

***HENRIK
IBSEN***



GHOSTS

Henrik Ibsen

Ghosts

A Domestic Tragedy in Three Acts

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DRAMATIS PERSONAE

Mrs. Alving (a widow).

Oswald Alving (her son, an artist).

Manders (the Pastor of the parish).

Engstrand (a carpenter).

Regina Engstrand (his daughter, in Mrs Alving's service).

(The action takes place at Mrs Alving's house on one of the larger fjords of Western Norway.)

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ACT I

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(SCENE.—A large room looking upon a garden door in the left-hand wall, and two in the right. In the middle of the room, a round table with chairs set about it, and books, magazines and newspapers upon it. In the foreground on the left, a window, by which is a small sofa with a work-table in front of it. At the back the room opens into a conservatory rather smaller than the room. From the right-hand side of this, a door leads to the garden. Through the large panes of glass that form the outer wall of the conservatory, a gloomy fjord landscape can be discerned, half-obscurd by steady rain.

ENGSTRAND is standing close to the garden door. His left leg is slightly deformed, and he wears a boot with a clump of wood under the sole. REGINA, with an empty garden-syringe in her hand, is trying to prevent his coming in.)

Regina (below her breath). What is it you want? Stay where you are. The rain is dripping off you.

Engstrand. God's good rain, my girl.

Regina. The Devil's own rain, that's what it is!

Engstrand. Lord, how you talk, Regina. (Takes a few limping steps forward.) What I wanted to tell you was this—

Regina. Don't clump about like that, stupid! The young master is lying asleep upstairs.

Engstrand. Asleep still? In the middle of the day?

Regina. Well, it's no business of yours.

Engstrand. I was out on a spree last night—

Regina. I don't doubt it.

Engstrand. Yes, we are poor weak mortals, my girl—

Regina. We are indeed.

Engstrand. —and the temptations of the world are manifold, you know—but, for all that, here I was at my work at half-past five this morning.

Regina. Yes, yes, but make yourself scarce now. I am not going to stand here as if I had a rendezvous with you.

Engstrand. As if you had a what?

Regina. I am not going to have anyone find you here; so now you know, and you can go.

Engstrand (coming a few steps nearer). Not a bit of it! Not before we have had a little chat. This afternoon I shall have finished my job down at the school house, and I shall be off home to town by tonight's boat.

Regina (mutters). Pleasant journey to you!

Engstrand. Thanks, my girl. Tomorrow is the opening of the Orphanage, and I expect there will be a fine kick-up here and plenty of good strong drink, don't you know. And no one shall say of Jacob Engstrand that he can't hold off when temptation comes in his way.

Regina. Oho!

Engstrand. Yes, because there will be a lot of fine folk here tomorrow. Parson Manders is expected from town, too.

Regina: What's more, he's coming today.

Engstrand. There you are! And I'm going to be precious careful he doesn't have anything to say against me, do you see?

Regina. Oh, that's your game, is it?

Engstrand. What do you mean?

Regina (with a significant look at him). What is it you want to humbug Mr. Manders out of this time?

Engstrand. Sh! Sh! Are you crazy? Do you suppose I would want to humbug Mr. Manders? No, no—Mr. Manders has always been too kind a friend for me to do that. But what I wanted to talk to you about, was my going back home tonight.

Regina. The sooner you go, the better I shall be pleased.

Engstrand. Yes, only I want to take you with me, Regina.

Regina (open-mouthed). You want to take me—? What did you say?

Engstrand. I want to take you home with me, I said.

Regina (contemptuously). You will never get me home with you.

Engstrand. Ah, we shall see about that.

Regina. Yes, you can be quite certain we shall see about that. I, who have been brought up by a lady like Mrs. Alving?—I, who have been treated almost as if I were her own child?—do you suppose I am going home with you?—to such a house as yours? Not likely!

Engstrand. What the devil do you mean? Are you setting yourself up against your father, you hussy?

Regina (mutters, without looking at him). You have often told me I was none of yours.

Engstrand. Bah!—why do you want to pay any attention to that?

Regina. Haven't you many and many a time abused me and called me a —? For shame?

Engstrand. I'll swear I never used such an ugly word.

Regina. Oh, it doesn't matter what word you used.

Engstrand. Besides, that was only when I was a bit fuddled...hm! Temptations are manifold in this world, Regina.

Regina. Ugh!

Engstrand. And it was when your mother was in a nasty temper. I had to find some way of getting my knife into her, my girl. She was always so precious gentile. (Mimicking her.) "Let go, Jacob! Let me be! Please to remember that I was three years with the Alvings at Rosenvold, and they were people who went to Court!" (Laughs.) Bless my soul, she never could forget that Captain Alving got a Court appointment while she was in service here.

Regina. Poor mother—you worried her into her grave pretty soon.

Engstrand (shrugging his shoulders). Of course, of course; I have got to take the blame for everything.

Regina (beneath her breath, as she turns away). Ugh—that leg, too!

Engstrand. What are you saying, my girl?

Regina. Pied de mouton.

Engstrand. Is that English?

Regina. Yes.

Engstrand. You have had a good education out here, and no mistake; and it may stand you in good stead now,

Regina.

Regina (after a short silence). And what was it you wanted me to come to town for?

Engstrand. Need you ask why a father wants his only child? Ain't I a poor lonely widower?

Regina. Oh, don't come to me with that tale. Why do you want me to go?

Engstrand. Well, I must tell you I am thinking of taking up a new line now.

Regina (whistles). You have tried that so often—but it has always proved a fool's errand.

Engstrand. Ah, but this time you will just see, Regina! Strike me dead if—

Regina (stamping her foot). Stop swearing!

Engstrand. Sh! Sh!—you're quite right, my girl, quite right! What I wanted to say was only this, that I have put by a tidy penny out of what I have made by working at this new Orphanage up here.

Regina. Have you? All the better for you.

Engstrand. What is there for a man to spend his money on, out here in the country?

Regina. Well, what then?

Engstrand. Well, you see, I thought of putting the money into something that would pay. I thought of some kind of an eating-house for seafaring folk—

Regina. Heavens!

Engstrand. Oh, a high-class eating-house, of course—not a pigsty for common sailors. Damn it, no; it would be a place ships' captains and first mates would come to; really good sort of people, you know.