

OLAF LILJEKRANS

Henrik Ibsen

1857

Translated by Anders Orbeck

A Play in Three Acts

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

LADY KIRSTEN LILJEKRANS.

OLAF LILJEKRANS Her son.

ARNE OF GULDVIK.

INGEBORG His daughter.

HEMMING His page.

THORGJERD An old fiddler.

ALFHILD.

Wedding GUESTS.

RELATIVES of Arne of Guldvik.

MAIDS and SERVANTS of Lady Kirsten.

SETTING

The action takes place in the middle ages, in a mountain, district.

FIRST ACT

[A thickly wooded hillside which leads up to higher mountain regions; in a deep ravine a swift river runs from the background out to the right; over the river lie some old logs and other remnants of a dilapidated bridge. Huge rocks lie scattered in the foreground; far away can be seen the summits of snow-capped mountain peaks. Evening twilight rests over the landscape; later on the moon appears.]

SCENE I

[THORGJERD stands on a rocky projection near the river and listens to the various choruses which are heard off the stage.]

CHORUS OF LADY KIRSTEN'S RETINUE. [Deep in the wood to the right.]

With ringing of bells we hurry along,
We wander in field and in dell;
O Christian, come, give heed to our song,
Awake from your magic spell.

RELATIVES OF ARNE OF GULDVIK. [Far away to the right.]

Now hasten we all
To the wedding hall;
The foal runneth light and gay!
The hoofs resound
On the grassy ground
As the merry swains gallop away!

LADY KIRSTEN'S RETINUE. [A little nearer than before.]

We conjure you forth from mountain and hill,
From the places which hold you bound.
Awake to our call, come, free your will
From elves that hover around!

[THORGJERD disappears in the ravine where the river runs; after a rapid interplay the choruses are heard much nearer.]

ARNE'S RELATIVES. Our way we shorten with jest and with song, And all of the bridal night.

LADY KIRSTEN'S RETINUE. With tears we wander the whole day long,
We search to the left and the right.

ARNE'S RELATIVES. [In close proximity, yet still outside the scene.] To
wedding and banquet, to song and dance, Both servants and hand-
maidens throng.

LADY KIRSTEN'S RETINUE. [Nearer than before.] Olaf Liljekrans! Olaf
Liljekrans! Why sleep you so deep and so long?

SCENE II

[ARNE of Guldvik appears with his relatives, men and women, minstrels,
etc., in the background to the right on the other side of the river; they are
all in festive attire. Shortly afterwards HEMMING from the same side.]

ONE OF THE RETINUE. See, here goes the way.

ANOTHER. No, here!

A THIRD. Not at all, it must be here.

ARNE OF GULDVIK. Well, well, are we now astray again!

ARNE OF GULDVIK. [Calls.] Hemming! Where is Hemming?

HEMMING. [Enters.] Here!

ARNE. Have I not told you to keep yourself close so as to be of some
service to me?

HEMMING. It was Mistress Ingeborg—she wanted,—and so—

ARNE. [Annoyed.] Mistress Ingeborg! Mistress Ingeborg! Are you
Mistress Ingeborg's maid? You are my page; it is me you shall serve. Do
you not get your keep and wage therefor? Come, tell us where the way
goes,—we are stuck.

HEMMING. [Uncertain.] The way? Well now, I am little acquainted up
here, but—

ARNE. I might have known it,—that is always the service you give me!
Well, we shall have to spend the night in the wilderness, as sure as I am
Arne of Guldvik.

HEMMING. [Who has in the meantime spied the remnants of the bridge.]
Aha, no need of that; here we can get across.

ARNE. Why didn't you tell us so in the first place?

[All cross the river and come forward on the stage.]

ARNE. [Looks about.] Yes, now I have my bearings again. The river there is the boundary between Lady Kirsten's dominions and mine.

ARNE. [Points to the left.] Down there lies her estate; in another hour or two we can sit cozily in the bridal house, but then we must hurry along.

ARNE. [Calls.] Ingeborg!—Hemming! Now where's Ingeborg?

HEMMING. In the rear, up on the hillside.

HEMMING. [Points to the right.] She is playing with her bridesmaids; they gather green twigs from the cherry trees and run about with joy and laughter.

ARNE. [Bitterly but in subdued voice.] Hemming! this wedding makes me sick; there are so many vexations about it.

ARNE. [Gazes out to the right.] There they run,—just look at them! It was she who hit upon the idea of going over the mountain instead of following the highway; we should reach our goal the sooner, she thought;—and yet notwithstanding—hm! I could go mad over it; tomorrow is she to go to the altar. Are these the decorous customs she ought to observe! What will Lady Kirsten say when she finds my daughter so ill disciplined?

ARNE. [As HEMMING starts to speak.] Yes, for that she is; she is ill disciplined, I say.

HEMMING. Master! You should never have married your daughter into Lady Kirsten's family; Lady Kirsten and her kinsmen are high-born people—

ARNE. You art stupid, Hemming! High-born, high-born! Much good that will do,—it neither feeds nor enriches a man. If Lady Kirsten is high-born, then I am rich; I have gold in my chests and silver in my coffers.

HEMMING. Yes, but your neighbors make merry over the agreement you have concluded with her.

ARNE. Ah, let them, let them; it is all because they wish me ill.

HEMMING. They say that you have surrendered your legal right in order to have Ingeborg married to Olaf Liljekrans; I shouldn't mention it, I suppose,—but a lampoon about you is going the rounds, master!

ARNE. You lie in your throat; there is no one dares make a lampoon about Arne of Guldvik. I have power; I can oust him from house and home whenever I please. Lampoon! And what do you know about lampoons!— If they have composed any songs, it is to the honor of the bride and her father!

ARNE. [Flaring up.] But it is a wretched bit of verse nevertheless, really a wretched bit of verse, I tell you. It is no man skilled in the art of poetry who has put it together, and if I once get hold of him, then—

HEMMING. Aha, master! then you know it too? Is there some one who has dared sing it to you?

ARNE. Sing, sing! Now don't stand there and delay me with your twaddle.

ARNE. [To the others.] Away, my kinsmen; little must we delay if we are to reach the bridal house before midnight. You should have heard what Hemming is telling. He says there is a rumor around that Lady Kirsten has baked and brewed for five whole days in honor of our coming. Is it not so, Hemming?

HEMMING. Aye, master!

ARNE. He says she owns not the beaker of silver so costly but she places it on the table shining and polished; so splendid a feast she has not prepared since the king came to visit her blessed lord twenty years ago. Is it not true, Hemming?

HEMMING. Aye, master!

HEMMING. [Whispering.] But, master, it is ill-thought to say such things; Lady Kirsten is proud of her birth; she thinks this marriage is somewhat of an honor to you; little you know how she intends to show herself to her guests.

ARNE. [Softly.] Ah, what nonsense!

ARNE. [To the others.] He says Lady Kirsten gives herself no rest; both day and night she is busy in pantry and cellar. Is it not—?

ARNE. [Startled as he looks out to the right.] Hemming! what is that? See here, who is that coming?

HEMMING. [With a cry.] Lady Kirsten Liljekrans!

ALL. [Astonished.] Lady Kirsten!

SCENE III

[The Preceding. LADY KIRSTEN comes with her HOUSE CARLS from the left.]

LADY KIRSTEN. [To her followers, without noticing the others.] Now just a little farther and I am sure we shall find him.

LADY KIRSTEN. [Taken aback, aside.] Arne of Guldvik! Heaven help me!

ARNE. [As he goes to meet her.] The peace of God, Lady Kirsten Liljekrans!

LADY KIRSTEN. [Composes herself and gives him her hand.] The peace of God to you!

LADY KIRSTEN. [Aside.] Does he then know nothing?

ARNE. [Contentedly.] And well met at the boundary! Indeed, this pleases me; yet almost too great is the honor you show me.

LADY KIRSTEN. What mean you?

ARNE. I mean too great is the honor you show me, when you travel miles over fields and wildernesses in order to bid me welcome on your land.

LADY KIRSTEN. Ah, Lord Arne—

LADY KIRSTEN. [Aside.] He knows nothing as yet!

ARNE. And that on a day like this, when you have enough things to attend to; 'tis at your house we celebrate the wedding of our children, since my estate lies too far from the church, and yet you come here to meet me with all your servants.

LADY KIRSTEN. [Embarrassed.] I beg you, say no more about that.

ARNE. Aye, I will speak of it loudly; the village people have said that you pride yourself on your noble birth, that you look down upon me and mine, and that you entered into the agreement only in order to put an end to the long-standing disputes which grew troublesome now that you have become a widow and begin to grow old; and if that had not been the case, you would never—

LADY KIRSTEN. How can you listen to what evil tongues invent? No more will we think of our differences which have lasted since the days of your ancestors. I think our families have suffered enough these years, yours as well as mine. Look around you, Lord Arne! Is not the hillside here

like the wildest of upland pastures? And yet in our fathers' days it was a region much frequented and rich. A bridge there was across the river, and a highway from Guldvik to my father's house. But with fire and sword they sallied forth from both sides; they laid everything waste that they came upon, for it seemed to them that they were too near neighbors. Now all sorts of weeds grow in the highway, the bridge is broken, and it is only the bear and the wolf that make their homes here.

ARNE. Yes, they ran the road around the mountain below; it is a good deal longer and they could thus better keep an eye on one another; but there is little need of that now, — which is well and good for both of us.

LADY KIRSTEN. To be sure, to be sure! But Ingeborg, the bride, where is she? I do not see her, and the bridesmaids likewise are lacking; surely she is not —

ARNE. She follows in the rear; she must shortly be here. But — listen, Lady Kirsten! One thing I will tell you, as well first as last, although, I should think, you know it. Ingeborg has at times whims and moods, — I swear to you she has them, however well disciplined she may be.

LADY KIRSTEN. [Expectant.] Well, what then?

LADY KIRSTEN. [Aside.] Is she too —

ARNE. Such things you must tame; I, as her father, will never succeed, but you will no doubt find ways and means.

LADY KIRSTEN. Aye, rest you assured.

LADY KIRSTEN. [Aside.] And Olaf, who is nowhere to be seen!

HEMMING. [Who has looked out to the right.] There comes Mistress Ingeborg.

HEMMING. [Aside.] How fair she is advancing foremost in the group!

LADY KIRSTEN. [Slowly to her servants.] You will keep silent about your errand up here.

A SERVANT. You may be sure of that.

HEMMING. [Aside, sighing, as he continues to look out to the right.] Ah, happy is Olaf, who will have her!

SCENE IV

[The Preceding. INGEBORG and the Bridesmaids come over the bridge.]

INGEBORG. [Still in the background.] Why do you run away from me? What good will that do? There can be no wedding anyway before I come.

INGEBORG. [Notices LADY KIRSTEN and her retinue.] Lady Kirsten! you here? Well, I am glad of that.

[Casually to the retinue.]

[To LADY KIRSTEN as she looks about.]

LADY KIRSTEN. Olaf!

LADY KIRSTEN. [Aside.] Woe is me! now it will out.

ARNE. Yes, Olaf, indeed! Ha, ha, ha! I must have been blind; 'tis well the bride sees better than I; for I have not noticed that the bridegroom is lacking; but now I understand very well how it comes that we meet here,— it is he who is causing—

LADY KIRSTEN. He—you mean—you know, that—

ARNE. I mean it has grown tedious for him down there in the festive hall. Aye, aye, I remember now my own wedding day; at that time I also was young. He has had a great desire to meet the bride, and accordingly he prevailed upon you to go with him.

LADY KIRSTEN. He greatly desired, to be sure, to meet the bride, but—

INGEBORG. But what?

LADY KIRSTEN. Olaf is not here with us.

HEMMING. [Approaches.] Not with you!

ARNE. And why not?

INGEBORG. Speak, I beg you!

LADY KIRSTEN. [Embarrassed and jestingly.] Truly, it appears the bride also is anxious! Come along, come along with me down to the bridal hall; there, I imagine he will be found.

HEMMING. [Whispering to ARNE.] Master! remember I gave you warning.

ARNE. [Suspiciously to LADY KIRSTEN.] First answer me; then shall we follow.

LADY KIRSTEN. Well then,—he is ridden out to the hunt.

LADY KIRSTEN. [As she is about to go.] Come, 'tis fast growing dark.

INGEBORG. To the hunt?

LADY KIRSTEN. Aye! Does that surprise you? You know the song of course:

"The knight likes to ride in the forest around,
To test his horse and his hound!"

INGEBORG. Does he think so little of his young bride that he uses the wedding days to go hunting wild animals?

LADY KIRSTEN. Now you are jesting. Come along, come along!

ARNE. [Who has in the meantime kept his eye on LADY KIRSTEN and her retinue.] No, wait, Lady Kirsten! I hardly dare measure myself in wisdom with you, but one thing clearly I see, and that is that you are concealing your real errand up here.

LADY KIRSTEN. [Confused.] I? How can you think that?

ARNE. From one thing and another I can see you are concealing something. You are strangely downcast, and yet you pretend to be playful in spirit; but it won't do—

LADY KIRSTEN. 'Tis nothing new for you to think ill of me and mine.

ARNE. Perhaps; but never did I do so without just cause.

ARNE. [Bursting out.] As sure as I live, there is something you are hiding from me.

LADY KIRSTEN. [Aside.] What will be the end of this?

ARNE. I let myself be fooled by you, but now I see clearly enough. You said you came to greet me at the boundary. How did you know we took the way over the mountain? It was Ingeborg who suggested this way just as we left Guldvik, and no one could have informed you about it.

ARNE. [When LADY KIRSTEN does not answer.] You are silent, as I might have known.

HEMMING. [In an undertone.] You see, master! Will you now believe what I said?

ARNE. [Likewise.] Hush!

LADY KIRSTEN. [Who has in the meantime composed herself.] Well and good, Lord Arne! I will be honest with you; let chance take care of the rest.

ARNE. Then tell us—

INGEBORG. What mean you?

LADY KIRSTEN. The agreement between us is sealed with word and with hand,—many honorable men whom I see here can bear witness to that: Olaf, my son, was to wed your daughter; tomorrow at my house the wedding was to be held—

ARNE. [Impatiently.] Yes, yes!

LADY KIRSTEN. Dishonor to him who breaks his word, but—

ARNE AND THE GUESTS.. What then! Speak out!

LADY KIRSTEN. There can be no wedding tomorrow as we had agreed.

ARNE. No wedding?

LADY KIRSTEN. It must be postponed.

HEMMING. Ah, shame and disgrace!

INGEBORG. No wedding!

ARNE. Cursed be you that you play me false!

THE GUESTS. [Threatening, as several of them draw their knives and rush in on Lady Kirsten's people.] Revenge! Revenge on the house of Liljekrans!

LADY KIRSTEN'S MEN. [Raise their axes and prepare to defend themselves.] Strike too! Down with the men of Guldvik!

LADY KIRSTEN. [Throws herself between the contending parties.] Stop, stop; I pray you, stop! Lord Arne! hear me to the end ere you judge my conduct.

ARNE. [Who has tried to quiet his kinsmen, approaches LADY KIRSTEN and speaks in a low tone as he tries to overcome his inner agitation, which is nevertheless apparent.] Forgive me, Lady Kirsten! I was too quick in my wrath. Had I stopped to think I might surely have known the whole was a jest on your part; I beg you, do not contradict me, it must be so! No wedding tomorrow,—how could such a thing happen! If it is ale and mead you lack, or if you need silver or embroidered linens, then come you to me.

LADY KIRSTEN. It is no poor man's house that your daughter is marrying into, Lord Arne! Do you but come to the wedding with all your kinsmen and friends, aye, come with three times as many if you wish,—in my home you shall find plenty of room and banquet fare, as much as you may desire. Think not for a moment that such an inglorious reason could stand in my way.

ARNE. You have changed your mind, perchance?

LADY KIRSTEN. Nor that either! If I have given my word, then am I likewise ready to keep it, today just as well as tomorrow; for such was ever the custom and rule in my family. But in this instance it is not in my power; one there is lacking—

INGEBORG. One! Whom? Surely I should think that when the bride is ready,—

LADY KIRSTEN. For a wedding two people are needed, the groom as well as the bride—

ARNE AND THE GUESTS. Olaf!

INGEBORG. My betrothed!

LADY KIRSTEN. Yes, he, my son—this night he is fled from his home and his bride.

GUESTS. Fled!

ARNE. Fled! He!

LADY KIRSTEN. As I hope for the grace of heaven, I have no hand therein.

ARNE. [With suppressed exasperation.] And the wedding was to be tomorrow! My daughter has put on her golden attire; invitations I have sent around in the district; my kinsmen and friends come from far away to attend the festive day.

ARNE. [Flaring up.] Ah, take you good care, if Arne of Guldvik is held up to scorn before his neighbors; it shall profit you little,—that I solemnly swear!

LADY KIRSTEN. You reason unjustly, if you think—

ARNE. 'Tis not, Lady Kirsten, for you to say so! We two have an old account to settle; it is not the first time that you set your cunning traps for me and mine. The race of Guldvik has long had to suffer, when you and your kinsmen plotted deception and guile. Power we had,—we had wealth

and property too; but you were too crafty for us. You knew how to lure us with wily words and ready speech,—those are wares I am little able to reckon as I should.

LADY KIRSTEN. Lord Arne! Hear me, I pray!

ARNE. [Continuing.] Now I see clearly that I have behaved like the man who built his house on the ice-floe: a thaw came on and down he went to the bottom. But you shall have little joy of this. I shall hold you to account, Lady Kirsten! You must answer for your son; you it was who made love for him, and your affair it will be to keep the word you have given me! A fool I was, aye, tenfold a fool, that I put my faith in your glib tongue. Those who wished me well gave me warning; my enemies made me an object of scorn; but little heed gave I to either. I put on my gala attire; kinsmen and friends I gathered together; with song and laughter we set out for the festive hall, and then,—the bridegroom has fled.

INGEBORG. Never will I marry one who holds me so lightly.

ARNE. Be still!

HEMMING. [Softly to ARNE.] Mistress Ingeborg is right; best it is you break the agreement.

ARNE. Be still, I say!

LADY KIRSTEN. [To ARNE.] You may well be rilled with wrath and resentment; but if you think I meant to deceive you, you do me the greatest injustice. You think we are playing a game of deception with you. But tell me,—what would tempt me and my son to such a thing? Does he not love Ingeborg? Where could he choose him a better bride? Is she not fair and lithe? Is her father not rich and mighty? Is not her family mentioned with honor as far as it is known?

ARNE. But how then could Olaf—

LADY KIRSTEN. The lot I have suffered is worse than you think. You will pity me instead of growing angry when you have heard.—Since the sun rose this morning I have wandered up here to find him again.

ARNE. Up here?

LADY KIRSTEN. Yes, up here; I must tell you—you'll be frightened—but nevertheless,—Olaf is bewitched in the mountain!

GUESTS. Bewitched in the mountain!

INGEBORG. [At the same time.] Deliver me, God!

ARNE. What say you, Lady Kirsten?

LADY KIRSTEN. He is bewitched in the mountain! Nothing else can it be. — Three weeks ago, after the betrothal feast at Guldvik, he did not come home till far into the next day. Pale he was and moody and quiet as I had never seen him before. And thus the days went by; he spoke but little; he lay in his bed most of the time and turned his face to the wall; but when evening came on, it seemed a strange uneasiness seized him; he saddled his horse and rode away, far up the mountain side; but no one dared follow him, and no one knew where he went beyond that. Believe me, 'tis evil spirits that have charmed his mind; great is the power they wield in here; from the time the terrible plague overran the country it has never been quite safe in the mountain here; there is scarcely a day goes by but the chalet girls hear strange playing and music, although there is no living soul in the place whence it comes.

ARNE. Bewitched in the mountain! Could such a thing be possible?

LADY KIRSTEN. Would to God it were not; but I can no longer doubt it. Three days is it now since he last was at home.

ARNE. And you have seen none who knows where he is?

LADY KIRSTEN. Alas, no, it is not so easy. Up here a hunter yesterday saw him; but he was wild and shy as the deer; he had picked all sorts of flowers, and these he scattered before him wherever he went, and all the while he whispered strange words. As soon as I heard of this, I set out with my people, but we have found nothing.

INGEBORG. You met none who could tell you—

LADY KIRSTEN. You know of course the mountain-side is desolate.

ARNE. [As he spies THORGJERD, who rises from the river.] Here comes one will I ask.

HEMMING. [Apprehensively.] Master! Master!

ARNE. What now?

HEMMING. Let him go! Do you not see who it is?

THE GUESTS AND LADY KIRSTEN'S PEOPLE. [Whispering among themselves.] Thorgjerd the fiddler! The crazy Thorgjerd!

INGEBORG. He has learned the nixie's songs.

HEMMING. Let him go, let him go!

ARNE. No,—not even were he the nixie himself—

SCENE V

[The Preceding.]

[THORGJERD has in the meantime gone to the edge of the stage to the left; at ARNE's last words he turns about suddenly as if he had been addressed.]

THORGJERD. [As he draws a step or two nearer.] What do you want of me?

ARNE. [Startled.] What's that?

HEMMING. Now see!

ARNE. Let me manage this.

ARNE. [To THORGJERD.] We seek Olaf Liljekrans. Have you met him about here today?

THORGJERD. Olaf Liljekrans?

LADY KIRSTEN. Why, yes,—you know him well.

THORGJERD. Is he not one of the evil men from the villages?

LADY KIRSTEN. Evil?

THORGJERD. They are all evil there! Olaf Liljekrans curses the little bird when it sings on his mother's roof.

LADY KIRSTEN. You lie, you fiddler!

THORGJERD. [With an artful smile.] So much the better for him.

ARNE. How so?

THORGJERD. You ask about Olaf Liljekrans? Has he gone astray in here? You seek him and cannot find him?

LADY KIRSTEN. Yes, yes!

THORGJERD. So much the better for him;—if it were a lie that I told, he will suffer no want.

INGEBORG. Speak out what you know!

THORGJERD. Then I should never be done!

THORGJERD. [Mischievously.] Elves and sprites hold sway here. Be you of good cheer! If you find him not he is at play with the elves; they are fond of all who love little birds, and Olaf, you said.... Go home,—go home again. Olaf is up in the mountain; he suffers no want.

LADY KIRSTEN. Curse you for saying such things!

ARNE. [To LADY KIRSTEN.] Do not heed what he says.

THORGJERD. [Approaches again.] I go hence now to tune my harp; Olaf Liljekrans is up in the mountain,—there shall his wedding be held.—Mad Thorgjerd must also be there; he can make tables and benches dance, so stirring is the music he plays. But you, take you heed; go you home again; it is not safe for you here. Have you not heard the old saying:

Beware of the elves when they frolic around,
They may draw you into their play;
And all that you see and all that you hear
Will stay with your mind always.

THORGJERD. [Suddenly breaking out with wild joy.] But here there are wedding guests,—ah! Each lady has on her very best gown, each man his very best coat,—now I see. Olaf Liljekrans is likewise a groom in the village,—there also he has a betrothed! Well, you have heard of such things before! I know that at any rate once,—it is years ago—but well I remember....

THORGJERD. [He continues after a moment's pause, more and more wildly.]

Sir Alvar and Ingrid had plighted their troth,
She was a sprightly maiden;
Three blessed long days they feasted and sang,
With jolly good wine they were laden.
The bride was fair and the bride was gay,
The dance of the guests she led,
When in came the nixie, the evil wight,
And sat on the edge of the bed.
Like a fiddler he sat on the edge of the bed,
And music bewitchingly played.
Around danced the benches and tables and all,
As lightly as servant and maid!—
The nixie he went through the open door,—

The truth it boots not to hide!—
And while he played on the harpstrings sweet,
There followed him ever—the bride!

THORGJERD. [Wildly, triumphantly.]

Fast in a spell lay knight and page,
The groom knew not whither to go,
The nixie made ready the bridal bed,
Little Ingrid's bed in the river below.

THORGJERD. [Suddenly becomes quiet and says softly.] That song I shall never forget!—But go you home, night is coming on, and when the sun is down the forest belongs to the others. Farewell! I shall take greetings to Olaf where he sits—in the mountain!

[Goes out to the left.]

SCENE VI

[The Preceding except THORGJERD.]

ARNE. [To LADY KIRSTEN.] He lies! Do not believe him!

HEMMING. But it is nevertheless true,—the tale of the bride who disappeared on the eve of her wedding.

ARNE. Aye, that was many years ago; nowadays such things never happen. But we'll all help to find him.

INGEBORG. It was not sung at my cradle that I should run about in forest and field to find my bridegroom.

ARNE. Be still!

INGEBORG. If he is enthralled in the mountain, then let her take him who has done it; I don't propose to share my betrothed's heart and soul.

HEMMING. [Softly and feelingly.] The Lord bless you for those words!

INGEBORG. [With a haughty look of dismissal.] What?

ARNE. Will you be silent, I say!

ARNE. [To the Guests.] Now quick, my good men! Spread out and search for him on every ridge and in every hillock! Away! Quite so! Tomorrow we drink to the wedding!

[The Guests and LADY KIRSTEN's People go out in different groups to the right and the left.]

ARNE. [Softly, to LADY KIRSTEN.] We must find him! It would cause me eternal shame if the wedding—

LADY KIRSTEN. Come, then, come!

INGEBORG. [Softly, to HEMMING, who stands downcast.] Why do you not go with the rest? Better it were that you brought me again my betrothed than stand here thus and bless me for words I really don't mean.

ARNE. [At the exit.] Come, come!

INGEBORG. [To HEMMING, who starts to go.] Wait, Hemming! Fasten my shoe buckle!

[LADY KIRSTEN and ARNE go out to the left.]

SCENE VII

[INGEBORG. HEMMING.]

INGEBORG. [Puts her foot forward.] See there, —fasten it tight!

[HEMMING kneels and does her bidding.]

INGEBORG. [As she puts the other foot forward.] There, —buckle this one too! Well, why do you bow your head? Has something gone wrong?

HEMMING. Do you demand that I shall speak honestly?

INGEBORG. Certainly I do.

HEMMING. Well, then you must know —

INGEBORG. [Quickly.] O no, it isn't necessary.

[She moves away a few steps; HEMMING rises.]

HEMMING. Alas, Lady Ingeborg! Once you were so kind to me; but now since you have become a real grown-up lady—and especially, I imagine, since you gave your betrothal vow—

INGEBORG. What then?

HEMMING. O nothing!—

[A pause.]

HEMMING. Can you remember,—we have been up here once before?

INGEBORG. [Curtly.] I don't remember!

HEMMING. You had run after your spotted goat, and I followed you, as was always my custom,—yes, that was a long time ago, but I remember it as if it happened today; right down there lies the swamp, which—

INGEBORG. [Comes nearer.] Was it the time we heard the bear?

HEMMING. Yes, the very time.

INGEBORG. [Constantly becoming more animated.] I found the goat again.

HEMMING. No, it was I who first discovered it.

INGEBORG. Yes, yes, you are right; up there on the slope—

HEMMING. And then you took your garter.

INGEBORG. And bound it.

HEMMING. Yes, for we had come to pick strawberries.

INGEBORG. Over there on the hill, yes! And you had made me a birch-bark scrip.

HEMMING. But then it was we heard—

INGEBORG. The bear, ha, ha, ha! We had to cross the swamp just where it was the wettest,—

HEMMING. And then I took you in my arms.

INGEBORG. And jumped with me from tuft to tuft.

INGEBORG. [Laughing.] How frightened we were, the two of us!

HEMMING. Of course I was most frightened for your sake.

INGEBORG. And I for yours—

[Stops suddenly and as she continues to look at him her face assumes an imperious and wounded expression.]

INGEBORG. What is it you stand here and say? Why don't you go? Is it fitting to speak thus to your master's daughter? Go, go; you were to find my betrothed!

HEMMING. Alas, I forgot your betrothed; I forgot that you are my master's daughter.

INGEBORG. If you find him, I promise you an embroidered jacket for Christmas,—so pleased shall I be.

HEMMING. I don't want any jacket; I serve you neither for gold nor silver, neither for keep nor for knightly dress. But now I am off; what lies in my power I shall do, if I know it pleases you.

INGEBORG. [Who has climbed up on a stone and is picking some blossoming cherry twigs.] Hemming! how rich is my betrothed?

HEMMING. How rich he is I really can't say; but it is said of his grandsire in the song:

With golden attire he can provide
A hundred maids or more for his bride!
So mighty perhaps is not Olaf Liljekrans, but still he owns
both forest and field.

INGEBORG. [Still occupied.] And you, what do you possess?

HEMMING. [Sighing.] My poverty—is all I have.

INGEBORG. That isn't very much, Hemming!

HEMMING. No, it isn't very much, Mistress Ingeborg!

INGEBORG. [Hums, turned away from him, without changing her position, and still occupied as before.]

'Tis little my heart is attracted indeed
To him who has all the wealth he may need!
Much more I fancy the humble swain,
The friend of my heart he will ever remain!

HEMMING. [In the greatest joy.] Ingeborg! O, if what you say is true, I must tenfold bless my poverty.

INGEBORG. [Turns her head and speaks coldly.] I don't understand you; the song was only an ancient ballad.

[Comes down from the rock with the cherry twigs in her hand, and approaches him as she looks at him fixedly.]

INGEBORG. But I know another song too, and that I will sing for you:

The king's court within stand the steeds so fair;
The suitor who lacks not the courage to dare,—
He shoes the yellow, he shoes the gray,
The swiftest he saddles before it is day!
He places his bride on the steed behind,
She follows him safe, she follows him blind.
He rides with her off, to the sea they hie,
With him she would willingly live and die!

HEMMING. [As though beside himself.] Ingeborg! Ingeborg! then nothing shall henceforth terrify me! Not that you have a betrothed, not that you are my master's daughter;—yea, as sure as I live, I shall steal you tonight!

INGEBORG. [Vehemently, as she constantly struggles to suppress a smile.] Help me, God! what is amiss with you? What is it you are thinking of? Will you steal your master's daughter? You must be sick or mad to conceive such a thing! Yet, it shall be forgotten—for this once. Go, now! and thank heaven you escape so lightly; for you have certainly earned a blow—

INGEBORG. [Raises the twigs, but lets them fall, and says in a changed tone.] —and my red golden ring—see there, take it!

[Throws him a ring, which she has removed from her arm, and rushes out quickly to the left.]

SCENE VIII

[HEMMING. Shortly afterwards OLAF Liljekrans from the, background. The moon rises.]

HEMMING. The golden ring unto me she has granted, Then still is she true, I am not deceived! 'Twas only in jest that she scolded and ranted As though she were bitterly grieved. All will I venture, no more will I dread!

HEMMING. [Despondent.] And yet, I am only a penniless swain, And early tomorrow is she to be wed!

HEMMING. [Quickly.] But into the forest the bridegroom is fled; O, if he should never come home again!

HEMMING. [Starts to rush out, but stops with a cry.] Olaf! there is he!

[OLAF comes slowly forward between the rocks in the background. He walks dreaming, his head uncovered, and his hands full of flowers which he tears to pieces and scatters on the way; his whole behavior during the following indicates an unsettled mind.]

OLAF. [Without noticing HEMMING.] If only I knew What she meant, could somehow the riddle unravel!

[Starts to go out to the left.]

HEMMING. Lord Olaf! Lord Olaf! O where do you travel? O hear me, Lord Olaf!

OLAF. [Half awakening.] Hemming! Is it you? Stand not in my way!

HEMMING. What is it that weighs On your mind, that you wander in here for three days?

[Observes him more closely.]

HEMMING. And what is the game that here you do play,— Your cheek is white, and your forehead is gray!

OLAF. Be not so amazed that my cheek is white, Three nights have I fought so strange a fight; Be not so amazed that my forehead is gray, Three nights have I been in the elfen play.

HEMMING. Heaven protect us!

OLAF. I am ill, I am faint! I remember neither devil nor saint!

HEMMING. [Apprehensively.] Come, Olaf, with me to your mother's estate!

OLAF. My mother's estate! Where stood it of late? 'Tis here, as it seems, that I have my home! The wood has become my ancestral hall, The river's roaring, the pine-trees' moan, Is sweeter to me than my mother's call.

OLAF. [With increasing rapture.] Aye, here it is quiet! Aye, here it is fair! Behold, my hall for the feast I prepare.

HEMMING. [Aside.] O what has come o'er him?

OLAF. Soon comes my bride!

HEMMING. Your bride! Then you know—?

OLAF. [Continuing.] When the day has died, When slumber the birds,
when fades the cloud, Then here will she come so young and so proud!

HEMMING. [Crosses himself.] All heavenly saints! I fear the worst!

OLAF.

Know you when it was that I saw her here first?
I rode late one evening from Guldvik hall,
Some kind of feast I seem to recall.
My spirit was heavy, my heart full of woe!
That something had grieved me is all that I know.
I rode all alone up the mountain side,
At midnight I passed by the river so wide;
Then heard I beyond a melodious wail,
That rang like a song over mountain and dale.
It seemed a plaintive, bewitching lay;
I folded my hands, I tried to pray,
But tied was my tongue and my thoughts went astray;
The strains did beguile and lure me away.
'Twas now like weeping and now like laughter,
'Twas now full of mirth, and now ever after
As were it the cry of a perishing man,
As were it a soul in the anguish of death,
That I heard in the song so beguiling, that ran
Like a stream around me!—I scarce got my breath!
So sorely bewildered was I in my soul;
It was as if powers both gentle and strong
Enticed me and lured me away from my goal,
I needs must come up, I was carried along.
And ever rang out the mysterious call;
How far I rode on I no longer recall.

HEMMING. [Aside.] And the bride, of whom the minstrel sang,—she too
had to follow—

OLAF.

My foal stopped short, I awoke in a maze,
I looked around with a wondering gaze;
'Twas all so pleasant and fair! But what land
I was in I could not understand!
I stood in a valley;—a deep peace lay
Over all like dew in the night!

The moon on the edge of the tarn did play;
It seemed to laugh as it vanished away
In the rolling billows so bright!
My head was heavy, my spirit oppressed,
I yearned for nothing but sleep;
I laid me down 'neath a linden to rest
In the whispering forest so sweet!

HEMMING. Lord Olaf! Lord Olaf! How dared you do it?

OLAF. [Continuing.]

I ventured then into the elf-maidens' play;
The fairest of maidens gave me a bouquet
Of snow-drops blue and of lilies white;
She pierced my soul with her glances so bright,
And whispered to me what nobody knows,—
A word I'll keep ever in mind:
"Olaf Liljekrans! know you where happiness grows,
Know you the hour when peace you will find?
Of all the flowers on the hill over yonder
Must you the fairest one find,
And bit by bit you must tear it asunder
And scatter it far to the wind,
Then—only then will you happiness find!"

HEMMING. You have slumbered and dreamed!

OLAF.

That very same day
My mother's estate grew cramped and narrow!
Through thicket, o'er highway, I hastened away
To the grove so pleasant with bow and with arrow!
There met I again the elf-maiden fair.

HEMMING. [Steps back amazed.] When then,—have you wakened and found—?

OLAF. I took my betrothal ring, shot with it there Right over her head, far into the air; Now is she evermore bound!

HEMMING. And it is the bride you are waiting for here?

OLAF. Yes, yes, the bride; soon will she be near!

HEMMING. [Aside.] His soul is enthralled, his mind is ill; All this Lady Kirsten shall know!

HEMMING. [Aloud.] And dare you go wandering fearless up here In the hills?

OLAF. It is here so still, 'Tis sweetly I dream as I go!

[Goes slowly in between the huge rocks in front on the right.]

HEMMING.

His wedding tomorrow his people prepare;
Yet for his betrothed he seems little to care;
'Tis little he knows that she is so near,
And less that she holds another one dear! —
He wanders around in the forest astray,
And Ingeborg gave me the golden ring!
His mother I'll seek without further delay;
The saints only know what the morrow will bring!

[Goes out to the left.]

SCENE IX

[OLAF LILJEKRANS enters again from the right.]

OLAF. [As he tears to pieces some flowers he has gathered off the stage.]

"Of all the flowers on the hill over yonder
Must you the fairest one find;
And bit by bit you must tear it asunder,
And scatter it far to the wind, —
Then—only then will you happiness find!"
These mysterious words give my spirit no rest.
The fairest of flowers? And what is the test?
Where will it be found? Is its beauty revealed
In the fragrance or deep in the blossom concealed?
Or hid in some magic power that I never
Can possibly find if I search forever?
So may there be virtue in many a spear
Whose steel is rusty and out of gear;

So too may a harp that no longer sings
But hangs forgotten in the halls of mirth,
Hide in its forsaken and dusty strings
The strangest magic on earth.

SCENE X

[OLAF LILJEKRANS. ALFHILD from the back of the stage. She is fantastically dressed and adorned with flowers and garlands of leaves; she looks about anxiously until she discovers OLAF and runs joyfully to meet him.]

ALFHILD. O, stay, stay! Do not go away from me!

OLAF. [As if suddenly awakened to life.] Alfhild! my young and beautiful bride!

ALFHILD. Olaf! my handsome knight! I grew tired of waiting; I had to come here to meet you!

OLAF. But tell me, why are you always afraid to come here?

ALFHILD. I have so often told you that I never went beyond this valley until you visited me. My father has said that evil powers hold sway out there; only here among the mountains could I fare safely and without harm! O, let whatever power will hold sway; you are here, and that is enough for me! Come, let me look into your eyes! Truly, I have you again!

OLAF. Have me! Alas, Alfhild! You artful, you beautiful woman, indeed you have me again! My soul you have charmed so deeply, so deeply. Lead me whither and as far as you will, into the mountain, under the hill, to the grassy meadow, where song and refrain echo sweetly in the evening, on the bottom of the river, down under the rapids, where there are harps for powerful plaintive lays; wherever your home is, there I am ready to wander!

ALFHILD. Why speak you thus? You must surely know better than what you are saying. —Spirits and elves hold sway in mountain and hillock, and on the bottom of the river lives the nixie,—so father has said. Think you that I am an elf or—

OLAF. You are the fairest in the world; be you what you please, so long as you are mine!

ALFHILD. Were I an elfen maid, then truly, say I, it would fare with you ill!

OLAF. Me!

ALFHILD. Yes, you! When you rode on your lonely path, I should go out to meet you and give you the drink of forgetfulness from the golden horn. I should mix therein my magic and charm so that you would forget both heaven and earth, forget where you were born and reared, what name you answered to, and where your kinsmen fared,—one thing alone should you remember, one thing alone should fill your mind and soul.

OLAF. Forsooth, then are you the elfen maid! For from the first hour you have practiced your magic on me.

ALFHILD. Have I?

OLAF. Through the meadow I rode, below where the river runs,—it was night and the songs and the plaintive lays echoed strangely around me....

OLAF. Bewildered I grew and lost my path; I wandered far, far in among the mountains; I discovered the beautiful valley, where no foot has trod, where no eye has feasted ere mine....

OLAF. A heavy slumber fell upon me in there; the elf maidens played in the meantime, and they drew me into their play....

OLAF. But when I awoke, there was affliction in my soul; homeward I rode, but down there I could no more be content; it seemed as if I had left behind me the richest and best in life, as if a wonderful treasure were held in store for me, if only I sought and found it....

OLAF. Up to the valley I had to go before I could find peace....

OLAF. You came to meet me, fair and glowing as in this hour; I seized your hand, I looked you in the eye—heaven and earth, the beauty of all creation, was in your eye!....

OLAF. Then I forgot both kinsmen and friends!....

OLAF. I came there the next night, I embraced you, I pressed you to my bosom,—the glory of heaven was in your embrace....

OLAF. —Then I forgot my Christian name and my forefathers' home....

OLAF. And I came the third night; I had to come; I kissed your red lips; my eyes burned their way into your soul.—More than the glory of creation was therein! I forgot more than God and home, more than heaven and earth. I forgot myself.

[Prostrates himself before her.]

OLAF. Alfhild! Alfhild!

ALFHILD. If it be a drink of forgetfulness which you speak of, then have I also charmed myself with it. I have fared as the minstrel who learned the nixie's songs in order to charm his sweetheart;—he charmed and charmed so long that at length the magic wove itself round his own soul too, and he could never win himself free therefrom.

[Stops and continues standing thoughtfully.]

OLAF. [As he rises.] What are you brooding over?

ALFHILD. High in the mountain there is a rocky ledge so steep that not even the eagle can fasten his claws thereon; there stands a lonely birch,—ill does it thrive, it is poor in leaves; but downward it bends its branches to the valley which lies far away; it is as though it longed for its sisters in the fresh and luxuriant grove, as though it yearned to be transplanted in the warm sunny life down below....

ALFHILD. Like the birch in the mountain was also my life; I longed to get away; I longed for you through the long, long years, even before I knew you existed. The valley became too cramped for me, but I did not know that beyond the mountains there was another valley like this one in here. The knights and the ladies that visited me every evening were not enough for me, and they told me nothing of the life beyond!

OLAF. Knights and ladies? You told me you never met any one there.

ALFHILD. No one like you! But every evening my father sang songs to me, and when the night came and my eyes were closed, they came to visit me, all those that live in my father's songs. Merry knights and beautiful ladies there were among them; they came with falcons on their hands, riding on stately steeds. They danced in the field, and laughter and merriment reechoed wherever they fared; the elves listened silently from behind each flower and the birds from the trees where they had fallen asleep. But with the coming of dawn they again disappeared; lonely I wandered; I decked myself with flowers and with green leaves, for I knew the next night they would come again. Alas, that life was after all not sufficient for me; a mighty longing rilled my bosom; it would never have been stilled if you had not come!

OLAF. You speak of your father; at no time did I see him in there!

ALFHILD. But seldom he comes now; he has never been there since the night we first met.

OLAF. But tell me, where is he?

ALFHILD. You have told me you rode late one summer night in the meadow where the river flows; there you heard strange songs which you only half understood, but which haunt and haunt you so that you will never forget them.

OLAF. Yes, yes!

ALFHILD. You once heard my father's songs! It is on them that I have been nourished. In truth, neither have I fully understood them; they seemed to me to be the most precious treasure, to be life itself; now they mean little to me; they are to me but a token of all the glory that was to come. In all of them was there a handsome knight; I imagined him to be the best and most glorious thing in all the valleys, the best and most glorious as far as bird can fly, as far as clouds can sail. Olaf! it was you,—I know you again! Oh, you must tell me of your home, of the distant valley whence you come; life out there must be rich and glorious; there it must be that my birds all fly with the falling of the leaves; for when they again come to visit me, they have so much to tell that is strange, so many a marvel to sing about, that all the flowers begin to bud and to blossom, the trees to grow green, and the big and glorious sun to rise early and go tardily to rest, in order to listen to all the stories and songs. But little grasp I of all that they tell; you must interpret it for me, you must make everything clear that inwardly craves an answer.

OLAF. Little am I able to answer what you ask of my home. My home? If I have had a home other than this, then I remember but little about it. It is all to me like a misty dream which is forgotten in the hour we waken. Yet, come! far below us there lies a village; there it seems I remember I wandered before I saw you; there it seems to me that my kinsmen live. Do you hear how the river conjures and rushes; let us follow it; out on the ledge near the waterfall we can overlook the village where I—once had my home. Come, come!

ALFHILD. But dare I—

OLAF. Follow and trust me, I shall protect you!

ALFHILD. I am ready; I know it well enough; whether I wished to or not, I must follow you wherever you go.

[They go out to the right.]

CHORUS OF WEDDING GUESTS AND LADY. KIRSTEN'S PEOPLE

(From the forest to the left.)

Awake to our call, come free your will
From elves that hover around!

SCENE XI

[LADY KIRSTEN and HEMMING enter from the left.]

HEMMING. Here he was;— why— now he is gone!

LADY KIRSTEN. And he said he was waiting for the bride who was to come?

HEMMING. Yes, but whom he had in mind I could not quite make out; for his speech was strangely incoherent. Ingeborg he did not mean,— that is certain.

LADY KIRSTEN. Say nothing, good Hemming! say nothing of what he just said! You did well to let me alone know he was here. You shall be richly rewarded for this, but first we must find him again—

HEMMING. [As he looks out to the right.] See,— see there, in the moonlight, on the hill near the river,— yes, surely I think—

LADY KIRSTEN. Hush, hush, it is Olaf!

HEMMING. There are two; a woman is with him—

LADY KIRSTEN. Heavenly saints!

HEMMING. He is pointing out the village as if— there they go!

LADY KIRSTEN. Call Lord Arne and our people! We will meet again here; I bring Olaf with me!

HEMMING. But dare you then—?

LADY KIRSTEN. Do as I say; but say nothing of what you have heard and seen. You can say that Olaf came up here to hunt deer and bear, and that he went astray in the mountain.

HEMMING. You can rely on me, Lady Kirsten!

[Goes out to the left.]

LADY KIRSTEN. Is it true, then? Have evil sprites gained control over him? Yes, so I can pretend to Arne of Guldvik, but little I believe it myself;— and yet it is said it happened often enough in the days gone by.

But it is elfen maids no doubt of flesh and blood that—. There he goes down to the river,—I must hasten!

[Goes out to the right in the background.]

CHORUS. [From the forest to the left.]

With ringing of bells we hurry along,
We wander in field and in dell!
O Christian, come, give heed to our song,
Wake up from your magic spell!

SCENE XII

[OLAF and ALFHILD come in from the right in the background. Later LADY KIRSTEN.]

ALFHILD.

O, you must tell me still more of the world!
Your words to my soul are refreshing indeed;
It seems as if here in the wonders you tell
My innermost longings you read!....

Did you ne'er on a summer night sit by a tarn,
So deep that no one could fathom it quite,
And see in the water the stars so bright,
Those knowing eyes that express with their flickering light
Much more than a thousand tongues could possibly say?

I often sat thus; I sought with my hands to capture
The sparkling riddles below in the deep—
I snatched after them, I would see them close,
Then they grew blurred like eyes that weep,—
It is idle to search and to seek—

So too in my soul there was many a riddle
I yearned to solve in the days that are gone!
They tricked me as did all the stars in the deep,
Grew stranger and stranger the more I brooded thereon!

OLAF.

Am I not to myself a mysterious riddle?
Am I Olaf Liljekrans, the nobly born,
The knight so proud, who vaunted his race,
Who laughed the singing of birds to scorn!
And yet, from my heart I tear what I was!
Happy I am,—and that can I understand—
Your prophecy failed,—I should happiness find,
When the fairest of flowers I had found in the land.
Ah! happiness here I have found!

ALFHILD. I prophesied nothing. But—tell me more of the life that is yonder!

OLAF.

The life that is yonder may go its own way;
Here is my home; with you will I wander,
My lovely wife! Alfild, behold!
Is it not as if here in the mountainous fold
Were built for us two a bower so fair!
The snowdrops in splendor stand garbed everywhere;
In here there is feasting, there is joy, there is mirth,
More real than any I have found on this earth!
The song rings out from the river so deep;
It is that which makes me both laugh and weep!
The song of magic, the mysterious lay,
Has made me so free, so happy and gay!

[Seizes her passionately in his arms.]

OLAF.

Farewell to the village below I say!
'Tis here that my bridal-bed I shall prepare;
Farewell to the world forever and ay,—
For here I shall hold my beautiful bride!

ALFHILD. [Moves away apprehensively.] Olaf!

OLAF. [Stops suddenly, as if seized with a vague and painful remembrance.]

My bride! What is it I say!
Tell me—when first—I happened this way—

Can you still remember the very first night?
What was it I sought? — No longer I know!
Did I come to fetch you — to — the village below?
Did I come the wedding guests to invite?

ALFHILD. What mean you? Wedding? I can't understand — ?

OLAF.

Our betrothal at Guldvik was held, you remember!
For three weeks thereafter our wedding was planned —
But it seems to me that, — no, my brow like an ember
Burns hot! I will try no more to remember!

CHORUS. [Softly and far in the forest.]

Olaf Liljekrans! Olaf Liljekrans!
Why sleep you so deep and so long?

ALFHILD. Hush, Olaf! do you hear?

OLAF. Did you hear it too?

ALFHILD. What was it?

OLAF.

A memory of long ago,
Which often comes back when I wander with you!
'Tis evil, — it calls from the village below.

LADY KIRSTEN. [Aside, as she enters from the rear of the stage
unobserved by the others.] Ah, there! He speaks; could I understand — !

[Approaches listening.]

OLAF. [With increasing vehemence.]

Yes, yes, I come; not alone will I ride!
For ladies and knights shall heed my command,
And come hither with song to greet my bride!
For you shall be saddled my swiftest steed,
The poet and minstrel shall ride in the lead,
Thereafter shall follow the steward and priest,
The people shall all be bid to the feast!
Pages so courtly shall guide your steed,
And beautiful flowers be strewn at your feet,
The peasant shall bow to the ground like a weed,

His wife shall curtsy to you as is meet!
The church bell shall ring to the countryside:
Now rides Olaf Liljekrans home with his bride!

CHORUS OF WEDDING GUESTS. [Animated, yet softly, in the forest to the left.]

Now hasten we all
To the wedding hall!
The foal runneth light and gay!
The hoofs resound
On the grassy ground,
As the merry swains gallop away!

LADY KIRSTEN. [Aside during the chorus.] Heaven he praised then!
Hemming has told—!

ALFHILD. [Jubilant.]

They come, they come, their voices I hear!
How sweetly it sounds! O Olaf, behold!

LADY KIRSTEN. Olaf, my son!

[Rushes to him unobserved by ALFHILD, who continues to look out to the left.]

OLAF. God help me! What's here! My mother!

LADY KIRSTEN.

My poor unfortunate son!
Now are you saved from the evil one!
There comes Lord Arne with Ingeborg, your wife!

OLAF. [With a cry and as if suddenly awakening.]

Ingeborg!—With that have you shattered my life!
My happiness then was not what it seemed!
Alas, that you had to inform me of this!

OLAF. [In despair.]

Dear mother! a beautiful dream I have dreamed;
You waken me now,—there's an end to my bliss!

SCENE XIII

[The Preceding. ARNE, INGEBORG, HEMMING, WEDDING GUESTS, and LADY KIRSTEN from the left.]

ARNE. Good luck, Lady Kirsten, to you! You have found him again, I am told.

LADY KIRSTEN. Of course I have found him. — And now for home!

ARNE. [To OLAF.] And no harm has been done you?

OLAF. [Absent-minded.] Me! What do you mean?

LADY KIRSTEN. [Interrupting.] Of course not, Lord Arne! He went astray on the hunt and—

INGEBORG. [Pointing to ALFHILD.] But this young woman—?

LADY KIRSTEN. A poor child! She has given him lodging and shelter.

ARNE. But there is no one who lives up here.

LADY KIRSTEN. Yet a stray one here and there! There is many a solitary family still dwells among the mountains since the time of the plague.

ARNE. Then come, come! The horses are waiting below on the hill.

OLAF. [Painfully, as he glances at ALFHILD.] O mother! I cannot!

LADY KIRSTEN. [Softly and resolute.] You must! It will be your eternal shame if you—

ARNE. What does he mean?

LADY KIRSTEN. He is sick and tired as yet, but it will pass off. Come!

LADY KIRSTEN. [With a significant look at OLAF.] The young woman comes too!

INGEBORG. You mean that she—!

LADY KIRSTEN. Faithfully has she nursed him; it is only fitting that she be rewarded.

ARNE. And tomorrow the wedding is held!

LADY KIRSTEN. Tomorrow, — that I solemnly swear!

ARNE. I have your word!

HEMMING. [Softly and triumphant, as he brings forth the ring.] And I have Ingeborg's golden ring!

INGEBORG. [Takes the ring from him and says carelessly.] My ring! Aha,—so you have my ring, Hemming! Thanks, I shall now take care of it myself!

[HEMMING stands a moment dumfounded and then follows very slowly the rest, who all except ALFHILD go out to the left.]

SCENE XIV

[ALFHILD. Shortly afterwards THORGJERD from the background.]

ALFHILD.

(Has observed in silent and childlike amazement the preceding scene without however heeding the action; when they are gone she suddenly comes to herself as from a dream.)

They are gone! Can I trust my eyes;—is it true?
Yes, here in the moonlight they stood in full view!
There I see them again down the mountain side,
And I must go with them, for I am the bride!

[Starts as if to rush out to the left.]

THORGJERD. [In the background.]

Alfhild! my child! And how come you here?
I have told you before—

ALFHILD.

O my father dear!
Now must I be free—as free as the wind,
No longer can I in the hills be confined!

THORGJERD. [Comes nearer.] What has befallen you?

ALFHILD. [In ecstasy.] Now is he come!

THORGJERD. But who?

ALFHILD.

The fair knight! He will carry me home!
Now first do I grasp all the restless desire,
That long has been smouldering in me like fire!
We often have sat, as the river rushed by,
While you sang of the princess enthralled in the hill!
The princess, my father! the princess am I;
But he, the fair knight, bent the troll to his will! —
And now I am free to do what I may;
I will hence into life and its motley affray!
His words were like song! I am free as the wind;
No power can stay me or hold me behind!

THORGJERD.

Poor child! You would down to the village below;
It will cost you your happiness; stay, do not go!

ALFHILD.

But, father, I must! Your sweetest lays
Will seem to me now like a misty haze!

THORGJERD.

Then go, my Alfhild! and dream while you may,
Your father will guard you always!
But look you take care of the crafty young swains
With words so cunning and free!

ALFHILD.

Away in the distant and sunny domains, —
Where Olaf is, there must I be!
There stands his castle with golden hall!
From the ballads you sang his face I recall;
The king's son is he, the knight who can ride,
And I, the poor Alfhild, — I am his bride!
Poor, did I say, — no, the princess on high,
O, more than the princess, — his sweetheart am I!

[The wedding chorus is heard far down the mountain side.]

ALFHILD. Listen, he calls with his trumpet and horn!

Farewell now, forest and flower and thorn!
Farewell, my valley; you have cramped me too long,
The whole world is calling with laughter and song!
Tomorrow attired in gold I shall ride
Away to the church as Olaf's bride!
We shall sit on the throne of honor within—
Ah, now shall my life in its fulness begin!

[She rushes out to the left. THORGJERD gazes after her thoughtfully.
The chorus dies away in the distance as the curtain falls.]

SECOND ACT

[The enclosure on Lady Kirsten's estate. To the right is seen the main building with an opening in the gable; neither windows nor doors are visible. Further towards the back of the stage on the same side a small log church and a churchyard. On the left side a storehouse and other out-buildings. On both sides in the foreground simple benches of stone. It is afternoon.]

SCENE I

[LADY KIRSTEN. Servants and Maids occupied with preparations for the wedding.]

LADY KIRSTEN. Let there be no lack of food or drink.

LADY KIRSTEN. [To herself.] Hard have I labored and struggled to bring things to this point; but now I shall give a feast that shall be heralded far and wide.

LADY KIRSTEN. [To the servants.] Be sure to see that on the banquet table—yet no, I shall attend to that myself. The wine shall be poured into the silver flagons; the large drinking horns shall be filled with the Italian cider; the ale is for the servants only, and likewise the homebrewed mead;—and listen, be sure to see that there are enough yellow candles in the church; the bridal party are not to go to the altar until late in the evening, and with red lights shall they be escorted on their way from the banquet hall to the church. Go now, all of you, and see that you remember, every one of you, the things I have told you.

[The people go.]

LADY KIRSTEN. God knows this wedding is costing me more than I well can bear; but Ingeborg brings with her a good dowry and besides—Oh, well, Arne I shall no doubt be able to manage and rule as I see fit, if he is first—

[Looks out to the right.]

LADY KIRSTEN. There comes Olaf! If only I knew that he—

SCENE II

[LADY KIRSTEN. OLAF comes from the house in festive garb; he is pale and thoughtful.]

OLAF. [To himself.] Yesterday and today! There is but a midsummer night between the two, and yet it seems to me that both autumn and winter have overtaken my soul since the time I wandered up there on the mountain side—with her, with Alfild!

OLAF. [Notices Lady Kirsten.] Alas, my dear mother, are you there?

LADY KIRSTEN. Quite so, my son! I like to see you dressed in gold and in silk. Now one can see by your dress who it is that is bridegroom tonight. I see you have rested.

OLAF. I have slept, but little have I rested; for all the while I was dreaming.

LADY KIRSTEN. A bridegroom must dream,—that is an ancient custom.

OLAF. My fairest dream is ended; let us not think any longer about that.

LADY KIRSTEN. [Changing the subject.] We shall have a merry time today, I think.

OLAF. It does not appear that heaven is pleased with my wedding day.

LADY KIRSTEN. How so?

OLAF. There are indications of a storm. Do you see how heavily the clouds are gathering in the west?

LADY KIRSTEN. The brighter the festive candles will shine when you go to the church tonight.

OLAF. [Paces back and forth a few times; at length he stops before his mother and says.] If I had married a poor man's daughter, without family or wealth,—tell me, mother, what would you have done?

LADY KIRSTEN. [Looks at him sharply.] Why do you ask?

OLAF. Answer me first. What would you have done?

LADY KIRSTEN. Cursed you and gone to my grave in sorrow!—But tell me, why do you ask?

OLAF. Ah, it was only a jest; I little thought of doing so.

LADY KIRSTEN. That I can believe; for you have always held your family in high honor. But be merry and gay; tomorrow Ingeborg will sit in there as your wife, and then you will find both peace and happiness.

OLAF. Peace and happiness. One thing there is lacking.

LADY KIRSTEN. What do you mean?

OLAF. The fairest of flowers which I was to pick asunder and scatter far to the winds.

LADY KIRSTEN. The silly dream;—think no longer about it.

OLAF. Perhaps it would be best for me if I could forget.

LADY KIRSTEN. In the ladies' room your betrothed sits with all her maids; little have you talked with her today. Do you not want to go in?

OLAF. [In thought.] Yes, yes! Where is she?

LADY KIRSTEN. In the ladies' room, as I said.

OLAF. [Lively.] Nothing shall be lacking to her from this day. Shoes with silver buckles I shall give her; she shall wear brooches and rings. The withered twigs shall be put away; I shall give her a golden necklace to wear.

LADY KIRSTEN. Of whom do you speak?

OLAF. Of Alfhild!

LADY KIRSTEN. I was speaking of Ingeborg, your betrothed. Olaf! Olaf! You make me anxious and worried,—so strange are you. I could really almost believe that she had bewitched you.

OLAF. That she has! Yes, forsooth, mother, I have been bewitched. I have been in the elf maidens' play; happy and gay I was as long as it

lasted, but now— . Through long, long years I shall be weighed down with woe as often as I call it to mind.

LADY KIRSTEN. If she were a witch, the stake would surely be hers; but she is a crafty and wily woman who has lured you on with her fair speech.

OLAF. She is pure as the mother of God herself!

LADY KIRSTEN. Yes, yes, but beware! Remember, whatever she is, tomorrow you are wed; it would be both sin and shame to you if you longer took notice of her.

OLAF. I realize it, mother, full well!

LADY KIRSTEN. And Ingeborg, whom you have betrothed and who loves you, yes, Olaf! loves you with all her heart—the punishment of heaven would be visited on you, in case you—

OLAF. True, true!

LADY KIRSTEN. I will not speak of our own circumstances; but you can easily see that Arne's daughter can help us greatly in one thing or another; our affairs have been going from bad to worse, and if the harvest should fail this year I should not in the least be surprised if we had to take up the beggar's staff.

OLAF. Yes, I know it.

LADY KIRSTEN. With Arne's money we can mend everything; an honorable place you will win for yourself among the king's men. Think this carefully over; if you have promised Alfhild more than you can fulfil—and I seem to notice in her something like that in spite of her quiet demeanor—why, speak with her about it. Tell her,—well, tell her anything you please; empty-handed she shall not go away from here,—that you can freely promise. See, here she comes! Olaf, my son! think of your betrothed and your noble race, think of your old mother who would have to go to her grave in shame, in case—be a man, Olaf! Now I go in to look after the banqueting table.

[Goes into the house.]

SCENE III

[OLAF alone.]

OLAF. [Gazes out to the right.]

As merry she is as the youthful roe,
As it plays with no thought of the morrow;
But soon will she wring her small hands in woe,
And suffer in anguish and sorrow!
Soon must I destroy the faith in her heart,
And waken her out of her dreams.
And then—yes, then we forever must part.
Poor Alfhild! So bitter your fate to me seems!

OLAF. [Brooding.]

What cared I for honor, what cared I for power,
What mattered my race when I wandered with you!
It seemed in your eyes was reflected a flower,
More precious than any the world ever knew!
Forgotten I had both struggle and strife,
But since I again came home to this life,
Since at table I sat in my father's hall,
Since I went to answer my mother's call—

OLAF. [Abruptly.]

'Tis true from a noble race I am born,
And Alfhild lives up in the mountains forlorn.
In her I should find but a constant sorrow.
I must tell her—yet, no, I can't let her know!
Yet truly—I must—I must ere the morrow,
She must hear what to me is the bitterest woe!

SCENE IV

[OLAF. ALFHILD from the church.]

ALFHILD. [Runs eagerly to meet him.]
Olaf! Olaf! You have led me to the land
Where I walk amid flowers, where before I trod on sand.
In truth you have here so pleasant an isle,
O here I can live without worry or guile!

So much I would question, so little I know,
The riddles must you explain as we go. —
Is it green here always in summer and spring?

OLAF. Alfild!

ALFHILD. Your answer delay!
You see yon house with its spire and wing?
There went I this morning to play;
Without there was joy, there was laughter and mirth;
Within it was still as nowhere on earth.
I stepped through the door, I saw a great hall,
Within was a peace that was fair;
A dawn softly breaking pervaded it all,
And people were kneeling in prayer.
But high from above them a virgin looked down,
She sailed upon clouds of white,
Her head shone forth like a crimson crown,
Like heaven when dawns the light.
Calm was her face, a blue dress she wore,
A beautiful elf in her arms she bore,
And round about her played angels of love,
That laughed when they saw me below in the door
From their place in the heavens above!

OLAF. [Aside.] Alas! I have wrought so woeful a play,
Soon will her sorrow begin!

ALFHILD. O, tell me, Olaf! what people are they
Who live in the house I was in?

OLAF. Each one who like you is good and kind,
Each one who is child-like in spirit and mind.
'Tis the church, God's house, — it belongs to him.

ALFHILD. The mighty father! 'Tis only your whim!
His house is high over the stars in the sky,
Where the white swan sails undefiled,
So high 'tis beyond any mortal eye
Save that of the dreaming child! —
The church that you spoke of! So then it is there
We shall ride in festal procession,
As bridegroom and bride!

OLAF. [Aside.] No longer I dare
Delay my wretched confession!

ALFHILD. Ah, each of your words has burned like a coal,
And deep its mark it has left on my soul!
My bosom is filled with joy and with song;
Wherever I wander in field or at home,
They shine on my path, they light me along,—
Like stars at night in the heavenly dome!
You said the whole world would be asked to the feast,
And foremost should ride the minstrel and priest,
Knights should go forward and guide my steed,
And roses should blossom on every side,
Each lily we met should bow like a weed,
The flowers should curtsy before the bride!

OLAF. Have I said—

ALFHILD. Olaf, you surely recall!
All things have followed your every desire;
The lindens stand yonder so green and so tall;
The roses are decked in their festive attire
And dance like elves at an elfen ball.
Never did heaven's illumining eye
So radiantly shine as here from the sky;
Never before sang the birds so sweet!
They sing the bride and the bridegroom to greet!—
O, you—you make me so happy and blessed,
Both heaven and earth could I hold to my breast!
Nowhere can so humble a weed be found
Which under my feet I could crush and destroy,
Nowhere a creature so deep in the ground,
But I would share in its sorrow and joy!
My bosom is filled with the glory of spring;
It surges and roars like a wood in a storm!

OLAF. [Aside.] And soon this youthful and lovely form
Shall writhe beneath sorrow's tormenting sting!

ALFHILD. O, glorious life!

[She kneels with upstretched arms.]

ALFHILD. O father of love,
In the distant heaven! Had I but the power,
The tongues of the angels above,
Thy praise I should sing every hour;
I cannot, for I am of little worth,
I can only bow down before you to the earth—
O thanks, thou unspeakable! Glory and praise
For all I can here understand of thy ways!

[She rises.]

ALFHILD. Yes, lovely is life in its every breath,
As lovely almost as the journey to death!

OLAF. In the grave you think it is pleasant to lie?

ALFHILD. I know not your meaning, but I brooded long.
And asked of my father "What means it to die?"
In answer thereto he sang me a song:

"When the child of man is weighted with grief
And longs to be rocked to rest,
Then comes there an elf with wings of white
And frees its spirit oppressed.

"The little elf with his wings of white
Makes ready a downy bed,
Of lilies he weaves the linen sheets
And pillows of roses red.

"Away on the pillows he carries the child,
He carries it safe on his arm,
He takes it to heaven aloft on a cloud
Away from all earthly harm.

"And cherubs there are in the heaven above
(I tell what is true to you);
They strew the pillows of rosy red
With pearls of white and of blue.

"Then wakens the little earthly child,
It wakens to heavenly mirth,—

But all that happiness, all that joy
There's no one that knows here on earth."

OLAF. 'Twere better, alas! had you never come here,
Had you lived in the mountain your peaceful life.
Your joy like a weed will wither and sear,
Your faith will be killed—

ALFHILD. But as Olaf's wife
I am strong as the torrent and have no fear!
With you by my side let happen what may,
With you I will laugh and suffer and languish.

ALFHILD. [Listening.] Hush, Olaf! You hear that mournful lay,
It sounds like a song of the bitterest anguish!

CHORUS OF PALLBEARERS. [Softly outside to the right.]
The little child we carry
With sorrow to the grave,
Beneath the mould we bury
What soon the worms will crave.

Hard is this lot and dreary:
With mournful dirge and sigh
To carry sad and weary
The child where it shall lie!

ALFHILD. [Uncertain and anxious.]
What is it, Olaf? What is it, I say?

OLAF. A child that death is bearing away,
A mother and children weep on the way.

ALFHILD. Death! Then where are the pillows of red,
The lily-white linen, and where is the dead?

OLAF. I see no pillows of red or of gray,
But only the dark black boards of the bier;
And thereon the dead sleeps on shavings and hay.

ALFHILD. On shavings and hay?

OLAF. That is all there is here!

ALFHILD. And where is the elf who bears on his arm
The child far away from all earthly harm?

OLAF. I see but a mother whose heart will break,
And little children who follow the wake.

ALFHILD. And where are the pearls of blue and of white,
That the angels strew in the heaven of light?

OLAF. I see only this,—they weep many a tear
As they stand at the side of the bier.

ALFHILD. And where is the home, the house of God,
Where the dead dream only of mirth?

OLAF. Behold! Now they place him beneath the sod
And cover him over with earth.

ALFHILD. [Quiet and thoughtful, after a pause.]
Not so was death in the song—not so.

OLAF. 'Tis true; but no such joy and pleasure
Has any one felt here below.—
Have you never heard of the mountain king's treasure,
Which night after night like gold would glow;
But if you would seize the gold in your hand,
You nothing would find save gravel and sand;
And listen, Alfhild! it often is true
That life turns out in the selfsame way;
Approach not too near, it may happen to you,
That you burn your fingers some day.
'Tis true it may shine like a heavenly star,
But only when seen from afar.

[He becomes aware of Lady Kirsten off the stage to the right.]

OLAF. My mother—she'll tell you—I shall depart.
The angels above send their peace to your heart!

[He goes towards the house but is stopped by LADY KIRSTEN.—The sky becomes overcast with dark clouds; the wind begins to howl in the tree-tops.—ALFHILD stands absorbed in deep thought.]

SCENE V

[The Preceding. LADY KIRSTEN.]

LADY KIRSTEN. [Softly.] Not so, my son, you have told her—?

OLAF. All I was able to say I have said. Now you tell her the rest, and then, mother, let me never, never see her again.

[He casts a glance at ALFHILD and goes out past the house.]

LADY KIRSTEN. That folly will soon be burned out of his soul, if—

LADY KIRSTEN. [As if she suddenly has an idea.] But in case I—Ah, if that could succeed, then would he be cured,—that I can promise. But Alfild—? Well, nevertheless, it must be attempted.

ALFHILD. [To herself.]

So then there is here too anguish and woe;
Well, so let it be; I shall never despair.
The sorrow of earth I never need know,
Still Olaf is good and fair!

LADY KIRSTEN. [Approaches.] It seems to me that gloomy thoughts are weighing upon your mind.

ALFHILD. Yes, yes, the result of things I have recently heard.

LADY KIRSTEN. From Olaf?

ALFHILD. Certainly from Olaf; he has told me—

LADY KIRSTEN. I know, Alfild. I know what he has said.

LADY KIRSTEN. [Aside.] He has mentioned to her his wedding, I see.

LADY KIRSTEN. [Aloud.] This very night it is to be held.

ALFHILD. What is to be held?

LADY KIRSTEN. The wedding!

ALFHILD. [Eagerly.] Oh, yes, that I know!

LADY KIRSTEN. You know it and do not take it more to your heart than this?

ALFHILD. No. Why should I take it to heart?

LADY KIRSTEN. [Aside.] There is something she is meditating,—I see that clearly.

LADY KIRSTEN. [Aloud.] Well, so much the better for all of us. But tell me, when the wedding is over, what then will you do?

ALFHILD. I? I have little thought of that.

LADY KIRSTEN. I mean, have you in mind to remain here or to go home?

ALFHILD. [Looks at her, surprised.] I have in mind to remain!

LADY KIRSTEN. [Aside.] There we have it; she thinks to hold him in her wiles even after he is wed. Well, we shall see about that.

LADY KIRSTEN. [Aloud.] Alfhild! I wish you every possible good, and if you dared rely on my—

ALFHILD. Yes, that I certainly dare!

LADY KIRSTEN. Well and good; then you will let me take upon myself your happiness. I shall take charge of you as best I know how, and if you but give me your word you shall this very night go to the church as a bride.

ALFHILD. Yes, I know that.

LADY KIRSTEN. [Surprised.] You know that! Who has told you?

ALFHILD. Olaf himself said so.

LADY KIRSTEN. [Aside.] Has Olaf—? Yes, forsooth, he has had the same idea that I had, to marry her off in order to be rid of her. Or perhaps in order to—well, no matter,—when she is finally married, when Olaf on his side is a married man, then—

LADY KIRSTEN. [Aloud.] Well and good, Alfhild! If Olaf has told you our intention for you, then it is not necessary for me to—But do you now hasten, go in there in the store house; there you will find my own wedding gown; that you shall wear!

ALFHILD. [With childlike joy.] Shall I! Your own wedding gown!

LADY KIRSTEN. Do as I say. Go in there and dress yourself as splendidly as you please.

ALFHILD. And do I also get a bridal crown?

LADY KIRSTEN. Certainly! A bridal crown and silver rings and golden bracelet. You will find plenty of them in the coffers and chests.

ALFHILD. Silver rings and golden bracelets!

LADY KIRSTEN. Go, go, and hurry as fast as you can.

ALFHILD. O, I shall not be long about it.

[Claps her hands.]

ALFHILD. I shall have silver rings and golden bracelets!

[She runs out to the left.]

SCENE VI

[LADY KIRSTEN alone.]

LADY KIRSTEN. The evil and cursed woman! Happy and gay she is though she knows that Olaf is to wed another. But that very fact will serve me well; it will go easier than I had thought. She looks as innocent as a child, and yet she can agree to take him as a husband whom I first pick out for her. And I who thought that she truly loved Olaf! If he is still ignorant of her real spirit, he shall soon learn. He shall know her to the core, he shall know how she has bewitched and lured him, and then, well, then she is no longer dangerous.

LADY KIRSTEN. [Smiling.] Well, well! Olaf thought of the same way of saving himself that I did; so good-natured I had never imagined him.—But where shall we find the man who is willing to—well, she is pretty, and I shall not mind a little silver and even a bit of land. Has Olaf already spoken to some one? That is hardly thinkable!—Well, then I shall see to that. I have servants enough on the estate and—

[Looks out to the right.]

LADY KIRSTEN. Hemming! what if I should try him! But he saw them together in the mountain yesterday; he must surely know there is something between the two. But none the less—he is a humble serving-man, and poor besides, and weak of mind—we shall see, we shall see!

SCENE VII

[LADY KIRSTEN. HEMMING from the right.]

HEMMING. [To himself.] Nowhere is Ingeborg to be found; she will bring me to my grave,—that is certain. Yesterday she was gracious to me; she gave me her ring; but then she took it away from me again; and today she will not so much as look at me as I pass.

LADY KIRSTEN. [Slowly, as she approaches.] A little cautious I must be.

LADY KIRSTEN. [Aloud.] Ah, Hemming, is it you? You prefer to wander alone, I see; you keep yourself away from the servants and maids; when I see such things I realize very well that you do so not without reason.

HEMMING. Why, my noble lady! what should—

LADY KIRSTEN. Yes, Hemming! there is something that you keep all to yourself as you go about; you are not very cheerful!

HEMMING. [Disconcerted.] Not cheerful? I?

LADY KIRSTEN. [Smiling.] There is here today a young and beautiful girl whom you fancy very much.

HEMMING. All saints!

LADY KIRSTEN. And she in turn has a fancy for you.

HEMMING. Me—Whom? I do not know whom you mean.

LADY KIRSTEN. Come, Hemming, do not speak so; before me you need not feel ashamed. Yes, yes, I see clearly, I tell you.

HEMMING. [Aside.] Heaven! she must have noticed by Ingeborg's manner that—

LADY KIRSTEN. I have seen that the wedding is but little joy to you. The trip to the church you care little about, since you would yourself like to go as a groom, yet cannot see your way clear.

HEMMING. [In the greatest agitation.] Alas, Lady Kirsten! my noble, august lady! be not offended!

LADY KIRSTEN. [Surprised.] I? And why should I be offended?

HEMMING. [Continuing.] I have struggled and fought against this unhappy love as long as I have been able, and I honestly believe she has done the same.

LADY KIRSTEN. She? Has she then told you that she cares for you?

HEMMING. Yes, almost!

LADY KIRSTEN. Well and good; then you talked about it together?

HEMMING. Yes,—but only once, only one single time, I swear.

LADY KIRSTEN. Once or ten times, it is all the same to me.

LADY KIRSTEN. [Aside.] Then they are already agreed; it was certainly a stroke of luck that I came upon Hemming; now I am not at all surprised that Alfhild was so willing to go to the altar.

LADY KIRSTEN. [Aloud.] Hemming! I am much indebted to you for finding my son again and for otherwise being of help to me; now I shall make requital,—I shall to the limit of my power stand by you in the matter we just spoke of.

HEMMING. [Overcome with joy.] You! You will! Lady Kirsten! Alas, great God and holy saints! I hardly dare believe it.

LADY KIRSTEN. [Stops.] But Lord Olaf, your son! What do you think he will say?

LADY KIRSTEN. He will not interpose any objection,—I shall see to that.

HEMMING. [Unsuspecting.] Yes, truly, it would be best for him too, for I know she cares little for him.

LADY KIRSTEN. [Smiling.] That I have noticed, Hemming!

HEMMING. Have you! Well, you are so clever, Lady Kirsten! And I who thought that I was the only one who had noticed it.

HEMMING. [Doubtfully.] Do you think that Lord Arne will give his consent?

LADY KIRSTEN. Your master? I shall know how to talk him into it,—that will not be so difficult.

HEMMING. You think so? Alas, but I am so poor a man.

LADY KIRSTEN. I shall remedy that all right, in case Lord Arne is not prepared to do so.

HEMMING. Thanks, thanks, Lady Kirsten! Heaven reward you for your kindness!

LADY KIRSTEN. But you will keep this that we have been speaking of to yourself.

HEMMING. That I promise.

LADY KIRSTEN. Then hold yourself in readiness; the guests will assemble out here in a little while now, and do you be on hand.

[She goes over to the door of the store house and looks for ALFHILD.]

HEMMING. [To himself.] No, this is to me like a strange illusive dream. Ingeborg and I, — we are to belong to each other! Ah, can it be true? So high I never dared let my thoughts ascend; — it seemed to me in the morning that I had been guilty of the greatest presumption if during the night I had dreamed about it. — Hm! I know very well of course that it is not for my sake that Lady Kirsten goes to all this trouble. She has something up her sleeve; she thinks it necessary to break the agreement with Lord Arne, and now that she has noticed that Ingeborg cares for me she will use that as an excuse. Well, I have so often given my master warning, but he will never believe me.

ARNE. [Calls outside to the left.] Hemming! Hemming!

LADY KIRSTEN. [Comes forward.] Your master calls! Go now! After a while I shall speak to him; he will agree. Believe me, he shall follow his page to the church in the same hour that he leads his daughter thither.

HEMMING. Thanks, thanks, Lady Kirsten! Truly, you confer a blessing on us all.

[He goes out to the left.]

LADY KIRSTEN. [To herself.] So young she is and yet so cunning; she has been coquetting with Hemming all the while she made my son believe that — Well and good, he shall soon learn to know her arts. But first I must see Lord Arne; he thinks highly of Hemming and would reluctantly part with him; it seemed too that Hemming feared that something like that might stand in the way; but they can easily remain as they are even if Hemming marries. — Hemming sees more clearly in the affair than I had expected. What will Olaf say, he asked; he has evidently noticed that my son still thinks of Alfhild. Well, let him; if he takes her he will say nothing, and when Alfhild is married, — I know Olaf; he has always wanted to stand in high honor among the men of the village, and for that reason he will certainly — yes, yes, it must, it shall succeed.

[She goes out to the right.]

SCENE VIII

[HEMMING comes from the left with a bowl of ale hidden under his coat. ARNE follows him cautiously, looking about.]

ARNE. Is there anyone?

HEMMING. No, come along, master.

ARNE. But it seemed to me I heard Lady Kirsten.

HEMMING. She is gone now, come along!

ARNE. [Sits down on the bench to the left.] Hemming! it is well that the wedding is to be held tonight. Tomorrow I go home; yes, that I will. Not a day longer will I remain in Lady Kirsten's house.

HEMMING. Why, master! is there enmity again between you?

ARNE. Is it not enough, do you think, that she and all her superior relatives look down on me; at supper they laughed and jested among themselves because I could not bring myself to eat of all those ungodly, outlandish dishes. And what was it that we got to drink? Sweet wine and cider that will stay in my stomach for eight days. No, the good old homebrewed ale for me.

[Drinks and adds softly and bitterly.]

ARNE. Of this I had sent the wretched woman three full barrels. And what has she done? Thrown it to her servants, and here I must steal myself a drink,—yes, Hemming! steal myself a drink of my own ale, that they may not revile me as a coarse peasant, who doesn't understand the more refined drinks.

HEMMING. Well, master! I gave you warning.

ARNE. Ah—gave me warning! You are stupid, Hemming! You think I haven't noticed it myself; but wait, just wait!

ARNE. [Flaring up.] To place my good nourishing ale before the house servants, as though it were not worthy to be put on the table of a lord.—

HEMMING. Yes, Lady Kirsten treats you ill, that is certain.

ARNE. [Hands him the bowl.] Come, sit down and drink!

ARNE. [HEMMING sits down.] Listen, Hemming! I could wish we were home again.

HEMMING. Well, I have no fancy for this festive home.

ARNE. No, my old room at Guldvik for me;—when we sat there of an evening and played chess with the ale jug between us—

HEMMING. The while Mistress Ingeborg sat at the loom and embroidered roses and all sorts of flowers in the linen—

ARNE. And sang all the time so merrily that it seemed to me that I became young and active again. Yes, Hemming! when the wedding is over, we shall go back and live our old ways again.

HEMMING. But then there will be no one who works the loom and sings merry lays the while.

ARNE. No, that is true enough; Ingeborg will then be gone. It will be a little hard on me; she is wild and self-willed, but I shall miss her nevertheless,—miss her greatly.

ARNE. [Considers.] Now and then I suppose I could visit her here—But no, that I will not! Here they laugh at me, they whisper behind my back,—I see it well enough.

HEMMING. But in case you wished, it could still be changed.

ARNE. Changed! You are stupid, Hemming! Always you talk about changing.

ARNE. [Hands him the bowl.] Come, drink, it will do you good. Changed; no, no, it shall never be changed! It was evil spirits who put into my head the idea of marrying into Lady Kirsten's family. But now it is done; the superior kinsmen will have to behave as they please, but my own relatives and friends shall not laugh at me,—if I have given my word, I shall keep it too.

ARNE. [Disheartened.] If I only knew that Olaf would be kind to her; I shall ask him to—.

ARNE. [Vehemently.] He *shall* be kind, else I shall come and beat him with my old fists.

HEMMING. Yes, it is well that you keep your eye on her, for Olaf cares little for her, I do believe.

ARNE. So, you think so?

HEMMING. Do you remember Alfhild, the poor girl, who yesterday followed us down from the mountain?

ARNE. Indeed I do. She is pretty!

HEMMING. [Rises.] So thinks Olaf, too.

ARNE. What does that mean?

HEMMING. Olaf loves her! 'Tis many a time he visited her up there;— what Lady Kirsten has told you, you must never believe.

ARNE. And what you blab about I believe still less. You are provoked with Ingeborg because at times she makes fun of you, and therefore you begrudge her this attractive marriage; yes, yes, I know you too well.

HEMMING. Why, master! you could believe that—

ARNE. Make me believe that Olaf Liljekrans loves that beggar woman! A noble, high-born lord such as he! It is almost as if one were to say that Ingeborg, my daughter, had a fancy for you.

HEMMING. [Embarrassed.] For me—how could you ever imagine—

ARNE. No, I don't imagine! But the one is as unreasonable as the other. Come, drink! and don't talk any more such nonsense.

ARNE. [Rises.] There is Lady Kirsten with the guests. What's going to happen now?

HEMMING. They are all to assemble out here; they will then follow the bride and bridegroom to the banquet-table and thence to the church.

ARNE. Aye, what a cursed custom! To the church at night! Is then marriage a work of darkness?

SCENE IX

[The Preceding. LADY KIRSTEN, OLAF, INGEBORG, GUESTS, and SERVANTS and MAIDS enter gradually from the several sides.]

LADY KIRSTEN. [To herself.] I have not seen Olaf alone; but when I think it over, it is probably best that he know nothing about it until it is all over.

LADY KIRSTEN. [Softly, to HEMMING, who has been whispering with INGEBORG.] Well, Hemming! How do you think your master is disposed?

HEMMING. Alas, Lady Kirsten! I have but little hope unless you lend your aid.

LADY KIRSTEN. Aye, we'll manage it all right.

[She mingles with the GUESTS.]

INGEBORG. [Softly, to HEMMING.] What do you mean? What blessed hope is it you are speaking of?

HEMMING. Alas, I hardly dare believe it myself; but Lady Kirsten means well by us. She will soon show you that—

INGEBORG. Hush! they are approaching.

OLAF. [In an undertone.] Tell me, mother! how goes it with her?

LADY KIRSTEN. Well enough, as I knew before.

OLAF. Then she knows how to comfort herself?

LADY KIRSTEN. [Smiling.] It seems so. Only wait! This very evening you shall know for certain.

OLAF. What do you mean?

LADY KIRSTEN. I mean that she is a sly witch. All her fair words have been deceitful wiles.

OLAF. No, no, mother!

LADY KIRSTEN. That we shall see! Alfild is happy and gay,—so much I know.

OLAF. It were well for me if she were!

LADY KIRSTEN. [Loudly and clearly.] Lord Arne of Guldvik! Now is the hour come at length which we have all, I imagine, been looking forward to.

HEMMING. [Aside.] Now it begins!

LADY KIRSTEN. Soon will the church bestow its blessing on our children and unite them in a long and loving union.

HEMMING. [Aside, startled.] What now?

LADY KIRSTEN. The terms we have already agreed upon. But I suggest that we here once again seal them with hand and word.

HEMMING. [As before.] Heaven and earth! Is she trying to deceive me?

ARNE. That is not necessary; I stand by my word like an honorable man.

LADY KIRSTEN. That I well know, Lord Arne! but it will take but a moment. First of all, there shall be an end for all time to every quarrel and dispute between our families,—and as for the damages and injuries which our old disagreements have caused on either side, no one shall demand

compensation for them; each must manage them as best he knows how. We promise that, do we not?

ARNE. That we promise!

[General shaking of hands among the relatives of the bridal couple.]

HEMMING. [Softly.] Curses upon you; you lied to me shamefully!

LADY KIRSTEN. Then we mention again, what we are already agreed upon, that the boundary line between Lord Arne's domains and mine shall be moved as far in upon his land as good and impartial men may judge to be fitting and just.

ARNE. Yes, yes, I suppose it must be so!

LADY KIRSTEN. That we promise, then?

THE GUESTS. That we promise!

[Shaking of hands as before.]

LADY KIRSTEN. Finally, Lord Arne shall give in the form of a dowry to his daughter as much silver, linen, and other furnishings as were named and agreed upon at the betrothal feast, all of which shall here be placed in my home from the day Mistress Ingeborg moves herein as my son's lawful wife, which is tonight. On that we are agreed?

THE GUESTS. That we solemnly promise!

[Shaking of hands.]

LADY KIRSTEN. Then let the bride and bridegroom clasp hands and go to the banquet-table and thence to the church.

ARNE. [Aside.] Ah, Hemming can now see whether Lady Kirsten deceives me.

HEMMING. [Softly.] O, then it is all over for me; a fool I was to depend on her.

LADY KIRSTEN. But on this joyful day it is fitting that we make as many as possible happy. And therefore I have a request to make, Lord Arne!

ARNE. Speak forth! If I can I shall gladly comply.

HEMMING. [Aside.] What does she purpose now?

LADY KIRSTEN. There is still a young couple who would like to go to the altar this evening; from what I hear, they are agreed between themselves.

The bride I shall take care of, but the bridegroom you must assist; it is Hemming, your page, and Alfild!

INGEBORG. [With a cry.] Hemming!

OLAF. [Likewise.] Alfild!

HEMMING. O, woe is me! Now I understand—

THE GUESTS. [At the same time.] Hemming and Alfild! The mountain girl!

[Laughter and whispering.]

OLAF. Alfild! You will marry her off to—No, no, it shall not be! Never, never!

LADY KIRSTEN. Be still!—Olaf, my son; be still, I beg you!

ARNE. [To himself.] What's this! Yes, truly, then Hemming was right; there is something between Olaf and Alfild.

ARNE. [Whispering.] Aye, Lady Kirsten! I see your scheme. Now I know why Olaf wandered three days in the mountain, and now you intend to make use of Hemming to be rid of her. Ha, ha!

LADY KIRSTEN. [With forced composure.] Lord Arne! how can you believe such a thing?

ARNE. [In a low tone.] O, I see clearly! Now I should think I had very good reason to break the agreement.

LADY KIRSTEN. [Softly and frightened.] Break the agreement! I beg of you! Will you put us all to shame?

[They talk together softly.]

HEMMING. [To INGEBORG, with whom he has in the meantime been whispering.] That is all there is to it, I swear. Lady Kirsten and I have not understood each other.

INGEBORG. Well, then decline! You shall! I command you.

HEMMING. No, no! I dare not; she will then see that it was you I was thinking of.

INGEBORG. Good; then I shall.

INGEBORG. [Aloud.] Hemming shall not go to the altar with Alfild;—he is too good to marry another man's darling!

OLAF. [With a cry.] For shame!

THE GUESTS. Darling!

ARNE. [To INGEBORG.] What are you saying?

LADY KIRSTEN. Heaven protect us!

OLAF. Cursed be my soul! She is put to shame!

INGEBORG. Yes, loudly I proclaim it: she is another man's darling. Let him gainsay it who dares.

ARNE. Ingeborg!

ARNE. [Aside.] What is the matter with her?

LADY KIRSTEN. [Softly.] So that's the way it is! She then,—she it is who cares for Hemming!

LADY KIRSTEN. [Softly and clearly, to ARNE.] Do you now intend to break the agreement? You can now see for yourself from your daughter's conduct what reason I had to get Hemming married!

ARNE. [Disconcerted.] My daughter! Could you imagine that she—

LADY KIRSTEN. You need not pretend! Ingeborg has a fancy for your house-carl; now I should think I had good reason to break our agreement.

ARNE. Break, break—! What are you thinking of! To bring on me such disgrace!

LADY KIRSTEN. [Mocking.] Yes,—otherwise you would do it!

ARNE. [Quickly.] No, no, I have reconsidered; it is best we both keep still!

LADY KIRSTEN. [To herself.] See, now have I won! I know Olaf; a woman so scorned will never tempt him!

SCENE X

[The Preceding. ALFHILD comes unnoticed out of the storehouse in glittering bridal dress with a crown on her head and her hair flowing.]

ARNE. [Aside.] This has been a cursed day for me! O, he is a cunning dog, this Hemming! He knew that Ingeborg had a fancy for him; it was therefore so galling to him that Olaf should have her.

LADY KIRSTEN. [Who has in the meantime regained her composure.]
And now to the festive hall! Hemming we can think of later. — Olaf, take
your bride by the hand!

ARNE. [Reluctantly, as he sees INGEBORG whisper to HEMMING.]
Where is the bride? Come, come!

ALFHILD AND INGEBORG. [At the same time, as they each seize one of
OLAF's hands.] Here I am!

THE GUESTS. How, — she takes Olaf?

[General amazement.]

LADY KIRSTEN. [Aside.] So far has he gone, then!

LADY KIRSTEN. [Aloud, to ALFHILD.] You are mistaken! That is not your
bridegroom!

ALFHILD. Why, certainly, it is Olaf!

INGEBORG. [Lets go his hand.] If then he has promised her—!

LADY KIRSTEN. [In great agitation.] Olaf is not your bridegroom, I say!
Tell her it yourself, my son!

[OLAF is silent. LADY KIRSTEN's Kinsmen look at each other
embarrassed. ARNE's Relatives draw nearer, angry and threatening.]

LADY KIRSTEN. [With raised voice.] Olaf Liljekrans! Answer loudly and
clearly! You owe it to yourself and to us.

OLAF. [In despair, struggling with himself.] Let it be as you wish then,
mother! Yes, by all the saints! I shall answer. Alfild! you are mistaken! I
am not your bridegroom.

OLAF. [Pointing to INGEBORG.] There—there stands my bride!

ALFHILD. [Withdraws a step or two dumfounded and stares at him.]
She—your—

OLAF. [With rising irritation.] Alfild! go hence! Go, go, far into the
mountain again; 'twill be best for you. I was sick and bewildered in mind
when I wandered up there! What I have told you I little remember! I do not
know and I do not want to know! Do you hear, — I do not want to! — The
golden crown you can keep! Keep all, both the silver and gold, that you
there stand dressed in. More, — yea, tenfold more you shall have. — Well!
why do you stare at me so?

[ALFHILD takes off the crown and the other adornments and places them at OLAF's feet as she continues uninterruptedly to stare at him.]

OLAF. Perhaps I pretended to you that you were to be my bride tonight, perhaps you believed me! Perhaps you thought that Olaf Liljekrans would marry a—a—what was it you called her?

OLAF. [Stamps with his foot.] Do not stare at me so, I say! I know you well enough; you have bewitched me. I forgot my family; I forgot my bride, my betrothed, she who stands there.

OLAF. [Seizes ALFHILD violently by the arm.] Look at her, Alfild! Aha, it is she that I love!

[ALFHILD sinks down on her knees and covers her face with her hands.]

OLAF. Rise, Alfild! rise, I say! If you dare to grieve in this way, I shall kill you!—Why are you not happy? Be merry and wild as I am!—And the rest of you! Why do you stand so silently, looking at one another? Laugh,— laugh loudly, so that it may echo around!—Alfild! Why don't you answer? Have I not told you enough! Aha! Then add, you others, a word to what I have said! Come, say something, you too; Lady Kirsten would like it! Laugh at her, mock her, trample her under your feet!

OLAF. [With ringing laughter.] Ha, ha, ha! She is Olaf's darling!

[ALFHILD sinks down to the ground in such a way that she rests prostrate against the stone bench at the left. A flash of lightning illuminates the scene and the thunder rolls; during the following to the close of the act the darkness and the storm increase.]

OLAF. See, see! That I like; now do the powers above join in! Right now will I ride to the church with my bride! Come, Mistress Ingeborg! But first will we drink,—yes, drink, drink! Bring here the beaker and horn,—not in there—! Light the candles in the church! Let the organ resound; prepare for a dance—not mournful psalms—fie, fie, no, a dance!

[Thunder and lightning.]

OLAF. Ah, it is rumored in heaven that Olaf Liljekrans is celebrating his wedding!

[Rushes out to the right.]

ARNE. Christ save me! his reason is gone!

LADY KIRSTEN. Ah, have no fear; it will soon pass,—I know him.

[Draws ARNE aside with her.]

ARNE. [Gently threatening HEMMING in passing.] O, Hemming, Hemming! You are a sly dog!

[The GUESTS go quietly and gloomily out to the right; the SERVANTS to the left.]

INGEBORG. [Detains HEMMING.] Hemming! I will not go to church with Olaf Liljekrans!

HEMMING. Alas, what will prevent it?

INGEBORG. If it comes to that, I shall say no,—no before the very altar itself, in the presence of all!

HEMMING. Ingeborg!

INGEBORG. Hold my horse saddled and ready!

HEMMING. What! You will—!

INGEBORG. I will! Now I know for the first time how dear you are to me,—now when I stand in danger of losing you. Go,—do as I say, and let me know when it is time.

[She goes out to the right.]

HEMMING. Yes, now am I strong; now I dare venture whatever it be!

[He goes out to the left.]

SCENE XI

[ALFHILD. Later HEMMING, INGEBORG, and others at various times.]

ALFHILD. [Remains lying motionless for a long time with her face concealed in her hands. At length she half raises herself, looks about bewildered, rises, and speaks with quiet broken laughter.]

One falcon the heavens with plenty may bless,
Another must suffer great want and distress!
One bird wears a coat of feathers so gay,
Another must live contented with gray!
I have known that tears are a balm to the soul,
When the world is nothing but gall;
But now I have suffered such sorrow and dole,

I could laugh myself dead at the thought of it all!

[It is now quite dark. The windows of the church are being lighted up. ALFHILD goes over to the house and listens while the following song is heard faintly within.]

CHORUS OF WEDDING GUESTS.

Hail to the bridegroom and hail to the bride!
There's feasting and joy everywhere.
Lord Olaf, all hail! a knight who can ride,
And Ingeborg a lady so fair!

HEMMING. [Steals in from the left during the song.] The horse stands saddled and ready! Now a secret sign to Ingeborg and then away!

[He goes out to the right to the rear of the house.]

ALFHILD.

His health from the silvery cup they drink,
The bride sits proudly enthroned at his side;
The candles of wax on the altar now wink,
Soon out to the church they will ride!
Within at the banquet sit host and guest
And laugh as they bandy the merry jest!
But here I must wander alone in the night,
Alas, they have all forsaken me quite!
Olaf! The storm is rending my hair!
The rain beats against me wherever I fare!
Olaf, Olaf! Can you see me thus languish
Beneath this unspeakable torture and anguish?

[She laughs.]

ALFHILD.

But rain or storm is a trifling thing,
'Tis as nothing beside the poignant sting
I suffer within my breast.—
My home and my father and all the rest
I left for Olaf, the friend I loved best!
He swore to me then I should be his bride!
And I came—God's love I felt in my soul;
But he drove me away, he thrust me aside;

So loudly he laughed when I writhed in dole!
While they banquet within, like a dog I must stay
Out here in the storm. Hence,—hence I will go!

[Starts to go, but stops.]

ALFHILD.

But I have not the power, I cannot go away;
Here must I stay and suffer my woe!
'Tis little the flowers out there in the wood
Can tear themselves up from the ground!
And Olaf, whether he be false or good,—
About him my roots I have wound.

[Pause.—The HOUSE SERVANTS come with torches from the left.]

ALFHILD. [As if seized by an uneasy presentiment.] Whither do you go?
Whither, whither? What is going to happen?

A SERVANT. Why, see, see! It is Alfhild; she is still here!

ALFHILD. O, tell me this! What is going to happen,—why all these
preparations?

THE SERVANT. The wedding! Wouldn't you care to see it?

ALFHILD. [In feverish anxiety.] The wedding! O, no, no! Put it off, only till
tomorrow! If the wedding is held, then is everything over with me, I well
know!

THE SERVANT. Postpone it! No, Alfhild! 'Tis not, I'm afraid, the wish of
bridegroom or bride!

ANOTHER. Think for a moment! Were you yourself but the bride, you
surely would not want to wait.

[Laughter.]

THE FIRST SERVANT. Now we go down to the gate at the church to
light the way with red bridal lights when the procession starts from the
house.

THE SECOND SERVANT. Come along with us, Alfhild! You shall also
have a torch to carry!

SEVERAL. Yes, yes, you must come! It is Lord Olaf's day of glory!

[Laughter.]

ALFHILD. [Takes one of the torches.] Yes, yes, I will! As the most humble in the row I shall stand down there, and then, when he sees me, when I ask of him, when I remind him of everything he has promised and sworn,—O, tell me, tell me, do you not think that he will be kind to me again? Do you think so? O, tell me you do! Say that you think so!

THE SERVANTS. Aha,—for certain he will; now come!

[They go out to the right to the rear of the house.]

ALFHILD. [Bursts into tears.]
They mock at me, laugh at me,—one and all!
So harsh is not even the mountain wall;
The moss thereon is permitted to grow;
There's no one so kind to me here! I—I must go!

[Thunder and lightning.]

ALFHILD. Ah, heaven itself is angry and grim,
It pours out its wrath on my wretched head;
But flash there is none to annihilate him
Who craftily tricked me in all that he said!

[The tones of the organ are heard from within the church.]

ALFHILD. O, listen! I hear God's angel choir!
'Tis Olaf to the altar they call!
And I must stand here in my ragged attire
And suffer outside the church-hall!

[She swings the torch high in the air.]

ALFHILD. No, no, that I will not, thou all-highest God!
O, tempt me no longer, forswear thee I may!

[She is silent and listens to the organ music.]

ALFHILD. God's angels are singing! From under the sod
The dead they were able to carol away!
O, my bosom is bursting with woe!

[She kneels and faces the church.]

ALFHILD. Cease, cease your melodies tender and sweet!

O, cease your singing; be kind, I entreat!
Or Olaf to the altar will go!

[Whispering and in the greatest apprehension.]

ALFHILD. Be still! O, be still! For a little while yet!
He is lulled in a sleep that will make him forget!
O, waken him not, else straight he will hie
To the church—and then, alas, I must die!

[The organ grows louder through the storm. ALFHILD springs up, beside herself with despair.]

The angels of God have forsaken me quite!
They mock at my anguish and woe!
They conjure him forth;—he is now in their might!
Ah, if here in the dark, dark night I must go,
Your bridal chamber at least shall be light!

[She throws the torch in through the opening in the gable and falls down on the ground.—INGEBORG and HEMMING come hurriedly from behind the house.]

HEMMING. Now it is time. The horse stands saddled behind the store house.

INGEBORG. And all the servants are down at the church, are they not?

HEMMING. Aye, rest you assured; and in the banquet house I have barred every shutter and door with heavy iron rings; no one can get out!

INGEBORG. Away, then! Up to the valley which Alfhild has told of!

HEMMING. Yes, up there! There no one will seek us!

[They rush out to the left.—ALFHILD continues to lie motionless for some time. Suddenly cries and commotion are heard in the bridal house; the flames break out through the roof.]

ALFHILD. [Jumps up in despair.]

It burns!—Aha,—I remember! 'T was here
Too dark for my soul—it filled me with fear!
Olaf, before it was you who smiled,
Now it is Alfhild, so gay and so wild!—
In the bridal house there is anguish and gloom,

The bride is burning on the arm of the groom!

[The HOUSE SERVANTS rush in one by one without torches and stand as if turned to stone. OLAF comes into view up in the opening, which he seeks to widen with desperate efforts.]

OLAF.

Alfhild! 'Tis you! So might I have known!
If only from out of this danger you save me,
'T is silver and gold you shall hereafter own!

ALFHILD. [With wild laughter.]

Too well I remember the promise you gave me!
Now ride to the church with minstrel and priest!
Now hold your wedding, — forget all the rest!
Alfhild has honored you as she knew best, —
The torch she has swung at your bridal feast!

[She rushes out at the back. The SERVANTS hasten to lend their help; a part of the roof falls in; OLAF is seen high amidst the flames as the curtain falls.]

THIRD ACT

[A sunny valley, rich in flowers, trees, and vegetation of all kinds, and surrounded by lofty snow-capped mountains. In the center of the background a quiet mountain tarn; on the left side a rocky cliff which drops straight down to the water. On the same side nearer the front of the stage a very old log hut, almost entirely hidden in the dense shrubbery. The glow of dawn shines over the mountains; in the valley itself the day is only half begun; during the following scene's the sun rises.]

SCENE I

[ALFHILD lies sleeping and half concealed among the bushes beside the hut; soft music indicates her shifting dreams. OLAF comes down the hillside to the right. Over his wedding clothes he wears a coarse cloak.]

OLAF. Here it was; I know the green there this side of the tarn. It was yonder beneath the linden tree that I dreamed my strange dream. On the slope of the mountain there I stood when Alfild for the first time came to meet me; I placed my betrothal ring on the string of my bow and shot;— that shot has proved a magic shot; it struck the huntsman himself.

OLAF. It is strange that when I wander up here, far from the village below, it seems as if another atmosphere played around me, as if a more vigorous blood flowed in my veins, as if I had another mind, another soul.

OLAF. Where is she now?

OLAF. I shall,—I will find her again! Up here she must come; she has no home out there in the cold wide world. And I—am I not also a homeless fugitive? Did I not become a stranger in my mother's house, a stranger among my kinsmen, the very first hour I met her?

OLAF. Is she then a witch,—has she power over secret arts as—?

OLAF. My mother! Hm! It seems to me it would scarcely be well for me to allow her to manage my life; she insinuates thoughts into my heart which do not belong there. No, no, I will find Alfild again and ask forgiveness for the wrong I have done, and then—

[He stops and looks out to the left.]

SCENE II

OLAF. (Alfild still sleeping. Thorgjerd comes from behind the hut on the left.)

OLAF. Well met, stranger!

THORGJERD. Thanks, the same to you. You are early about!

OLAF. Or late; early in the morning, but late in the night.

THORGJERD. You belong in the village below, I take it.

OLAF. My family lives there. And you?

THORGJERD. Wherever the mind is at rest, there is one at home; that is why I like best to wander in here;—my neighbors shall not do me any injustice.

OLAF. That I have noticed.

THORGJERD. Then you have been here before?

OLAF. I chased a hind this summer in here; but when I look closely I see 'tis a royal child that has been bewitched.

THORGJERD. [Looks at him sharply.] That hunt is dangerous!

OLAF. For the hunter?

[THORGJERD nods.]

OLAF. I was sitting and thinking the same thing myself; it seems to me that I was bewitched on that hunt.

THORGJERD. Farewell and good luck to you!

OLAF. Out upon you! If you wish a huntsman good luck he will never come within shot of the prey.

THORGJERD. If the shot should strike the hunter himself, the best luck that could happen to him would be to have no luck at all.

OLAF. You speak wisely.

THORGJERD. Yes, yes; there is many a thing to be learned in here.

OLAF. Too true! I have learned here the best that I know.

THORGJERD. Farewell! I'll take greetings from you to your kinsmen.

OLAF. You mean to go down?

THORGJERD. Such was my purpose. These are merry days down there, I am told. A mighty knight is celebrating his wedding—

OLAF. Then you should have been there last night; now I fear the best part of the fun is past.

THORGJERD. I dare say I'll come in time even yet.

OLAF. Perhaps! But still you should have been there last night; so bright and so warm a festive hall you never have seen before.

THORGJERD. It was well for him who was within.

OLAF. I know one who had to stand outside.

THORGJERD. Yes, yes, outside,—that is the poor man's place.

OLAF. I know one who had to stand outside and who nevertheless was both worse off and better off than those within.

THORGJERD. I must go down,—I see that clearly; I shall play for the guests. Now I shall fetch my harp, and then—

OLAF. You are a minstrel?

THORGJERD. And not among the worst. Now shall I fetch my harp from where it lies hidden near the waterfall; those strings you should hear. With them I sat once on the edge of the bed and played the bride out of the festive hall over ridge and field.—Have you never heard little Ingrid's lay? He who could play the bride out of the bridegroom's arms can surely play his child home to her father again. Farewell! If you linger here we may meet again when I get down there.

[He goes out to the right by the tarn.]

SCENE III

[OLAF. ALFHILD.]

OLAF. Ah, if it were—for certain I cannot doubt it. Alfild herself said that her father played such music that no one who heard it could ever forget. He mentioned Lady Ingrid who disappeared on the eve of her wedding many years ago,—there was a young minstrel named Thorgjerd who loved her, so went the story. Many a strange tale was afterwards current about him; at times he stood right in the midst of the village and played so beautifully that all who heard it had to weep; but no one knew where he made his home. Alfild—yes, she is his child! Here she has grown up, here in this desolate valley, which no one has known of by name for many a year; and Ingrid, who disappeared—indeed, he said—

[Becomes aware of ALFHILD.]

OLAF. Alfild! There she is! In her wedding garments she has fled up here. Here then shall you awaken after the bridal night; so sorry a day to you was my day of honor. You wished to go out into life, you said; you wanted to learn to know all the love in the world. So sorry a journey you had, but I swear it shall all be well again. She moves; it is as if she were writhing in sorrow and anguish;—when you awaken, it shall be to joy and delight!

ALFHILD. [Still half in dreams.]

It burns! Oh, save him,—he is within!
He must not die! Life anew he must win!

[She jumps up in fright; the music ceases.]

ALFHILD. Where am I! He stands here before me, it seems!

Olaf Liljekrans! save me from my dreams!

OLAF. Alfhild! take heart, here you need fear no harm!

ALFHILD. [Moves away, fearfully and apprehensively.]

You think with sweet words my soul to beguile?

In your heart there is evil, though with lips you may smile,

On me you shall nevermore practice your charm!

OLAF. Alfhild! be calm, do not start;

'Tis Olaf I am, the friend of your heart!

Unkind I have been, I have treated you ill;

But deep in my heart I was faithful to you!

I was blind and deluded and weak of will,—

And thus I did wound you far more than I knew!

O, can you forgive me? Alfhild, you must,—

I swear to you I shall be worthy your trust!

I shall bear you aloft and smooth your way,

And kiss from your cheek the tears of dole,

The grief in your heart I shall try to allay,

And heal the wound that burns in your soul!

ALFHILD. I know you too well and your cunning disguise.

Since last I did see you I too have grown wise.

You would have me believe with your wily speech

It is you for whom I now suffer and languish.

You would have me believe it was you that did teach

Me to revel in joy and to writhe in anguish.

'Twill profit you little, I know you too well,

Whether early or late you come to my dell.

I know you too well; for deceit on your brow

I can read. Not so was the other, I vow!

OLAF. The other? Whom mean you?

ALFHILD. He that is dead!

'Tis therefore I suffer so bitter a dread.

You don't understand? You must know there were two;

And that is why peace I shall nevermore find!

The one was all love, so good and so true,

The other was evil, faithless, unkind;

The one to me came on a late summer day,

When my heart burst in flower and bloom;
The other led me in the mountain astray,
Where all things are shrouded in gloom!
'Tis the evil one, you, that has come again;
The other who loved me, so good and so kind,
The one who will never be out of my mind,—
Ah, him have I slain!

[She sinks down on a stone near the house and busts into tears.]

OLAF. Has he stolen your peace, has he robbed you of rest,
Then why let him longer dwell there in your breast!

ALFHILD. Alas, were I laid in the grave far below,
With me, I am sure, my sorrow would go!
I knew it not then,—to you do I swear,
I thought it was little for him I did care;
Now I see I must die of a grief-broken heart,
Yet his image will never depart!

[A short pause.]

ALFHILD. Have you chords in your bosom that you can command?
It seems so; your voice sounds so pleasant and sweet;
Pleasant—though blended it is with deceit.
Have you chords in your breast, then go round in the land
And sing of Alfhild a plaintive lay
To the village girls you meet on the way:

Only yesterday I was so little a roe,
I roamed in the green groves around;
They came to the forest with arrow and bow,
And chased me with falcon and hound!

Only yesterday I was a bird so forlorn,
I sat 'neath the linden alone;
They drove me away from the place I was born,
And threw at me stone after stone.

Only yesterday I was an untamed dove,
Which nowhere finds peace or rest;
They came from below, they came from above,
And pierced with an arrow my breast!

OLAF. [Deeply moved.]
Alas, that I lay in the grave below.
Lulled in eternal rest!
Your every word is a steel-made bow
That strikes with an arrow my breast!

ALFHILD. [Jumps up with childlike joy.]
Just so it shall be, — 'tis rightfully so!
Yes, truly, indeed, have you chords in your breast!
So let it be sung; they easily show
That you are yourself by my sorrow oppressed.
They show that your own grief is just as strong
As the one that you voice in your plaintive song!

[She stops and looks sorrowfully at him.]

ALFHILD. Yet no, — you shall not sing of Alfhild's lament;
What stranger is there whom my sorrow will move!
From whence I came, and whither I went
There is no one out there who shall question or prove!
Sing rather of Olaf Liljekrans,
Who wandered astray in the elf-maidens' dance!
Sing of Alfhild, the false and unkind,
Who drove his betrothed quite out of his mind;
And sing of all the sorrow and fear,
When dead Olaf Liljekrans lay on the bier.
Sing of all the weeping below,
When away they carried the three who had died!
The one was Olaf, the other his bride!
The third was his mother who perished of woe.

OLAF. Yes, Olaf is dead; it is just as you say;
But I shall be now so faithful a friend;
Wherever you dwell, wherever you wend,
From your side I shall nevermore stray!
May I suffer in full for the sin I committed, —
Atonement to me shall be sweet.
'Twill comfort me much if I be permitted
To roam with you here in some far-off retreat!
From early dawn till the end of day,
Like a faithful hound I shall follow your lead!
I shall clothe my remorse in so plaintive a lay

Till finally you shall believe me indeed.
Each moment we spent here in ecstasy
I shall call up again to your memory!
Each flower that blooms shall speak it anew,
The cuckoo and swallow shall sing it to you!
The trees that grow here in the forest so green
Shall whisper thereof both soft and serene!

ALFHILD. Enough! You would only beguile me anew;
Far better were it for you now to depart!
So fair is the falsehood I see within you,
So faithless the thoughts that dwell in your heart!
What would you up here? What is it you want?
You think that you know the place that you haunt?
So pleasant a spot was this valley of yore,
A curse lies upon it forevermore!
In the past, when lone in the forest I went,
The leaves on the trees had so fragrant a scent!
The flowers bloomed forth on my every side,
When you pressed me to you and called me your bride!
But now—the whole valley is burned in the night;
The trees are burned to the left and the right;
The straw and the leaves are withered away,
Each flower is turned to a dusty gray!—

ALFHILD. Yes, clearly I see,—in a single night
Is the world become old!—When I wandered below
All alone, and sank down 'neath my shame and my woe,
Then faded the world and its golden delight.
All things but deceit have vanished away;
So much have I learned on my bridal day!
My father lied; he was wrong when he said
The dead are borne to the dwelling of God;
But Olaf knew better the fate of the dead:
The dead sink below, far under the sod!

ALFHILD. [She breaks out in deepest agony.]
Ah, well do I see now you knew what you did;
For low in the grave my body is hid.

OLAF. Alfild! Your words deal so crushing a blow!
O, God! was your heart once so young and so bold—
Forgive me my sin and forget all your woe!

ALFHILD. [With marked and increasing bewilderment.]
Hush, do not speak to me! Olaf, behold!
A corpse they carry, to the grave they creep;
But no mother is there, no children who weep,
No pillows are there of blue or of red, —
Alfhild on shavings and straw lies dead!
I shall never ride now to the heaven above,
And awake in the arms of the God of love.
No mother have I whose heart will break,
No one who follows and weeps for my sake;
No person have I in the world so wide,
Who weeps for me at the bier, —
No angels to scatter on every side
Blue pearls in the heavenly sphere;
And ne'er shall I reach the dwelling of God,
Where the dead dream only of mirth!

OLAF. Alfhild!

ALFHILD. They lower me under the sod!
They cover me over with earth!
And here must I lie with all my dread,
Must live and suffer although I be dead:
Must know there is nothing now left for me,
Yet cannot forget, nor fight myself free;
Must hear when he whom my love I gave
Rides off to the church right over my grave;
Must hear him forever suffer and languish,
And yet can not lessen his anguish!
O, how my bosom is filled with despair!
The angels of God have forgotten my prayer!
They heed no longer my weeping and woe—
The portal is closed to the heavenly bliss—
Dig me up again! Let me not lie here below!

[She rushes out to the left.]

OLAF. Alfhild! Alfhild! O, Christ, what is this?

[He follows her quickly.]

SCENE IV

[INGEBORG and HEMMING enter, after a pause, from the right.]

INGEBORG. Well, here we are up here! How lovely and bright and peaceful it is!

HEMMING. Yes, here we shall live happily together!

INGEBORG. But mark you well that you are my servant, and nothing else,—until my father has given his consent.

HEMMING. That he will never do!

INGEBORG. Never you mind,—we'll find some means or other.—But now we must think about choosing a cabin to live in.

HEMMING. There are plenty of them around here. Over the whole valley there are deserted huts; everything is just the same as it was when the last people died in the terrible plague many years ago.

INGEBORG. Here I like it very much! Over there, too, there is just such an old hut; the water is near by, and the forest must surely be alive with game. You can fish and hunt; aye, we shall live a wonderful life!

HEMMING. Yea, forsooth, a wonderful life! I shall fish and hunt the while you gather berries and keep the house in order.

INGEBORG. Do I? No, that you must take care of!

HEMMING. Yes, yes, as you please. O, a delightful life we shall live!

[Stops and adds somewhat dejectedly.]

HEMMING. But when I stop to think a bit;—I have neither bow nor fishing outfit.

INGEBORG. [Likewise with an expression of despondency.] And it occurs to me there are no servants here who can help me.

HEMMING. That shall I willingly do!

INGEBORG. No, thanks.—And all my good clothes—I didn't bring anything along except my bridal gown which I am wearing.

HEMMING. That was thoughtless of you!

INGEBORG. True enough, Hemming! And for that reason you shall steal down to Guldvik some night and bring me clothes and other things as much as I have need of.

HEMMING. And be hanged as a thief!

INGEBORG. No, you shall be careful and cautious, — that I warn you. But when finally the long winter comes? There are no people up here, — music and dancing we shall never have—Hemming! Shall we stay here or—

HEMMING. Well, where else is there we can go?

INGEBORG. [Impatiently.] Yes, but human beings cannot live here!

HEMMING. Why, surely, they can!

INGEBORG. Well, you see yourself they are all of them dead! Hemming! I think it best I go home to my father.

HEMMING. But what will become of me?

INGEBORG. You shall go to war!

HEMMING. To war! And be killed!

INGEBORG. Not at all! You shall perform some illustrious deed, and then will you be made a knight, and then will my father no longer be opposed to you.

HEMMING. Yes, but what if they kill me in the meantime?

INGEBORG. Well, we'll have plenty of time to think about that. Today and tomorrow we shall have to remain here, I suppose; so long will the guests sit in the festive house and celebrate, — if they look for us, it will probably be about in the village; up here we can be safe and—

[She stops and listens.]

CHORUS. [Far away off the stage to the right.]

Away, — away to find
Alfhild, the false, unkind;
For all our woe and strife
She must pay with her life!

HEMMING. Ingeborg! Ingeborg! They are after us!

INGEBORG. Where shall we find refuge?

HEMMING. Well, how can I know—

INGEBORG. Go into the hut; lock the door so that it can be bolted from within.

HEMMING. Yes, but—

INGEBORG. Do as I say! I shall go up on the hill the meanwhile and see if they are far away.

[She goes out to the right.]

HEMMING. Yes, yes! Alas, if only they don't get us!

[He goes into the house.]

SCENE V

[OLAF comes from the forest to the left. Immediately afterwards INGEBORG from the right.]

OLAF. [Looks about and calls softly.] Alfild! Alfild! She is nowhere to be seen! Like a bird she disappeared from my view into the wood and I—

INGEBORG. They are right close and—

[Stops, frightened.]

INGEBORG. Olaf Liljekrans!

OLAF. Ingeborg!

HEMMING. [Sticks his head out of the door and spies OLAF.] Lord Olaf! So! Now is it surely all up with me!

[Withdraws hastily.]

INGEBORG. [Aside.] He must have ridden in advance of the rest.

OLAF. [Aside.] She must have come up here with her father to look for me.

INGEBORG. [Aside.] But I will not go with him!

OLAF. [Aside.] I will not stir from here!

INGEBORG. [Aloud, as she draws nearer.] Olaf Liljekrans! Now you have me; but you will do ill if you try to compel me.

OLAF. That is furthest from my mind!

INGEBORG. Why then come you here in company with my kinsmen?

OLAF. Do I? On the contrary, it is you who—

INGEBORG. That invention won't fool me; only a moment ago I saw the whole crowd—

OLAF. Who? Who?

INGEBORG. My father and our relatives!

OLAF. Up here?

INGEBORG. Why, yes, right close at hand!

OLAF. Ah, then is my mother with them.

INGEBORG. Of course, she is with them. But how can that frighten you?

OLAF. You see,—it is I they seek!

INGEBORG. No, it is I!

OLAF. [Astonished.] You!

INGEBORG. [Begins to grasp the connection.] Or—wait a moment—Ha, ha, ha! What an idea! Come, shall we two be honest with each other?

OLAF. Yes, that is exactly what I had in mind!

INGEBORG. Well, then, tell me, at what hour came you up here?

OLAF. During the night!

INGEBORG. I, too!

OLAF. You!

INGEBORG. Yes, yes! And you went away without any one's knowing it?

OLAF. Yes!

INGEBORG. I, too!

OLAF. But tell me—

INGEBORG. Hush, we have only a moment or two! And you fled up here because you had but little desire to go to the altar with me?

OLAF. Aye, how can you think—

INGEBORG. Yes, that I can easily think. Answer me now; we were to speak honestly.

OLAF. Well, then, it was therefore that I—

INGEBORG. Well and good, I did likewise!

OLAF. You, Ingeborg!

INGEBORG. And now you would rather not have any one come upon your tracks?

OLAF. Well, it can't be denied!

INGEBORG. I, too! Aha, — 'tis a jolly coincidence; I fled from you, and you from me! We both fled up here, and now just as our relatives are after us we meet again! Listen, Olaf Liljekrans! Say we promise not to betray one another!

OLAF. I promise.

INGEBORG. But now we must part!

OLAF. I understand!

INGEBORG. For, if they found us together, then —

OLAF. Yes, then it would be still more difficult for you to be rid of me!

INGEBORG. Farewell! If ever I come to have a wedding you shall be my bride's man.

OLAF. And if anything like that should happen to me, you will, I am sure, accommodate me in the same way.

INGEBORG. Of course! Farewell! Farewell! And do not think unkindly of me.

OLAF. Indeed not; I shall give you my hand wherever we meet!

INGEBORG. I, too! Wherever we meet — only not at the altar.

[She goes into the house. OLAF goes into the forest on the right at the back.]

SCENE VI

[LADY KIRSTEN, ARNE of Guldvik, WEDDING GUESTS, PEASANTS and SERVANTS from the right.]

LADY KIRSTEN. See, here will we begin the hunt. Our people must spread about and search all around the tarn; — she shall come forth and then — woe upon her! no mercy or pity is there in my soul.

ARNE. What will you do then?

LADY KIRSTEN. Hold judgment upon her—right on the spot where she is found! All the damage she has done on my dominions I have power and authority to punish in accordance with reason and justice.

ARNE. Yes, but what good is that? What is lost can not thereby be won back again.

LADY KIRSTEN. No, but I shall get revenge, and that is no little gain. Revenge,—revenge I must have, if I am to bear and live down my loss and all the shame she has brought upon me. The storm last night ruined the whole of my year's crop; not a single uninjured straw is left in my fields; and in here, where she herself has said she has her home, here everything thrives and blossoms more luxuriantly than I have ever seen! Is not that the operation of secret arts? Olaf she has snared so securely in her devilish net that he fled out of the village in the wildest storm to follow her. My house she burned clear to the ground; all the openings and doors she barred on the outside;—it was a miracle of God that the servants brought their timely help!

ARNE. Alas, alas; I am afraid it has cost two lives that I thought much of,—Ingeborg and my man Hemming!

LADY KIRSTEN. Come, come, Lord Arne! You must not completely despair of them yet. Ingeborg may have escaped after all; the rest of us came out of it untouched in spite of the cunning of the cursed witch;—Ingeborg has been bewildered with fright and has sought refuge somewhere.

ARNE. Yes, yes, that may be the case with Ingeborg; but Hemming is past all hope,—of that I am sure!

LADY KIRSTEN. How so?

ARNE. O, he had become such a sly and contriving devil of late! He has let himself be shut in and burnt merely to get revenge over me; he knows I can't get along for a single day without him. O, I know him!

LADY KIRSTEN. Well, however it is, Alfhild we must capture; she shall be tried, condemned, and punished; I have misdeeds a plenty to charge her with.

ARNE. And I can mention a few in case it is necessary; she has stolen my dapple-gray horse from the stable; this morning it was gone with saddle and bridle.

LADY KIRSTEN. [Aside.] Ingeborg and Hemming gone, and his horse likewise; were I in his place I should know what to think.

LADY KIRSTEN. [Aloud.] Now let us divide and go about in small groups; he who first gets his eye on Alfild shall blow the trumpet or horn; let the rest listen and follow the sound till we are assembled again.

[They go out at different sides.]

ARNE. [Who alone has remained.] And I, who am not acquainted here,— how am I to find my way.

ARNE. [Calls.] Hemming! Hemming!

[Stops.]

ARNE. I forgot,— he is—

ARNE. [Shaking his head.] Hm! It was a shameful trick he played.

[He goes out to the right.]

SCENE VII

[ALFHILD appears near the tarn to the left; she carries a little bundle.]

ALFHILD. I have wailed, I have wept, till my heart is sore;
I am weary and tired, I can weep no more!

[Sinks down on a stone in the foreground.]

ALFHILD. First to my father farewell I shall say!
Then into the mountains I make my way!
Down here I see Olaf wherever I go;
I must up in the heights to steel my mind!
I must deaden my grief, forget what I know,
And leave all the memories dear behind!

ALFHILD. The life in my dream had so rosy a hue!
'Tis nothing but fiction, nothing is true,—
'Tis nothing but nonsense and shifting lies;
Naught can be seized and held in the hand.
Naught must be looked at with open eyes,
Nothing stands proof when we understand!

[The sound of trumpets is heard from the wood.]

ALFHILD. My mother's heirlooms I take with me;
I shall bury them deep in the ground!
I shall bury them deep 'neath the tall birch tree,
Over yonder where Olaf I found!

[She opens her bundle and takes out a bridal crown and other ornaments.]

ALFHILD. This crown did my mother once wear on her head;
She too by the world then was tricked and misled,
She too then in love and its power believed.
Was she too so rudely deceived?
Was it only in jest that my father did sing
The pleasures that gladden the human breast?
Ah, then he should never have said anything;
His songs have robbed me of earthly rest;
His songs built a home for the ecstasies
Of life in my heart, — now in ruin it lies!

[The trumpets are heard again.]

ALFHILD. Silver indeed is a metal of worth,
'Twill never crumble like autumn hay.
Were it hid for a thousand years in the earth,
It would still glitter bright, it would never decay!
The pleasures of life are like autumn hay,
And sorrow like silver that glitters away!

[Ties the ornaments together in the bundle.]

ALFHILD. A magic treasure I often recall,
From which dropped nine glorious pearls every night;
But no matter how many the pearls it let fall,
The treasure remained just as big and as bright!

ALFHILD. A treasure of magic, this sorrow of mine,
And from it shall drip by night and by day,
Not nine, — but ten thousand pearls that shine, —
Yet the treasure shall never decay! —
Yes, the world has made me so wise, — so wise!
Once I followed the clouds in their flight,
Flew dreaming with them on their path in the skies,
And called them the swans of the light!

I thought that the trees spread their branches so wide,
That I might walk in the shade;
I thought there was life in the mountain side.
A sorry mistake I have made.
Now I know better;—for man alone
Can revel in joy, can suffer despair.
In tree and in flower, friend there is none,—
My sorrow alone I must bear.

[She rises.]

ALFHILD. Away then! Up midst the ice and the snow,—
The grave is the only shelter below!

[She starts to leave.]

SCENE VIII

[ALFHILD, LADY KIRSTEN, ARNE, WEDDING GUESTS, PEASANTS and SERVANTS from various sides. Later OLAF LILJEKRANS.]

LADY KIRSTEN. There she is! Stand still, Alfild! Do not try to escape,—
else we shall shoot you.

ALFHILD. What do you want of me?

LADY KIRSTEN. That you shall learn soon enough.

LADY KIRSTEN. [Points to her bundle.] What is this you are carrying?

ALFHILD. My mother's treasures!

LADY KIRSTEN. Give it here! See, see! A crown of silver! Indeed, Alfild!
If you are your mother's only daughter I am very much afraid the bridal
crown will nevermore be needed in her family.

LADY KIRSTEN. [To the Servants.] Bind her! She stands there and
pretends to be sad; no one can know what she is scheming.

[ALFHILD is bound.]

LADY KIRSTEN. [Aloud and with suppressed passion.] The court is
ready. As you all know, I have a legal and prescriptive right to protect my
dominions, to pass judgment in accordance with the law of the realm on
every one who does me harm on my own lands. This is what you, Alfild,

have presumed to do, and it is therefore that you now stand here accused before your judge. Defend yourself if you can, but do not forget it is a matter of life and death.

ARNE. But listen, Lady Kirsten!

LADY KIRSTEN. Excuse me, Lord Arne! I am within my rights here, and I intend to insist on them.

LADY KIRSTEN. [To ALFHILD.] Come forward and answer me!

ALFHILD. Do you but question me, — I shall answer!

LADY KIRSTEN. Many and grievous are the charges that are directed against you. First and foremost I charge you here with having beguiled my son, Olaf Liljekrans, with your unholy arts, so that he turned heart and soul away from his betrothed to whom he was pledged, — so that he, sick in heart, never at any time found peace in his home, but came up here to this unknown valley where you have had your home. All this could not have happened in any ordinary way; you are therefore accused of witchcraft, — defend yourself if you can.

ALFHILD. I have little to say in answer to this. Witchcraft you call that strange power that drew Olaf up here. Perhaps you are right; but this witchcraft was not of evil; — every hour that Olaf has been here God must surely have witnessed! Each thought that I have had of Olaf the angels of God must have known! And they had no occasion to blush.

LADY KIRSTEN. Enough, enough! You would add blasphemy to your transgression! Woe upon you, Alfhild! Your every word only adds weight to the scales. Yet, that is your affair!

LADY KIRSTEN. [To the rest.] I crave you all as witnesses to her answer.

[Turns to ALFHILD.]

LADY KIRSTEN. I charge you next with having again, this very night, with the aid of these same secret powers, met Olaf up here, and furthermore that you keep him concealed in here!

ALFHILD. There you are right! Secretly is he hidden here!

LADY KIRSTEN. You admit it?

ALFHILD. Yes, but however powerful you are, you will never be able to set him free. Perhaps it would be best for me if you were able; but neither you nor the whole wide world have the power to set him free!

LADY KIRSTEN. [In a violent outburst.] Now death will certainly be your punishment! Out with it, — where have you got him?

ALFHILD. [Presses her hands to her bosom.] In here—in my heart! If you can tear him out from it you can practice witchcraft better than I!

LADY KIRSTEN. That answer is nothing. Out with it, — where is he?

ALFHILD. I have answered!

LADY KIRSTEN. [With repressed irritation.] Good!

ARNE. [To the spectators.] Were Hemming alive he would have been able to get the truth out of her; he had become so crafty of late.

LADY KIRSTEN. Now the third charge against you: last night you set fire to my house and burned it clear to the ground. Perhaps human life has been lost, — that we not know as yet, — but whether or no, it will neither harm nor help your cause; for your intention to burn all of us is as clear as day. Do you deny my charge that you set fire to my home last night?

ALFHILD. I do not deny it; I have destroyed your house!

LADY KIRSTEN. And how will you extenuate your action?

LADY KIRSTEN. [With bitter mockery.] You shall not be able to say that you acted over hastily. Good opportunity you had, so far as I can remember, to stop and consider; you stood outside there, no one came near you, no one prevented you from deliberating as calmly as you could. Nor shall you say that the merriment of the festive occasion went to your head, nor that the wine distracted you; for you were not on the inside at all; you stood on the outside, and it was cool enough there, — the biting wind should have made you sober.

ALFHILD. Yes, I destroyed your house last night; but you and Olaf and all the rest of you out there have done me a greater wrong. The world was to me a festive hall which belonged to the Great Father. The blue heaven was its roof, the stars were the lamps that shone from its ceiling. I wandered happy and rich in all this; but you, you threw a brand right in the midst of this golden splendor; now is everything withered and dead!

LADY KIRSTEN. Such talk will profit you little! Still once more I ask, where is Olaf Liljekrans, my son?

ALFHILD. I have answered!

LADY KIRSTEN. Then you have also passed your own sentence, and I shall confirm it.

[OLAF appears on the rocky cliff among the trees, unnoticed by the rest.]

OLAF. [Aside.] Alfild! God help me! What is that?

[Withdraws unseen.]

LADY KIRSTEN. You have, in accordance with the law of the land, incurred the penalty of death as guilty of witchcraft and arson. This sentence is herewith pronounced upon you, and forthwith right here on the spot it shall be executed.

ARNE. But listen, Lady Kirsten!

LADY KIRSTEN. Judgment is pronounced! Alfild shall die!

ALFHILD. Do as you please; little shall I be of hindrance to you. When Olaf denied his love, then ceased my life,—I live no longer.

LADY KIRSTEN. Take her up on the rocky ledge over there.

[Two Servants take ALFHILD up.]

LADY KIRSTEN. For the last time, Alfild! Give me back my son!

ALFHILD. I will answer no more!

LADY KIRSTEN. Just as you please!

LADY KIRSTEN. [To the Servants.] Cast her down! No, wait! I have an idea!

LADY KIRSTEN. [To ALFHILD.] As you stand there, I remember you again as you yesterday came forward with the golden crown and thought you were worthy to be Olaf Liljekrans' bride. Now we soon shall see how much you are worth; there are present here peasants and servants and many humble men;—perhaps your life can still be saved! Yes, Alfild! You stare at me, but so it is; I will be merciful to you!

LADY KIRSTEN. (Turns to the rest.) You all know the old custom, that when a woman is sentenced to death for a capital offence, as she is, her life will be saved and she will be free if an irreproachable man comes forth and upholds her innocence and declares himself ready and willing to marry her. That custom you know?

ALL. Yes, yes!

ALFHILD. [Bursting into tears.] O, to be mocked,—mocked so terribly in my last hour!

LADY KIRSTEN. Well then, Alfild! This custom you shall have the benefit of. If the most humble man in my company comes forth and declares himself willing to marry you, then are you free.

LADY KIRSTEN. [Looks about.] Is there no one who applies?

[All are silent.]

LADY KIRSTEN. Give her the silver crown; that shall go in the bargain; perhaps, Alfild, you will then rise in value!

[The crown is placed on ALFHILD's head.]

LADY KIRSTEN. For the second time I ask,—is any one willing to save her?

[She looks about. All are silent.]

LADY KIRSTEN. Now for it; I am afraid your moments are numbered. Hear me well, you servants up there! Should no one answer my third call, then do you watch for a sign from me and cast her into the lake! Use now your arts, Alfild! See if you can conjure yourself free from death.

LADY KIRSTEN. [With a loud voice.] For the last time! There stands the witch and incendiary! Who will save and marry her?

[She looks about. All are silent.—LADY KIRSTEN raises her hand quickly as a signal, the Servants seize ALFHILD; in the same moment OLAF rushes out on the ledge in full wedding garb.]

OLAF. I will save and marry her!

[He thrusts the SERVANTS aside and unbinds her. ALFHILD sinks with a cry on his bosom; he puts his left arm around her and raises his right arm threateningly in the air.]

ALL. [Stand as if turned to stone.] Olaf Liljekrans!

LADY KIRSTEN. Olaf Liljekrans, my son! What have you done? Disgraced yourself for all time!

OLAF. No, I blot out the shame and disgrace which I brought on myself by my treatment of her! My sin I shall expiate and make myself happy the while!

OLAF. [Brings ALFHILD forward.] Yes, before all of you I solemnly proclaim this young woman my bride! She is innocent of all that has been charged against her; I only have transgressed.

[Kneels before her.]

OLAF. And at your feet I beg you to forget and forgive—

ALFHILD. [Raises him.] Ah, Olaf! You have given me back all the glory of the world!

LADY KIRSTEN. You will marry her! Well and good; then am I no longer a mother to you!

OLAF. You will cause me great sorrow, although it is now long since that you were a real mother to me. You used me merely to build aloft your own pride, and I was weak and acquiesced. But now have I won power and will; now I stand firmly on my own feet and lay the foundation of my own happiness!

LADY KIRSTEN. But do you stop to consider—

OLAF. Nothing will I now consider,—I know what I want. Now first I understand my strange dream. It was prophesied of me that I was to find the fairest of flowers,—that I was to tear it asunder and strew it to all the winds. O, thus it has happened! A woman's heart is the fairest flower in the world; all its rich and golden leaves I have torn asunder and scattered to the winds. But be of good cheer, my Alfild! Many a seed has gone too, and sorrow has ripened it, and from it shall grow a rich life for us here in the valley; for here shall we live and be happy!

ALFHILD. O, now I am happy as in the first hour we met.

LADY KIRSTEN. [Aside.] Ingeborg is gone; this rich valley belongs to Alfild,—no one else has a claim to it—

LADY KIRSTEN. [Aloud.] Well, Olaf! I shall not stand in the way of your happiness. If you think you will find it in this way, then—well, then you have my consent!

OLAF. Thanks, mother, thanks! Now I lack nothing more!

ALFHILD. [To LADY KIRSTEN.] And me you forgive all my sin?

LADY KIRSTEN. Yes, yes! Perhaps I too was wrong,—let us not say any more of that!

ARNE. But I, then? And my daughter, whom Olaf had pledged—Yet, it is true, perhaps she is no longer alive!

OLAF. Of course she's alive!

ARNE. She lives! Where is she? Where?

OLAF. That I can not say; but I may say that we both in all friendliness have broken our pledge.

LADY KIRSTEN. You see, Lord Arne! that I—

ARNE. Well, my daughter shall not be forced upon any one. Alfild was fated to marry a knight; the same may happen to Ingeborg.

ARNE. [With dignity.] Noble lords and honorable men, hear me! It has come to my ear that many of you hold me to be little skilled in courtly manners and customs. I will show you now you are completely mistaken. In the old chronicles it is frequently told that when a noble king loses his daughter he promises her hand and half his kingdom to him who may find her; he who finds Ingeborg shall receive her hand in marriage and in addition half of all that I own and possess. Are you with me on that?

THE YOUNG MEN. Yes, yes!

SCENE IX

[The Preceding. INGEBORG comes hurriedly out of the hut and pulls HEMMING behind her.]

INGEBORG. Here I am! Hemming has found me!

ALL. [ASTONISHED] Ingeborg and Hemming! Up here!

ARNE. [Irritated.] Ah, then shall—

INGEBORG. [Throws herself about his neck.] O father, father! It will not avail you; you have given your word!

ARNE. But that did not apply to him! Now I see it all right; he has taken you away himself.

INGEBORG. No, to the contrary, father! It was I who took him away!

ARNE. [Frightened.] Will you be silent with such words! Are you out of your head?

INGEBORG. [Softly.] Then say "yes" right here on the spot! Otherwise I shall proclaim to all people that it was I who—

ARNE. Hush, hush! I am saying "yes"!

[Steps between them and looks sternly at HEMMING.]

ARNE. It was you then who stole my dapple-gray horse with saddle and bridle?

HEMMING. Alas, Lord Arne!—

ARNE. O Hemming! Hemming! You are a—

[Stops to consider.]

ARNE. Well, you are my daughter's betrothed; let it all be forgotten.

HEMMING AND INGEBORG. O, thanks, thanks!

SCENE X

[The Preceding. THORGJERD with a harp in his hand has during the foregoing mingled with the people.]

THORGJERD. Aye, see, see! A multitude of people in the valley today!

THE PEASANTS. Thorgjerd, the fiddler!

ALFHILD. [Throws herself in his arms.] My father!

ALL. Her father!

OLAF. Yes, yes, old man! There are people and merriment in here today, and hereafter it shall always be thus. It is your daughter's wedding we are celebrating; for love has she chosen her betrothed, of love have you sung for her,—you will not stand in our way!

THORGJERD. May all good spirits guard you well!

ALFHILD. And you will remain with us!

THORGJERD. No, no, Alfild!
A minstrel has never a place to rest,
His soul fares afar, he forever must roam!
For he who has music deep down in his breast,
Is never in mountains or lowlands at home;
In the meadows green, in the sheltering bower,
He must touch the strings and sing every hour,
He must watch for the life that lives in the shower,
Beneath the wild fjord, in the rushing stream,
Must watch for the life that beats in the soul,
And clothe in music what people but dream,

And give voice to its sorrow and dole!

OLAF. But sometime you will surely visit us here!
Now shall 'mid the birches a hall be erected;
Here, my Alfild! shall you be protected.
I and my love will always be near,
No more shall your eye be dimmed with a tear!

ALFHILD. Yes, now I see, — life is precious and kind!
Rich as the fairest dream of the mind!
So dreary and black is never our sorrow, —
'Tis followed sometime by a bright sunny morrow!

ALFHILD. [Kneels.] O angels of God! you have led me aright,
Again you have granted me solace and bliss!
You guided my wandering past the abyss,
You steadied my foot that was weak and slight!
O, if with my mind I cannot understand, —
With my heart I'll believe to the last!
Yes, heavenly powers! You still watch o'er the land!
Clear is the sun when the dark storm is passed; —
From death and destruction my love did you save:
So now then let happen what may!
For now I am cheerful, now am I brave,
Ready for life and its motley affray!

ALFHILD. [With a glance at OLAF.] And when we at length —

[She pauses and stretches her arms above her head.]

ALFHILD. by the angels of love Are borne to our home in the heavens
above!

[The rest have formed a group around her; the curtain falls.]

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