

# Nora's story: the prolonged harboring of a youth amidst the emergence of an elder...

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Nora's Story: The Prolonged Harboring of a Youth Amidst The Emergence of an Elder Nora Helmer, the main protagonist of Scandinavian playwright Henrik Ibsen's *A Doll's House* (1879), has always been depicted, as an exuberant novelty item, whose only purpose is to serve the important male figures in her life. This especially pertains to her father and her husband. These male figures move around Nora's realm with indirect disregard to Nora's true nature, desires, and abilities. Although this facade seems to be built on solid ground in the beginning, we see the consequential subtle, but progressive, crumbling of a falsified foundation. In the end, Nora, the once veiled unseasoned girl becomes a woman waiting to grasp the horizons of experience and solitude. This radical but vital paradigm shift could have only been further beneficial if she disappeared into independence. Thus, I believe Nora's decision to leave Torvald and her children is reasonable and morally justified. Henrik Ibsen uses connecting themes such as the uncovering of Torvald's true nature, his real characterization of Nora and the inevitable hampering of Nora's rightful individualistic growth in order to show this moral justification. In the beginning, Nora's fondness for Torvald knew no limits and she sought to do whatever was possible without due regard for herself to please him. She believes being the source of entertainment, indulgence, and appeasement for Torvald allows for her own source of contentment. Although Torvald commands a certain sentimental affection towards Nora, the source for most of these feelings however come solely from the appreciation of her alluring outwardly complexion. Nora's intricate emotions and intelligence take a back seat in Torvald's mind to the more important plastic image that she is mandated to portray. Perfect examples of

this dynamic throughout the whole story are the belittlement of Nora's points during conversations. Torvald consistently rebuffs her points or exposes the flaws in her points by confirming truth in gender stereotypes. In one scene Nora and Torvald talk about credit and debt, Helmer says, " Nora! (Goes over and playfully takes her by the ear). Are you scatterbrains off again? What if today I borrowed a thousand crowns... and then on New Year's Eve a roof tile fell on my head... " Nora then says, " If anything so awful happened, then it just wouldn't matter if I had debts or not. " Torvald responds firmly first stating, " Nora, Nora, how like a woman! (45)" This quote shows Torvalds arrogance and inability to understand not just women but also his own wife with which he has been married with for 8 years. By grabbing Nora by the ear and comparing her thought processes to general women, he creates a subordinate childlike platform for Nora and demonstrates his lack of care for further comprehension of his wife's statements. We also see Torvalds habitual need to refer to his wife in names of endearment. This only seeks to reduce her place as a human being while further digging her into the belief that her existence is to be Torvalds eye candy and plaything. In the end, the stoic anger that has accumulated from Torvalds constant arrogance and belittlement boils over. Nora reasons, " You arranged everything to your own taste, and so I got the same taste as you-or I pretended to...when I look back, it seems as if I'd lived here like a beggar-just from hand to mouth. I've lived by doing tricks for you, Torvald. But that's the way you wanted it... You're to blame that nothing's become of me. (109)" It is obviously presented in the quote that she has never been able to cultivate her own thinking. Common reasoning and opinions were already given to her because

of the specified gender role that Torvald has placed her in. This restriction limited her own maturation thus also limiting her happiness. Although the children in the story take on more of a background role, they are integral in Nora's decision to leave the household. One major philosophy that both Torvald and Nora have in common is their philosophies of how children should be raised. Torvald firmly believes the success of a child's future has a lot to do with raising them in a household without deceit and lies. According to Torvald, "...that kind of atmosphere of lies infects the whole life of a home. Every breath the children take in is filled with the germs of something degenerate." Torvald continues and decides to single out the mothers on the topic, "Almost everyone who goes bad early in life has a mother who's a chronic liar. (70)" Torvald clearly explains here the evils of raising a child up in an environment founded on deception. This hypothesis soundly resonates in Nora because every time Krogstad comes to visit she always tries to hide the children away. Nora does not want the children to be in the same room as a liar and in the presence of her lying behind Torvald's back. If this philosophy rings true, then she is in no way fit to raise her own kids. We especially see this concept in the end when it is discovered that Nora has never been happy living with Torvald nor has she ever been in love with him. If Nora were to remain with Torvald after their ordeal she would just be lying to herself, forcing herself to love and be happy with Torvald while creating a breeding ground for doomed children. Furthermore, Nora herself is a child not because of her age but because of her lack of experience brought upon by past impedances from her father and husband to grow into her own. How can someone who hasn't fallen on her own grace and sought out her own

blunders raise children? The answer is she cannot and Nora has to step away for a period so she can later emerge into a more versed and maybe even gallant woman. It is the culmination of these aforementioned examples that justify Nora's decision to leave her husband and children. Nora in the end has only touched the surface of her own potential and what she could really experience and accomplish if she just disappeared from the negatives that are holding her back. Torvald is the perfect example of one such negative because of his ability to implicitly cut Nora down to size just to boost his own flawed ego. Nora has to leave her children for now because a woman who is trapped in a web of loveless deceitful engagement cannot foster the growth of her own maturation nerveless that of her children.