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HEDDA GABLER

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Hedda Gabler by Henrik Ibsen.

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Hedda: Well, I may as well tell you that—just at this time— [Impatiently breaking off.] No, no; you can ask Aunt Julia. She will tell you, fast enough.

Tesman: Oh, I almost think I understand you, Hedda! [Clasps his hands together.] Great heavens! do you really mean it! Eh?

Hedda: Don't shout so. The servant might hear.

Tesman: [Laughing in irrepressible glee.] The servant! Why, how absurd you are, Hedda. It's only my old Berta! Why, I'll tell Berta myself.

Hedda: [Clenching her hands together in desperation.] Oh, it is killing me, —it is killing me, all this!

Tesman: What is, Hedda? Eh?

Hedda: [Coldly, controlling herself.] All this—absurdity—George.

Tesman: Absurdity! Do you see anything absurd in my being overjoyed at the news! But after all—perhaps I had better not say anything to Berta.

Hedda: Oh—why not that too?

Tesman: No, no, not yet! But I must certainly tell Aunt Julia. And then that you have begun to call me George too! Fancy that! Oh, Aunt Julia will be so happy—so happy!

Hedda: When she hears that I have burnt Eilert Lovborg's manuscript—for your sake?

Tesman: No, by-the-bye—that affair of the manuscript—of course nobody must know about that. But that you love me so much,¹⁸ Hedda—Aunt Julia must really share my joy in that! I wonder, now, whether this sort of thing is usual in young wives? Eh?

Hedda: I think you had better ask Aunt Julia that question too.

Tesman: I will indeed, some time or other. [Looks uneasy and downcast again.] And yet the manuscript—the manuscript! Good God! it is terrible to think what will become of poor Eilert now.

MRS. ELVSTED, dressed as in the first Act, with hat and cloak, enters by the hall door.

Mrs. Elvsted: [Greets them hurriedly, and says in evident agitation.] Oh, dear Hedda, forgive my coming again.

Hedda: What is the matter with you, Thea?

Tesman: Something about Eilert Lovborg again—eh?

Mrs. Elvsted: Yes! I am dreadfully afraid some misfortune has happened to him.

Hedda: [Seized her arm.] Ah,—do you think so?

Tesman: Why, good Lord—what makes you think that, Mrs. Elvsted?

Mrs. Elvsted: I heard them talking of him at my boarding-house—just as I came in. Oh, the most incredible rumours are afloat about him to-day.

Tesman: Yes, fancy, so I heard too! And I can bear witness that he went straight home to bed last night. Fancy that!

Hedda: Well, what did they say at the boarding-house?

¹⁸ Literally, "That you burn for me."

