and truth. I mean to teach my congregation that lesson by calling upon your aunt next Sunday. (The GRANDMOTHER nods at her approvingly. LEONARDA sees this, takes her hand, and turns again towards the BISHOP.) This venerable lady pleads for me too. She belongs to a day that was more tolerant than ours at all events than ours is in this little out-of-the-way place. All the wisdom of her long life is summed up in these two words: Have forbearance!

**Bishop.** There is one kind of forbearance, Mrs. Falk, that is forbidden us the forbearance that would efface the distinction between good and evil. That is what the toleration of my grandmother's day meant; but it is not an example to be followed.

**Leonarda** (leaving the GRANDMOTHER's side). If I have erred if I seem of no account, from the lofty standpoint from which you look upon life remember that you serve One who was the friend of sinners.

**Bishop.** I will be your friend when I see you seeking your soul's salvation. I will do all I can then.

**Leonarda.** Help me to expiate my past! That means everything to me and is not much for you to do. I only ask for a little show of courtesy, instead of indignities! I will contrive that we shall seldom meet. Only don't drive me away because that means exposing me to contempt. Believe me, I will give you no cause for shame; and your good deed will be rewarded by the gratitude of the young people.

**Bishop.** I am deeply distressed at having to take up this attitude towards you. You are bound to think me hardhearted; but that is not the case. I have to consider that I am the guardian of thousands of anxious consciences. I dare not for my nephew's sake offend the respect they feel for me, the trust they put in me; nor dare I disregard the law we all must follow. For a bishop to do as I have done in opening my doors to your niece, is in itself no small thing, when you consider the dissensions that are going on in the Church nowadays. I cannot, I dare not, go farther and open my doors to a woman whom my whole congregation albeit unjustly well, I won't wound your feelings by going on.

**Leonarda.** Really?

**Bishop.** Believe me, it gives me great pain. You have made a remarkable impression upon me personally. (Meanwhile the GRANDMOTHER has got up to go out of the room.)

**Leonarda.** Are you going away? (The BISHOP goes to the wall and rings a bell.)

LEONARDA

**Grandmother.** Yes I am too old for these scenes. And, after what I have just heard, I am sure I have no right to sit here either. (CORNELIA comes in, takes her arm, and assists her out.)

**Leonarda** (coming forward). Now I can say this to your lordship: you have no courage. Standing face to face with me here, you know what you ought to do, but dare not do it.

**Bishop.** You are a woman so I will not answer.

**Leonarda.** It is because I am a woman that you have said things to me to-day that you would not have said to General Rosen, for instance a man who is allowed to come to your lordship's house in spite of his past life, and his present life too.

**Bishop.** He shall come here no more in future. Beside, you cannot deny that there is a difference between your two cases.

**Leonarda.** There is indeed a difference: but I did not expect the distinction to be made on these lines. Nor did I imagine, my lord, that your duty was to protect, not the weaker vessel, but the stronger to countenance open vice, and refuse help to those who are unjustly accused!

**Bishop.** Do you think there is any use in our prolonging this conversation?

[AAGOT opens the door at the back and calls from the doorway.]

**Aagot.** Aunt!

**Leonarda.** Aagot! Good heavens!

**Aagot** (coming forward). Aunt!

**Leonarda.** Then you know? (AAGOT throws herself into her arms.) My child!

**Aagot.** I felt sure you would be here, heaven help me!

**Leonarda.** Control yourself, my child!

**Aagot.** No, I cannot. This is too much.

**Bishop.** Would you ladies rather be alone?

**Aagot.** Where is Hagbart?

**Bishop.** He has gone out for a walk.

**Aagot.** It makes me boil with rage! So this was to be the price of my being received into your family that I was to sell the one who has been a mother to me! Sell her, whom I love and honour more than all the world!

**Bishop.** Mrs. Falk, do you wish to continue? or

**Aagot.** Continue what? Your negotiations for the sale of my dear one? No. And if it were a question of being admitted to heaven without her, I should refuse!

LEONARDA

**Bishop.** Child! Child!

**Aagot.** You must let me speak! I must say what is in my heart. And this, at any rate, is in it that I hold fast to those I love, with all the strength that is in my being!

**Bishop.** You are young, and speak with the exaggeration of youth. But I think we should do better to put an end to this interview; it can lead to nothing.

**Leonarda.** Let us go.

[HAGBART appears at the door.]

**Aagot** (seeing him before the others). Hagbart!

**Hagbart.** I heard your voice from outside. Mrs. Falk

**Aagot.** Hagbart! (She goes towards him, but as he hastens to her side she draws back.) No don't touch me!

**Hagbart.** But, Aagot ?

**Aagot.** Why did you not manage to prevent this? You never said a word to me about it!

**Hagbart.** Because really I knew nothing about it.

**Aagot.** One becomes conscious of such things as that without needing to be told. It hasn't weighed much on your mind! Did you not know of it just now?

**Hagbart.** Yes, but

**Aagot.** And you didn't fly to tell us?

**Hagbart.** It is true I

**Aagot.** Your mind was taken up with something else altogether. And my only aim in life has been that everything should be made right for her! I thought you were going to do that.

**Hagbart.** You are unjust, Aagot. What can I do ?

**Aagot.** No, you are too much of a dreamer. But this you must realise that I am not going to buy an honoured position at the price of insults to my aunt; that is the very last thing possible.

**Hagbart.** Of course! But need there be any question of that? I will come and live with you two, and

**Aagot.** You talk like a fool!

**Leonarda.** Aagot! Aagot!

**Aagot.** Oh, I feel so hurt, so deceived, so mortified I must say it out. Because to-day is not the first of it nor is this the only thing.

**Leonarda.** No, I can understand that. But what is it? You are wounding his love for you.

LEONARDA

**Aagot** (bitterly). His love for me!

**Leonarda**. Are you out of your mind? You are talking wildly!

**Aagot**. No, I am only telling the truth!

**Leonarda** (earnestly, and lowering her voice). Angry words, Aagot? You, who have seen into the bottom of his heart in quiet sacred moments! You who know how true, how steadfast he is! He is different from other men, Aagot

**Aagot** (drawing away from her). Stop! stop! You don't see!

**Leonarda**. You are out of your senses, my child! Your behaviour is disgracing us.

**Aagot**. The greatest disgrace is his, then because it is not me he loves! (Bursts into tears and rushes to the back of the room.)

**Bishop** (to HAGBART, in a low voice). I hope now you will go away for a little while.

**Hagbart**. Yes.

**Bishop**. Come away, then. (Goes out to the left, HAGBART follows him.)

**Aagot** (coming forward to LEONARDA). Can you forgive me?

**Leonarda**. Let us go home.

**Aagot**. But say something kind to me.

**Leonarda**. No.

**Aagot**. I won't let you go away till you do.

**Leonarda**. I cannot.

**Aagot**. Aunt, I am not jealous of you.

**Leonarda**. Be quiet!

**Aagot**. Only you must let me go away for a few days I must get things straight in my mind. (Bursts into tears.) Oh, aunt for pity's sake do you love him? (LEONARDA tries to get away from her.) I don't love him any longer! If you love him, aunt, I will give him up!

**Leonarda**. At least hold your tongue about it, here in another person's house! If you are not coming with me, I am going home by myself.

**Aagot**. Then I shall never follow you.

**Leonarda**. You are completely out of your senses!



## LEONARDA

**Aagot.** Yes; I cannot live, unless you speak to me gently and look at me kindly. God keep you, aunt, now and always!

**Leonarda** (turning to her). My child!

**Aagot.** Ah! (Throws herself into her arms.)

**Leonarda.** Let us go home!

**Aagot.** Yes.

[Curtain.]

## ACT III

(SCENE The garden at LEONARDA FALK'S house some days later. On the left, a summer-house with table and chairs. A large basket, half full of apples, is on the table. LEONARDA is standing talking to PEDERSEN.)

**Leonarda.** Very well, Pedersen; if the horses are not needed here, we may as well send to fetch Miss Aagot home. Can we send to-day?

**Pedersen.** Certainly, ma'am.

**Leonarda.** Then please send Hans as soon as possible with a pair of horses to the hill farm for her. It is too cold for her to be up there now, anyway.

**Pedersen.** I will do so. (Turns to go.)

**Leonarda.** By the way, Pedersen, how has that little affair of yours been going?

**Pedersen.** Oh

**Leonarda.** Come to me this evening. We will see if we can continue our little talk about it.

**Pedersen.** I have been wishing for that for a long time, ma'am.

**Leonarda.** Yes, for the last eight or ten days I have not been able to think of anything properly.

**Pedersen.** We have all noticed that there has been something wrong with you, ma'am.

**Leonarda.** We all have our troubles. (PEDERSEN waits; but as LEONARDA begins to pick apples carefully from a young tree and put them in a small basket that is on her arm, he goes out to the left. HAGBART appears from the right, and stands for a minute without her seeing him.)

**Hagbart.** Mrs. Falk! (LEONARDA gives a little scream.) I beg your pardon, but I have been looking for you everywhere. How are you? I have only just this moment got back.

**Leonarda.** Aagot is not at home.

**Hagbart.** I know. Has she been away the whole time?

LEONARDA

**Leonarda.** Yes.

**Hagbart.** Will she be away long?

**Leonarda.** I am sending the horses up to-day, so she should be here by the day after to-morrow.

**Hagbart.** It was you I wanted to speak to, Mrs. Falk.

**Leonarda.** About Aagot?

**Hagbart.** Yes, about Aagot amongst other things.

**Leonarda.** But couldn't you wait till some other time?

**Hagbart.** Mrs. Falk, I came straight here from the steamer; so you can see for yourself

**Leonarda.** But if it concerns Aagot, and she is not here?

**Hagbart.** The part of it that concerns Aagot is soon said. She was perfectly right only I did not know it at the time.

**Leonarda.** Good God!

**Hagbart.** I do not love Aagot.

**Leonarda.** But if Aagot loves you?

**Hagbart.** She has showed me lately that she does not. Did she not tell you so, plainly?

**Leonarda.** She was how shall I put it? too excited for me to attach much importance to what she said.

**Hagbart.** Then she did tell you so. I thought she had indeed I was sure of it. Aagot does not love me, but she loves you. She wants you to be happy.

**Leonarda.** If you do not love Aagot, it seems to me you ought not to have come here.

**Hagbart.** Perhaps you are right. But I am not the same man as I was when I used to come here before; nor do I come for the same reason.

**Leonarda.** If you do not love Aagot, I must repeat that you have no right to be here. You owe that much consideration both to her and to me.

**Hagbart.** I assure you that it is from nothing but the sincerest consideration for you that I am here now.

**Leonarda** (who up to this point has been standing by the tree). Then I must go!

**Hagbart.** You won't do that!

**Leonarda.** You seem to me completely changed.

## LEONARDA

**Hagbart.** Thank goodness for that! because I don't feel any great respect for the man I was before. Many people can decide such things in a moment, but it has taken me time to see my course clearly.

**Leonarda.** I don't understand you.

**Hagbart** (almost before the words are out of her mouth, coming close to her). You do understand me!

**Leonarda.** It would be wicked! Take care!

**Hagbart.** Your hand is trembling

**Leonarda.** That is not true!

**Hagbart.** They say there is a devil in every one that should not be waked. It is a foolish saying, because these devils are our vital forces.

**Leonarda.** But we ought to have them under control. That is the lesson my life has taught me; it has cost me dear, and I mean to profit by it.

**Hagbart.** If I did not believe that it was the impulse of truth itself that guided me to you, I should not be standing here. I have had a long struggle. I have had to give up one prejudice after another, to enable my soul to find itself fully and go forward confidently. It has brought me to you and now we will go forward together.

**Leonarda.** That might have been, without this.

**Hagbart.** I love you! It is you I have loved in her since the very first day. I love you!

**Leonarda.** Then have respect for me and go!

**Hagbart.** Leonarda!

**Leonarda.** No, no! (Shrinks away from him.) Oh, why did this happen?

**Hagbart.** It has come upon us step by step. The cruel obstacles in our way have only proved friends to us, in bringing us together. Give yourself up to happiness, as I do now!

**Leonarda.** I do not deserve happiness. I have never expected that.

**Hagbart.** I don't know what you have gone through to make you what you are now so beautiful, so good, so true; but this I do know, that if the others had not judged you by your failures, I should not have loved you for what you have achieved. And I thought that might give me some value in your eyes.

**Leonarda.** Thank you for that, from my heart! But the world disapproves of such things. It disapproves of a young man's making love to an older woman, and if

**Hagbart.** I have never cared much about the world's opinion, even in the days when I was most hidebound in prejudice. It is your opinion I want yours only!

**Leonarda.** And my answer is that one who is alone can get along without the world's sympathy but it is different with a couple. They will soon feel the cold wind of the world's displeasure blowing between them.

## LEONARDA

**Hagbart.** When you answer me, it makes what I have said seem so formal and ceremonious so clumsy. But I must just be as I am; I cannot alter myself. Dearest, from the moment I felt certain that it was you I loved, only one thing seemed of any importance to me everything else was blotted out. And that is why I do not understand what you say. Do you suppose they will try to make me tire of you? Do you suppose that is possible?

**Leonarda.** Not now, but later on. There will come a time

**Hagbart.** Yes, a time of work self-development! It has come now. That is why I, am here! Perhaps a time of conflict may come too heaven send that it may! Are we to pay any heed to that? No! You are free, and I am free; and our future is in our own hands.

**Leonarda.** Besides, I have grown old

**Hagbart.** You!

**Leonarda.** and jealous, and troublesome; while you are the incarnation of youth and joy.

**Hagbart.** You have more youth in you than I. You are an enchantress! All your life you will be showing me new aspects of yourself as you are doing now. Each year will invest you with a new beauty, new spiritual power. Do you think I only half understand you, or only half love you? I want to sit close in your heart, warmed by its glow. It is the irresistible power of truth that has drawn me to you. My whole life will not be long enough for me to sound the unfathomable depths of your soul.

**Leonarda.** Your words are like the spring breezes, alluring and intoxicating, but full of deadly peril too.

**Hagbart.** You love me! I knew it before I came here to-day. I saw it the moment I stood here. Love is the very breath of life to you, surpassingly more than to any one else I have ever seen; and that is why you have suffered so terribly from the disappointments and emptiness of life. And now, when love is calling to you love that is true and sincere you are trembling!

**Leonarda.** You understand me in a way I thought impossible! It takes away all my resolution; it

**Hagbart.** Surely you saw it in all the many talks we love had?

**Leonarda.** Yes.

**Hagbart.** Then is that not a proof that we two ?

**Leonarda.** Yes, it is true! I can hide nothing from you. (Bursts into tears.)

**Hagbart.** But why this unhappiness?

**Leonarda.** I don't know! It pursues me all day, and all through the sleepless night. (Weeps helplessly.)

**Hagbart.** But it has no real existence. It might, in the case of others; but not in our case not for us.

**Leonarda.** I spoke in my distress, without thinking. I threw out the first thing that came into my head, to try and stop you. But it is not that oh, God! (Sways as if half swooning.)

**Hagbart** (rushing to her side). Leonarda!

## LEONARDA

**Leonarda.** No, no! Let me be!

**Hagbart.** You know your love is too strong for you will you not give way to it?

**Leonarda.** Hagbart, there is something about it that is not right

**Hagbart.** Do you mean in the way it has come about? In Aagot's having been the means of leading me to you? Think of it, and you will see that it could not have happened otherwise.

**Leonarda.** Talking about it will not help me. I must see Aagot; I must speak to Aagot.

**Hagbart.** But you have done that! You know it is you that love me, and not she. You know it is you that I love, and not her. What more do you need?

**Leonarda.** I want time. I want not to lose the self-control I have won for myself by years of renunciation and self-sacrifice, and was so proud of. But it won't obey me when you speak to me. Your words possess me in spite of myself. If there is any happiness on earth, it is to find one's every thought faultlessly understood. But that happiness brings a pain with it for me, at any rate. No, don't answer! You are too strong for me; because I love you love you as only one can who has never believed such joy could exist or could possibly come to her and now the depths of my peace are troubled with the thought that it is treachery to my child.

**Hagbart.** But you know that it is not!

**Leonarda.** I don't know. Let me have time to think! I am afraid, and my fear revives forgotten memories. More than that I am afraid of the immensity of my love for you, afraid of dragging you with me into a whirlpool of disaster! No, don't answer! Don't touch me! Hagbart, do you love me?

**Hagbart.** Can you ask that?

**Leonarda.** Then help me! Go away! Be generous. Let my heart know this triumph and see you in its glorious rays! Other women do not need that, perhaps but I need it go!

**Hagbart.** Leonarda!

**Leonarda.** Wait till you hear from me. It will not be long. Whatever happens, be patient and remember, I love you! No, don't say anything! I have neither courage nor strength for anything more. (Her voice sinks to a whisper.) Go! (He turns to go.) Hagbart! (He stops.) What you have said to me to-day has given me the greatest happiness of my life. But your going away now without a word will be more to me than all you have said. (He goes out.)

**Leonarda** (stands for some moments in a kind of ecstasy, moves, and stands still again. Suddenly she calls out):  
Aagot!

**Aagot** (from without). Are you there?

**Leonarda.** My dear child! (Goes out, and comes in again with AAGOT in her arms.) Did you walk?

**Aagot.** The whole way! (She is carrying her hat in her hand, appears hot and sunburnt, and bears evident signs of having made a long journey on foot. She takes off a knapsack which she has been carrying on her back.) I washed in a brook to-day and used it as a looking-glass as well!

LEONARDA

**Leonarda.** Have you been walking all night?

**Aagot.** No; I slept for a little while at Opsal, but I was out by sunrise. It was lovely!

**Leonarda.** And I have just been arranging to send and fetch you.

**Aagot.** Really? Well, they can fetch my things. I could not wait any longer.

**Leonarda.** You look so well.

**Aagot.** Oh, that is because I am so sunburnt.

**Leonarda.** You are feeling all right again, then now?

**Aagot.** Splendid, aunt! All that is over, now. I have had a letter from grandmother.

**Leonarda.** Was that letter from her that I sent on to you? I could not make out whom it was from.

**Aagot.** Yes, it was from her. Here it is. You must hear it.

**Leonarda.** Yes.

**Aagot** (reads). My dear child. I have not written a letter for many years, so I do not know what this will be like. But Hagbart is away, so I must tell you myself. Do not be distressed any longer. As soon as you are married, I will come and live with you. Isn't that glorious, aunt? (She is trembling with happiness, and throws her arms round LEONARDA'S neck.)

**Leonarda.** But

**Aagot.** But what? There is no more but about it, don't you see! It is on your account.

**Leonarda.** On my account? Yes, but what about you? How do you stand with Hagbart?

**Aagot.** Oh, that? Well, I will tell you the whole story! I can do that now. Oh, don't take it all so seriously, aunt! It really is nothing. But let us sit down. (Brings forward a seat, as she speaks.) I really feel as if I wanted to sit down for a little while, too! Well, you see, it came upon me like an unexpected attack a blow from behind, as it were. Now, my dear aunt, don't look so troubled. It is all over now. As a matter of fact, the beginning of it all was a play I saw.

**Leonarda.** A play?

**Aagot.** We saw it together once, you and I, do you remember? Scribe's Bataille de Dames.

**Leonarda.** Yes.

**Aagot.** And I remember thinking and saying to you: That fellow Henri, in the play, was a stupid fellow. He had the choice between a strong-natured, handsome, spirited woman, who was ready to give her life for him, and a child who was really a stupid little thing for she was, it is no use denying it, aunt and he chose the insignificant little person. No, I would rather sit down here; I can rest better so. Ah, that is good! And now you mustn't look me in the face oftener than I want to let you, because you take it too dreadfully solemnly, and I am going to tell you something foolish now. All of a sudden it flashed across my mind: Good heavens! the woman was ,and the little

## LEONARDA

hussy with the curly hair was ,and he? But Hagbart is a man of some sense: he had chosen otherwise! And I did not know; but I realised at the same time that almost from the first day Hagbart used always to talk to you, and only to you, and hardly at all to me except to talk about you. I got so miserable about it that I felt as if some one had put a knife into my heart; and from that moment I am so ashamed of it now I had no more peace. I carried an aching pain in my heart night and day, and I thought my heart itself would break merely to see him speak to you or you to him. I am ashamed of myself; because what was more natural than that he should never be tired of talking to you? I never should, myself!

**Leonarda.** But still I don't see I don't understand yet

**Aagot.** Wait a bit! Oh, don't look so anxiously at me! It is all over now, you know.

**Leonarda.** What is all over?

**Aagot.** Bless my soul, wait! Aunt, dear, you are more impatient than I am myself! I do not want you to think me worse than I am, so I must first tell you how I fought with myself. I lay and cried all night, because I could not talk to you about it, and in the daytime I forced myself to seem merry and lively and happy. And then, aunt, one day I said to myself quite honestly: Why should you feel aggrieved at his loving her more than you? What are you, compared with her? And how splendid it would be, I thought, for my dear aunt to find some one she could truly love, and that it should be I that had brought them together!

**Leonarda.** That was splendid of you, Aagot!

**Aagot.** Yes, but now I mustn't make myself out better than I am, either. Because I did not always manage to look at it that way; very often something very like a sob kept rising in my throat. But then I used to talk to myself seriously, and say: Even supposing it is your own happiness you are giving up for her sake, is that too much for you to do for her? No, a thousand times no! And even supposing he does not love you any more, ought you not to be able to conquer your own feelings? Surely it would be cowardly not to be able to do that! Think no more of him, if he does not love you!

**Leonarda.** Aagot, I cannot tell you how I admire you, and love you, and how proud I am of you!

**Aagot.** Oh, aunt, I never realised as I did then what you have been to me! I knew that if I were capable of any great deed, anything really good or really fine, it was you that had planted the impulse in me. And then I sought every opportunity to bring this about; I wanted to take ever so humble a part in it, but without your hearing a word or a sigh from me. Besides, I had you always before me as an example; because I knew that you would have done it for me indeed that you had already done as much. Your example was like a shining beacon to me, aunt!

**Leonarda.** Aagot!

**Aagot.** But you don't seem to be as happy about it as I am! Don't you understand yet how it all happened?

**Leonarda.** Yes, but about the result of it?

**Aagot.** Dearest, you know all about that! No, it is true, you don't! I must not forget to tell you that; otherwise you won't be able to understand why I behaved so stupidly at the Bishop's.

**Leonarda.** No.

**Aagot.** Well, you see, when I was full of this splendid determination to sacrifice myself so as to make you happy, I used to feel a regular fury come over me because Hagbart noticed no change in me or, to be more correct, did

## LEONARDA

not understand it in the least. He used to go about as if he were in a dream. Isn't it extraordinary how one thing leads to another? My feeling was stronger than I had any idea of; because when the Bishop wanted to slight you and that was like a stab from behind, too! I absolutely lost my head with Hagbart because of his not having prevented that, instead of going about dreaming. I don't know but well, you saw yourself what happened. I blurted out the first thing that came into my head and was abominably rude; you were angry; then we made friends again and I went away and then, aunt

**Leonarda.** And then ?

**Aagot.** Then I thought it all over! All the beautiful things you said to me about him, as we were going home, came back to me more and more forcibly. I saw you as I had always known you, noble and gentle. It was so wonderful up there, too! The air, the clearness, the sense of space! And the lake, almost always calm, because it was so sheltered! And the wonderful stillness, especially in the evening! And so it healed, just as a wound heals.

**Leonarda.** What healed?

**Aagot.** The pain in my heart, aunt. All the difficulties vanished. I know Hagbart to be what you said noble and true. And you too, aunt! You would neither of you have wished to give me a moment's pain, even unconsciously, I knew. It was so good to realise that! It was so restful, that often while I was thinking of it, I went to sleep where I sat I was so happy! Ah, how I love him! And then came grandmother's letter .

[HANS comes in, but does not see AAGOT at first.]

**Hans.** Then I am to fetch Miss Aagot why, there she is!

**Aagot** (getting up). You quite frightened me, Hans!

**Hans.** Welcome back, miss!

**Aagot.** Thank you.

**Hans.** Well, you have saved me a journey, miss, I suppose?

**Aagot.** Yes. But someone must go and fetch my things.

**Hans.** Of course, miss. But what is the matter with the mistress?

**Aagot.** Aunt! Heavens, what is the matter?

**Hans.** The mistress has not looked well lately.

**Aagot.** Hasn't she? Aunt, dear! Shall I ? Would you like to ? Aunt!

**Hans.** Shall I fetch some one to

**Leonarda.** No, no! But you, Aagot will you—. Oh, my God! Will you run in and get

**Aagot.** Your bottle of drops?

**Leonarda.** Yes. (AAGOT runs out.) Hans, go as quickly as you can to the General's ask him to come here! At once!



## LEONARDA

**Hans.** Yes, ma'am.

**Leonarda.** Hans!

**Hans.** Yes, ma'am.

**Leonarda.** Go on horseback. You may not find the General at home and have to go elsewhere after him.

**Hans.** Yes, ma'am. (Goes out. AAGOT re-enters.)

**Aagot.** Here it is, aunt!

**Leonarda.** Thank you. It is over now.

**Aagot.** But what was it, aunt?

**Leonarda.** It was something, dear something that comes over one sometimes at the change of the year.

[Curtain.]

(The interval between this act and the next should be very short.)

## ACT IV

(SCENE. A room in the BISHOP'S house, the same evening. The lights are lit. The BISHOP comes in with LEONARDA, who is in travelling dress, with a shawl over her arm and a bag in her hand. The BISHOP makes a movement as though to relieve her of them, but she puts them down herself.)

**Leonarda.** Your lordship must excuse me for troubling you so late as this; but the reason of it is something over which I have no control. –Is your nephew here?

**Bishop.** No, but I expect him. He has been here twice this afternoon already to see me, but I was out.

**Leonarda.** I will make haste then, and do what I have to do before he comes.

**Bishop.** Shall I give instructions that we are to be told when he comes in?

**Leonarda.** If you please.

**Bishop** (ringing the bell). Grandmother says that as soon as he came back to-day, he went at once to see you.

**Leonarda.** Yes.

[Enter a Maid.]

**Bishop** (to the Maid). Be so good as to let me know when Mr. Hagbart comes in. (Exit Maid.)

**Leonarda.** Has he had a talk with his grandmother?

**Bishop.** Yes.

LEONARDA

**Leonarda.** After he ? (Checks herself.)

**Bishop.** After he had been to see you.

**Leonarda.** Did he tell her anything?

**Bishop.** He was very much agitated, apparently. I did not ask grandmother any further questions; I can imagine what passed between them. Has he spoken to you?

**Leonarda.** Yes.

**Bishop.** And you, Mrs. Falk?

**Leonarda.** I ? Well, I am here.

**Bishop.** Going on a journey, if I am not mistaken?

**Leonarda.** Going on a journey. Things are turning out as you wished after all, my lord.

**Bishop.** And he is to know nothing about it?

**Leonarda.** No one except the person who will accompany me. I am sailing for England by to-night's boat.

**Bishop** (looking at his watch). You haven't much time, then.

**Leonarda.** I only want to entrust to your lordship a deed of gift of my property here.

**Bishop.** In favour of your niece?

**Leonarda.** Yes, for Aagot. She shall have everything.

**Bishop.** But last time, Mrs. Falk, you said

**Leonarda.** Oh, I have enough for my journey. Later on I shall want nothing; I can provide for myself.

**Bishop.** But what about Aagot? Will you not wait until she comes home?

**Leonarda.** She came home to-day. She is resting now. But I have sent back my carriage to bring her here immediately. I want to ask you to take her in I know no one else and to comfort her

**Bishop.** Indeed I will, Mrs. Falk. I understand what this must cost you.

**Leonarda.** And will you try to bring those two together again?

**Bishop.** But they don't love each other!

**Leonarda.** Aagot loves him. And as they both love me my idea was that when I am gone, and they know that it was my wish, the love they both have for me may bring them together again. I hope so they are both so young.

**Bishop.** I will do all I can.

## LEONARDA

**Leonarda.** Thank you. And I want to make bold to beg you to let grandmother go and live in the country with Aagot or let Aagot come and live here, whichever they prefer. It would divert Aagot's mind if she had the care of grandmother; and she is very fond of her.

**Bishop.** And grandmother of her.

**Leonarda.** And wherever the grandmother is, Hagbart will be too. Very likely the old lady would help them.

**Bishop.** I think your idea is an excellent one; and I am amazed that you have had time and strength to think it all out in this manner.

**Leonarda.** Is grandmother still up?

**Bishop.** Yes; I have just come from her room. Hagbart has excited her; she can stand so little.

**Leonarda.** Then I expect I had better not go and bid her good-bye. I should have liked to, otherwise.

**Bishop.** I don't think I ought to allow it.

**Leonarda.** Then please say good-bye to her from me and thank her.

**Bishop.** I will.

**Leonarda.** And ask her to help

**Bishop.** I will do everything I possibly can.

**Leonarda.** And your lordship must forgive me for all the upset I have caused here. I did not intend it.

**Bishop.** I am only sorry that I did not know you sooner. Many things might have been different.

**Leonarda.** We won't talk about that now.

[Enter Maid.]

**Maid.** I was asked to bring you this card, ma'am.

**Leonarda.** Thank you. Is the General in the hall?

**Maid.** Yes.

**Bishop.** General Rosen here?

**Leonarda.** I took the liberty of asking him to call for me here when the boat was signalled.

**Bishop.** Ask the General to come in. (Exit Maid.) Then it is General Rosen that is to . (Checks himself.)

**Leonarda** (searching in her bag). that is to accompany me? He is my husband.

**Bishop.** The husband you divorced.

LEONARDA

**Leonarda.** Yes.

**Bishop.** I see I have done you a great injustice, Mrs. Falk.

**Leonarda.** Yes. (GENERAL ROSEN comes in, dressed in a smart travelling suit and looking very spruce.)

**General Rosen.** I beg your lordship's pardon but, time is up. Mrs. Falk, is this yours? (Gives her a letter.)

**Leonarda.** Yes. When Aagot comes, will your lordship give her this? and help her?

**Bishop.** I will, Mrs. Falk. God bless you!

[Enter Maid.]

**Maid.** Mr. Hagbart has just come in.

**Leonarda.** Good-bye! Say good-bye to

**Bishop** (taking her hand). What you are doing is more than any one of us could have done.

**Leonarda.** It all depends on how deeply one loves. Thank you, and good-bye!

**Bishop.** Good-bye! (GENERAL ROSEN offers LEONARDA his arm. She takes it, and they go out. The BISHOP follows them. HAGBART comes in from the right, looks round in astonishment, then goes towards the back of the room and meets the BISHOP in the doorway.)

**Bishop.** Is that you? (Both come forward without speaking.)

**Hagbart** (in a low voice, but evidently under the influence of great emotion). I can tell by your voice and your face that you know about it.

**Bishop.** You mean that you think I have had a talk with grandmother?

**Hagbart.** Yes.

**Bishop.** Well, I have. She told me nothing definite, but I see how things stand. I saw that sooner than you did yourself, you know.

**Hagbart.** That is true. The fight is over now, as far as I am concerned.

**Bishop.** Scarcely that, Hagbart.

**Hagbart.** Oh, you won't admit it, I know. But I call it the most decisive victory of my life. I love Mrs. Falk and she loves me.

**Bishop.** If you were not in such an excited condition

**Hagbart.** It is not excitement, it is happiness. But here, with you oh, I have not come to ask for your blessing; we must do without that! But I have come to tell you the fact, because it was my duty to do so. Does it grieve you so much?

LEONARDA

**Bishop.** Yes.

**Hagbart.** Uncle, I feel hurt at that.

**Bishop.** My boy !

**Hagbart.** I feel hurt both on her account and on my own. It shows that you know neither of us.

**Bishop.** Let us sit down and talk quietly, Hagbart.

**Hagbart.** I must ask you to make no attempt to persuade me to alter my decision.

**Bishop.** Make your mind easy on that score. Your feelings do you honour and I know now that she is worthy of them.

**Hagbart.** What do you say that? (They sit down.)

**Bishop.** My dear Hagbart, let me tell you this at once. I have gone through an experience, too, since the last time we met. And it has taught me that I had no right to treat Mrs. Falk as I did.

**Hagbart.** Is it possible?

**Bishop.** I judged her both too quickly and too harshly. That is one of our besetting sins. And I have paid too much heed to the opinion of others, and too little to the charity that should give us courage to do good. She, whom I despised, has taught me that.

**Hagbart.** You do not know how grateful and how happy you have made me by saying that!

**Bishop.** I have something more to say. At the time we held that unjust opinion of her, we misled you for you relied on our opinion then until you ended by sharing our views and being even more vehement in the matter than we, as young people will. That created a reaction in you, which in the end led to love. If that love had been a sin, we should have been to blame for it.

**Hagbart.** Is it a sin, then?

**Bishop.** No. But when you felt that we were inclined to look upon it in that light, that very fact stirred up your sense of justice and increased your love. You have a noble heart.

**Hagbart.** Ah, how I shall love you after this, uncle!

**Bishop.** And that is why I wanted you to sit down here just now, Hagbart to beg your pardon and hers. And my congregation's, too. It is my duty to guide them, but I was not willing to trust them enough. By far the greater number among them are good people; they would have followed me if I had had the courage to go forward.

**Hagbart.** Uncle, I admire and revere you more than I have ever done before more than any one has ever done!

**Bishop** (getting up). My dear boy!

**Hagbart** (throwing himself into his arms). Uncle!

**Bishop.** Is your love strong enough to bear

LEONARDA

**Hagbart.** Anything!

**Bishop.** Because sometimes love is given to us to teach us self-sacrifice.

[The GRANDMOTHER comes in.]

**Grandmother.** I heard Hagbart's voice.

**Hagbart.** Grandmother! (He and the BISHOP go to help her.) Grandmother! You don't know how happy I am! (Takes her by the arm.)

**Grandmother.** Is that true?

**Bishop** (taking her other arm). You should not walk about without help.

**Grandmother.** I heard Hagbart's voice. He was talking so loud, that I thought something had happened.

**Hagbart.** So it has something good! Uncle consents! He is splendid! He has made everything all right again, and better than ever! Oh, grandmother, I wish you were not so old! I feel as if I should like to take you up in my arms and dance you round the room.

**Grandmother.** You mustn't do that, my dear. (They put her into her chair.) Now! What is your last bit of news?

**Hagbart.** My last bit of news? I have no fresh news! There is nothing more to tell!

**Bishop.** Yes, Hagbart, there is.

**Hagbart.** Why do you say that so seriously? You look so serious and seem agitated! Uncle! (The noise of wheels is heard outside.)

**Bishop.** Wait a little, my dear boy. Wait a little! (Goes out by the door at the back.)

**Hagbart.** Grandmother, what can it be?

**Grandmother.** I don't know. But happiness is often so brief.

**Hagbart.** Happiness so brief? What do you mean? Good God, grandmother, don't torture me!

**Grandmother.** I assure you, I know nothing about it only

**Hagbart.** Only what?

**Grandmother.** While your uncle was with me, Mrs. Falk was announced.

**Hagbart.** Mrs. Falk? Has she been here? Just now?

**Grandmother.** Yes, just now.

**Hagbart.** Then something must have happened! Perhaps it was she that uncle . (Rushes to the door, which opens, and the BISHOP comes in with AAGOT on his arm, followed by CORNELIA.) Aagot!

LEONARDA

**Aagot.** Hagbart! (Anxiously.) Is aunt not here!

**Cornelia.** What, grandmother here! (Goes to her.)

**Bishop.** My dear Aagot, your aunt entrusted this letter to me to give to you.

**Hagbart.** A letter ?

**Grandmother.** What is the matter? Let me see! (CORNELIA moves her chair nearer to the others.)

**Hagbart.** Read it aloud, Aagot!

**Aagot** (reads). My darling. When you receive this letter I shall have gone away. I love the man you . (With a cry, she falls swooning. The BISHOP catches her in his arms.)

**Grandmother.** She has gone away?

**Cornelia.** She loves the man you ? Good God, look at Hagbart!

**Bishop.** Cornelia! (She goes to him, and they lay AAGOT on the couch. CORNELIA stays beside her. The BISHOP turns to HAGBART.) Hagbart! (HAGBART throws himself into his arms.) Courage! Courage, my boy!

**Grandmother** (getting up). It is like going back to the days of great emotions!

[The Curtain falls slowly.]