

## Fortitude and Forbearance of Woman Characters in Ibsen's A Doll's House

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### ABSTRACT

Henrik Johan Ibsen is one of the founders of modernism in theatre who is often referred to as the father of realism. He is the second most influential playwright next to Shakespeare. He introduced different themes and techniques in his plays, are unique and useful for his readers and audience. Ibsen depicts the then 19th century Norwegian society most realistically and vividly. A central theme of Ibsen's plays is the portrayal of sorrow, suffering, anguish, frustration, agony and travesty of woman characters. Thus Ibsen's sympathy, kindness and liking for women would eventually find significant expression in most of his plays. This article attempts to highlight fortitude and forbearance of woman characters in Ibsen's play "A Doll's House".

**KEYWORDS:** Fortitude, Forbearance, Big Secret, Discrepancy, Blackmail, Conjugal Bliss

"A Doll's House" (1879) among his twelve prose plays, "A Doll's House" (1879), his masterpiece highlights the status and freedom of women in the contemporary society who were subservient to men. When the play was published and then staged, a bomb was exploded on the then Norwegian society, people felt. So far as the title is concerned Ibsen portrays his female characters nicely and realistically. Among the five important characters, the two women characters find due importance throughout the play. Nora and her childhood friend, Mrs. Linde deserve readers' praise and sympathy for their fortitude and forbearance in the play.

Nora, the protagonist of the play is the wife to Torvald Helmer, who has sacrificed everything for her husband's sake. From the very outset of the play, we come to know that she has a big secret; under no circumstance she is ready to reveal it. So here is a question; what is the

big secret? Why does not she disclose before any one even before her husband? If it is revealed what will happen? Does the revelation jeopardize their conjugal life?

Firstly the critical analysis highlights on Nora's big secret. We come to know about her big secret when she tells Mrs. Linde about it. She says to the latter that she has taken her husband to Italy for treatment as he had been suffering from an incurable disease.

As per doctors' suggestion it was inevitable his treatment in warm climate. Otherwise he won't survive which necessitates a huge amount of money. At that time Nora has not sufficient means for the expenditure. Here she displays her fortitude by signing an IOU to gather the amount from Nils Krogstad who is morally corrupt. She neither informed her husband nor gave any faint hint to her ailing father, who was bedridden for a long time. She does not want to aggravate the two situations.

Because she knows her husband better than other. In act one Helmer says to Nora about borrowing:

Helmer : That is like a women ! But seriously, Nora, you know what I think about that.

No debt, No borrowing. There can be no freedom or beauty about home life that depends on borrowing and debt. We two have kept bravely on the straight road so far, and we will go on the same way for the short time longer that there need be any struggle. (p.03)

Undoubtedly Nora is an embodiment of fortitude and forbearance. Nils Krogstad has often tried to blackmail her and threatened to disclose the big secret when he has got his dismissal letter from Helmer: Though Nora pays the regular instalments and has paid a lion's share of the debt.

Krogstad intends Nora to exercise her influence on her husband to retain his post in the bank. Here Nora comes to know about her discrepancy that she has committed at the time of signing the IOU. Nils has given the money on the security of a bond which had to be signed by her father. In this way her father will stand as a security for the money. The bond should have been signed by her father. But it had been signed by her as she does not like to aggravate her father's ailment. On the other hand it had been dated wrongly which is a mismatch between the day of signature and her father's death. This is the discrepancy which she has committed earlier. In this connection Krogstad says:

Krogstad: And, as that is so, there is a discrepancy (taking a paper from his pocket. Which I cannot account for.)

Nora: What discrepancy? I don't know-

Krogstad: The discrepancy consists Mrs. Helmer, in the fact that your father signed this bond three days after his death.

Nora: What do you mean? I don't understand-

Krogstad: Your father died on the 29<sup>th</sup> of Sept. But you look here: your father has dated his signature the 2<sup>nd</sup> of October. (p.27)

This discrepancy is used as a weapon by Nils to blackmail Nora from time to time.

Nora argues, that it is not the duty of a wife and daughter to save her husband's life and to save her old ailing father. Nils says that the law cares for nothing about motives. Then Nora retorts that it must be a very foolish law. Krogstad informs that he is going to produce the paper in the court which contains the duplicate signature of Nora's father. So Nora will be imprisoned means it will destroy their conjugal bliss and her husband's prestige good name and power will be spoilt after the revelation. On the other hand Nora has desperately efforted to save the situation. But she is not successful after cajoling her husband not to dismiss Nils. After all the consequence went against her will as he is bent upon to dismiss Nils and appoint Mrs. Linde in his place.

Then Krogstad has inserted a letter in Torvald's letter box that reveals the big secret of Nora's life. On the eve of Christmas, Tarantella a ball (dance party) is organised in which Nora will take part as a fisher lass. She tries her best to capture her husband's mind during the dance party and requests him to play the tune so that she can prepare for the dance properly. She does not let her husband go to the letter box to open it. So she says:

Nora: Yes, indeed I shall, Torvald But I cannot get on a bit without you to help me. I have absolutely Forgotten the whole thing.

Helmer: Oh, we will soon work it up again.

Nora: Yes, help me, Torvald. Promise that you will. I am so nervous about it-all the people. You must give Yourself up to me entirely this evening Not the tiniest bit of business. You must not even take a pen in your hand. Will you promise, Torvald dear?

But Krogstad's letter reveals every detail of the big secret. After going through the letter, Helmer becomes furious and scolds Nora severely.

Helmer: What a horrible awakening! All these eight years-she who was my pride and joy-hypocrite a liar-worse, worse a criminal ! The unutterable ugliness of it all! What a disgraceful behavior... No religion, no morality, no sense of duty. (p.70)

Helmer also says that Nora has destroyed his all happiness. She has ruined all his future. It is horrible to think of it. Under such a circumstance, Nora is claim, quiet and reserved. She thinks about the matter very deeply. She cannot decide what to do under this circumstance that shows her fortitude and forbearance of the protagonist.

Krogstad's second letter has changed everything. Torvald becomes very delighted as Krogstad has returned the I.O.U. to Nora. So he cannot go to court without the I.O.U..

Though Torvald has tried his best to convince Nora that they both have been saved. They will start a new life by living together under the same roof. But his sweetened words have not pacified Nora. She looks calm and resolute. Finally she takes a decision to leave her husband, her home and her little children behind. Even though Torvald proposes to live like brother and sister, Nora denies to live with a stranger when Torvald suggests to help her in her want. Then she slams the doors and goes out through the hall.

From the very outset of the play, Miss: Linde is an unfortunate women who appears as a widow. Her marriage gives her no advantage but pushes her to an unending predicament without any offspring. According to her she has no one to live for and live with. She has sacrificed her love for the sake of her old-ailing mother and two little brothers. She has jilted Krogstad's love to comfort her mother's life towards the end of the latter's life and fends for her brothers. Really she exhibits uncommon fortitude when she has married another man who is unknown to her.

In order to sustain her life, she comes to Nora's house to request for an official job. Though she has spent four years after her husband's death to earn her livelihood from a shop to a school.

When she comes to know about Nora's big secret and Krogstad's repeated threats, she comes forward to solve her problem. She has done her best to make an end of the misunderstanding and tries to bring a reconciliation between Nora and Krogstad. On the other

hand. She really shows an exceptional fortitude and forbearance to get reunited with Krogstad whom she loves earlier.

Henrik Ibsen highlights their relation and has brought a happy reunion between them. Before their reunion Mrs. Linde says to Krogstad.

Linde : I am quite alone in the world-my life so dreadfully empty and I feel so forsaken. (p.60)

Nils Krogstad and Mrs. Linde get reunited towards the end of the play. Thus their reunion provides some delight and relief to the readers.

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