LOVBORG.
Answer me one thing, Hedda—

HEDDA.
Well?

LOVBORG.
Was there no love in your friendship for me either? Not a spark—not a tinge of love in it?

HEDDA.
I wonder if there was? To me it seems as though we were two good comrades—two thoroughly intimate friends. [Smilingly.] You especially were frankness itself.

LOVBORG.
It was you that made me so.

HEDDA.
As I look back upon it all, I think there was really something beautiful, something fascinating—something daring—in—in that secret intimacy—that comradeship which no living creature so much as dreamed of.

LOVBORG.
Yes, yes, Hedda! Was there not?—When I used to come to your father's in the afternoon—and the General sat over at the window reading his papers—with his back towards us—

HEDDA.
And we two on the corner sofa—

LOVBORG.
Always with the same illustrated paper before us—

HEDDA.
For want of an album, yes.

LOVBORG.
Yes, Hedda, and when I made my confessions to you—told you about myself, things that at that time no one else knew! There I would sit and tell you of my escapades—my days and nights of devilment. Oh, Hedda—what was the power in you that forced me to confess these things?

HEDDA.
Do you think it was any power in me?

LOVBORG.
How else can I explain it? And all those—those roundabout questions you used to put to me—

HEDDA.
Which you understood so particularly well—

LOVBORG.
How could you sit and question me like that? Question me quite frankly—

HEDDA.
In roundabout terms, please observe.

LOVBORG.
Yes, but frankly nevertheless. Cross-question me about—all that sort of thing?

HEDDA.
And how could you answer, Mr. Lovborg?

LOVBORG.
Yes, that is just what I can't understand—in looking back upon it. But tell me now, Hedda—was there not love at the bottom of our friendship? On your side, did you not feel as though you might purge my stains away—if I made you my confessor? Was it not so?

HEDDA.
No, not quite.

LOVBORG.
What was you motive, then?

HEDDA.
Do think it quite incomprehensible that a young girl—when it can be done—without any one knowing—

LOVBORG.
Well?

HEDDA.
—should be glad to have a peep, now and then, into a world which—?

LOVBORG.
Which—?

HEDDA.
—which she is forbidden to know anything about?

LOVBORG.
So that was it?

HEDDA.
Partly. Partly—I almost think.

LOVBORG.
Comradeship in the thirst for life. But why should not that, at any rate, have continued?

HEDDA.
The fault was yours.

LOVBORG.
It was you that broke with me.

HEDDA.
Yes, when our friendship threatened to develop into something more serious. Shame upon you, Eilert Lovborg! How could you think of wronging your—your frank comrade.

LOVBORG.
[Clenches his hands.] Oh, why did you not carry out your threat? Why did you not shoot me down?

HEDDA.
Because I have such a dread of scandal.

LOVBORG.
Yes, Hedda, you are a coward at heart.

HEDDA.
A terrible coward. [Changing her tone.] But it was a lucky thing for you. And now you have found ample consolation at the Elvsteds'.

LOVBORG.
I know what Thea has confided to you.

HEDDA.
And perhaps you have confided to her something about us?

LOVBORG.
Not a word. She is too stupid to understand anything of that sort.

HEDDA.
Stupid?

LOVBORG.
She is stupid about matters of that sort.

HEDDA.
And I am cowardly. [Bends over towards him, without looking him in the face, and says more softly:] But now I will confide something to you.

LOVBORG.
[Eagerly.] Well?

HEDDA.
The fact that I dared not shoot you down—

LOVBORG.
Yes!

HEDDA.
—that was not my arrant cowardice—that evening.

LOVBORG.
[Looks at her a moment, understands, and whispers passionately.] Oh, Hedda! Hedda Gabler! Now I begin to see a hidden reason beneath our comradeship! You and I—! After all, then, it was your craving for life—