HEDDA goes over to the stove, and seats herself on one of the footstools. BRACK stands over her, leaning on the arm-chair.

HEDDA.
[Whispers.] What did you say about the pistol?

BRACK.
[Softly.] That he must have stolen it.

HEDDA.
Why stolen it?

BRACK.
Because every other explanation ought to be impossible, Mrs. Hedda.

HEDDA.
Indeed?

BRACK.
[Glances at her.] Of course Eilert Lovborg was here this morning. Was he not?

HEDDA.
Yes.

BRACK.
Were you alone with him?

HEDDA.
Part of the time.

BRACK.
Did you not leave the room whilst he was here?

HEDDA.
No.

BRACK.
Try to recollect. Were you not out of the room a moment?

HEDDA.
Yes, perhaps just a moment—out in the hall.

BRACK.
And where was your pistol-case during that time?

HEDDA.
I had it locked up in—

BRACK.
Well, Mrs. Hedda?

HEDDA.
The case stood there on the writing-table.

BRACK.
Have you looked since, to see whether both the pistols are there?

HEDDA.
No.

BRACK.
Well, you need not. I saw the pistol found in Lovborg's pocket, and I knew it at once as the one I had seen yesterday—and before, too.

HEDDA.
Have you it with you?

BRACK.
No; the police have it.

HEDDA.
What will the police do with it?

BRACK.
Search till they find the owner.

HEDDA.
Do you think they will succeed?

BRACK.
[Bends over her and whispers.] No, Hedda Gabler—not so long as I say nothing.

HEDDA.
[Looks frightened at him.] And if you do not say nothing,—what then?

BRACK.
[Shrugs his shoulders.] There is always the possibility that the pistol was stolen.

HEDDA.
[Firmly.] Death rather than that.

BRACK.
[Smiling.] People say such things—but they don't do them.

HEDDA.
[Without replying.] And supposing the pistol was not stolen, and the owner is discovered? What then?

BRACK.
Well, Hedda—then comes the scandal!

HEDDA.
The scandal!

BRACK.
Yes, the scandal—of which you are so mortally afraid. You will, of course, be brought before the court—both you and Mademoiselle Diana. She will have to explain how the thing happened—whether it was an accidental shot or murder. Did the pistol go off as he was trying to take it out of his pocket, to threaten her with? Or did she tear the pistol out of his hand, shoot him, and push it back into his pocket? That would be quite like her; for she is an able-bodied young person, this same Mademoiselle Diana.

HEDDA.
But I have nothing to do with all this repulsive business.

BRACK.
No. But you will have to answer the question: Why did you give Eilert the pistol? And what conclusions will people draw from the fact that you did give it to him?

HEDDA.
[Lets her head sink.] That is true. I did not think of that.

BRACK.
Well, fortunately, there is no danger, so long as I say nothing.

HEDDA.
[Looks up at him.] So I am in your power, Judge Brack. You have me at your beck and call, from this time forward.

BRACK.
[Whispers softly.] Dearest Hedda—believe me—I shall not abuse my advantage.

HEDDA.
I am in your power none the less. Subject to your will and your demands. A slave, a slave then! [Rises impetuously.] No, I cannot endure the thought of that! Never!

BRACK.
[Looks half-mockingly at her.] People generally get used to the inevitable.

HEDDA.
[Returns his look.] Yes, perhaps.