

ALLMERS: What did they say?

RITA: (sinking down beside the arm chair on the left.) They said "The crutch is floating."

In the second act we learn that it was while watching the Rat-Wife row out over the fiord that Eyolf, standing alone on the very edge of the pier, seemed to turn giddy and disappeared; that he was seen lying on his back on the bottom; and with "great, open eyes." A painful scene occurs, and it is here that Ibsen strips Rita and Allmers naked to their very souls. We see the man in his true colors. We see his superficiality, his falseness and cowardice. We are shown Rita, "the passionate, warm-blooded being," "the child of earth," jealous to satisfy her uncontrolled desires—not a nice picture by any means, but one which appeals to us much more readily than Allmer's selfish priggishness. "Not out of love for Eyolf," says Rita, "did you sacrifice your book, but because you were consumed with distrust of yourself—because you had begun to doubt whether you had any great vocation to live for in the world."

ALLMERS: (observing her closely.) Could you see that in me?

RITA: Oh, yes; little by little. And then you needed something new to fill up your life. It seems that I wasn't enough for you any longer.

ALLMERS: That is the law of change, Rita.

RITA: And that is why you wanted to make a prodigy of poor little Eyolf.

ALLMERS: (with sudden passion.) You are the guilty one in this!

RITA: (rising.) I!

ALLMERS: Yes, you. It was your fault that he became what he was! It was your fault that he couldn't save himself when he fell into the water.

RITA: Alfred—You shall not throw the blame on me!