

# MRS. LINDE

MRS. LINDE: And older, Nora, much older.

NORA: A little older, yes, perhaps, a tiny little bit. Not much, not much. *(She stops suddenly and looks serious.)* Oh, Kristine, I'm so sorry. Forgive me.

MRS. LINDE: Forgive you? Why, Nora?

NORA: You lost your husband.

MRS. LINDE: Three years ago, yes.

NORA: I read it in the newspapers. Kristine, do believe me, I meant so often to write to you then, but I just kept putting it off and things kept getting in the way.

MRS. LINDE: My dear Nora, I understand perfectly.

NORA: No, it was very bad of me. Didn't he leave you anything to live on?

MRS. LINDE: Nothing.

NORA: And no children?

MRS. LINDE: None.

NORA: Nothing at all then?

MRS. LINDE: He left me nothing, not even an ounce of grief.

NORA: Kristine, that's not possible. *(Mrs. Linde smiles sadly and strokes Nora's hair.)*

MRS. LINDE: These things do happen sometimes, Nora.

NORA: All on your own then. All on your own. That's awful. I have three such lovely children. Oh I didn't mean it like that. You can't see them just yet. The Nanny's taken them out. But tell me everything —

MRS. LINDE: No, no, no, you talk to me.

NORA: No, you start. I am not going to be selfish today. Today I will think only about you. Oh, I do have to tell you one thing.

NORA: Have you heard our wonderful news?

MRS. LINDE: No, what?

NORA: My husband has just been made the new manager of the Joint Stock Bank.

MRS. LINDE: Your husband — that is wonderful —

NORA: Yes, I know. Being a lawyer is such an insecure profession. Oh I can't tell you how happy we are. When he starts work at the bank in the New Year he gets a huge salary and a fair share of bonuses. From then on we can live quite differently. We can do

as we like. Oh Kristine, it is gorgeous to have pots and pots of money. Isn't it?

MRS. LINDE: Yes indeed, it must be lovely to have the basics.

NORA: No, more than the basics, pots and pots and pots of money. (*Mrs. Linde smiles.*)

MRS. LINDE: Nora, Nora, haven't you got any sense yet? Even in school you spent money like water.

NORA: I know, and Torvald says I still do but our life together hasn't been that easy. We've had very little money. We have both had to work hard.

MRS. LINDE: You as well?

NORA: Oh yes. Bits and pieces. Needlework, crocheting, embroidery — that sort of thing. Other things as well. The thing is, when we first got married obviously Torvald had to earn more money than before but in that first year he took on so much extra work he just couldn't take it and he became ill. Terribly, terribly ill and the doctors said it was absolutely necessary that we travelled south.

MRS. LINDE: Oh yes, you spent an entire year in Italy, didn't you?

NORA: We did. And it saved his life, Torvald's life. It was a wonderful year but it cost an awful lot of money.

MRS. LINDE: I would imagine so.

NORA: Four thousand, eight hundred kroner — a lot — a lot of money.

MRS. LINDE: You were very lucky that you had it.

NORA: Well, we had it from Papa, you know.

MRS. LINDE: I see. It was around the time your father died.

NORA: Yes, that's right. Can you believe it — I couldn't go to nurse him. I was stuck here, I was expecting Ivar to be born any day and I had Torvald to look after, and he was so ill, so ill. Do you remember my Papa? He was so dear to me, so kind — I never saw him again. That's the worst thing that's happened to me since I got married.

MRS. LINDE: I remember how fond you were of him. So then you left for Italy?

NORA: Yes, we left a month later.

MRS. LINDE: And your husband came back in good health?

NORA: Fit as a fiddle.

MRS. LINDE: But — the doctor?

NORA: I'm sorry?

MRS. LINDE: The gentleman who arrived at the same time as me? I thought the maid said....

NORA: Oh, Dr. Rank, yes. Oh no, this isn't a professional visit. He's Torvald's best friend. He drops by at least once a day. No, Torvald has not been ill for one moment since then. And the children are well, they're very healthy, and I am too. Oh Kristine! It is so wonderful to be alive and to be happy. Oh, that was so thoughtless of me — listen to me rabbiting on about myself. I'm so sorry. Don't be cross with me, don't. Would you tell me something? You know you said you didn't love your husband, why did you marry him? Tell me.

MRS. LINDE: My mother was alive then. She was bedridden. Helpless. I had two younger brothers. I had to take care of them. I could not refuse his offer. It wouldn't have been justifiable.

NORA: No, I don't suppose it would have, really. So he was rich, then?

MRS. LINDE: He did have money, but the whole business was shaky. Then he died, and everything collapsed. There was nothing left.

NORA: What happened?

MRS. LINDE: I managed a little shop. And then a little school. And anything else I could think of. These last three years, Nora, I haven't stopped working. That's over now, Nora. My poor mother's died, she doesn't need me. The boys don't either. They've found positions, they can look after themselves.

NORA: You must feel so relieved —

MRS. LINDE: No, empty. I cannot tell you how empty. Nothing to live for any more. (*She gets up uneasily.*) That's why I couldn't stay there any more. It must be easier to find work here. Something to keep me busy, to take my mind off things. I thought perhaps a job, some office job.

NORA: Kristine, no, it will wear you out and you look so exhausted already. Why don't you go for a holiday — (*Mrs. Linde goes to the window.*)

MRS. LINDE: Nora, I don't have a Papa to give me the money for the journey.

NORA: Don't be cross with me, don't. (*Mrs. Linde goes to her.*)

MRS. LINDE: I'm sorry, I've just become so bitter. I have to think about myself all the time. Do you know? When you told me of your good news I was happy not for you, but for myself.

NORA: What do you mean? Oh I see, you think Torvald might be able to help you?

MRS. LINDE: Yes, I do think that.

NORA: Well, he will, Kristine. Leave it to me. I'll ask him. I'll think of something he really likes. And I would really like to be able to help you.

MRS. LINDE: Nora, it's so kind of you, to help me — especially when you know so little of how difficult life can be —

NORA: Sorry?

MRS. LINDE: Dear God, you do some needlework, you embroider — you are a child, Nora.

~~NORA: Don't say that to me, don't talk down to me.~~

~~MRS. LINDE: I'm sorry.~~

~~NORA: You're as bad as the rest of them. You all think that I'm useless. Do you honestly think that I don't know how hard life can be —~~

~~MRS. LINDE: Nora dear, you've just told me about your troubles.~~

~~NORA: That was nothing. There's a big thing I've not told you.~~

~~MRS. LINDE: What do you mean?~~

~~NORA: You're proud that you worked so long and hard for your family, aren't you?~~

~~MRS. LINDE: Yes, I am.~~

~~NORA: Listen to me, Kristine. I've done something to be proud and happy about. I have.~~

~~MRS. LINDE: I don't doubt it. What is it?~~

~~NORA: Torvald must not hear this. He must never hear this. No one must know, Kristine. No one but you.~~

~~MRS. LINDE: What?~~

~~NORA: It was me who saved Torvald's life. I saved his life.~~

~~MRS. LINDE: You saved his life? How did you save it?~~

END

# MRS. LINDE CB

## ACT THREE

*The same room. The sofa table has been moved to the middle of the floor, with chairs around it. A lamp burns on the table. The door to the hall is open. Dance music can be heard from the floor above.*

*Mrs. Linde sits by the table and tries to read, leafing through a book, unable to concentrate. A few times she listens intently towards the hall door. She looks at her watch. She listens again. She goes to the hall and opens the door cautiously. Quiet steps can be heard on the stairs and she whispers.*

MRS. LINDE: Come in, no one's here. *(Krogstad is in the doorway.)*

KROGSTAD: I found a note from you at home. What is this about?

MRS. LINDE: I have to speak to you.

KROGSTAD: Oh, have you? Does it have to be in this house?

MRS. LINDE: It is not possible at my lodgings. There's no privacy there. We're on our own. Come in. The maid's asleep and the Helmers are upstairs at a dance. *(He enters the room.)*

KROGSTAD: I see. So, the Helmers dance tonight? They're dancing?

MRS. LINDE: Why shouldn't they dance?

KROGSTAD: Absolutely. Why shouldn't they dance?

MRS. LINDE: It's time for us to talk.

KROGSTAD: Do we have anything more to talk about?

MRS. LINDE: We have a great deal to talk about.

KROGSTAD: I shouldn't have thought so.

MRS. LINDE: You wouldn't, because you have never really understood.

KROGSTAD: Was there anything to understand, except what

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was clear to everybody? A heartless woman dumps a man when she's offered a better deal.

MRS. LINDE: Do you think I have no heart? Do you think I left you with an easy heart?

KROGSTAD: Didn't you?

MRS. LINDE: Did you really think that?

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

MRS. LINDE: What else could I do? I had to leave you, and so I had to destroy everything you felt for me. (*Krogstad clenches his fist.*)

KROGSTAD: My God, — and you did this for money.

MRS. LINDE: You mustn't forget I had a helpless mother and two younger brothers. We couldn't wait for you, Nils. Your prospects were so remote then.

KROGSTAD: Even so. But you did not have the right to throw me aside like that for someone else.

MRS. LINDE: I really don't know. I've asked myself many times if I had that right. (*Krogstad speaks more quietly.*)

KROGSTAD: When I lost you, I lost my bearings — it was as if the solid ground had given way under my feet. Look at me. Now, I'm wrecked, the ship's gone, and I'm a man clinging to wreckage.

MRS. LINDE: Help might be looking you in the face.

KROGSTAD: It was looking me in the face, but you've come and got in the way.

MRS. LINDE: I didn't know until today that I was to replace you at the bank.

KROGSTAD: But now you do know it, are you going to resign?

MRS. LINDE: No. Because it would not help you in the slightest if I did.

KROGSTAD: Well, I would have done it.

MRS. LINDE: I've learned to be practical. Life and hard bitter necessity have taught me that.

KROGSTAD: And life has taught me not to believe in fine words.

MRS. LINDE: Then life has taught you something useful. But do you believe in doing something?

KROGSTAD: What do you mean by that?

MRS. LINDE: You said you were like a shipwrecked man clinging to wreckage.

KROGSTAD: I had good reason to say that.

MRS. LINDE: Well I'm like a shipwrecked woman, clinging to the wreckage as well. I've no one to care about, no one to care for.

KROGSTAD: You made that choice yourself.

MRS. LINDE: There was no other choice then.

KROGSTAD: So, what about it?

MRS. LINDE: Nils, suppose these two shipwrecked people could reach each other?

KROGSTAD: What are you saying?

MRS. LINDE: It's better that two people cling to the wreckage together rather than one person on his own.

KROGSTAD: Kristine.

MRS. LINDE: Why do you think I've come to this town?

KROGSTAD: Were you really thinking about me?

MRS. LINDE: If I'm to survive, I have to work. All my life, as long as I remember, I have worked. And there is no joy in working for yourself alone. Give me something, Nils. Give me someone to work for.

KROGSTAD: I don't believe this. This is a woman's hysterical, high-minded obsession with sacrificing herself —

MRS. LINDE: Have you ever known me to be hysterical?

KROGSTAD: Could you really do this? Could you? Tell me. Do you know all about my past life?

MRS. LINDE: Yes.

KROGSTAD: And you know my reputation here?

MRS. LINDE: You've just said, you've just implied, with me you could have been someone else.

KROGSTAD: I'm certain of it.

MRS. LINDE: Well then, surely it could still happen?

KROGSTAD: Kristine, do you know what you're saying?

MRS. LINDE: I need to care for someone, and your children need a mother. You and I need each other. Nils, I believe in you. I believe in what you really are. With you, I would have the courage to do anything. *(He clasps her hands.)*

KROGSTAD: Thank you — thank you — Kristine — I will make other people see me in the same way — but I forgot — *(She listens.)*

MRS. LINDE: Ssh. The dance upstairs, can you hear it? They'll be coming back when it's over.

KROGSTAD: You don't know what I've done to the Helmers, do you?

MRS. LINDE: I do know.

KROGSTAD: Even so, you've still the courage —

MRS. LINDE: I also know what a man like you can do in desperation.

KROGSTAD: If only I could stop what I've done

MRS. LINDE: You can. Your letter is still in the box.

KROGSTAD: Are you certain?

MRS. LINDE: Certain, but —

KROGSTAD: I will ask for my letter back.

MRS. LINDE: No, you will not.

KROGSTAD: I will, yes. I'll stay here till Helmer comes down.

MRS. LINDE: You must not ask for your letter back.

KROGSTAD: Wasn't that the reason you asked to meet me here?

MRS. LINDE: It was. I was frightened and didn't know better. They must be honest with each other.

KROGSTAD: Very well. If you want to take the responsibility — but one thing I can do and I will do it now — *(She listens.)*

MRS. LINDE: Hurry up. You must go. The dance is over. We have to leave now.

KROGSTAD: I'll wait for you downstairs.

MRS. LINDE: Do. You can walk me to my lodgings.

KROGSTAD: I am the happiest man in the whole wide world.

*(He exits through the front door. The door between the room and the hall remains open.)*

MRS. LINDE: It's happened. *(She tidies up a little and gets her outdoor clothes.)* It's actually happened. Someone to work for, someone to live for. A home to bring joy to. I'll make it so comfortable. *(She listens, then puts on her hat and coat. Helmer and Nora's voices are heard in the hall. A key is turned and Helmer leads Nora into the hall, almost by force. She is dressed in the Italian costume, with a big, black shawl draped over her shoulders. He is wearing a dinner jacket with a big, black cloak. Still in the doorway, Nora resists him.)*

NORA: No, please, not yet, not in here, no. I want to go back upstairs. It's too early, I don't want to leave.

HELLMER: My precious Nora, please —

END