

EYOLF: (with eagerness) Oh, who was that one? Tell me!

THE RAT WIFE: (laughing) It was my own sweetheart, it was, little heartbreaker!

EYOLF: And where is he now, then?

THE RAT WIFE: (harshly) Down where all the rats are (resuming her milder tone). But now I must be off and get to business again. Always on the move. (To Rita). So your ladyship has no sort of use for me to-day? I could finish it all off while I'm about it.

RITA: No, thank you; I don't think we require anything.

THE RAT WIFE: Well, well, your sweet ladyship, you can never tell. If your ladyship should find that there's anything here that keeps nibbling and gnawing and creeping and crawling, then just see and get hold of me and Mopseman. Good-bye, good-bye, a kind good-bye to you all.

(She goes out by the door on the right).

EYOLF: (softly and triumphantly, to Asta) Only think, Auntie, now I've seen the Rat Wife too!

(Rita goes out upon the verandah, and fans herself with her pocket-handkerchief. Shortly afterwards, Eyolf slips cautiously and unnoticed out of sight).

We then come to another very powerful scene, in which Rita reproaches her husband for his coldness on his return home the evening before. "There stood your champagne, but you tasted it not," she quotes, and the emotion of this scene is still fresh when shrieks are heard in the distance from the direction of the fiord.

It is here that Ibsen gives us an example of one of his lightning word pictures. He describes in four words Little Eyolf's death with a vividness which leaves us gasping:

RITA: (on the verandah listening) Hush, be quiet; let me hear what they are saying. (Rita rushes back with a piercing shriek into the room).