

SCENE TWO

Start

LIGHTS UP on HEDDA, facing EILERT LOVBORG, who has just entered the room, holding a letter.

He looks around, confused.

EILERT

Have I come at a bad time? This feels rather ... abrupt.

HEDDA

I skipped ahead. Have a seat, Eilert.

EILERT

Your husband invited me here. I have his letter.

HEDDA

Yes, I tried to prevent that. Without success.

EILERT

You don't want me here?

HEDDA

Nothing that ever happens around here has to do with what I want. So I decided to jump to the chase.

EILERT

Well, this seems a bit awkward, without your husband here. And I would have thought you'd have a servant to announce me?

HEDDA

She got a pink slip. She'll thank me in the long run.

EILERT

This isn't the way I expected to find you –

HEDDA

I know. The sequence is temporarily off, but I expect things will try to align themselves very shortly. That's why I need to tell you a few things before we're interrupted.

EILERT

Perhaps I should return at another time.

HEDDA

You could work on your listening skills, you know. I'm trying to talk to you about something important.

EILERT

All right, Mrs. Tesman.

HEDDA

Oh, jeez, are you going to pretend we don't have a history now? There's no time for that!

EILERT

I don't want to presume ...

HEDDA

Presume. For God's sake, presume.

EILERT

All right. I will. I suppose this is easy for you, isn't it? Just like old times. The proud, disdainful, beautiful daughter of the famous General Gabler - still toying with the affections of the man who was once willing to toss all of his own ambitions into the river just for the chance to be close to her. Do you know how hard it is for me to come here after all this time, and once again stare into your cold, piercing eyes? Do you know how much courage it takes for me to just sit here next to you? How much restraint?

HEDDA

See, this is why it didn't work out between us. You're a little intense.

EILERT

You're the one who threatened to shoot me.

HEDDA

Oh come on. Don't exaggerate.

EILERT

I'm the one who found myself staring down the barrel of one your father's damned pistols. Without the slightest doubt that you would pull the trigger, and that I would feel the impact in my heart. Bang! *He shoots*

JUDGE BRACK is heard offstage,
responding to the noise.

BRACK (OS)

No, Mrs. Tesman! Please don't shoot me!

HEDDA

Now see what you've done. He thinks it's his cue.

EILERT

Cue? What is this? Have you taken another lover?

HEDDA

It's just Judge Brack.

She yells offstage.

It's not time yet, Brack! Come back in an hour!