

Morten Kiil

ACT II

(The same. The door of the dining room is closed. Morning.)

Mrs. Stockmann enters from the dining room with a sealed letter in her hand, and goes to the entrance of the room on the right and looks in.)

MRS. STOCKMANN: Thomas, are you there?

STOCKMANN: *(within)* Yes, I just came back. *(enters)* What is it?

MRS. STOCKMANN: A letter from your brother *(hands him the letter)*.

STOCKMANN: Ah! Let's see. *(opens the envelope and reads)* "The enclosed manuscript is returned herewith..." *(reads on muttering)* H'm...

MRS. STOCKMANN: What does he say?

STOCKMANN: *(putting paper in his pocket)* Nothing; he just says he'll come here about midday.

MRS. STOCKMANN: You'll have to remember to stay at home.

STOCKMANN: I can do that well enough; I've finished my morning's work.

MRS. STOCKMANN: I am curious to see how he takes it.

STOCKMANN: You'll see he won't be too pleased that I and not he, has made this discovery.

MRS. STOCKMANN: Doesn't that bother you.

STOCKMANN: No; in spite of everything, he'll be happy about the find. But still, Peter's so damnably fearful that someone else besides himself will do something for the good of the town.

MRS. STOCKMANN: Really, Thomas, you ought to try and be kind and share the honors with him. Couldn't you just say it was Peter that put you on the right track...

STOCKMANN: Of course, gladly, if I can set things straight, I...

(Old Morten Kiil looks in through the hall door, looks around questioningly and speaks slyly.)

KIIL: Is it...is it true?

MRS. STOCKMANN: Is that you, Father?

STOCKMANN: Hello! Good morning, good morning, Father-in-law!

MRS. STOCKMANN: Do come in.

KIIL: I will, if it's true; if not, no and I'm off.

STOCKMANN: If what's true?

KIIL: That impossible story about the springs and the baths. Is it true?

STOCKMANN: Of course it's true! But how did you come to hear of it?

KIIL: (*coming in*) Petra rushed in on her way to school...

STOCKMANN: Oh, she did, did she?

KIIL: Yes...she told me and I thought she was teasing; but that's not like Petra.

STOCKMANN: Of course not...in fact, unimaginable.

KIIL: You should never trust anybody, because before you know it, someone's made a fool of you. So it's true?

STOCKMANN: It certainly is true. Sit down, Father-in-law (*forcing him down onto the sofa*). Isn't this a real blessing for the town?

KIIL: (*suppressing his laughter*) Blessing for the town?

STOCKMANN: Why yes...a blessing...because I made this discovery in time...

KIIL: (*as before*) Yes, yes, yes; but I would never have believed you could have played such a trick on your brother.

STOCKMANN: "Such a trick"!

MRS. STOCKMANN: Really, Father...

KIIL: (*resting his hands and chin on top of his walking stick and winking slyly at the doctor*) What is this all about? Has some animal or other gotten into the water pipes?

STOCKMANN: Yes; bacteria.

KIIL: Petra says a lot of animals have gotten in...an enormous number of them.

STOCKMANN: Yes...there may be hundreds of thousands of them.

KIIL: But no one can see them. Isn't that so?

STOCKMANN: True; no one can see them.

KIIL: (*with a quiet chuckling laugh*) I'll be damned if that isn't the best thing I've ever heard from you.

STOCKMANN: What do you mean?

KIIL: You'll never be able to make the mayor believe anything like that.

STOCKMANN: That remains to be seen.

KIIL: Do you think he's that foolish?

STOCKMANN: I hope the whole town will be that foolish.

KIIL: The whole town! Well, that may be. It would serve them right; do them some good. They think they know so much more than we old men. They drove me out of the chairmanship of the Board. Yes, they drove me out like a dog. Now it's their turn. Keep up your tricks, Stockmann! Keep up your tricks on them!

STOCKMANN: But...

KIIL: Keep it up...keep it up (*rising*). If you can make the mayor and his pack of friends pay dearly, I'll give a hundred crowns straight away to the poor.

STOCKMANN: That's good of you.

KIIL. I know. But I've not much to throw away as you well know; but if you make it, at Christmas I'll give fifty crowns to the poor.

(*Hovstad enters from the hall.*)

HOVSTAD: Good morning! (*pausing*) Oh! I beg your pardon...

STOCKMANN: Come in! Come in!

KIIL: (*chuckling again*) Is he in on it too?

HOVSTAD: What do you mean?

STOCKMANN: Of course, he's in on it.

KIIL: I might have known it! Naturally, it has to make the newspapers. Ah! You're the right one for this, Stockmann! Let them have it. I must leave.

STOCKMANN: Can't you stay longer?

KIIL: No, I have to leave. Play as many tricks as you can on them; I'll see to it that you don't lose.

(*He exits. Mrs. Stockmann goes off with him.*)

STOCKMANN: See, the old man doesn't believe a word about the water.

HOVSTAD: Was that what he...?

STOCKMANN: Yes, that's what we were talking about and you've probably come to talk about the same thing.

HOVSTAD: Yes...do you have time, Doctor?

STOCKMANN: As much as you like.

HOVSTAD: Have you heard anything from the mayor?

STOCKMANN: Not yet. He'll be here soon.

HOVSTAD: Since last night, I've been thinking about it.

STOCKMANN: And?

HOVSTAD: To you as a doctor and scientist, this business of the water is an individual, isolated phenomenon. It might not have occurred to you that a good many other things are connected with it.

STOCKMANN: How? Come, let's sit down. No...there, on the sofa.

