

## **Easter**

BY AUGUST STRINDBERG

### CHARACTERS

MRS. HEYST ELIS, her son. Instructor in a preparatory school  
ELEONORA, her daughter CHRISTINE, Elis' fiancée BENJAMIN, a  
freshman LINDKVIST

[Scene for the entire play.--The interior of a glass-enclosed piazza, furnished like a living-room. A large door at the middle back leading out into the garden with fence and garden gate visible. Beyond one sees the tops of trees (indicating that the house is situated on a height), and in the distance the cathedral and another high building loom against the sky. The glass windows which extend across the entire back of scene are hung with flowered yellow cretonne, which can be drawn open. A mirror hangs on the panel between door and window on the left. Below the mirror is a calendar. To the right of door a writing table covered with books and writing materials. A telephone is also on it. To L. of door is a dining table, stove and bureau. At R. in foreground it small sewing table with lamp on it. Near it are two arm-chairs. A hanging lamp at center. Outside in the street an electric light. At L. there is a door leading from piazza to the house, at R. a door leading to the kitchen. Time, the present.]

### ACT I.

[Thursday before Easter. The music before curtain is: Haydn: Sieben Worte des Erlösers. Introduction: Maestoso Adagio.]

[A ray of sunlight falls across the room and strikes one of the chairs near the sewing table. In the other chair, untouched by the sunshine, sits Christine, running strings thro' muslin sash-curtains. Elis enters wearing a winter overcoat, unbuttoned. He carries a bundle of legal documents which he puts on the writing table. After that he takes off his overcoat and hangs it at L.]

ELIS. Hello, sweetheart.

CHRISTINE. Hello, Elis.

ELIS [Looks around]. The double windows are off, the floor scoured, fresh curtains at the windows--yes, it is spring again! The ice has gone out of the river, and the willows are beginning to bud on the banks--yes, spring has come and I can put away my winter overcoat. [Weighs his overcoat in his hand and hangs it up.] You know, it's so heavy--just as tho' it had absorbed the weight of the whole winter's worries, the sweat and dust of the school-room.

CHRISTINE. But you have a vacation now.

ELIS. Yes, Easter. Five days to enjoy, to breathe, to forget. [Takes Christine's hand a minute, and then seats himself in arm-chair.] Yes, the sun has come again. It left us in November. How well I remember the day it disappeared behind the brewery across the street. Oh, this winter, this long winter.

CHRISTINE [With a gesture toward kitchen]. Sh! Sh!

ELIS. I'll be quiet--But I'm so happy that it's over with. Oh, the warm sun! [Rubs his hands as tho' bathing them in the sunshine.] I want to bathe in the sunshine and light after all the winter gloom--

CHRISTINE. Sh! Sh!

ELIS. Do you know, I believe that good luck is coming our way--that hard luck is tired of us.

CHRISTINE. What makes you think so?

ELIS. Why, as I was going by the cathedral just now a white dove flew down and alighted in front of me, and dropped a little branch it was carrying right at my feet.

CHRISTINE. Did you notice what kind of branch it was?

ELIS. Of course it couldn't have been an olive branch, but I believe it was a sign of peace--and I felt the life-giving joy of spring. Where's mother?

CHRISTINE [Points toward kitchen]. In the kitchen.

ELIS [Quietly and closing his eyes]. I hear the spring! I can tell that the double windows are off, I hear the wheel hubs so plainly. And what's that?--a robin chirping out in the orchard, and they are hammering down at the docks and I can smell the fresh paint on the steamers.

CHRISTINE. Can you feel all that--here in town?

ELIS. Here? It's true we are *here*, but I was up there, in the North, where our home lies. Oh, how did we ever get into this dreadful city where the people all hate each other and where one is always alone? Yes, it was our daily bread that led the way, but with the bread came the misfortunes: father's criminal act and little sister's illness. Tell me, do you know whether mother has ever been to see father since he's been in prison?

CHRISTINE. Why, I think she's been there this very day.

ELIS. What did she have to say about it?

CHRISTINE. Nothing--she wouldn't talk about it.

ELIS. Well, one thing at least has been gained, and that is the quiet that followed the verdict after the newspapers had gorged themselves with the details. One year is over: and then we can make a fresh start.

CHRISTINE. I admire your patience in this suffering.

ELIS. Don't. Don't admire anything about me. I am full of faults--you know it.

CHRISTINE. If you were only suffering for your own faults--but to be suffering for another!

ELIS. What are you sewing on?

CHRISTINE. Curtains for the kitchen, you dear.

ELIS. It looks like a bridal veil. This fall you will be my bride, won't you, Christine?

CHRISTINE. Yes--but--let's think of summer first.

ELIS. Yes, summer! [Takes out the check book.] You see the money is already in the bank, and when school is over we will start for the North, for our home land among the lakes. The cottage stands there just as it did when we were children, and the linden trees. Oh, that it were summer already and I could go swimming in the lake! I feel as if this family dishonor has besmirched me so that I long to bathe, body and soul, in the clear lake waters.

CHRISTINE. Have you heard anything from Eleonora?

ELIS. Yes--poor little sister! She writes me letters that tear my heart to pieces. She wants to get out of the asylum--and home, of course. But the doctor daren't let her go. She would do things that might lead to prison, he says. Do you know, I feel terribly conscience-stricken sometimes--

CHRISTINE [Starting]. Why?

ELIS. Because I agreed with all the rest of them that it was best to put her there.

CHRISTINE. My dear, you are always accusing yourself. It was fortunate she could be taken care of like that--poor little thing!

ELIS. Well, perhaps you're right. It is best so. She is as well off there as she could be anywhere. When I think of how she used to go about here casting gloom over every attempt at happiness, how her fate weighed us down like a nightmare, then I am tempted to feel almost glad about it. I believe the greatest misfortune that could happen would be to see her cross this threshold. Selfish brute that I am!

CHRISTINE. Human being that you are!

ELIS. And yet--I suffer--suffer at the thought of her misery and my father's.

CHRISTINE. It seems as tho' some were born to suffer.

ELIS. You poor Christine--to be drawn into this family, which was cursed from the beginning! Yes, doomed!

CHRISTINE. You don't know whether it's all trial or punishment, Elis. Perhaps I can help you through the struggles.

ELIS. Do you think mother has a clean dress tie for me?

CHRISTINE [Anxiously]. Are you going out?

ELIS. I'm going out to dinner. Peter won the debate last night, you know, and he's giving a dinner tonight.

CHRISTINE. And you're going to that dinner?

ELIS. You mean that perhaps I shouldn't because he has proven such an unfaithful friend and pupil?

CHRISTINE. I can't deny that I was shocked by his unfaithfulness, when he promised to quote from your theories and he simply plundered them without giving you any credit.

ELIS. Ah, that's the way things go, but I am happy in the consciousness that "this have I done."

CHRISTINE. Has he invited you to the dinner?

ELIS. Why, that's true--come to think of it, he didn't invite me. That's very strange. Why didn't I think of that before! Why, he's been talking for years as though I were to be the guest of honor at that dinner, and he has told others that. But if I am not invited--then of course it's pretty plain that I'm snubbed, insulted, in fact. Well, it doesn't matter. It isn't the first time--nor the last. [Pause.]

CHRISTINE. Benjamin is late. Do you think he will pass his examinations?

ELIS. I certainly do--in Latin particularly.

CHRISTINE. Benjamin is a good boy!

ELIS. Yes, but he's somewhat of a grumbler. You know of course why he is living here with us?

CHRISTINE. IS it because--

ELIS. Because--my father was the boy's guardian and spent his fortune for him, as he did--for so many others. Can you fancy, Christine, what agony it is for me as their instructor to see those fatherless boys, who have been robbed of their inheritance, suffering the humiliations of free scholars? I have to think constantly of their misery to be able to forgive them their cruel glances.

CHRISTINE. I believe that your father is truly better off than you.

ELIS. Truly!

CHRISTINE. But Elis, we should think of summer, and not of the past.

ELIS. Yes, of summer! Do you know, I was awakened last night by some students singing that old song, "Yes, I am coming, glad winds, take this greeting to the country, to the birds--Say that I love them, tell birch and linden, lake and mountain, that I am coming back to them--to behold them again as in my childhood hours--" [He rises--moved.] Shall I ever go back to them, shall I ever go out from this dreadful city, from Ebal, accursed mountain, and behold Gerizim again? [Seats himself near the door.]

CHRISTINE. Aye, aye--that you shall!

ELIS. But do you think my birches and lindens will look as they used to--don't you think the same dark veil will shroud them that has been

lying over all nature and life for us ever since the day when father--  
[Points to the empty arm-chair which is in the shadow.] Look, the sun  
has gone.

CHRISTINE. It will come again and stay longer.

ELIS. That's true. As the days lengthen the shadows shorten.

CHRISTINE. Yes, Elis, we are going toward the light, believe me.

ELIS. Sometimes I believe that, and when I think of all that has  
happened, all the misery, and compare it with the present--then I am  
happy. Last year you were not sitting there, for you had gone away  
from me and broken off our betrothal. Do you know, that was the  
darkest time of all. I was dying literally bit by bit; but then you came  
back to me--and I lived. Why did you go away from me?

CHRISTINE. Oh; I don't know--it seems to me now as if there was no  
reason. I had an impulse to go--and I went, as tho' I were walking in  
my sleep. When I saw you again I awoke--and was happy.

ELIS. And now we shall go on together forevermore. If you left me  
now I should die in earnest.--Here comes mother. Say nothing, let her  
live in her imaginary world in which she believes that father is a  
martyr and that all those he sacrificed are rascals.

MRS. HEYST [Comes from kitchen. She is paring an apple. She is  
simply dressed and speaks in an innocent voice]. Good afternoon,  
children. Will you have your apple dumpling hot or cold?

ELIS. Cold, mother dear.

MRS. HEYST. That's right, my boy, you always know what you want  
and say so. But you aren't like that, Christine. Elis gets that from his  
father; he always knew what he wanted and said so frankly, and  
people don't like that--so things went badly with him. But his day will  
come, and he'll get his rights and the others will get their just deserts.  
Wait now, what was it I had to tell you? Oh, yes, what do you think?  
Lindkvist has come here to live! Lindkvist, the biggest rascal of them  
all!

ELIS [Rises, disturbed]. Has *he* come here?

MRS. HEYST. Yes, indeed, he's come to live right across the street from us.

ELIS. So now we must see him coming and going day in and day out. That too!

MRS. HEYST. Just let me have a talk with him, and he'll never show his face again! For I happen to know a few things about him! Well, Elis, how did Peter come out?

ELIS. Oh, finely!

MRS. HEYST. I can well believe that! When do you think *you* will join the debating club?

ELIS. When I can afford it!

MRS. HEYST. "When I can afford it." Humph, that isn't a very good answer! And Benjamin--did he get through his examinations all right?

ELIS. We don't know yet; but he'll soon be here.

MRS. HEYST. Well, I don't quite like the way Benjamin goes around looking so conscious of his privileges in this house--but we shall take him down soon enough. But he's a good boy just the same. Oh, yes, there's a package for you, Elis. [Goes out to kitchen and comes back directly with a package.]

ELIS. Mother does keep track of everything, doesn't she? I sometimes believe that she is not so simple minded as she seems to be.

MRS. HEYST. See, here's the package. Lina received it. Perhaps it is an Easter present!

ELIS. I'm afraid of presents since the time I received a box of cobblestones. [Puts the package on the table.]



MRS. HEYST. Now I must go back to my duties in the kitchen. Don't you think it is too cold with the door open?

ELIS. Not at all, mother.

MRS. HEYST. Elis, you shouldn't hang your overcoat there. It looks so disorderly. Now, Christine, will my curtains be ready soon?

CHRISTINE. In just a few minutes, mother.

MRS. HEYST [To Elis]. Yes, I like Peter; he is my favorite among your friends. But aren't you going to his dinner this evening, Elis?

ELIS. Yes, I suppose so.

MRS. HEYST. Now, why did you go and say that you wanted your apple dumpling cold when you are going out to dinner? You're so undecided, Elis. But Peter isn't like that.--Shut the door when it gets chilly, so that you won't get sniffles.[Goes out R.]

ELIS. The good old soul--and always Peter. Does she like to tease you about Peter?

CHRISTINE [Surprised and hurt]. Me?

ELIS [Disconcerted]. Old ladies have such queer notions, you know.

CHRISTINE. What have you received for a present?

ELIS [Opening package]. A birch rod!

CHRISTINE. From whom?

ELIS. It's anonymous. It's just an innocent joke on the schoolmaster. I shall put it in water--and it will blossom like Aaron's staff. "Rod of birch, which in my childhood's hour"--And so Lindkvist has come here to live!

CHRISTINE. Well, what about him?

ELIS. We owe him our biggest debt.

CHRISTINE. *You* don't owe him anything.

ELIS. Yes, one for all and all for one; the family's name is disgraced as long as we owe a farthing.

CHRISTINE. Change your name!

ELIS. Christine!

CHRISTINE [Puts down work, which is finished]. Thanks, Elis, I was only testing you.

ELIS. But you must not tempt me. Lindkvist is not a rich man, and needs what is due him.--When my father got through with it all it was like a battle-field of dead and wounded--and mother believes father is a martyr! Shall we go out and take a walk?

CHRISTINE. And try to find the sunshine? Gladly!

ELIS. I can't understand how it can be that our Saviour suffered for us and yet we must continue to suffer.

CHRISTINE. Here comes Benjamin.

ELIS. Can you see whether he looks happy or not?

CHRISTINE [Looks out door]. He walks so slowly, he's stopped at the fountain--and bathing his eyes.

ELIS. And this too!

CHRISTINE. Wait until--

ELIS. Tears! Tears!

CHRISTINE. Patience.

[Enter Benjamin. He has a kind face and seems very downcast. He carries several books and a portfolio.]

ELIS. Well, how did you get along in Latin?

BENJAMIN. Badly!

ELIS. Let me see your examination paper. What did you do?

BENJAMIN. I used "ut" with the indicative, altho' I knew it should be the subjunctive.

ELIS. Then you are lost! But how could you do that?

BENJAMIN [Submissively]. I can't, explain it--I knew how it should be. I meant to do it right, but some way I wrote it wrong. [Seats himself dejectedly near dining table.]

ELIS [Sinks down near writing desk and opens Benjamin's portfolio]. Yes, here it is--the indicative, oh!

CHRISTINE [Faintly, with effort]. Well, better luck next time--life is long.

ELIS. Terribly long.

BENJAMIN. Yes, it is.

ELIS [Sadly but without bitterness]. But that everything should come at the same time! You were my best pupil, so what can I expect of the others? My reputation as a teacher is lost. I shall not be allowed to teach any longer and so--complete ruin! [To Benjamin.] Don't take it to heart so--it is not your fault.

CHRISTINE [With great effort]. Elis, courage, courage, for God's sake.

ELIS. What shall I get it from?

CHRISTINE. What you got it from before.

ELIS. But things are not as they were. I seem to be in complete disgrace now.

CHRISTINE. There is no disgrace in undeserved suffering. Don't be impatient. Be equal to the test, for it is just another test. I feel sure of that.

ELIS. Can a year for Benjamin become less than three hundred and sixty-five days?

CHRISTINE. Yes, a cheerful spirit makes the days shorter.

ELIS [Smiling]. Blow upon the burn; that heals it, children are told.

CHRISTINE. Be a child then, and let me tell you that. Think of your mother, how she bears everything.

ELIS. Give me your hand; I am sinking. [Christine reaches out her hand to him.] Your hand trembles.--

CHRISTINE. No, not that I know of--

ELIS. You are not so strong as you seem to be--

CHRISTINE. I do not feel any weakness--

ELIS. Why can't you give me some strength then?

CHRISTINE. I have none to spare!

ELIS [Looking out of the window]. Do you see who that is coming?

[Christine goes and looks out of window, then falls upon her knees, crushed.]

CHRISTINE. This is too much!

ELIS. Our creditor, he who can take our home and all our belongings away from us. He, Lindkvist, who has come here and ensconced himself in the middle of his web like a spider, to watch the flies--

CHRISTINE. Let us run away!

ELIS [At window]. No--no running away! Now when you grow weak I become strong--now he is coming up the street--and he casts his evil eye over toward his prey.

CHRISTINE. Stand aside, at least.

ELIS [Straightening himself]. No, he amuses me. His face lights up with pleasure, as tho' he could already see his victims in his trap. Come on! He is counting the steps up to our gate and he sees by the open door that we are at home.--But he has met some one and stands there talking.--He is talking about us, for he's pointing over here.

CHRISTINE. If only he doesn't meet mother, so that she can't make him harsh with her angry words!--Oh, prevent that, Elis!

ELIS. Now he is shaking his stick, as if he were protesting that in our case mercy shall not pass for justice. He buttons his overcoat to show that at least he hasn't yet had the very clothes on his back taken from him. I can tell by his mouth what he is saying. What shall I reply to him? "My dear sir, you are in the right. Take everything, it belongs to you."

CHRISTINE. There is nothing else you could say.

ELIS. Now he laughs. But it is a kind laugh, not a malicious one! Perhaps he isn't so mean after all, but he'll see that he gets every penny coming to him, nevertheless! If he would only come, and stop his blessed prating.--Now, he is swinging his stick again.--They always carry a stick, men who have debtors, and they always wear galoshes that say "Swish, swish," like lashes through the air-- [Christine puts hand against his heart.] Do you hear how my heart beats? It sounds like an ocean steamer. Now, thank Heaven, he's taking his leave with his squeaking galoshes! "Swish, swish," like a switch! Oh, but he wears a watch charm! So he can't be utterly

poverty-stricken. They always have watch charms of carnelian, like dried flesh that they have cut out of their neighbors' backs. Listen to the galoshes. "Angry, angrier, angriest, swish, swish." Watch him! The old wolf! He sees me! He sees me! He bows! He smiles! He waves his hand--and [Sinks down near the writing table, weeping] he has gone by!

CHRISTINE. Praise be to God!

ELIS [Rising]. He has gone by--but he will come again. Let's go out in the sunshine.

CHRISTINE. And what about dining with Peter?

ELIS. As I am not invited, I cannot go. For that matter, what should I do there in the festivity! Just go and meet an unfaithful friend! I should only make a pretense of not being hurt by what he has done.

CHRISTINE. I'm glad, for then you will stay here with us.

ELIS. I'd rather do that, as you know. Shall we go?

CHRISTINE. Yes, this way.

[Goes towards left. As Elis passes Benjamin he puts his hand on Benjamin's shoulder.]

ELIS. Courage, boy!

[Benjamin hides his face in his hands.]

ELIS [Takes the birch rod from the dining table and puts it behind the looking-glass]. It wasn't an olive branch that the dove was carrying--it was a birch rod!

[They go out.]

[Eleonora comes in from back: she is sixteen, with braids down her back. She carries an Easter lily in a pot. Without seeing, or pretending not to see Benjamin, she puts the lily on the dining table and then goes

and gets a water-bottle from the sideboard and waters the plant. Then seats herself near dining table right opposite Benjamin and contemplates him and then imitates his gestures and movements.]

[Benjamin stares at her in astonishment.]

ELEONORA [Points to lily]. Do you know what that is?

BENJAMIN [Boyishly, simply]. It's an Easter lily--that's easy enough; but who are you?

ELEONORA [Sweetly, sadly]. Well, who are you?

BENJAMIN. My name is Benjamin and I live here with Mrs. Heyst.

ELEONORA. Indeed! My name is Eleonora and I am the daughter of Mrs. Heyst.

BENJAMIN. How strange no one ever said anything about you!

ELEONORA. People do not talk about the dead!

BENJAMIN. The dead?

ELEONORA. I am dead civilly, for I have committed a very bad deed.

BENJAMIN. You!

ELEONORA. Yes, I spent a trust fund; but that wasn't so much, for it was money as ill-gotten as ill-spent--but that my poor old father should be blamed for it and be put in prison--you see, that can never be forgiven.

BENJAMIN. So strangely and beautifully you talk! And I never thought of that--that my inheritance might have been ill-gotten.

ELEONORA. One should not confine human beings, one should free them.

BENJAMIN. You have freed me from a delusion.

ELEONORA. You are a charity pupil?

BENJAMIN. Yes, it is my sorrowful lot to have to live upon the charity of this poor family.

ELEONORA. You must not use harsh words or I shall have to go away. I am so sensitive I cannot bear anything harsh. Nevertheless it's my fault that you are unhappy.

BENJAMIN. Your father's fault, you mean.

ELEONORA. That is the same thing, for he and I are one and the same person. [Pause.] Why are you so dejected?

BENJAMIN. I have had a disappointment!

ELEONORA. Should you be downcast on that account? "Rod and punishment bring wisdom, and he who hates punishment must perish--" What disappointment have you had?

BENJAMIN. I have failed in my Latin examination--altho' I was so sure I would pass.

ELEONORA. Just so; you were so sure, so sure, that you would even have laid a wager that you would get thro' it.

BENJAMIN. I did have a bet on it.

ELEONORA. I thought so. You see that's why it happened--because you were so sure.

BENJAMIN. Do you think that was the reason?

ELEONORA. Certainly it was! Pride goeth before a fall!

BENJAMIN. I shall remember that the next time.



ELEONORA. That is a worthy thought; those who are pleasing to God are of humble spirit.

BENJAMIN. Do you read the Bible?

ELEONORA. Yes, I read it!

BENJAMIN. I mean, are you a believer?

ELEONORA. Yes, I mean that I am. So much so that if you should speak wickedly about God, my benefactor, I would not sit at the same table with you.

BENJAMIN. How old are you?

ELEONORA. For me there is no time nor space. I am everywhere and whensoever. I am in my father's prison, and in my brother's school-room. I am in my mother's kitchen and in my sister's little shop far away. When all goes well with my sister and she makes good sales I feel her gladness, and when things go badly with her I suffer--but I suffer most when she does anything dishonest. Benjamin, your name is Benjamin, because you are the youngest of my friends; yes, all human beings are my friends, and if you will let me adopt you, I will suffer for you too.

BENJAMIN. I don't quite understand the words you use, but I think I catch the meaning of your thoughts. And I will do whatever you want me to.

ELEONORA. Will you begin then by ceasing to judge human beings, even when they are convicted criminals--

BENJAMIN. Yes, but I want to have a reason for it. I have read philosophy, you see.

ELEONORA. Oh, have you! Then you shall help me explain this from a great philosopher. He said, "Those that hate the righteous, they shall be sinners."

BENJAMIN. Of course all logic answers that in the same way, that one can be doomed to commit crime--.

ELEONORA. And that the crime itself is a punishment.

BENJAMIN. That is pretty deep! One would think that that was Kant or Schopenhauer.

ELEONORA. I don't know them.

BENJAMIN. What book did you read that in?

ELEONORA. In the Holy Scripture.

BENJAMIN. Truly? Are there such things in it?

ELEONORA. What an ignorant, neglected child you are! If I could bring you up!

BENJAMIN. Little you!

ELEONORA. I don't believe there is anything very wicked about you. You seem to me more good than bad.

BENJAMIN. Thank you.

ELEONORA [Rising]. You must never thank me for anything. Remember that.--Oh, now my father is suffering. They are unkind to him. [Stands as tho' listening.] Do you hear what the telephone wires are humming?--those are harsh words, which the soft red copper does not like--when people slander each other thro' the telephone the copper moans and laments--[Severely] and every word is written in the book--and at the end of time comes the reckoning!

BENJAMIN. You are so severe!

ELEONORA. I? Not I! How should I dare to be? I, I? [She goes to the stove, opens it, and takes out several torn pieces of white letter paper and puts them on the dining table.]

BENJAMIN. [Rises and looks at the pieces of paper which Eleonora is putting together.]

ELEONORA [To herself]. That people should be so thoughtless as to leave their secrets in the stove! Whenever I come I always go right to the stove! But I don't do it maliciously--I wouldn't do anything like that, for then I should feel remorse.

BENJAMIN. It is from Peter, who writes and asks Christine to meet him. I have been expecting that for a long time.

ELEONORA [Putting her hands over the bits of paper]. Oh, you, what have you been expecting? Tell me, you evil minded being, who believes nothing but bad of people. This letter could not mean anything wrong to me, for I know Christine, who is going to be my sister sometime. And that meeting will avert misfortune for brother Elis. Will you promise me to say nothing of this, Benjamin?

BENJAMIN. I don't exactly think I should like to talk much about it!

ELEONORA. People who are suspicious become so unjust. They think they are so wise, and they are so foolish!--But what is all this to me!

BENJAMIN. Yes, why *are* you so inquisitive?

ELEONORA. You see that is my illness--that I must know all about everything or else I become restless--

BENJAMIN. Know about everything?

ELEONORA. That is a fault which I cannot overcome. And I even know what the birds say.

BENJAMIN. But they can't talk?

ELEONORA. Haven't you heard birds that people have taught to talk?

BENJAMIN. Oh, yes--that people have taught to talk!

ELEONORA. That is to say they can talk. And we find those that have taught themselves or are like that instinctively--they sit and listen without our knowing it and then they repeat these things afterward. Just now as I was coming along I heard two magpies in the walnut tree, who sat there gossiping.

BENJAMIN. How funny you are! But what were they saying?

ELEONORA. "Peter," said one of them, "Judas," said the other. "The same thing," said the first one. "Fie, Fie, Fie," said the other. But have you noticed that the nightingales only sing in the grounds of the deaf and dumb asylum here?

BENJAMIN. Yes, they do say that's so. Why do they do that?

ELEONORA. Because those who have hearing do not hear what the nightingales say: but the deaf and dumb hear it!

BENJAMIN. Tell me some more stories.

ELEONORA. Yes, if you are good.

BENJAMIN. How good?

ELEONORA. If you will never be exacting about words with me, never say that I said so and so, or so and so. Shall I tell you more about birds? There is a wicked bird that is called a rat-hawk: as you may know by its name, it lives on rats. But as it is an evil bird it has hard work to catch the rats. Because it can say only one single word, and that a noise such as a cat makes when it says "miau." Now when the rat-hawk says "miau" the rats run and hide themselves--for the rat-hawk doesn't understand what it is saying so it is often without food, for it is a wicked bird! Would you like to hear more? Or shall I tell you something about flowers? Do you know when I was ill I was made to take henbane, which is a drug that has the power to make one's eyes magnify like a microscope. Well, now I see farther than others, and I can see the stars in the daylight!

BENJAMIN. But the stars are not up there then, are they?

ELEONORA. How funny you are! The stars are always up there--and now, as I sit facing the west, I can see Cassiopea like a W up there in the middle of the Milky Way. Can you see it?

BENJAMIN. No, indeed I can't see it.

ELEONORA. Let me call your attention to this, that some can see that which others do not do not be too sure of your own eyes therefore! Now I'm going to tell you about that flower standing on the table: it is an Easter lily whose home is in Switzerland; it has a calyx which drinks sunlight, therefore it is yellow and can soothe pain. When I was passing a florist's, just now, I saw it and wanted to make a present of it to brother Elis. When I tried to go into the shop I found the door was locked--because it is confirmation day. But I must have the flower--I took out my keys and tried them--can you believe it, my door key worked! I went in. You know that flowers speak silently! Every fragrance uttered a multitude of thoughts, and those thoughts reached me: and with my magnifying eyes I looked into the flowers' workrooms, which no one else has ever seen. And they told me about their sorrows which the careless florist causes them--mark you, I did not say cruel, for he is only thoughtless. Then I put a coin on the desk with my card, took the Easter lily and went out.

BENJAMIN. How thoughtless! Think if the flower is missed and the money isn't found?

ELEONORA. That's true! You are right.

BENJAMIN. A coin can easily disappear, and if they find your card it's all up with you.

ELEONORA. But no one would believe that I wanted to take anything.

BENJAMIN [Looking hard at her]. They wouldn't?

ELEONORA [Rising]. Ah! I know what you mean! Like father, like child! How thoughtless I have been! Ah! That which must be, must be! [Sits.] It must be so.

BENJAMIN. Couldn't we say that--

ELEONORA. Hush! Let's talk of other things! Poor Elis! Poor all of us! But it is Easter, and we ought to suffer. Isn't there a recital tomorrow? [Benjamin nods his head.] And they give Haydn's Seven Words on the Cross! "Mother, behold thy son!" [She weeps with face in hands.]

BENJAMIN. What kind of illness have you had?

ELEONORA. An illness that is not mortal unless it is God's will! I expected good, and evil came; I expected light, and darkness came. How was your childhood, Benjamin?

BENJAMIN. Oh, I don't know. Kind of tiresome! And yours?

ELEONORA. I never had any. I was born old. I knew everything when I was born, and when I was taught anything it was only like remembering. I knew human weaknesses when I was four years old, and that's why people were horrid to me.

BENJAMIN. Do you know, I, too, seem to have thought everything that you say.

ELEONORA. I am sure you have. What made you think that the coin I left at the florist's would be lost?

BENJAMIN. Because what shouldn't happen always does happen.

ELEONORA. Have you noticed that too? Hush, some one is coming. [Looks toward back.] I hear--Elis, oh, how good! My only friend on earth! [She darkens.] But--he didn't expect me! And he will not be glad to see me--no, he won't be, I am sure he won't be. Benjamin, have a pleasant face and be cheerful when my poor brother comes in. I am going in here while you prepare him for my being here. But no matter what he says, don't you say anything that would hurt him, for that would make me unhappy. Do you promise? [Benjamin nods.] Give me your hand.

BENJAMIN [Reaches out his hand].

ELEONORA [Kisses him on the top of his head]. So! Now you are my little brother. God bless and keep you! [Goes toward the left and as she passes Elis' overcoat she pats it lovingly on the sleeve.] Poor Elis! [She goes out L.]

ELIS [In from back, troubled].

MRS. HEYST [In from kitchen].

ELIS. Oh, so there you are, mother.

MRS. HEYST. Was it you? I thought I heard a strange voice!

ELIS. I have some news. I met our lawyer in the street.

MRS. HEYST. Well?

ELIS. The case is going to the superior court--and to gain time I've got to read all the minutes of the case.

MRS. HEYST. Well, that won't take you long.

ELIS [Pointing to the legal documents on the writing desk]. Oh, I thought that was all over with, and now I must weary myself by going through all that torture again--all the accusations, all the testimony and all the evidence, all over again!

MRS. HEYST. Yes, but the superior court will free him!

ELIS. No, mother, he has confessed.

MRS. HEYST. But there may be some mistakes in the trial which count. When I talked with our lawyer he said there might be some technical errors--I think that's what he called them.

ELIS. He said that to console you.

MRS. HEYST [Coldly]. Are you going out to dinner?

ELIS. No.

MRS. HEYST. Oh, so you've changed your mind again.

ELIS. Yes.

MRS. HEYST. Oh, you are so changeable!

ELIS. I know it, but I am tossed about like a chip in a high sea.

MRS. HEYST. I surely thought I heard a strange voice that I half recognized. But I must have been mistaken. [Points to Elis' overcoat.] That coat ought not to hang there, I said. [Goes out R.]

ELIS [Goes to L. Sees the lily on table]. Where did that plant come from?

BENJAMIN. There was a young lady here with it.

ELIS. Young lady! What's that? Who was it?

BENJAMIN. It was--

ELIS. Was it--my sister?

BENJAMIN. Yes.

ELIS [Sinks down near table]. [Pause.] Did you talk with her?

BENJAMIN. Yes, indeed!

ELIS. Oh, God, is there more to be endured? Was she angry with me?

BENJAMIN. She? No, she was so sweet, so gentle.

ELIS. How wonderful! Did she talk about me? Was she very vexed with me?

BENJAMIN. No, on the contrary she said you were her best, her only friend on earth.



ELIS. What a strange change!

BENJAMIN. And when she went, she patted your coat on the sleeve--

ELIS. Went? Where has she gone?

BENJAMIN [Pointing to the window door]. In there!

ELIS. She is in there then?

BENJAMIN. Yes.

ELIS. You look so happy and cheerful, Benjamin.

BENJAMIN. She talked so beautifully to me.

ELIS. What did she talk about?

BENJAMIN. She told me some of her own stories--and a lot about religion.

ELIS [Rising]. Which made you happy?

BENJAMIN. Yes, indeed!

ELIS. Poor Eleonora, who is so unfortunate herself and yet can make others happy! [Goes to door left, hesitating.] God help us!

## ACT II.

[Good Friday evening. The music before and thro' the act, Haydn's Sieben Worte. Largo No. 1. "Pater dimitte illis." Same scene. Curtains are drawn, lighted up by electric light in the street. The hanging lamp is lighted. On dining table a small lamp, also lighted. There is a glimmer from the lighted stove. Elis and Christine are sitting at the sewing table. Benjamin and Eleonora are seated at dining table

reading, opposite each other, with the small lamp between them--  
Eleonora has a shawl over her shoulders.]

[They are all dressed in black. The papers that Elis brought in the First Act are on the writing table in a disorderly condition, the Easter lily stands on sewing table. An old clock stands on the dining table. Now and then one sees shadows of people passing by in the street.]

[The cathedral organ is heard faintly.--The following scene must be played softly.]

ELIS [Softly to Christine]. Yes--it's Good Friday--Long Friday they call it in some countries. Ah--yes--it is long. And the snow has softened the noises in the street like straw spread before the house of the dying. Not a sound to be heard--[Music louder] only the cathedral organ--[A long pause.]

CHRISTINE. Mother must have gone to vespers.

ELIS. Yes.--She never goes to high mass any more. The cold glances people give her hurt her too much.

CHRISTINE. It's queer about these people they sort of demand that we should keep out of the way, and they even see fit to--

ELIS. Yes--and perhaps they are right.--

CHRISTINE. On account of the wrong-doing of one, the whole family is excommunicated--

ELIS. Yes--that is the way things go.

[Eleonora pushes the lamp over to Benjamin that he may see better.]

ELIS [Noticing them]. Look at them!

CHRISTINE. Isn't it beautiful? How well they get along together.

ELIS. How fortunate it is that Eleonora has grown so calm and contented. Oh, that it might only last!

CHRISTINE. Why shouldn't it last?

ELIS. Because--happiness doesn't last very long usually.

CHRISTINE. Elis!

ELIS. Oh, I am afraid of everything today.

[Benjamin moves the lamp slowly over to Eleonora's side.]

CHRISTINE. Look at them! [Pause.]

ELIS. Have you noticed the change in Benjamin? His fierce defiance has given way to quiet submissiveness.

CHRISTINE. It's her doing. Her whole being seems to give out sweetness.

ELIS. She has brought with her the spirit of peace, that goes about unseen and exhales tranquillity. Even mother seems to be affected by her. When she saw her a calmness seemed to come over her that could never have been expected.

CHRISTINE. Do you think that she is really recovered now?

ELIS. Yes. If it weren't for this over-sensitiveness. Now she is reading the story of the crucifixion and some of the time she is weeping.

CHRISTINE. We used to read it at school, I remember, on Wednesdays, when we fasted.

ELIS. Don't talk so loud--she will hear you.

CHRISTINE. Not now--she is so far away.

ELIS. Have you noticed the quiet dignity that has come into Benjamin's face?

CHRISTINE. That's on account of suffering. Too much happiness makes everything commonplace.

ELIS. Don't you think it may be--love? Don't you think that those little--

CHRISTINE. Sh--sh--don't touch the wings of the butterfly--or it will fly away.

ELIS. They must be looking at each other, and only pretending to read. I haven't heard them turn over any pages.

CHRISTINE. Hush!

[Eleonora rises, goes on tip-toe to Benjamin and puts her shawl over his shoulders. Benjamin protests mildly but gives in to her wish-- Eleonora returns to her seat and pushes the lamp over to Benjamin's side.]

CHRISTINE. She doesn't know how well she wishes. Poor little Eleonora--[Pause.]

ELIS [Rises]. Now I must return to the law papers.

CHRISTINE. Do you think anything will be gained by going over all that again?

ELIS. Only one thing. That is to keep up mother's hope. I only pretend to read--but a word now and then pricks me like a thorn in the eye. The evidence of the witnesses, the summaries--father's confession--like this: "the accused admitted with tears"--tears--tears--so many tears--and these papers with their official seals that remind one of false notes and prison bars--the ribbons and red seals--they are like the five wounds of Christ--and public opinion that will never change--the endless anguish--this is indeed fit work for Good Friday! Yesterday the sun was shining--and in our fancy we went out to the country,--Christine, think if we should have to stay here all summer.

CHRISTINE. We would save a great deal of money--but it would be disappointing.

ELIS. I couldn't live thro' it--I have stayed here three summers--and it's like a dead city to me. The rats come out from the cellars and alleys--while the cats are out spending the summer in the country. And all the old women that couldn't get away sit peeking through the blinds gossiping about their neighbors--"See, he has his winter suit on"--and sneer at the worn-down heels of the passers-by. And from the poor quarters wretched beings drag themselves out of their holes, cripples, creatures without noses or ears, the wicked and unfortunate--filling the parks and squares as if they had conquered the city--there where the well-dressed children just played, while their parents or maids looked on and encouraged them in their frolics. I remember last summer when I--

CHRISTINE. Oh, Elis--Elis--look forward--look forward.

ELIS. Is it brighter there?

CHRISTINE. Let us hope so.

ELIS [Sits at writing table]. If it would only stop snowing out there, so we could go out for a walk!

CHRISTINE. Dearest Elis, yesterday you wanted night to come, so that we might be shielded from the hateful glances of the people. You said, "Darkness is so kind," and that it's like drawing the blanket over one's head.

ELIS. That only goes to prove that my misery is as great one way as the other. [Reading papers.] The worst part of the suit is all the questioning about father's way of living.--It says here that we gave big dinner parties.--One witness practically says that my father was a drunkard--no, that's too much. No. No, I won't--as tho'--I must go thro' it, I suppose.--Aren't you cold?

CHRISTINE. No. But it isn't warm here. Isn't Lina home?

ELIS. She's gone to church.

CHRISTINE. Oh, yes, that's so. But mother will soon be home.

ELIS. I am always afraid to have her come home. She has had so many experiences of people's evil and malice.

CHRISTINE. There is a strain of unusual melancholy in your family, Elis.

ELIS. And that's why none but the melancholy have ever been our friends. Light-hearted people have always avoided us--shrunk from us.

CHRISTINE. There is mother, going in the kitchen door.

ELIS. Don't be impatient with her, Christine.

CHRISTINE. Impatient! Ah, no, it's worse for her than any of us. But I can't quite understand her.

ELIS. She is always trying to hide our disgrace. That's why she seems so peculiar. Poor mother!

MRS. HEYST [Enters, dressed in black, psalm book in hand, and handkerchief]. Good evening, children.

ALL. Good evening, mother dear.

MRS. HEYST. Why are you all in black, as tho' you were in mourning? [Pause.]

ELIS. Is it still snowing, mother?

MRS. HEYST. It's sleeting now. [Goes over to Eleonora.] Aren't you cold out here? [Eleonora shakes her head.] Well, my little one, you are reading and studying, I see. [To Benjamin.] And you too? Well, you won't overdo. [Eleonora takes her mother's hand and carries it to her lips.]

MRS. HEYST [Hiding her feelings]. So, my child--so--so--

ELIS. Have you been to vespers, mother?

MRS. HEYST. Yes, but they had some visiting pastor, and I didn't like him, he mumbled his words so.

ELIS. Did you meet any one you knew?

MRS. HEYST. Yes, more is the pity.

ELIS. Then I know whom--

MRS. HEYST. Yes, Lindkvist. And he came up to me and--

ELIS. Oh, how terrible, how terrible--

MRS. HEYST. He asked how things were going--and imagine my fright--he asked if he might come and see us this evening.

ELIS. On a holy day?

MRS. HEYST. I was speechless--and he, I am afraid, mistook my silence for consent. So he may be here any moment.

ELIS [Rises]. Here?

MRS. HEYST. He said he wished to leave a paper of some sort which was important.

ELIS. A warrant! He wants to take our furniture.

MRS. HEYST. But he looked so queer. I didn't quite understand him.

ELIS. Well, then--let him come--he has right and might on his side, and we must bow down to him.--We must receive him when he comes.

MRS. HEYST. If I could only escape seeing him!

ELIS. Yes, you must stay in the house.

MRS. HEYST. But the furniture he cannot take. How could we live if he took the things away? One cannot live in empty rooms.

ELIS. The foxes have holes, the birds nests there are many homeless ones who sleep under the sky.

MRS. HEYST. That's the way rogues should be made to live--not honest people.

ELIS [By the writing table]. I have been reading it all over again.

MRS. HEYST. Did you find any faults? What was it the lawyer called them? Oh--technical errors?

ELIS. No. I don't think there are any.

MRS. HEYST. But I met our lawyer just now and he said there must be some technical errors a challengeable witness, an unproven opinion--or a contradiction, he said. You should read carefully.

ELIS. Yes, mother dear, but it's somewhat painful reading all this--

MRS. HEYST. But now listen to this. I met our lawyer, as I said, and he told me also that a burglary had been committed here in town yesterday, and in broad daylight.

[Eleonora and Benjamin start and listen.]

ELIS. A burglary! Where?

MRS. HEYST. At the florist's on Cloister street. But the whole thing is very peculiar. It's supposed to have happened this way: the florist closed his place and went to church where his son--or was it his daughter?--was being confirmed. When he returned, about three o'clock--or perhaps it was four, but that doesn't matter--well, he found the door of the store wide open and his flowers were gone--at least a whole lot of them. [They all look at her questioningly.] Well, anyway, a yellow tulip was gone, which he missed first.

ELIS. A yellow tulip? Had it been a lily I would have been afraid.



MRS. HEYST. No, it was a tulip, that's sure, well, they say the police are on the track of the thief anyway.

[Eleonora has risen as if to speak, but is quieted by Benjamin, who goes to her and whispers something to her.]

MRS. HEYST. Think of it, on Holy Thursday! When young people are being confirmed at the church, to break into a place and steal! Oh, the town must be full of rogues, and that's why they throw innocent people into prison!

ELIS. Do you know who it is they suspect?

MRS. HEYST. No. But it was a peculiar thief. He didn't take any money from the cash drawer.

CHRISTINE. Oh, that this day were ended!

MRS. HEYST. And if Lina would only return--[Pause.] Oh, I heard something about the dinner Peter gave last night. What do you think--the Governor himself was there.

ELIS. The Governor at Peter's--? I'm astonished. Peter has always avowed himself against the Governor's party.

MRS. HEYST. He must have changed then.

ELIS. He wasn't called Peter for nothing, it seems.

MRS. HEYST. But what have *you* got against the Governor?

ELIS. He is against progress--he wants to restrict the pleasures of the people, he tries to dictate to the boards of education--I've felt his interference in my school.

MRS. HEYST. I can't understand all that--but it doesn't matter. Anyhow the Governor made a speech, they say, and Peter thanked him heartily.

ELIS. And with great feeling, I can fancy, and denied his master, saying, "I know not this man," and again the cock crew. Wasn't the Governor's name Pontius and his surname Pilate?

[Eleonora starts as if to speak but Benjamin quiets her again.]

MRS. HEYST. You mustn't be so bitter, Elis. Human beings are weak and we must come in contact with them.

ELIS. Hush,--I hear Lindkvist coming.

MRS. HEYST. What? Can you hear him in all this snow?

ELIS. Yes, I can hear his stick striking the pavement--and his squeaking galoshes. Please, mother, go into the house.

MRS. HEYST. No. I shall stay and tell him a few things.

ELIS. Dear, dear mother, you must go in or it will be too painful.

MRS. HEYST [Rising, with scorn]. Oh, may the day that I was born be forgotten--

CHRISTINE. Don't blaspheme, mother.

MRS. HEYST. Should not the lost have this trouble rather than that the worthy should suffer torture?

ELIS. Mother!

MRS. HEYST. Oh, God! Why have you forsaken me and my children? [Goes out L.]

ELIS. Oh--do you know that mother's indifference and submission torture me more than her wrath?

CHRISTINE. Her submission is only pretended or make-believe. There was something of the roar of the lioness in her last words. Did you notice how big she became?

ELIS [At window, listening]. He has stopped--perhaps he thinks the time ill-chosen.--But that can't be it--he who could write such terrible letters,--and always on that blue paper! I can't look at a blue paper now without trembling.

CHRISTINE. What will you tell him--what do you mean to propose?

ELIS. I don't know. I have lost all my reasoning powers.--Shall I fall on my knees to him and beg mercy--can you hear him? I can't hear anything but the blood beating in my ears.

CHRISTINE. Let us face the worst calmly--he will take everything and--

ELIS. Then the landlord will come and ask for some other security, which I cannot furnish.--He will demand security, when the furniture is no longer here to assure him of the rent.

CHRISTINE [Peeking through the curtain]. He isn't there now.--He is gone!

ELIS [Rushing to window]. He's gone?--Do you know, now that I think of Lindkvist, I see him as a good-natured giant who only scares children. How could I have come to think that?

CHRISTINE. Oh, thoughts come and go--

ELIS. How lucky that I was not at that dinner yesterday--I would surely have made a speech against the Governor, and so I would have spoiled everything for us.

CHRISTINE. Do you realize that now?

ELIS. Thanks for your advice, Christine. You knew your Peter.

CHRISTINE. My Peter?--

ELIS. I meant--my Peter.--But--look--he is here again, woe unto us!

[One can see the shadow of Lindkvist on the curtain, who is nearing slowly. The shadow gets larger and larger, until it is giant-like. They stand in fear and tremble.]

ELIS. Look,--the giant--the giant that wants to swallow us.

CHRISTINE. Now it's time to laugh, as when reading fairy-tales.

ELIS. I can't laugh any more.

[The shadow slowly disappears.]

CHRISTINE. Look at the stick and you must laugh. [Pause.]

ELIS [Brightly]. He's gone--he's gone--yes, I can breathe again now, as he won't return until tomorrow. Oh, the relief!

CHRISTINE. Yes, and tomorrow the sun will be shining,--the snow will be gone and the birds will be singing--eve of the resurrection!

ELIS. Yes, tell me more like that--I can see everything you say.

CHRISTINE. If you could but see what is in my heart, if you could see my thoughts and my good intentions, my inmost prayer, Elis--Elis--when I now ask--[Hesitates.]

ELIS. What? Tell me.

CHRISTINE. When I beg you now to--

ELIS [Alarmed]. Tell me--

CHRISTINE. It's a test. Will you look at it as a test?

ELIS. A test? Well then.

CHRISTINE. Let me--do let me--No, I daren't. [Eleonora listens.]

ELIS. Why do you torture me?

CHRISTINE. I'll regret it, I know. So be it! Elis, let me go to the recital this evening.

ELIS. What recital?

CHRISTINE. Haydn's "Seven Words on the Cross," at the cathedral.

ELIS. With whom?

CHRISTINE. Alice.

ELIS. And?

CHRISTINE. Peter!

ELIS. With Peter?

CHRISTINE. See, now you frown. I regret telling you, but it's too late now.

ELIS. Yes. It is somewhat late now, but explain--

CHRISTINE. I prepared you, told you that I couldn't explain, and that's the reason I begged your boundless faith.

ELIS [Mildly]. Go. I trust you. But I suffer to know that you seek the company of a traitor.

CHRISTINE. I realize that, but this is to be a test.

ELIS. Which I cannot endure.

CHRISTINE. You must.

ELIS. I would like to, but I cannot. But you must go nevertheless.

CHRISTINE. Your hand!

ELIS [Giving his hand]. There--[The telephone rings; Elis goes to it.] Hello!--No answer. Hello!--No answer but my own voice.--Who is it?--That's strange. I only hear the echo of my own words.

CHRISTINE. That might be possible.

ELIS [Still at 'phone]. Hello!--But this is terrible! [Hangs up receiver.] Go now, Christine, and without any explanations, without conditions. I shall endure the test.

CHRISTINE. Yes, do that and all will be well.

ELIS. I will.--[Christine starts R.] Why do you go that way?

CHRISTINE. My coat and hat are in there. Good bye for now. [Goes out R.]

ELIS. Good-bye, my friend, [Pause] forever. [He rushes out L.]

ELEONORA. God help us, what have I done now? The police are after the guilty one, and if I am discovered--then--[With a shriek] they'll send me back there. [Pause.] But I mustn't be selfish. Oh, poor mother and poor Elis!

BENJAMIN [Childishly]. Eleonora, you must tell them that I did it.

ELEONORA. Could you make another's guilt yours, you child?

BENJAMIN. That's easy, when one knows he's innocent.

ELEONORA. One should never deceive.

BENJAMIN. No, but let me telephone to the florist and explain to him.

ELEONORA. No, I did wrong, and I must take the consequences. I have awakened their fear of burglars, and I must be punished.

BENJAMIN. But what if the police come in?

ELEONORA. That would be dreadful--but what must be, must be. Oh, that this day were ended! [Takes clock from table and puts the hands forward.] Dear old clock, go a little faster--tick, tick, tick. [The clock strikes eight.] Now it's eight. [Moves hands again.] Tick, tick, tick. [Business with clock.] Now it's nine--ten--eleven--twelve--o'clock. Now it is Easter eve, and the sun will soon be rising, and then we'll color the Easter eggs.

BENJAMIN. You can make time fly, can't you?

ELEONORA. Think, Benjamin, of all the anemones and violets that had to stay in the snow all winter and freeze there in the darkness.

BENJAMIN. How they must suffer!

ELEONORA. Night is hardest for them--they are afraid of the darkness, but they can't run away, and so they must stay there thro' the long winter night, waiting for spring, which is their dawn. Everybody and everything must suffer, but the flowers suffer most. Yes, and the song-birds, they have returned; where are they to sleep tonight?

BENJAMIN [Childishly]. In the hollow trees.

ELEONORA. There aren't hollow trees enough to hold them all. I have only noticed two hollow trees in the orchard, and that's where the owls live, and they kill the song birds. [Elis is heard playing the piano inside. Eleonora and Benjamin listen for a few moments.] Poor Elis, who thinks that Christine has gone from him, but I know that she will return.

BENJAMIN. Why don't you tell him, if you know?

ELEONORA, Because Elis must suffer; every one should suffer on Good Friday, that they may remember Christ's suffering on the cross. [The sound of a policeman's whistle is heard off in the distance.]

ELEONORA [Starts up]. What was that?

BENJAMIN. Don't you know?

ELEONORA. No.

BENJAMIN. It's the police.

ELEONORA. Ah, yes, that's the way it sounded when they came to take father away--and then I became ill.--And now they are coming to take me.

BENJAMIN [Rushing to the door and guarding it]. No, no, they must not take you. I shall defend you, Eleonora.

ELEONORA. That's very beautiful, Benjamin, but you mustn't do that.

BENJAMIN [Looking thro' curtain]. There are two of them. [Eleonora tries to push Benjamin aside. He protests mildly.] No, no, not you, then--I don't want to live any longer.

ELEONORA. Benjamin, go and sit down in that chair, child, sit down.

[Benjamin obeys much against his will.]

ELEONORA [Peeps thro' curtain]. Oh! [Laughs.] It's only some boys. Oh, we doubters! Do you think that God would be angry, when I didn't do any harm, only acted thoughtlessly? It served me right--I shouldn't have doubted.

BENJAMIN. But tomorrow that man will come and take the things.

ELEONORA. Let him come. Then we'll go out under the sky, away from everything--away from all the old home things that father gathered for us, that I have seen since I was a child. Yes, one should never own anything that ties one down to earth. Out, out on the stony ways to wander with bruised feet, for that road leads upward. That's why it's the hard road.

BENJAMIN. Now you are so serious again!



ELEONORA. We must be today. But do you know what will be hardest to part with? This dear old clock. We had it when I was born and it has measured out all my hours and days. [She takes the clock from table.] Listen, it's like a heart beating,--just like a heart.--They say it stopped the very hour that grandfather died. We had it as long ago as that. Good-bye, little timekeeper, perhaps you'll stop again soon. [Putting clock on table again.] Do you know, it used to gain time when we had misfortune in the house, as tho' it wished to hasten thro' the hours of evil, for our sake of course. But when we were happy it used to slow down so that we might enjoy longer. That's what this good clock did. But we have another, a very bad one--and now it has to hang in the kitchen. It couldn't bear music, and as soon as Elis would play on the piano it would start to strike. Oh, you needn't smile; we all noticed it, not I alone, and that's why it has to stay out in the kitchen now, because it wouldn't behave. But Lina doesn't like it either, because it won't be quiet at night, and she cannot time eggs by it. When she does, the eggs are sure to be hard-boiled--so Lina says. But now you are laughing again.

BENJAMIN. Yes, how can I help--

ELEONORA. You are a good boy, Benjamin, but you must be serious. Keep the birch rod in mind; it's hanging behind the mirror.

BENJAMIN. But you say such funny things, that I *must* smile. And why should we be weeping always?

ELEONORA. Shall we not weep in the vale of tears?

BENJAMIN. H'm.

ELEONORA. You would rather laugh all the time, and that's why trouble comes your way. But it's when you are serious that I like you best. Remember that. [Pause.]

BENJAMIN. Do you think that we will get out of this trouble, Eleonora?

ELEONORA. Yes, most of it will take care of itself, when Good Friday is over, but not all of it--today the birch rod, tomorrow the

Easter eggs--today snow--tomorrow thaw. Today death--tomorrow life--resurrection.

BENJAMIN. How wise you are!

ELEONORA. Even now I can feel that it is clearing outside--and that the snow is melting--I can smell the melting snow. And tomorrow violets will sprout against walls facing south. The clouds are lifting--I feel it--I can breathe easier. Oh, I know so well when the heavens are clear and blue.--Go and pull the shades up, Benjamin. I want God to see us.

[Benjamin rises and obeys. Moonlight streams into the room.]

ELEONORA. The moon is full--Easter moon! But you know it is really the sun shining, although the moon gives us the light--the light!

ACT III.

[Easter eve. The music before and thro' this act, Haydn's Sieben Worte. No. 5. Adagio. Scene the same. The curtains are up. The landscape outside is in a grey light. There is a fire in the stove. The doors are closed. Eleonora is seated near the stove with a bunch of crocuses in her hand. Benjamin enters from R.]

ELEONORA. Where have you been all this long time, Benjamin?

BENJAMIN. It hasn't been very long.

ELEONORA. I have wanted you so!

BENJAMIN. Have you? And where have you been, Eleonora?

ELEONORA. I went down street and bought these crocuses, and now I must warm them. They were frozen. Poor dears!

BENJAMIN. Yes. It's so chilly today, there isn't a bit of sunshine.

ELEONORA. The sun is behind the fog. There aren't any clouds, just sea-fog. I can smell the salt in the air.--

BENJAMIN. Did you see any birds out there?

ELEONORA. Yes, flocks of them, starting north for their summer home. And not one will fall to the earth unless God wills it.

ELIS [Enters from R.]. Has the evening paper come yet?

ELEONORA. No, Elis.

[Elis starts to cross the room--when he is at C. Christine enters from L.]

CHRISTINE [Without noticing Elis]. Has the paper come?

ELEONORA. No, it hasn't come.

[Christine crosses room and goes out R., passing Elis, who goes out too. Neither looks at the other.]

ELEONORA. Huh! how cold and chilly! Hate has entered this house. As long as love reigned one could bear it, but now,--huh! how cold!

BENJAMIN. Why were they so anxious about the evening paper?

ELEONORA. Don't you know? There will be something in it about--

BENJAMIN. What?

ELEONORA. Everything! The theft, the police, and more too--

MRS. HEYST [From R.]. Has the paper come?

ELEONORA. No, mother dear.

MRS. HEYST [As she goes out]. Let me know first when it does come.

ELEONORA. The paper, the paper! Oh, that the print shop would burn down or that the editor were taken ill, or something--No, no. I mustn't say that. I mustn't. Do you know, Benjamin, I was with my father last night.

BENJAMIN [Surprised]. Last night?

ELEONORA. Yes, while I slept. And then I was with my sister. She told me that she sold thirty dollars' worth of things day before yesterday, and that she had earned five dollars for herself.

BENJAMIN. That wasn't much.

ELEONORA. It's a great deal, Benjamin.

BENJAMIN [Slyly]. And who else did you meet in your sleep?

ELEONORA. Why do you ask that? You mustn't try to tease me, Benjamin. You would like to know my secrets--but you mustn't.

BENJAMIN. Well, then you can't know my secrets either.

ELEONORA [Listening]. Can you hear the telephone wires humming? Now the paper is out, and now they are 'phoning each other, "Have you read about it?"--"Yes, indeed I have!"--"Isn't it terrible?"

BENJAMIN. What is terrible?

ELEONORA. Everything. Life is terrible, but we must be satisfied. Think of Elis and Christine. They love each other, and yet hate has come between them, so that when they walk thro' the room the thermometer drops several degrees. She went to the recital last night and today they won't speak to each other. And why,--why?

BENJAMIN. Because your brother is jealous.

ELEONORA. Don't mention that word. What do we know about it, for that matter,--more than that it is disease and punishment? One must never touch evil, for then one will surely catch it. Look at Elis,

haven't you noticed how changed he is since he started to read those papers?

BENJAMIN. About the law-suit?

ELEONORA. Yes. It is as if evil had crept into his soul; it is reflected in his face and eyes. Christine feels this, and not to be contaminated by it, she encases herself in an armor of ice. And those papers--if I could only burn them! They are filled with meanness, falsehood and revenge. Therefore, my child, you must keep away from evil and unclean things, both with your lips and heart.

BENJAMIN. How you understand everything!

ELEONORA. Do you know something else that I feel? If Elis and Christine get to know that I bought the Easter lily in that unusual way, they will--

BENJAMIN. What will they do?

ELEONORA. They will send me back--*there*. Where I just came from. Where the sun never shines. Where the walls are dark and bare. Where one hears only crying and lamentation. Where I sat away a year of my life.

BENJAMIN. Where do you mean?

ELEONORA. There, where one is tortured more than in prison. Where the unfortunate dwell, where unquiet reigns, where despair never sleeps, and whence no one returns.

BENJAMIN. Worse than prison? How could that be?

ELEONORA. In prison one is tried and heard, but there in *that* place no one listens. Poor little Easter lily that was the cause of all this! I meant so well, and it turned but so badly!

BENJAMIN. But don't you go to the florist and tell him how it happened. You would be like a lamb led to the sacrifice.

ELEONORA. It doesn't complain when it knows that it *must* be sacrificed, and doesn't even seek to get away. What else can *I* do?

ELIS [Enters from R., a letter in his hand]. Hasn't the paper come yet?

ELEONORA. No, brother dear.

ELIS [Turns toward kitchen door]. Lina must go out and get an evening paper.

[Mrs. Heyst enters from R., Eleonora and Benjamin show fear.]

ELIS [To Eleonora and Benjamin]. Go out for a few moments. I want to speak to mother.

[Eleonora and Benjamin go out.]

MRS. HEYST. Have you received word from the asylum?

ELIS. Yes.

MRS. HEYST. What do they want?

ELIS. They demand Eleonora's return.--

MRS. HEYST. I won't allow it. She's my own child--

ELIS.--And my sister.

MRS. HEYST. What do you mean to do?

ELIS. I don't know. I can't think any more.

MRS. HEYST. But I can. Eleonora, the child of sorrow, has found happiness, tho' it's not of this world. Her unrest has turned to peace, which she sheds upon others. Sane or not, she has found wisdom. She knows how to carry life's burdens better than I do, better than all of us. Am *I* sane, for that matter? Was I sane when I thought my husband innocent altho' I knew that he was convicted by the evidence, and that

he confessed? And you, Elis--are you sane when you can't see that Christine loves you, when you believe that she hates you?

ELIS. How can I be in the wrong? Didn't she go out with my false friend last night?

MRS. HEYST. She did, but you knew about it. Why did she go? Well, you should be able to divine the reason.

ELIS. No. I cannot.

MRS. HEYST. You will not. Very well, then you must take the consequences.

[The kitchen door opens a little and Lina's hand is seen with evening paper. Mrs. Heyst takes paper and gives it to Elis.]

ELIS. That was the last misfortune. With Christine. I could carry the other burdens, but now the last support has been pulled away and I am falling.

MRS. HEYST. Well, fall then--but land right side up, and then you can start again. Any news worth reading in the paper?

ELIS. I don't know. I am afraid to look at it today.

MRS. HEYST. Give it to me, then. I am not--

ELIS. No, wait a moment--

MRS. HEYST. What are you afraid of?

ELIS. The worst of all.

MRS. HEYST. The worst has happened so many times that it doesn't matter. Oh, my boy, if you knew my life--if you could have seen your father go down to destruction, as I did, and I couldn't warn all those to whom he brought misfortune! I felt like his accomplice when he went down--for, in a way, I knew of the crime, and if the judge hadn't been

a man of great feeling, who realized my position as a wife and mother, I too would have been punished.

ELIS. What was really the cause of father's fall? I have never been able to understand.

MRS. HEYST. Pride--pride. Which brings us all down.

ELIS. But why should the innocent suffer for *his* wrong-doing?

MRS. HEYST. Hush. No more. [She takes paper and reads. Elis walks up and down, worried and nervous.] Ah, what's this? Didn't I say that there was a yellow tulip among the things stolen at the florist's?

ELIS. Yes, I remember.

MRS. HEYST. But here it says that it was an Easter lily.

ELIS [With fear]. An Easter lily? Does it say that?

[They look at each other. A long pause.]

MRS. HEYST [Sinking into a chair]. It's Eleonora. Oh, God keep us!

ELIS. It wasn't the end then.

MRS. HEYST. Prison or the asylum--

ELIS. But it's impossible. She couldn't have done this. Impossible!

MRS. HEYST. And now the family name must be dragged in disgrace again.

ELIS. Do they suspect her?

MRS. HEYST. They say that suspicion leads in a certain direction-- it's pretty plain where.

ELIS. I must talk to her.



MRS. HEYST. Don't speak harshly to her. I can stand no more. Oh, she is lost--regained but lost again! Speak kindly to her. [She goes out R.]

ELIS [At door L.]. Oh,--[Calls] Eleonora, come out here. I want to speak to you.

ELEONORA [Coming in, her hair down]. I was just putting up my hair.

ELIS. Never mind that. Tell me, little sister, where did you get that flower?

ELEONORA. I took it from--

ELIS. Oh, God!

[Eleonora hangs her head, crushed, with her arms over her breast.]

ELEONORA. But I--I left money there, beside the--

ELIS. You left the money? You paid for it, then?

ELEONORA. Yes and no. It's provoking, but I haven't done anything wrong--I meant well--do you believe me?

ELIS. I believe you, little sister--but the newspapers don't know that you are innocent.

ELEONORA. Dear me! Then I must suffer for this also. [She bends her head forward; her hair falls over her face.] What do they want to do with me now? Let them do what they will!

BENJAMIN [Enters from L., beside himself]. No, no. You mustn't touch her. She hasn't done any harm--I know it--as it was I--I--I--[He breaks down] who did it.

ELEONORA. Don't believe what he is saying--it was I.

ELIS. What shall I believe--whom shall I believe?

BENJAMIN. Me!

ELEONORA. Me, me!

BENJAMIN. Let me go to the police--

ELIS. Hush, Benjamin, hush.

ELEONORA. No, I'll go--I'll go.

ELIS. Quiet, children. Here comes mother.

[Mrs. Heyst enters R., takes Eleonora in her arms and kisses her tenderly.]

MRS. HEYST [Stirred]. My dear, dear child! You have come back to your mother and you shall stay with me.

ELEONORA. You kiss me, mother? You haven't kissed me in years. Why just now?

MRS. HEYST. Why, because now--because the florist is out there and asks pardon for making all this fuss.--The money has been found, and your card and--

[Eleonora springs into the arms of Elis and kisses him. Then she goes to Benjamin and kisses him quickly on the forehead.]

ELEONORA [To Benjamin]. You good child, who wanted to suffer for my sake! Why did you do it?

BENJAMIN. Because--I--I--like--you so much, Eleonora.

MRS. HEYST. Well, my children, put on some things now and go out into the orchard. It's clearing up.

ELEONORA. Oh, it's clearing--and soon the sun will be shining!

[She takes Benjamin's hand and they both go out L.]

ELIS. Mother, can't we throw the rod into the fire soon?

MRS. HEYST. Not yet. There is still something--

ELIS. Is it--Lindkvist?

MRS. HEYST. Yes. He is out there. But he looks so queer and bent on talking to you. Too bad he talks so much and always about himself.

ELIS. Let him come. Now that I have seen a ray of sunlight, I am not afraid to meet the giant. Let him come.

MRS. HEYST. But don't irritate him. Providence has placed our destiny in his hands--and he who humbleth himself shall be exalted and he who exalteth himself--well--you know what happens to him.

ELIS. I know. Listen--the galoshes--squeak, squeak, squeak! Does he mean to come in with them on? And why not? They are his own carpets.

[There are three raps on door R.]

MRS. HEYST. Elis, think of us all.

ELIS. I do, mother.

[Mrs. Heyst opens door R. Lindkvist enters, Mrs. Heyst goes out. He is an elderly man of serious, almost tragic aspect, with black bushy eyebrows. Round, black-rimmed eye-glasses. He carries a stout stick in his hand, he is dressed in black, with, fur coat, and over his shoes wears galoshes that squeak.]

LINDKVIST [After looking at Elis]. My name is Lindkvist.

ELIS [Reserved]. Heyst is my name--won't you sit down?

[Lindkvist sits in chair R. of sewing table--looks at Elis with a stern eye.]

ELIS [After a pause]. How can I be of service?

LINDKVIST [With good humor]. H'm. Last evening I had the honor to notify you of my intended visit, but thinking it over, and realizing that it was a holy evening, I refrained from coming then, as my visit is not of a social nature--and I don't talk *business* on a holy evening.

ELIS. We are very grateful.

LINDKVIST. We are *not* grateful. [Pause.] However, day before yesterday I made a casual call on the Governor.--[Stops to notice how Elis takes it.] Do you know the Governor?

ELIS [Carelessly.] I haven't that honor.

LINDKVIST. Then you shall have that honor.--We spoke about your father.

ELIS. No doubt.

LINDKVIST [Takes out a paper and lays it down on table]. And I got this paper from him, from the Governor.

ELIS. I've been expecting this for some time, but before you go any further allow me to ask you a question.

LINDKVIST. Go ahead.

ELIS. Why don't you put that warrant in the hands of the executors, so we could escape this long and painful business?

LINDKVIST. So--so--my young man.

ELIS. Young or not, I ask no mercy, only justice.

LINDKVIST. Well, well, no mercy--no mercy--eh? Do you see this paper that I put here on the corner of the table?

ELIS. Yes.

LINDKVIST. Ah,--now I put it back again. [Puts it back in his pocket.] Well, then, justice, only justice. Listen, my young friend. Once upon a time, I was deprived of my money and in a disagreeable manner. When I wrote you a courteous letter, asking how much time you needed, you saw fit to answer with an uncourteous note--and treated me as if I were a usurer, a plunderer of widows and children--altho' I was really the one plundered, and you belonged to the plunderer's party. But as I was more judicious, I contented myself with answering your note courteously, but to the point. You know my blue paper, eh? I see you do. And I can put the seals on, too, if I choose--but I don't, not yet. [Looks around the room.]

ELIS. As you please; the things are at your disposal.

LINDKVIST. I wasn't looking at the furniture. I looked to see if your mother was in the room. She no doubt loves justice as much as you do?

ELIS. Let us hope so.

LINDKVIST. Good. Do you know that if justice, which you value so highly, had its course, your mother, who only knew of your father's criminal act, could have been imprisoned?

ELIS. No! No!

LINDKVIST. Yes! Yes! And it isn't too late even now.

ELIS [Rises]. My mother--

[Lindkvist takes out another paper, also blue, and places it on the table.]

LINDKVIST. See--now I put down another paper, and it's blue, too, but as yet--no seals.

ELIS. Oh, God,--my mother! "As ye sow, so shall ye reap."

LINDKVIST. Yes, my young lover of justice, "As ye sow, so shall ye reap." That's the way it goes. Now, if I should put this question to

myself: "You, Joseph Lindkvist, born in poverty and brought up in denial and work, have you the right at your age to deprive yourself and children--mark you, *your children*--of the support, which you thro' industry, economy and denial,--mark you, *denial*,--saved penny by penny? What will you do, Joseph Lindkvist, if you want justice? You plundered no one--but if you resent being plundered, then you cannot stay in this town, as no one would speak to the terrible creature who wants his own hard-earned money returned." So you see there exists a grace which is finer than justice, and that is mercy.

ELIS. You are right. Take everything. It belongs to you.

LINDKVIST. I have right on my side, but I dare not use it.

ELIS. I shall think of your children and not complain.

LINDKVIST. Good. Then I'll put the blue paper away again.--And now we'll go a step further.

ELIS. Pardon me, but do they intend to accuse my mother?

LINDKVIST. We will go a step further first--I take it that you don't know the Governor personally?

ELIS. No, and I don't want to know him.

[Lindkvist takes out paper again and shakes it warningly at Elis.]

LINDKVIST. Don't, don't say that. The Governor and your father were friends in their youth, and he wishes to see and know you. You see. "As ye sow," and so forth, in everything--everything. Won't you go to see him?

ELIS. No.

LINDKVIST. But the Governor

ELIS. Let us change the subject.

LINDKVIST. You must speak courteously to me, as I am defenseless. You have public opinion on your side, and I have only justice on mine. What have you got against the Governor? He doesn't like this and that, what some people would call pleasure.--But that belongs to his eccentricities, and we needn't exactly respect his eccentricities, but we can overlook them and hold to fundamental facts as human beings; and in the crises of human life we must swallow each other skin and hair, as the saying goes. But will you go to see the Governor?

ELIS. Never.

LINDKVIST. Are you that sort of creature?

ELIS. Yes.

LINDKVIST [Rises, walks about waving his blue paper.] That's too bad--too bad.--Well, then I must start from the other end.--A revengeful person has threatened to take legal steps against your mother.

ELIS. What do you say?

LINDKVIST. Go to see the Governor.

ELIS. No.

LINDKVIST [Taking Elis by the shoulders]. Then you are the most miserable being that I have ever met in all my experience.--And now I shall go and see your mother.

ELIS. No, no. Don't go to her.

LINDKVIST. Will you go to see the Governor then?

ELIS. Yes.

LINDKVIST. Tell me again and louder.

ELIS. Yes.

LINDKVIST [Giving Elis blue paper]. Then that matter is over with--and there is an end to that paper, and an end to your troubles on that score.

[Elis takes paper without looking at it.]

LINDKVIST. Then we have number two--that was number one. Let us sit down. [They sit as before.] You see--if we only meet each other half-way, it will be so much shorter.--Number two--that is my claim on your home.--No illusions--as I cannot and will not give away my family's common property, I must have what is owing me, to the last penny.

ELIS. I understand--

LINDKVIST. So. You understand that?

ELIS. I didn't mean to offend you.

LINDKVIST. No. I gather as much. [He lifts his glasses and looks at Elis.] The wolf, the angry wolf--eh? The rod--the rod--the giant of the mountains, who does not eat children--only scares them--eh? And I shall scare you--yes, out of your senses. Every piece of furniture must come out and I have the warrant in my pocket. And if there isn't enough--you'll go to jail, where neither sun nor stars shine.--Yes, I can eat children and widows when I am irritated.--And as for public opinion? Bah! I'll let that go hang. I have only to move to another city. [Elis is silent.] You had a friend who is called Peter. He is a debater and was your student in oratory. But you wanted him to be a sort of prophet.--Well, he was faithless. He crowed twice, didn't he? [Elis is silent.]

LINDKVIST. Human nature is as uncertain as things and thought. Peter was faithless--I don't deny it, and I won't defend him--in that. But the heart of mankind is fathomless, and there is always some gold to be found. Peter was a faithless friend, but a friend nevertheless.

ELIS. A faithless--



LINDKVIST. Faithless--yes, but a friend, as I said. This faithless friend has unwittingly done you a great service.

ELIS [Sneeringly]. Even that.

LINDKVIST. [Moving nearer to Elis]. As ye sow, so shall ye reap!

ELIS. It's not true of evil.

LINDKVIST. It's true of everything in life. Do you believe me?

ELIS. I must, or else you will torture the life out of me.

LINDKVIST. Not your life--but pride and malice I *will* squeeze out of you.

ELIS. But to continue--

LINDKVIST. Peter has done you a service, I said.

ELIS. I want *no* services from him--

LINDKVIST. Are you there again? Then listen! Thro' your friend Peter's intervention the Governor was able to protect your mother. Therefore you must write and thank Peter. Promise me that.

ELIS. Any other man in the world--but not him.

LINDKVIST [Nearer to Elis]. Then I must squeeze you again. How much money have you in the bank?

ELIS. What has that got to do with it? I cannot be responsible for my father's debts!

LINDKVIST. Oh, indeed? Weren't you among those who ate, and drank, when my children's money was spent in this house? Answer.

ELIS. I can't deny it.

LINDKVIST. Well, then, you must sit down immediately and write a check for the balance. You know the sum.

ELIS [As in a dream]. Even that?

LINDKVIST. Yes, even that.--Be good enough to make it out now.

[Elis rises and takes out check-book and pen.]

LINDKVIST. Make it on yourself or an order--

ELIS. Even then it won't be enough.

LINDKVIST. Then you must go out and borrow the rest. Every penny must be paid.

ELIS [Handing check to Lindkvist]. There--everything I have.--That is my summer and my, bride. I haven't anything else to give you.

LINDKVIST. Then you must go out and borrow, as I said.

ELIS. I can't do it.

LINDKVIST. Then you must get security.

ELIS. No one would give security to a Heyst.

LINDKVIST. So. Then I'll propose an alternative. Thank Peter, or you will have to come up with the whole sum.

ELIS. I won't have anything to do with Peter.

LINDKVIST. Then you are the most miserable creature that I have ever known. You can by a simple courtesy save your mother's dwelling and your fiancée's happiness, and you won't do it. There must be some motive that you won't come out with. Why do you hate Peter?

ELIS. Put me to death--but don't torture me any longer.

LINDKVIST. Are you jealous of him?

[Elis shrugs his shoulders.]

LINDKVIST. So--that's the way things stand. [Rises and walks up and down.] Did you read the evening paper?

ELIS. Yes, more is the pity!

LINDKVIST. All of it?

ELIS. No, not all.

LINDKVIST. No? Then you didn't read of Peter's engagement?

ELIS. No. That I did not know about.

LINDKVIST. And to whom do you think?

ELIS. To whom?

LINDKVIST. Why, he is engaged to Miss Alice, and it was made known at a certain recital, where your fiancée helped spread the glad news.

ELIS. Why should it have been such a secret?

LINDKVIST. Haven't two young people the right to keep their hearts' secrets from you?

ELIS. And on account of their happiness I had to suffer this agony!

LINDKVIST. Yes, just as others have suffered for your happiness--your mother, your father, your fiancée, your sister, your friends. Sit down and I'll tell you a little story.

[Elis sits, against his will, through this scene and the following. It is clearing outside.]

LINDKVIST. It's about forty years since I came to this town, as a boy, you understand--alone, unknown, without even one acquaintance, to seek a position. All I owned was one silver dollar. The night that I arrived was a dark, rainy one. As I didn't know of any cheap hotel, I asked the passers-by about one, but no one stopped to answer. Took me for a beggar, most likely. When I was at the height of my despair, a young man came up and asked me why I was crying--evidently I was crying.--I told him my need, and he turned from his course and took me to a hotel, and comforted me with friendly words. As I entered the hotel the glass door of a store next door was thrown open and hit my elbow and was smashed to pieces. The furious owner of the store grabbed me and insisted that I should pay for it, or else he would call the police. Can you imagine my despair? The kindly-intentioned unknown man, who was a witness of the affair, protested, and went to the trouble of calling the police himself, explained, and saved me from a night in the street. This man was your father! So you see, "As ye sow, so shall ye reap." And for your father's sake, I have foregone what is owed me. Therefore take this paper and keep your check. [Rises.] And as you find it hard to say thanks, I'll go immediately, and especially as I find it painful to be thanked. [Goes to door back.] Go to your mother as soon as your feet can carry you and relieve her of her worries. [Elis starts to Lindkvist to thank him, but Lindkvist makes a gesture toward R.] Go--

[Elis hastens out R. The center door opens and Eleonora and Benjamin enter. On seeing Lindkvist, she shows extreme fear.]

LINDKVIST. Well, little ones, step in and have no fear. Do you know who I am? [In a blustering voice.] I am the giant of the mountains,--muh, muh, muh!--and yet I am not dangerous. Come here, Eleonora. [She goes to him and he takes her head in his hand and looks into her eyes.] You have your father's kind eyes,--he was a good man--but he was weak. [Kissing her forehead.] There.

ELEONORA. You speak well of my father? Can it be any one wishes him well?

LINDKVIST. I can--ask your brother Elis.

ELEONORA. Then you don't want to harm us?

LINDKVIST. No, my dear child.

ELEONORA. Well, help us then.

LINDKVIST. Child, I can't help your father in his sentence. I can't help Benjamin in his Latin. But everything else is helped already. Life doesn't give everything, and nothing is given for nothing. Therefore you must help me,--will you?

ELEONORA. Poor me, what can I do?

LINDKVIST. What is the date today?

ELEONORA. Why, it's the sixteenth.

LINDKVIST. Good. Before the twentieth you must, have your brother Elis make a call on the Governor, and you must get him to write a letter to Peter.

ELEONORA. Is that all?

LINDKVIST. Oh, you dear child! But if he neglects these things the giant will come again and say muh, muh!

ELEONORA. Why should the giant come and scare children?

LINDKVIST. So that the children will be good.

ELEONORA. That's true. The giant is right. [She kisses Lindkvist's coat sleeve.] Thanks, dear giant.

LINDKVIST. You should say *Mr.* Giant, I should think.

ELEONORA. Oh, no. That's not your real name--

LINDKVIST [Laughing]. Good-bye, children. Now you can throw the rod in the fire.

ELEONORA. No, we must keep it. Children are so forgetful.

LINDKVIST. How well you know children, little one! [He goes out.]

ELEONORA. We are going to the country, Benjamin. Within two months! Oh, if the time would only pass quickly. [She takes calendar and tears the pages off one by one.] April, May, June, and the sun is shining on them all. Now you must thank God, who helped us to the country.

BENJAMIN [Bashfully]. Can't I say my thanks in silence?

ELEONORA. Yes, you can say it in silence, for now the clouds are gone, and it can be heard up there.

[Christine has entered from L. and stopped. Elis and Mrs. Heyst from R. Christine and Elis start to meet each other with loving smiles. Before they meet--]

CURTAIN.