A Doll's House

By Henrik Ibsen
Translated by Robert Cole

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DEDICATION

For Gladden

STORY OF THE PLAY

Henrik Ibsen's *Et Dukkehjem* (also known variously as *A Doll House*, *The Doll's House*, *The Doll House*, *The Child Wife*, *Nora*) is one of the supreme classics of Western theatre. With as many viable translations as there are available, the question goes as to why another one is necessary. Even with the best (mainly British) English translations, Ibsen still comes off as stiff and stodgy in his use of dialogue, but this version seems to breathe new life into the characters. Of course no one can improve Ibsen's original story, but the vernacular here fits today's audiences. Nora seems more carefree, Torvald more sweetly condescending. We identify with them more quickly, and that helps us accept the antiquated mores Nora must strive to live under.

TRANSLATOR'S NOTE

This work is made from a literal translation. *Special Thanks go to Elizabeth Adkisson, Donna Avery, Jeff Caldwell, James Dickey, Dr. J. Kevin Dupré, Shannon Galamore, Penn Genthner, Ed and Mary Gurney, Lurlean Hunter, David Henry Hwang, Dianne E. Johnson, Karen Mardis, Johnathan Marable, Jean McNew, Karla L. Roberts, Gladden Schrock, Chris Screws, Lee Eric Shackleford, Rachel Holland Smith, Sendy Tittle, Luke Tittle, R. Daniel Walker, Pinson Valley High School Thespians Troupe 7393, the Friends of PVHS Theatre, Playhouse Costumes, the Department of Theatre and Dance in the School of the Arts at Samford University, the Pinson Valley High School Fine Art faculty, the staff and administration of Pinson Valley High School, and the students, parents, and guardians of the original cast, creative team, and production crew.*

CHARACTERS

(3 m, 4 w, 1 flexible, 2 boys, 1 girl)

TORVALD HELMER: the new manager of Equity Bank.

NORA HELMER: his wife.

DR. RANK: the Helmers' friend.

MRS. KRISTINE LINDE: Nora's childhood friend.

NILS KROGSTAD: Torvald's employee.

BOB HELMER: one of the Helmers' three children.

EMMY HELMER: one of the Helmers' three children.

IVAR HELMER: one of the Helmers' three children.

ANNE-MARIE: the nanny to the Helmers' children.

HELENE: the maid.

A PORTER: a flexible role.

SETTING

The Helmers' residence; Norway, 1870s. It is winter, around Christmas. There is a nice living room, decorated tastefully, but not expensively. A door upstage left leads to the hall where one enters the house; another door stage right leads to a study. Between these two doors sits a piano. Downstage, in the main part of the room, there is a door stage right and a window stage left of it. In front of the window is a round table with armchairs. There is also a small sofa nearby. Stage left, there is another door. Downstage of it, there is a rocking chair, another pair of armchairs, a stove, and also a small table. There are engravings on the walls, a china cabinet, small knick-knacks, a small bookcase with nicely-bound books, floor carpeting, and a fire in the stove.

Please see end of script for props, SFX, costume suggestions and dance notes.

ACT I

(AT RISE: A BELL SOUNDS and HELENE, the maid, quickly enters to open the hall door. Cheerfully, NORA HELMER enters, humming. She is dressed in a coat and carrying lots of packages, which she puts down on the stage left table. A PORTER has followed her into the room, carrying a Christmas tree and a basket.)

NORA: Helene, hurry-- hide the Christmas tree before the children see.

(HELENE exits with the tree the way she entered. NORA takes out her purse and turns to the PORTER.)

NORA: *(Cont'd.)* How much, sir?
PORTER: Fifty ore.
NORA: There's a krone. Keep the change.

(The PORTER nods and exits. NORA shuts the door behind him. She laughs to herself quietly as she takes her coat off. NORA takes a bag of macaroons out of her pocket and eats a couple. She, then, goes to the door of the study and listens.)

NORA: *(Cont'd.)* He's here.

(SHE hums again -- this time, louder -- so her husband will hear. She goes to the stage left table.)

TORVALD: *(From the study.)* Is that a lark peeping out there?
NORA: *(About to open some of the packages.)* It might be.
TORVALD: Or maybe a squirrel rummaging about?
NORA: That's more like it.
TORVALD: Well, when did my squirrel get home?

NORA: Just now. *(Putting the bag back in her pocket and wiping her mouth.)* Come out here, Torvald, and see what I bought.

TORVALD: Not now, dear. *(A brief pause; then, opening the door and looking out, still holding a pen from working.)* Bought? All that? My little bird's been out wasting money again, I see.

NORA: Oh, Torvald, we can let ourselves go a little. It's Christmas.

TORVALD: Look, we can spend, but not recklessly.

NORA: Just a little recklessly. Just a tiny little bit? You're the one with the big salary now.

TORVALD: The big salary after the New Year…

NORA: So, we borrow for a month.

TORVALD: Nora… *(Going to HER and playing with her ear.)* Little Miss Frivolous. Let's say I borrowed one thousand kroner today and you spent them all on stocking gifts. Then, at the stroke of twelve on New Year's Eve, the roof caved in and split my head open.

NORA: *(Putting HER hand on HIS arm.)* Torvald, don't speak of such things.

TORVALD: Well, what if it happened? Anything can.

NORA: If something so horrible did happen, debts wouldn't matter.

TORVALD: Except to the people we borrowed from.

NORA: Who would care about them?

TORVALD: This is just like a woman. Seriously, Nora…how many times do I have to tell you? No debt! Never borrow! Nothing in this life is free. What man would want to live in a home built on the foundation of loan and debt rather than hard work? Now, we have been brave so far. We can be brave a little bit longer -- until that salary does come.

NORA: *(Going to the stove.)* Anything you say, Torvald.

TORVALD: *(Going to HER.)* All right, now. My skylark can't let her wings droop. Come on -- a squirrel can't pout. *(Taking out his wallet.)* Hmm. What do I have here?

NORA: *(Turning quickly.)* Torvald!

TORVALD: Nora... *(Handing HER a few notes.)* I know what it takes to make a nice Christmas.

NORA: *(Counting.)* Ten, twenty, thirty, forty. Thank you, Torvald. This'll do me for a long time.

TORVALD: It better.

NORA: It will. Come here, Torvald. Let me show you what I got at the stores. I know it looks like a lot, but it was all so cheap. Some new clothes and a toy-sword for Ivar, a horse and trumpet for Bob. And here's a doll and a doll's bed for Emmy. I know it doesn't look sturdy, but children tear apart everything anyway. I also have some dress clothes and handkerchiefs for the staff. Anne-Marie really does need some nicer things.

TORVALD: And what's that?

NORA: *(Shrieking.)* No, no, Torvald. You can't see that until later.

TORVALD: All right, all right. Well, everyone has something here except you.

NORA: Oh, I don't need anything.

TORVALD: Of course you do, dear. Come on -- what is something sensible you need?

NORA: Nothing – really. Except, maybe...

TORVALD: Yes?

NORA: *(Playing with the buttons on TORVALD's shirt; not looking at him.)* The only thing I could think of would be...

TORVALD: Out with it, Nora.

NORA: *(Quickly; pulling back out some of the money.)* More of this. Then, I could buy myself something.

TORVALD: Nora...

NORA: Please, Torvald. Give me just as much as you can afford and I'll wrap it and place it under the tree. Wouldn't that be fun?

TORVALD: Nora, what do they call that bird that just eats money right out of your hand?

NORA: I know, I know, Torvald. But, if you do this, I'll have time to think of what I truly need. Now, isn't that sensible?

TORVALD: *(Smiling.)* Yes...if you really could keep the money I give you, and you really bought something for yourself. But, usually, things need to go toward the house and you buy so many useless things. Then, I'm shoveling more out.

End of Freeview

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