

## Comment P. 19

### “Nora, Nora! What a woman you are! ... at the last”

These lines are extracted from “A Doll’s House”, the earliest of Henrik Ibsen’s plays on social problems.

These lines are a part of a conversation between Helmer and Nora. It is Helmer who utters these words. He is talking about the principle of borrowing money and being in debt. Helmer is introduced to the readers through these words to be a man of principles who refuses completely to be in debt. He appears to be thinking in terms of financial security, reputation, honesty, and society. The words also shed light on his caution. However, the events will not support his characteristics because after his discovery of his wife’s forgery, the whole image of Helmer as a man of principles falls down and nothing of his characteristics remain but his cowardice. At that time he becomes a narrow-minded, self-centred, rather unmanly character.

These lines come as a reaction to what Nora says about borrowing money. She does not care about anything but her husband. In her view, they can borrow money when necessary. If anything happened to Helmer, she would not care about owing money. Thus, she seems to be financially reckless and unreasonable. Her way of thinking is very childish and naïve.

Moreover, the words are dexterously chosen and very suggestive. For example, Helmer’s phrase, “but seriously”, shows that he never speaks with Nora seriously. This is due to the fact that he thinks of her as a “doll-wife” who has to amuse him. Helmer’s repetition of “Nora, Nora!” indicates that he is surprised by what she says to him about not caring about owing money. Nora has also wondered who cares for them and that they are all strangers. Helmer wonders about her way of thinking.

Helmer summarizes, in very short but expressive words, his “principles on these points”. “No debts, no borrowing”. He touches the readers from the very beginning of the play and appears to be very cautious and firm. He even presents a piece of advice to Nora by saying “Home life ceases to be free and beautiful as soon as it is founded on borrowing and debt.” Helmer prepares the readers and gives them hints to what will happen later. According to Helmer’s words, life will turn to hell, later on, when he discovers the forgery of Nora. Life will not be free or beautiful anymore. Here the writer uses the technique of dramatic irony. The readers know that Helmer’s house itself is built on what he rejects completely.

This excerpt sheds light on one of the themes of the play- that is, the lack of understanding between wife and husband. The readers feel that there is a gap between Nora and Helmer in the way of thinking. They do not understand each other because each one of them lives in a separate world. Nora lives in the world of emotions while Helmer lives in the world of principles. This lack of understanding will lead to the separation and destruction of the whole family. Therefore, their marriage will be doomed to failure.

By and large, this extract imparts to the readers many pieces of information. First, it sheds light on Helmer's character. Secondly, it indicates what will happen later. Finally, it shows what extent each one of the couple lives separately from the other. Thus, these pieces of information are closely and dexterously interwoven.