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*Dramatic Publishing*

HENRIK IBSEN'S

# A Doll's House

One-Act Adaptation

by ALBERT PIA



*THE DRAMATIC PUBLISHING COMPANY*

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(A DOLL'S HOUSE)

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A DOLL'S HOUSE  
*One-Act Adaptation*  
For Three Men and Three Women

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C H A R A C T E R S

TORVALD HELMER

NORA HELMER

DOCTOR RANK

CHRISTINE LINDE

NEAL KROGSTAD

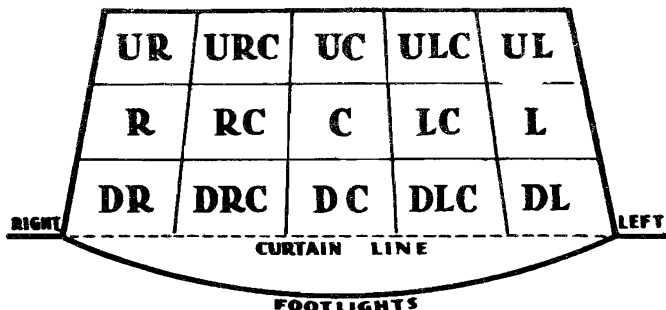
HELEN

**PLACE:** A comfortable apartment living room.

**TIME:** Three days, just before and after Christmas,  
some years ago.

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## CHART OF STAGE POSITIONS



### STAGE POSITIONS

*Upstage* means away from the footlights, *downstage* means toward the footlights, and *right* and *left* are used with reference to the actor as he faces the audience. R means *right*, L means *left*, U means *up*, D means *down*, C means *center*, and these abbreviations are used in combination, as: UR for *up right*, RC for *right center*, DLC for *down left center*, etc. A territory designated on the stage refers to a general area, rather than to a given point.

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NOTE: Before starting rehearsals, chalk off your stage or rehearsal space as indicated above in the *Chart of Stage Positions*. Then teach your actors the meanings and positions of these fundamental terms of stage movement by having them walk from one position to another until they are familiar with them. The use of these abbreviated terms in directing the play saves time, speeds up rehearsals, and reduces the amount of explanation the director has to give to his actors.

## Scene One

(LIGHTS come up to reveal a comfortable apartment living room. It is afternoon on the day before Christmas. The stage is empty for a moment. Then the door is heard opening offstage R of hallway C. NORA is heard entering excitedly.)

NORA (offstage). Hide the Christmas tree, Helen, so the children won't see it!

(HELEN enters hallway UC momentarily.)

HELEN. Oh, yes, madam.

(HELEN exits UC as NORA enters C.)

TORVALD (in his study offstage UL). Is that you, Nora?

NORA (crossing to table R with gift boxes). Yes, Torvald!

(TORVALD enters UL from study.)

TORVALD. All this? Have you been wasting money again?

NORA. Oh, yes, dear! This is the first Christmas I won't have to economize.

TORVALD. Still, we shouldn't spend so freely.

NORA. Oh, just a little! You're going to earn such a big salary, now!

TORVALD. Yes, of course, Nora, after the New Year.

NORA (somewhat less spirited). Ohhh, we can borrow until then, dear.

TORVALD (resigned). Just like a woman. Nora, there can be no joy in a life that depends upon borrowing.

NORA. Yes, dear. (Crosses ULC to clothes rack,

taking off her coat.)

TORVALD. Now, now! Is my little doll sad?  
(Tenderly.) Nora--(Reaches into pocket.)  
--guess what I have for you? (He exposes  
money.)

NORA (turning; sees money and smiles). Money!  
(She crosses happily to him.)

TORVALD (at RC). You think I don't know you need  
money at Christmas?

NORA. Thank you, Torvald. I really save all I  
can, honestly.

TORVALD (teasing playfully). Yes, of course,  
dear, but you can't save anything!

NORA (sadly). Oh, Torvald . . .

TORVALD (taking her into his arms). I was only  
joking. (Doorbell rings.) Who can that be?

(HELEN enters and stands in doorway UC.)

HELEN. A lady to see you, madam.

NORA. Invite her in, Helen.

HELEN (to TORVALD). Doctor Rank has also  
come, sir. He's in the study.

TORVALD. Thank you. (HELEN exits UC.) Excuse  
me, dear. (He lightly kisses NORA on the cheek  
and exits UL.)

(CHRISTINE is ushered in by HELEN UC.)

CHRISTINE. Hello, Nora. (HELEN exits UC.)

NORA. Christine! (Crosses UC.) How delightful!  
(Embracing CHRISTINE.) Here, take off your  
coat. (Helps CHRISTINE with coat, which is  
placed on coat rack ULC.) Please sit down.  
(Leads CHRISTINE to downstage edge of couch.)  
Oh, Christine, I'm so sorry. (Standing RC.)

CHRISTINE. For what, Nora?

NORA (tenderly). You are a widow. (Slowly sits on edge of chair RC.)

CHRISTINE. Yes. It's been three years.

NORA. And you're all alone. How sad that is. Please tell me about it.

CHRISTINE. No, not now. I want to hear about you.

NORA. Well, there is a bit of good news I must tell you. We've just had marvelous luck.

CHRISTINE (brightly). Oh?

NORA (rising). My husband has been made manager of the bank!

CHRISTINE. Ohhh, that is good luck!

NORA. Christine! It will be wonderful to have money for a change and no need to worry.

CHRISTINE. Yes, it would be so grand to have what one needs.

NORA. We've both had to work so hard and have had such bad luck.

CHRISTINE. You mean--you, too?

NORA. Oh, yes. Torvald left his office when we were married to start his own business. But during the first year he fell seriously ill from overwork, and the doctor said he had to go to a warm climate to recover.

CHRISTINE. You were away over a year, weren't you?

NORA. Yes. We just had to go. It saved Torvald's life. But it cost an awful lot of money, Christine.

CHRISTINE. I would think so. It's lucky you had the money to do it.

NORA. I should tell you that I got it from my father.

CHRISTINE. It was about that time that he died, wasn't it?

NORA. Yes. Dear Papa. That was an awful sad



time.

CHRISTINE. Then you went South?

NORA. Yes. The doctors insisted that we go.

CHRISTINE. And your husband recovered?

NORA. Yes. Fully.

CHRISTINE. The doctor still visits him?

NORA. What doctor?

CHRISTINE. The gentleman who arrived here just as I did.

NORA. Oh, that's Doctor Rank. He is our dearest friend. He visits with us every day. (Smiling. Then suddenly:) Oh, my goodness, I'm chattering only about my own life. I'm sorry. (She moves in closer, sits on couch right of Christine and becomes confidential.) Is it true? I mean . . . you did not love your husband? (CHRISTINE shakes her head slowly.) Then why did you marry him?

CHRISTINE. My mother was very ill at the time and I had to care for my two younger brothers. I had to accept his offer.

NORA. He was well-to-do at the time?

CHRISTINE. Yes, he was very well off, but his business failed and we lost everything when he died.

NORA. Ohhh! . . . What did you do?

CHRISTINE. Then I turned to anything I could find. The last three years were endless. But, my mother is now gone, and the boys don't need me any longer.

NORA. That must be a relief.

CHRISTINE. No. I feel my life is empty and meaningless. There's no one to live for. That's why I couldn't stand life in my home town any more. If I could find some work . . . Then you told me of your good luck . . . I thought I could get a position as bookkeeper at the bank . . .

- NORA (kindly). I understand. Perhaps Torvald could use you.
- CHRISTINE. That was the kind of position I was hoping for.
- NORA. Leave it to me, Christine. I'd be so happy to be of help to you.
- CHRISTINE. You're so kind; for you know so little of life's troubles.
- NORA. "Know so little . . ." (Rises and crosses URC.) Oh, you are just like all the others. You all think I am capable of nothing serious . . . Why, I, too, have something I am very proud of.
- CHRISTINE. What do you mean?
- NORA. No one must know, Christine--(Moving in toward C.)--only you.
- CHRISTINE. What is it?
- NORA. I was the one who saved Torvald's life!
- CHRISTINE. You? How, Nora?
- NORA. Torvald would never have lived, had I not taken him to a warm climate during his illness.
- CHRISTINE. Of course, but your father gave you the money.
- NORA. That's what Torvald and everyone thinks, but it was I who got the money.
- CHRISTINE. All that money, Nora? You?
- NORA (smiling proudly). Yes.
- CHRISTINE. You certainly didn't borrow it!
- NORA. Why not?
- CHRISTINE. A wife cannot borrow money without consent of her husband.
- NORA. Ohhhh. (Crossing proudly away.) And if a wife is clever in business? . . .
- CHRISTINE. You haven't done anything foolish, Nora!
- NORA (turning to CHRISTINE). Is it foolish to save your husband's life?
- CHRISTINE. But without his knowledge!

NORA (with conviction). But it was absolutely necessary that he should have no knowledge of the seriousness of his illness. He had to be saved . . . and I found a way to do it.

CHRISTINE. Do you ever expect to tell him?

NORA. Perhaps . . . some day . . . This horrible business has caused me such concern. I've had great difficulty making the payments. I've had to save money wherever I could, but I've not found it easy to do with the household allowance, with food and clothing so expensive.

CHRISTINE. It has had to come from your own means?

NORA. Completely, since it was my own responsibility. So, I have had to find other means of earning the money. So, I worked privately in my room late nights and grew awfully tired. Yet, it was almost a pleasure earning money. I felt almost like a . . . man.

CHRISTINE (rising). Dear Nora.

NORA. But it's fine now, for soon I will be free! . . . What a marvelous thing to think of: to be free of care! . . . To be able to enjoy the children and provide Torvald with everything as he likes it! My goodness! (A bell is heard.)

(HELEN enters UC.)

HELEN. Excuse me, madam. There is a gentleman to see Mr. Helmer.

NORA. Who is it, Helen? (CHRISTINE steps toward window DL.)

(KROGSTAD enters UC from behind the maid.)

KROGSTAD (almost rudely). It is I, Mrs. Helmer. (CHRISTINE has turned away as soon as she

saw the gentleman, and remains unseen.)

NORA (obviously upset by this intrusion). You?

What do you want to see my husband about?

(HELEN exits UC.)

KROGSTAD (at ULC). I work at the bank, and I hear your husband will be our new manager.

NORA (at RC). You will . . . ?

KROGSTAD. Do nothing but talk business, Mrs. Helmer; nothing else.

NORA. Helen!

(HELEN appears in doorway.)

NORA. Please show the gentleman into the study.

(HELEN nods, turns and exits UC with KROGSTAD following. NORA shuts door.)

CHRISTINE (turning from window to face NORA).

Nora, who was that?

NORA (crossing down to chair RC). His name is Krogstad.

CHRISTINE (DL). Then it was he.

NORA. Do you know him?

CHRISTINE. Yes. (Sits on downstage end of couch.) Years ago.

NORA. He is a widower, now, with several children.

CHRISTINE. Ohhh? (DR. RANK'S voice is heard L as he leaves Torvald's office.)

RANK (offstage). No, no, my friend, I'll leave you and visit with Nora for a while.

(DR. RANK appears UL. He sees NORA with company. He stops abruptly.)

RANK. Oh, I'm sorry, I didn't know . . . (He stands at C.)

NORA (greeting DR. RANK with a warm smile). Oh,

Doctor Rank, please come in. This is Mrs. Linde, a dear friend of mine from out of town. (He crosses to couch, takes CHRISTINE'S hand in greeting.)

RANK. How do you do? Have you come to town to amuse yourself?

CHRISTINE. One must live, Doctor Rank.

RANK (at C, and above couch). Yes, some people believe it is necessary.

NORA (at RC). Oh, Doctor Rank, you know you want to live, also.

RANK. Yes, as horrible as I feel, I want to prolong this painful existence. (Indicates room UL.) I had to excuse myself from . . . (Sourly.)

NORA. Who is he?

RANK. A lawyer by the name of Krogstad, who suffers from a diseased moral character, who talks importantly about "having to live."

CHRISTINE. Those who are sick need the most help. Don't you believe so, doctor?

NORA (cutting in). Why did he want to see Torvald?

RANK. I don't know. (Steps R.) It was something about the bank.

NORA. Are all the people employed in the bank responsible to Torvald now?

RANK. Oh, yes, of course.

NORA. It's so remarkable that Torvald has such power over so many people.

(TORVALD comes out of the office UL carrying his coat.)

NORA. Oh, Torvald, has the gentleman gone?

TORVALD. Yes, he is gone. (At LC, above couch.)

NORA. Torvald, this is Christine Linde, who has just come to town.

TORVALD. Yes, of course. (Crossing to CHRISTINE.)

My wife's school friend!

CHRISTINE. We've known each other a long time.

NORA. And she's made the long journey to see you.

TORVALD. Oh?

CHRISTINE. Well, I . . .

NORA. Christine is a very capable bookkeeper and she is hoping to work for a clever man.

TORVALD. Well!

NORA. You'll be able to find something for Christine, won't you?

TORVALD. Well, it is possible. You've had experience, I presume?

CHRISTINE. Yes, considerable.

TORVALD. Good. It's likely I may find something for you.

NORA (gaily). I told you so!

TORVALD. You have arrived at an opportune time, Christine.

CHRISTINE. How can I thank you?

TORVALD. No need. Now you must excuse me, please. (Steps UC.)

RANK. I will join you. (Moving toward right of TORVALD.)

NORA. Will you be long, dear? (CHRISTINE rises.)

TORVALD. About an hour. (CHRISTINE gets her coat to leave.)

NORA. Are you going, too, Christine?

CHRISTINE (as DR. RANK helps her with her coat). Yes, I must.

TORVALD. Good, you can join us.

CHRISTINE. Good-bye, Nora. Thank you very much.

NORA. Good-bye, Christine. (The three exit.

NORA begins to arrange the Christmas packages. There is a pause.)

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(KROGSTAD knocks on the door UC and enters without invitation.)

KROGSTAD. Excuse me, Mrs. Helmer.

NORA (startled). Oh! What do you want?

KROGSTAD. The outer door was open. Someone forgot to shut it.

NORA (RC). My husband is out, Mr. Krogstad.

KROGSTAD (ULC). I know. I saw them leave.

NORA. What do you want, then?

KROGSTAD. Just a word with you.

NORA. It's not time for the next payment.

KROGSTAD. No. But it will depend on you what kind of Christmas you will have.

NORA. What do you want?

KROGSTAD. I watched from the restaurant across the street and saw your husband leave with Mrs. Linde . . . Is she to have a position at the bank?

NORA. You have no right to question me! (Pause.) But, since you ask, Mrs. Linde is to have a position, and I favored her. (Crosses R to packages.)

KROGSTAD. I thought so. (Firmly.) Mrs. Helmer, you will use your influence in my favor as well.

NORA. What do you mean?

KROGSTAD. You will see that I remain in my position at the bank.

NORA. Why? (Stepping toward him.) Who proposes to remove you from your position?

KROGSTAD. Don't pretend innocence. You know I'm being let go.

NORA. I didn't . . .

KROGSTAD. It is not only the money I'm concerned with. There is another reason. I'm sure you know that I was involved in a foolish act some years ago. (Crossing toward NORA.)