

## **THIS MARRIAGE SUCKS**

Name a marriage where both husband and wife are completely happy and have been married their entire life. I'll bet it is difficult for you to name five or six marriages that have lasting meaning. For years, literature portrayed marriages as picture-perfect and ever-lasting--until Ibsen and his realism. Ibsen did not invent realism, but he was great at practicing it. Ibsen, through his play A Doll's House, introduced us to a couple who seem satisfied on the surface, when in reality their marriage is incomplete.

First, a look at the wife, Nora, is in order. People say that you are what you eat, but Nora is what she speaks. Her lines reveal her personality. For example, Nora says, "Pooh! We can borrow that long." (Act I, 970) Nora is referring to having a Christmas that is nothing but a spending spree. She wants to borrow for three months until Torvald gets his raise. By saying this, Nora uncovers to the audience that she is somewhat childish and unrealistic. Another example is when Nora says, "...I could sneak down to the maid's quarters, because they never tried to improve me..." (Act II, 996) This quote reveals the need for relaxation by Nora. She doesn't want to be corrected

all of the time; she only wants to be treated like an adult. Nora Helmer also has views on her husband Torvald. She believes he has been wonderful to her; he is a good man. However, Torvald has never made her completely happy. Nora believes she would be happier if she left him. Poor Torvald--he only meant well.

Poor Torvald is the discussion of this next paragraph. The things that Torvald say also show what his personality is truly like. "But you know we can't go squandering," replied Torvald. (Act I, 970) Torvald is wise with his money. He wants to actually live well, and through experience, Torvald knows he must save his money. Another time Torvald says to Nora, "Now my little lark talks sense." (Act III, 1009) By this reply, Torvald is showing that he thinks he knows what is best for Nora, and that Nora doesn't know what the hell is good for her. Torvald suffers from a complex in which he treats Nora like his daughter. Torvald views Nora as a timid, little woodland creature who needs constant protection and supervision or else she may perish. Torvald sees Nora as a helpless child. As a result of this, their marriage is a strained relationship.

Nora and Torvald Helmer have been married for eight years. In those eight years, some description words can be used for their marriage. Fake--Nora is faking her happiness. Weak--the Helmers have never truly sat down and talked as husband and wife. Finally--foster care--Torvald "takes care of" Nora. He doesn't act like her husband; he acts like her father. Despite the bad words, strengths do exist in their marriage. Torvald does take care of Nora; he is devoted. Nora is a good mother. However, the weaknesses in their marriage are overwhelming. Torvald is more worried about his image than about Nora. Nora would rather be with Dr. Rank than Torvald. Nora has not been happy in eight years. Torvald refers to Nora as a child and not as "my wife". Their relationship fell apart for good reason.

In conclusion, the Helmer's marriage, while seeming perfect, has a weak foundation. Nora kept secrets from Torvald. She was never completely up front with him until the end. Torvald was never a "husband" to Nora, because he was more or less her second father. Down deep, this marriage had been on the rocks for years. It was time for somebody to end it.