

ALLMERS: Yes, yes; I do! It was you that left the helpless child unwatched upon the table.

RITA: He was lying so comfortably among the cushions, and sleeping so soundly, and you had promised to look after him.

ALLMERS: Yes, I had. (Lowering his voice.) But then you came—you, you, you—and lured me to you.

RITA: (looking defiantly at him.) Oh, better own at once that you forgot the child and everything else.

ALLMERS: (in suppressed desperation.) Yes, that is true. (Lower.) I forgot the child—in your arms!

RITA: (exasperated.) Alfred! Alfred—this is intolerable of you!

ALLMERS: (in a low voice, clenching his fist before her face.) In that hour you condemned little Eyolf to death.

RITA: You, too. You, too—if it is as you say.

ALLMERS: Oh, yes; call me to account, too—if you will. We have sinned, both of us. And so after all there *was* retribution in Eyolf's death.

RITA: Retribution?

ALLMERS: (with more self-control.) Yes. Judgment upon you and me. Now, as we stand here, we have our deserts. While he lived, we let ourselves shrink away from him in secret, abject remorse. We could not bear to *see it*—the thing he had to drag with him——

RITA: (whispers.) The crutch?

ALLMERS: Yes, that. And now, what we now call sorrow and heartache—it is really the gnawing of conscience, Rita; nothing else.

"Little Eyolf" is a drama of retribution. Remorse and anguish have set in. They are haunted by the thought that the child's "great open eyes" may watch them day and night.