

A Doll's House

CHRISTINE (Side 1)

TORVALD EXITS. MRS LINDE
ENTERS WEARING CLOTHES
FROM HER JOURNEY. SHE IS
TIMID. RELUCTANT.

Christine

Hello Nora.

NORA DOES NOT RECOGNIZE
HER

NORA

Hello...

Christine

You don't recognize me.

NORA

No...I'm not sure ... wait...yes -- it's you. Christine -- is it really you?

Christine

Yes, it's me.

NORA

Oh, Christine, I didn't recognize you -- I'm so sorry. But how could I -
- you've changed so much.

Christine

Yes I'm sure I have -- it's been nine or ten years.

NORA

Has it been that long since we've seen each other? I has -- my God, it
has.

Christine

I came from out of town this morning.

NORA

You've come for Christmas -- Wonderful! We'll have so much fun.
Come on -- take off your coat. (Nora helps her with her things.)
You're freezing. (looks at her.) Yes, now you look like you. It was
just that first moment. (beat) But you do look a little thinner.

Christine

And older, Nora. I'm a lot older.

NORA

A little older, maybe... just a tiny little bit -- not very much. (beat)
Oh. I'm such an idiot chattering on like this -- sorry. (beat) Christine,
will you forgive me?

Christine

For what?

NORA

You lost your husband.

Christine

Yes. Three years ago.

NORA

I know, I saw it in the paper. Please believe me, I kept meaning to
write to you, but I kept putting it off and...well you know how it is.

Christine

That's all right, I understand.

NORA

No, it was very bad of me. What you must have gone through.

(short pause) Did he leave you with anything to live on?

Christine

Nothing.

NORA

No children?

Christine

No.

NORA

Nothing at all?

Christine

He left me nothing. Not even grief.

NORA

That can't be true.

Christine

That's the way it is sometimes, Nora

NORA

You're all alone. That must be hard for you.

I have three beautiful children. You can't see them right now because they are outside. But now, tell me everything --

Christine

No, no -- you do the talking.

NORA

No, you start. Please. I'm not going to be selfish today. Today I only think about you. But I do have to tell you one thing. Have you heard the great news?

Christine

No, what?

NORA

This is wonderful: my husband has been made **manager** of the Joint Stock Bank! Can you believe it!

Christine

That **is** wonderful.

NORA

Isn't it? He takes over the bank the first of the year and he'll be making a huge salary with big bonuses. Life will be so different with lots of money. Not having to worry so much all the time. You know - free.

Christine

It must be comforting to have everything that you need.

NORA

More than we need. I hate to brag, but he'll be making so much money.

Christine

(with a little laugh) You haven't changed a bit. Even at school -- you had money on the brain -- always spending more than you had to spend.

NORA

(Nora laughs) I know. Torvald says I still do. (Imitates him pointing her finger) "Nora, Nora." Our life has not been as easy as you think. We've lived on very little up to now -- and we've **both** had to work.

Christine

You?

NORA

Me too -- You probably knew that right after we got married, Torvald quit his job as a government lawyer -- no chance of a real salary -- it was a dead end. So the first year we were married, he worked himself to the bone, patching together all kinds of part-time jobs. You can't imagine how hard he was working -- night and day. He wanted so much to be the good provider, but he couldn't take the stress anymore and he got sick. Very sick. The doctors said that it was absolutely essential that we get out of the rat race, reduce stress.

Christine

You spent the whole year away, didn't you?

NORA

That's right -- we put him into a place that was combination clinic and retreat. It wasn't easy, I'll tell you that. Isaac had just been born. But we had no choice. It ended up being an absolutely wonderful year and it saved Torvald's life. We rented a tiny cottage nearby but it still cost a lot of money.

Christine

I can imagine.

NORA

A lot.

Christine

You were lucky that you had that kind of money on hand when you really needed it.

NORA

Well, we got it from my father.

Christine

Oh. That must have been right before he died.

NORA

Yes, that's when it was. And the awful thing was, I couldn't go and take care of him. I was stuck here, pregnant with Isaac, ready to give birth any minute -- taking care of Torvald who was deathly ill. (beat)

I never saw my father again.

Christine

I know how close you were. So then you all just left.

NORA

Yes, we had the money by then and the doctors kept pushing us -- so we left as soon as we could -- after we put my father's things in order.

Christine

And your husband came back completely cured?

NORA

Fit as a fiddle. A story with a happy ending -- three healthy children, a wonderful husband -- it's just exhilarating to be alive and happy.

Oh I am just terrible -- going on and on about myself again. (Nora pulls up a stool next to Christine and places her arms in her lap.) Please don't be angry with me. Don't.

All right, tell me, you really didn't mourn your husband (Christine shakes her head) You really didn't love him.

Christine

No.

NORA

Why did you marry him then? Tell me.

Christine

My mother was still alive but helpless -- bedridden. And then I had my two brothers to take care of -- I felt I couldn't say no.

NORA

No, no, you did the right thing. So -- did he have lots of money?

Christine

Yes. But his business was not as secure as I thought it was, and when he died the whole thing collapsed and there was nothing left.

NORA

Oh dear -- what did you do?

Christine

I tried to manage by working in a small shop and I did a little teaching and whatever else I could think of. The last three years have been one long workday without end. No rest.

It's over now, Nora. My mother's passed away, **she** doesn't need me. My brothers don't either -- they've gone into business and can take care of themselves.

NORA

You must feel so relieved --

Christine

I don't. Just empty. No one to care of, no one to live for anymore. (she rises) That's why I couldn't stand it, stuck up there in that backwater. Easier to find something here to occupy me, something demanding. If I could find some steady job, office work maybe...

NORA

But that's exhausting and you look so...worn out already. Why don't you just get away for a little while?

Christine

I don't have a father to give me money for the trip, Nora.

NORA

Please don't be angry with me.

Christine

Don't **you** be angry with me. When you end up boxed into a corner like I am, it's easy **to** be consumed with anger and resentment - not a good place to be.

I have no one to take care of, but what am I going to do, just sit around with my hands in my lap? Each day, you get more and more isolated - - when you have no one to live for. When you told me the good news about your husband's new job, I was happier for my sake than for yours.

NORA

Why? Oh, I understand. You thought Torvald might be able to help you.

Christine

I was thinking that, yes.