

# The Word

A play by  
Kaj Munk

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# Preface

## Source

Munk, Kaj. 1953. *Five Plays by Kaj Munk*. Translation by R. F. Keigwin. New York: The American-Scandinavian Foundation. Copenhagen: Nyt Nordisk Forlag Arnold Busck. London: George Allen & Unwin LTD.

The Kaj Munk Research Center is grateful to the American-Scandinavian Foundation and their Senior Advisor, Lynn Carter, to be granted permission to present the translations of *The Word*.

## Introduction to *The Word*

Besides "The Blue Anemone" ["Den blaa Anemone"] (1943), *The Word* is perhaps Kaj Munk's most famous work – certainly helped by the 1955 film adaptation by world renowned filmmaker Carl Th. Dreyer – and it is undoubtedly one of his best plays. It was written while Munk was waiting on the decision of the Danish Royal Theatre's administration concerning the acceptance of his other play, *Herod the King* [*En Idealist*] (written in 1924, premiere in 1928), a decision that had been on the way for over a year. In frustration, he complained to his friend and the censor of the theatre, Hans Brix, who asked Munk to use his waiting productively – perhaps he could try to write a play, which took prayers seriously.

In Kaj Munk's memoir *Foraaret så sagte kommer* ['The quiet arrival of Spring'], it is explained how the play is deeply rooted in his own life. Losing both parents as a child and the deaths of others close to him had left a darkness in his consciousness, and in the second year as a priest in the small Danish town Vedersø on the west-coast of Jutland, he was witness to a tragedy which had a great influence upon him. A young neighbour and her newborn baby died, and Munk found it incomprehensible that God would allow such a thing. With such an occurrence fresh in memory, the encouragement from Hans Brix came as a catalyst for the play, and he wrote a finished draft by the end of 1925 over the course of a few days. With the original title 'In the beginning was the Word', a refined manuscript was accepted by the Danish Royal Theatre in 1927 but did not become part of the theatre's repertoire. Instead, the Betty Nansen Theatre took charge of the production, where it premiered September 2<sup>nd</sup> 1932 and became one of the greatest successes of Danish theatre history.

*The Word* is counted among the "Jutland plays", which is a small and characteristic group of plays, all taking place by the western sea in West Jutland. Other titles in this group of plays are *Kærlighed* ['love'] (written in 1926), *Havet og menneskene* ['the sea and the humans'] (written in 1929) and *En Almanakhistorie* ['An Almanac Story'], a kind of continuation of *The Word* ten years later (1934-35). The common thread for these plays is that they take the provincial population seriously and depict them and the harsh nature of West Jutland with respect and love. Though, *The Word* does not nearly indulge as much in the West Jutland dialect compared with the three other plays.

Another parallel to these 'Jutland plays' is Christianity as an important theme, where different opinions concerning faith and practice interact with one another.

### Meta-data about the play

The pastor represents the Danish National Church, the old Mikkel Borgen represents Grundtvigianism, while the son Johannes can be said to represent the child's faith in God, or rather the belief of God in spite of or (in a Kierkegaardian sense) by virtue of "the Absurd". Apart from these three is the last actor of a certain type of Christian belief, the member of the inner Mission Reuben Snipper (who in the original play is called 'Peter Skrædder' or 'Peter Tailor'). Outside of the play's complex network of faith stands the Doctor as a representant of a rational and scientific world-view. Even though the foundation of the play is a specific idea – the possibility of a miracle – all the characters are characters alive, the language is natural and the lines shimmer and spark. One of the most noticeable aspects in this genius dramatic play is its mixture of realism – the mood of Danish country-life in the 1920s and the supernatural and miraculous resurrection.

### The English translation by R. P. Keigwin

R. P. Keigwin's (1883-1972) English translation of *The Word* is part of an anthology of Kaj Munk's plays from 1953, which was an international collaboration between three publishing companies: The American-Scandinavian Foundation from the United States; Nyt Nordisk Arnold Busck from Denmark; as well as George Allen & Unwin Ltd. From Great Britain. Keigwin had previously translated and edited collections of Kaj Munk's work, e.g., *Playwright, Priest and Patriot: Some examples of his work* from 1944, and he has translated Hans Christian Andersen's work to English as well.

In some instances, Keigwin has omitted lines from the original play. The reasoning is unclear: perhaps it is because the omitted sections in the play are rich with specifically Danish cultural references. The omitted lines are: 71-74; 342; 367; 370 (the hymn); 471 (the last sentence)-477 (the first sentence); 535; 651-654; 868 (a complete of the original line); 876-881; and 951 (chorus of a Danish hymn). Footnotes will mark where Keigwin's translation omit original lines, and how many lines have been omitted. Asger Holde has translated the omitted lines from the original play and added them to the text.

Keigwin uses the English Revised Version of the King James Bible, where the revised version of the New Testament first was published in 1881 and the Old Testament published in 1885. The Bible verses in the footnotes added by the Kaj Munk Research Center are from the New International Version, with the latest update being from 2011.

### Footnotes and references

*The Word* was digitally published in Danish for the first time in the Study Edition, which was edited by Professor Marc Auchet in 2015. Explanatory footnotes were edited by Jesper Valeur Mogensen and were revised to meet DSL-standards (Danish Language and Literature Company) in 2021 by Professor Emeritus dr.phil. Johan de Mylius and cand.mag. Jette Vibeke Damsgaard Madsen. The introduction and footnotes were translated from Danish into English by Asger Holde. Abbreviations of references in the footnote are as follows:

- DSD: Den store Danske ['The Big Danish', a digital encyclopedia]. <https://den-storedanske.lex.dk/>
- OT: Old Testament
- NT: New Testament
- GTL: *Gyldendals Teaterleksikon* ['Gyldendal's lexicon of Theatre']. [lex.dk](https://lex.dk) –
- DDS: *Den danske Salmebog* ['The Danish Collection of Hymns']. <https://www.dendanskesalmebogonline.dk/>

## The Word

### A Legend of Today

*“Ay, his fest clothes shall hang ready,  
for you really never know but what he  
may turn up one Easter morning.”*

THE SOBER-MINDED WIDOW  
OF A VEDERSØ<sup>1</sup> FARMER

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<sup>1</sup> Vedersø is a small town on the West coast of Jutland, where Kaj Munk served as priest from 1924 until his death in 1944.

**THE WORD**

["Ordet"]

**First produced at the Betty Nansen Theatre,  
Copenhagen, 1932**

This 'legend of today' (Munk's own sub-title to THE WORD) may be – and has been – interpreted in various ways. As far as the author himself is concerned, it seems to have been written partly as an escape from the despair that in youth and early manhood more than once possessed him on witnessing the grief caused by death to those around him. The 'meaning' of the miracle that marks the climax of the play was hotly debated (and even protested against) at the original production some years ago; the interest aroused throughout the Northern countries was extraordinary and drew to the theatre, it is said, many people not ordinarily seen there. One strange feature was that the actor whose playing of the crucial part of Johannes contributed so largely to the original triumph found his inspiration, after a difficult start in rehearsals, along lines unintended by the author, yet with a success to which Munk himself paid ready and generous tribute.

In construction THE WORD is perhaps the best of all Kaj Munk's plays. The characters, too, are types that he knew first-hand, and he consciously set out to write a play in which country folk were to be taken seriously – not turned into figures of farce, as so often in the theatre. The greatest temptation in this latter direction occurs here in the part of the preaching tailor; but it is clear that Munk loved this man, even while he satirized him, and the part should not be overplayed. The tailor belongs to a religious group closely resembling Primitive Methodism, while his sectarian opponent, old Mikkel Borgen, is a Grundtvigian; both these sects are found, not outside, but within the Lutheran State Church. Grundtvig (pronounced 'Groontvy') is a name of even greater significance in Denmark than Wesley in England.

## CHARACTERS

MIKKEL BORGEN of Borgenscroft, *a yeoman farmer*

YOUNG MIKKEL, *his eldest son*

JOHANNES, *the second son*

ANDERS, *the youngest son*

INGER, *young Mikkel's wife*

MAREN and RUTH<sup>2</sup>, *her two little daughters*

THE PASTOR

THE DOCTOR

REUBEN SNIPPER<sup>3</sup>

KIRSTIN, *his wife*

ESTHER<sup>4</sup>, *their daughter*

ANNA MARIA, *a village convert*

*Members of Reuben's flock*

The scene of the play is laid in a straggling Danish village. The first 3 Acts take place on a cold December afternoon and evening; the 4th Act five days later.

- |       |   |
|-------|---|
| I     | The large living-room at Borgenscroft         |
| II    | Reuben's home at the other end of the village |
| III-V | Same as Act I                                 |

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<sup>2</sup> In the original Danish version of *Ordet*, Ruth is called Lilleinger ['Little Inger'], as in the little version of her mother Inger. Perhaps R. P. Keigwin altered her name to make the two characters more discernable.

<sup>3</sup> In the original version, Reuben is called Peter. It is unclear why his name was altered to Reuben by Keigwin in his translation of the play.

<sup>4</sup> In the original version, Esther is called Anne.





## ACT ONE

*The large living-room at Borgenscroft<sup>5</sup>. Young Mikkel and his wife, Inger*

- (1) *YOUNG MIKKEL:* Well, goodbye, Inger. I'll soon be back.
- (2) *INGER:* Goodbye, Mikkel.
- (3) *YOUNG MIKKEL:* Do the best you can with him.
- (4) *INGER:* You may be sure I shall do all I can.
- (5) *YOUNG MIKKEL:* Wouldn't it be better, though, for me to stay at home and try and help you?
- (6) *INGER:* You know well enough – if he won't take it from me, it's not going to make much difference what you others can find to tell him.
- (7) *YOUNG MIKKEL:* That's true. But – be careful how you go to work. Remember the condition you are in, little wife.
- (8) *INGER:* Ouf! You're always bringing up about my condition.
- (9) *YOUNG MIKKEL:* Now, come, Inger!
- (10) *INGER:* Well, all right. Don't take any notice of me. I don't mean anything by it. I expect that also comes from – my condition.
- (11) *YOUNG MIKKEL:* Anders oughtn't really to have bothered you just now. It was wrong of Anders to do that.
- (12) *INGER:* Now you mustn't be too hard on your poor brother, seeing how things are with him at present.
- (13) *YOUNG MIKKEL:* You'll fix it up all right, won't you? I do hope Dad won't get too worked up about it.
- (14) *INGER:* I dare say he will – bother it! No, I'm much more afraid of his being just rather upset. But – you wait, Mikkel – I shall carry it off all right. Now run along, do. And mind you don't go through the ice.
- (15) *YOUNG MIKKEL:* I shall keep an eye on Anders, when he gets back.
- (16) *INGER:* Yes, do. And of course things *might* go so badly that – that it would be nice to have you somewhere about.
- (17) *YOUNG MIKKEL:* Goodbye, my girl. {92}
- (18) *INGER:* Goodbye, boy. Bless my soul, anyone would think we had just become engaged.
- (19) *YOUNG MIKKEL:* So we have, Inger-girl.
- (20) *INGER:* What – married for eight years!... Oh, botheration! I've gone and let the coffee boil.
- (21) *YOUNG MIKKEL:* Eight years – eight short years.

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<sup>5</sup> In the beginning of Munk's tenure as priest in Vedersø, there was a farm with the name "Borgensgaard" (translated here as "Borgenscroft", but could be translated as "Farm of Borgen" as well).

- (22) *INGER*: Oh, well – it's a long way to our golden wedding.
- (23) *YOUNG MIKKEL*: It'll come soon enough, little wife, quite soon enough... Well, goodbye, clear. Mind you don't bungle it.
- (24) *INGER*: Do I generally?
- (25) *YOUNG MIKKEL*: No, it wouldn't be right to say that. Good luck!
- (26) *INGER*: Thank you, Mikkell. (*Young Mikkell goes out R.*) (*Glancing upward – in a low voice*) Thank you, dear God, thank you for everything. Today especially – please help me. Amen.  
(*Old Mikkell Borgen comes in L.B.*)
- (27) *BORGEN* (*Misinterpreting her upward glance*): Yes, that's where the rain comes in. I really must have that leak stopped.
- (28) *INGER*: Oh, grandpa, is that you? You gave me quite a start. What's that you say?
- (29) *BORGEN*: That patch up there you were looking at – that's rainwater. The roof is leaking just by the chimney. Thatcher Kristen is a bungler at his job – however much he's been converted. Is the mare on her legs again?
- (30) *INGER*: Soon will be, by the look of her.
- (31) *BORGEN* (*speaking out through the R. door*): Katinka, tell them to give the mare some more straw; and let the boy keep an eye on the sow till I come out.
- (32) *INGER*: Why have you had such a short nap to-day?
- (33) *BORGEN*: This confounded rheumatism! It's the change in the weather. I feel better when I'm on my legs. (*She gives him a cup of coffee*) What – coffee at this time of day?
- (34) *INGER*: It's such a cold day.
- (35) *BORGEN*: Is that your reason?
- (36) *INGER*: Yes-no, not really. (*Handing him a pipe*) Is that what you're looking for? There. {93}
- (37) *BORGEN*: No, I'll have the long one today. But it's got to be filled – can you do that as well?
- (38) *INGER*: I can do everything, grandpa.
- (39) *BORGEN*: Except have a boy.
- (40) *INGER*: Now then!
- (41) *BORGEN*: Last of all, a match. Thank you... Ah, Inger my girl, you're a master one at making coffee – my word, you are. Not too weak and not too strong.
- (42) *INGER*: You see, I've gradually got to know how you like it. There now, I'll sit here in the warm and peel potatoes, and we can have a little talk over the coffee.
- (43) *BORGEN*: Are there potatoes for supper?
- (44) *INGER*: We've got something warmed up ... (*After a pause*) Fancy the new pastor not having paid us a call here at Borgenscroft yet.

- (45) *BORGEN*: He's not exactly our way of thinking, in church matters<sup>6</sup>.
- (46) *INGER*: He won't appeal to Reuben's folk either<sup>7</sup>.
- (47) *BORGEN*: In fact, neither chalk nor cheese.
- (48) *INGER*: Never satisfied, grandpa.
- (49) *BORGEN*: Ay, and prods of it, my lass. I've always been like that: never satisfied with what isn't good ... Mikkel and Anders are down cutting the reeds, I suppose?
- (50) *INGER*: Yes – yes – Mikkel went off just – just as you came up ... Still, he can preach a good sermon.
- (51) *BORGEN*: What, the pastor? Yes, that's what finally made us choose him. They told me – where he came from – that he's a man who'll grow to his cassock.
- (52) *INGER*: That he'll what?
- (53) *BORGEN*: That he'll – that his position as pastor will give him – backbone. Well, anyhow, we shall soon see.
- (54) *JOHANNES* (*putting his head in at L.F. door. His articulation is excited and confused*): A dead body in the parlour! A dead body in the parlour!

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<sup>6</sup> In the original Danish play, Borgen's remarks are more specific. He says: "Han er jo ikke Grundtvigianer" ["Well, he isn't a Grundtvigian"]. A Grundtvigian is, as Keigwin remarks in his introduction to the play, a follower of the line of thought of Nikolaj Frederik Severin Grundtvig (1783-1872). Like Søren Kierkegaard (1813-55) Grundtvig was one of the most influential Christian thinkers in Danish history. The spoken, 'living' word is central in the Grundtvigian thought, which is given to the individual by God through baptism and communion. The Grundtvigians were greatly concerned with the common folk and the every-day experience, and they wished to 'awaken' people through the congregation of the living word and thereby create happy, engaged, free and spiritually enlightened human beings, which is why Grundtvigianism was called "the happy Christendom". The awakening therefore had not only a religious purpose, but also through poetry and art a sensory and aesthetic purpose for Danish culture in general. Grundtvig's text "Human first – Christian then" (1837) is arguably the clearest depiction of his foundational thoughts for "the School of Life", a cultural project which was realized through the Grundtvigian 'Folk High-schools' (Not to be confused with the American high-school) from 1844. At the same time, the Grundtvigian awakening resulted in cooperative dairies and butcheries. It was especially the wealthy farmers, who were followers of the bright, optimistic version of Christianity. [DSD]

<sup>7</sup> Once again, Inger's remarks are more specific in the original play. She says: "Heller ikke Missionsmand da ["He isn't a man of the inner Mission, either.]" A man of the inner Mission is a follower of *The Church Association for the inner Mission* (established in 1861) – a missions movement in the Danish National Church based on evangelical Lutheran understanding of Christianity. Under the supervision of priest Vilhelm Beck (official chairman in 1881), the movement reached a national scale of influence through the building of mission houses and the founding of schools, educations, unions and magazines. The inner Mission emphasized the work of love and the religious conversion of the individual (revival) in its understanding of Christianity. Due to its pietistic heritage, the inner Mission encouraged among other things a deep internalization of the faith through eager Bible studies and being together with other converts, and it demanded a decisive and condemning rejection to worldly pleasures, like card-games and theatre, which the inner Mission considered sinful. Therefore, the inner Mission was arguably influenced by an either-or view of life, and one of the trademarks of the inner Mission was also the thunderous speeches made by lay-men and the revivalist priests (for which Kaj Munk had some admiration or sympathy), which often presented the Christian God as strict, who condemned disbelievers to eternal damnation. The followers of the inner Mission one often found fishermen and homesteaders. [DSD] It made sense for Keigwin not to be too detailed in his translation, as the terminology for these Danish denominations might be too specific and therefore confusing to an English-speaking culture. One can argue that the dynamics between the characters of different religious persuasions are self-explanatory enough for a foreign audience.

- (55) *INGER*: Whatever's he saying?
- (56) *BORGEN*: Quiet, Johannes, and shut your door. {94}
- (57) *JOHANNES (as before)*: A dead body in the parlour! And so shall my Father be glorified<sup>8</sup>.
- (58) *BORGEN*: There, there. (*Gets up and shuts the door on him*) "
- (59) *INGER*: Whatever was he saying?
- (60) *BORGEN (resuming his seat)*: Who takes any count of what *he* says? H'm. Things are not what they were at Borgenscroft.
- (61) *INGER*: Wait a bit, grandpa; they'll look up again before long.
- (62) *BORGEN*: Johannes will never get better.
- (63) *INGER*: How do you know that? And –
- (64) *BORGEN*: Mikkel will never get any better.
- (65) *INGER*: Why, whatever are you about? How can you dream of comparing them – a comparison like that?
- (66) *BORGEN*: And Anders – well, well!
- (67) *INGER*: I can't make you Grundtvig ones out sometimes – Glad Christians, they call you. Mikkel I can understand at a pinch. But not you.
- (68) *BORGEN*: What do you reckon you are?
- (69) *INGER*: I – I don't call myself anything. You remember, my dad never could bear labels. And I've come to pretty well the same idea myself in the last year or two. You Grundtvig folk – you Glad Christians –
- (70) *BORGEN*: What about us?<sup>9</sup>
- (71) *INGER*: I could very well tell you what Sidse House-Cook<sup>10</sup> told me last time the two of you were in bouts. You'll perhaps be mad at first, but then it'll might make you laugh afterwards.
- (72) *BORGEN*: I don't care what that old shrew says. She only speaks of things which she doesn't understand – that's why she always has plenty to speak off.
- (73) *INGER*: Oh, but often times it is those who speak without refrain who'll arrive to the best of phrases. And of course, she was boiling with rage on account of you. She said to me in the utility room: "Yes, dear little Inger, Grundtvig himself was fine. I've served in his house; I know. But back when our Lord made Grundtvig, there stood Old Nick watching and begging to help. No, said our Lord, this one I'll make myself; but try to make one alike yourself. So Old Nick tried, but he

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<sup>8</sup> A reference to Jesus, who used similar turn of phrases, e.g., in Gospel of John 15:8, NT: "By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples".

<sup>9</sup> In his translation, Keigwin omits lines 71-74 from the original play. The mentioned lines shown in this version is Asger Holde's translation.

<sup>10</sup> House-Cook: translated from the Danish term 'Kogekone', which is a woman, often from the working-class, working as a private cook.

couldn't make it alike, and the more he made, the worse they got; all those are the Grundtvigians".

- (74) *BORGEN*: So we are, are we? You can go and tell Sidse House-Cook that when the Devil's old ma saw how bad it went him, she came running from her pots and pans to help; but she only got around to making one, and that was a House-Cook.
- (75) *INGER*: It seems to me that in your meeting-house – yes, *there* the Ancient of days<sup>11</sup> is still alive to shield and defend you. But at home you often go about as if He were dead.
- (76) *BORGEN*: You know, Inger – I don't believe in miracles any longer. And you know when it was I lost my faith in them, don't you?
- (77) *INGER*: You mean, because your prayers were not heard those nights you watched beside Johannes's bed.
- (78) *BORGEN*: If I could have prayed with faith, the thing would have happened. But I had misgivings – wondered if God would hear me; well, it might be worth trying ... No, my clear, no. If a father can't pray for his loved one, even in the hour of bitterest need – well, then – there's no place for miracles in this world. {95}
- (79) *INGER*: Ah, but God might perform them, grandpa. Surely He might be stronger than men's doubt.
- (80) *BORGEN (after a pause)*: Inger, if you only knew – if you only knew how often I'm just burning to go to Lourdes<sup>12</sup>.
- (81) *INGER*: Whatever's that?
- (82) *BORGEN*: It's a place in France.
- (83) *INGER*: What happens there?
- (84) *BORGEN*: It's a place where the Catholics say miracles happen.
- (85) *INGER*: I've sometimes read in the paper, too, about miracles being done here in Denmark.
- (86) *BORGEN*: Just wild fancies. Hysteria.
- (87) *INGER*: Yes, but, look here, that's what you think about it all. Now, do you know what I think?
- (88) *BORGEN*: Well, what do you think?
- (89) *INGER*: I believe that, round about us, lots of small miracles happen without our knowing it, even in our day, and that God answers our prayers; but He does it on

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<sup>11</sup> "The Ancient of days" is a biblical reference (e.g., the Book of Daniel 7, 13 and 22, OT), which refers to God. In the context of the play, it may also be a reference to Grundtvig, as he used it in the recurring chorus of the song "Til Danmark – Fædreland ved den bølgede Strand" [To Denmark – Fatherland at the surging Beach] (1848): "Thi end lever den gamle af Dage" ["For then lives the Ancient of days"]. Inger may be referencing Grundtvig to Borgen the Grundtvigian to exemplify the irony that he isn't living up to the name of "the glad Christianity".

<sup>12</sup> Lourdes is a place in southern France with an underground spring, which has been presumed to possess miraculous capabilities. [DSD] Borgen has likely thought of bringing his ill son Johannes to the spring, so that he can be miraculously cured of his illness.

the quiet, like, so as to avoid a lot of unnecessary fuss. Otherwise, we couldn't really pray to Him as we do – if it wasn't like that, I don't think. And it may just as well happen here, Grandpa, in both these cases.

(90) *(He looks sceptical.) ...*

(91) Grandpa.

(92) *BORGEN*: Well, what is it?

(93) *INGER*: Will you fetch Maren and Ruth home from school to-day?

(94) *BORGEN*: Yes, of course, I will.

(95) *INGER*: But your rheumatism?

(96) *BORGEN*: Rheumatism be blowed! I'm not a complete cripple yet, dang it all. It's only when I'm lying in bed and there comes a change of weather – then it's the devil ...

(97) *INGER*: Grandpa.

(98) *BORGEN*: What is it this time?

(99) *INGER*: Don't you think Esther would make a wonderfully good wife for Anders?

(100) *BORGEN*: H'm. So that's why we're having coffee?

(101) *INGER*: Yes. No, not really. But don't you think so?

(102) *BORGEN*: We won't go into that now. {96}

(103) *INGER*: To think you can be so –

(104) *BORGEN*: So what?

(105) *INGER*: You're so proud of being a yeoman farmer, Grandpa – you can't deny that.

(106) *BORGEN*: And why in the name of fortune should I deny it? My father owned this farm before me, without landlord or tenant, free and independent; and before him his father, and again before him his father. I'm the ninth of the family to have the farm – that I know. And I'm not ashamed to be proud of it.

(107) *INGER*: Old Granny – she always said: "There are two sorts of every sort, the good sort and the bad sort." Well, then, I suppose there are two sorts of pride.

(108) *BORGEN*: I respect every man who keeps his place and sticks to his job.

(109) *INGER*: You mean, a – system of castes, like they have in the hot countries.

(110) *BORGEN*: Birds of a feather flock together.

(111) *INGER*: Grandpa, there's only one thing – only one thing that matters when people are married, and that is that they should love each other.

(112) *BORGEN*: Love will come in time.

(113) *INGER*: Oh, Grandpa, you talk of things that you – really, my dear, I believe you understand everything in this world except just that: except love.

(114) *BORGEN*: Well, well!

(115) *INGER*: Have you ever been in love yourself?

(116) *BORGEN (with a laugh)*: Ever been in love? Don't forget – old Mikkil Borgen was once young Mikkil Borgen, and in those days –

(117) *INGER*: Were you really in love in those days?

(118) *BORGEN*: Over and over again.



- (119) *INGER*: I thought as much.
- (120) *BORGEN*: What do you mean – you thought as much?
- (121) *INGER*: That you hadn't ever really been in love.
- (122) *BORGEN*: Now may I – as you're so free with your questions – may I also venture, young lady? Have you never yourself taken a fancy to anyone else but Mikkel? {97}
- (123) *INGER*: Never, grandpa, never. Ever since I was twelve years old, I've never had a thought for anyone but Mikkel.
- (124) *BORGEN*: Well, I'm blest.
- (125) *INGER*: There, you can see for yourself – you just don't understand it. And so you don't understand either what it means for Anders to love Esther.
- (126) *BORGEN*: Must we go over all that again?
- (127) *INGER*: And I'm quite sure that Anders and Esther love each other just as much as Mikkel and I do. But how am I to make that clear to you, when you've never in your life experienced anything like it? For of course you and Maren were simply –
- (128) *BORGEN*: What were we simply?
- (129) *INGER*: Why, it was just a farmer's deal. You know, you said yourself, Grandpa, that Maren wasn't able to share your – your spiritual interests.
- (130) *BORGEN*: Look here, Inger, you must let Maren rest in her grave – all honour to her. Maren was a good wife to me; she was just the right one for me to have. What do you suppose Borgenscroft would have looked like, if she hadn't been? While I rushed round to meetings, she stopped at home and saw that the men got on with the jobs I had parcelled out to them before I went off. When I came home with a trail of lecturers, parsons and High School superintendents<sup>13</sup>, she gave us good food and looked after us beautifully. Never have I seen a surly look on her face, even when they were people she didn't care about – whose talk she couldn't follow. For forty years we lived together, utterly unlike each other, and there was never an angry word between us. She was fond of me, and I honoured and respected her for what she was. My idea about the one thing needful – that was right enough; but hers about the other thing needful – that was right too, by God, it was<sup>14</sup>. Yes, I have been rather sorry for Martha now and then; for I suppose they too had to be fed. This putting Martha and Mary to live together – I always felt it was so wise of the Lord God that His Son might well have spared His criticism. {98}

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<sup>13</sup> To illustrate that Borgen has been an active follower and practitioner of the Grundtvigian praxis.

<sup>14</sup> A reference to the story of the two sisters Martha and Mary, as is told in the Gospel of Luke., 10: 41-42, NT. When they are visited by Jesus, Mary sits by the feet of Jesus and listens to his teaching, while Martha is busy keeping house. When Martha complains, Jesus says: "Martha! Martha! You are worried and upset about many things, but few things are needed – or indeed only one. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her."



- (131) *INGER*: But – why, Grandpa, do you mean to say you're not satisfied with Him either?
- (132) *BORGEN*: Honestly, Inger, there are times when I feel so disheartened that I'm dissatisfied with everything and everybody, even (I had almost said) with our Lord Himself.  
(*A pause.*)
- (133) *INGER*: Grandpa, if you will promise to be pleased at Anders and Esther wanting to marry, I'll promise you something you will really enjoy.
- (134) *BORGEN*: And what may that be?
- (135) *INGER*: You shall have fried eel for dinner on Sunday.
- (136) *BORGEN*: Well, of course, that's not a bad offer.
- (137) *INGER*: And – and – and this time it shall be a boy? Aren't you pleased? You'll say yes, then?
- (138) *BORGEN* (*with a laugh*): You're a fine one to promise.
- (139) *INGER*: You'll say yes, then?
- (140) *BORGEN*: There, we won't discuss that proposal here in committee any longer.
- (141) *INGER*: Yes, yes, that's just what we will do.
- (142) *BORGEN*: And, anyhow, all this argument isn't at all good for you in your present cond – as you are just now.
- (143) *INGER*: Oh, you bring that in as well. Yes, it is. It's very good for me – as I am just now – to be able to put it all on one side as settled.
- (144) *BORGEN*: You worry your head far too much over this, Inger. Forget about it. You wait – Anders will soon give up all those ideas, I expect, and we shall find him a girl who can –
- (145) *INGER*: You simply won't understand? Then let me tell you straight out: Anders is not on the ice with Mikkel this afternoon.
- (146) *BORGEN*: He isn't? Where is he, then?
- (147) *INGER*: He's gone for a bicycle-ride.
- (148) *BORGEN*: A bicycle-ride to-day – on a Monday? Where to? Oh, I see – that's the game!
- (149) *INGER*: Yes, Grandpa.
- (150) *BORGEN*: Oh – oh, that's how it is. I see, I see. That's why we were to have coffee.  
{99}
- (151) *INGER*: Yes, Grandpa, that's why. And listen: when he gets –
- (152) *BORGEN*: So he's cycled over to the Marsh<sup>15</sup> this afternoon.

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<sup>15</sup> The Marsh: Where Reuben Snipper lives, a swamp-like area of land, which is uncultivable. This indicates a class difference between the wealthy farmer Borgen and the poor tailor Reuben.

- (153) *INGER*: Yes, and when he gets back presently, you'll make up your mind to look pleased, won't you? Take my arm, and we'll both go and meet him at the door and say: "Congratulations, Anders!" We will, won't we?
- (154) *BORGEN*: H'm! So Reuben Snipper is getting himself a son-in-law to-day.
- (155) *INGER*: And old Mikkel Borgen a daughter-in-law – a nice kind, gentle, capable young –
- (156) *BORGEN*: I didn't ask for one.
- (157) *INGER*: Grandpa, as I said before, won't you please shake hands with Anders and congratulate him? If you won't do it for the sake of your son and his happiness, and for your own sake, Grandpa, and for God's, then do it for mine, will you? and for my – for your grandchild that I carry under my heart.
- (158) *BORGEN*: Nothing on earth will make me give way ... So Anders has gone cycling – without a word to me – and you knew – and said nothing either. A conspiracy – between my own children-behind my back. No, it's really too bad ... (*He gets up to go.*)
- (159) *INGER*: Grandpa, where are you going?
- (160) *BORGEN*: Must *I* be called to account? You children don't let me know where you're going. Why should I – ? (*He goes out R.*)
- (161) *INGER* (*calling after him*): Grandpa! ... Out into the cold like that – with nothing round his neck ... (*Snatching up a muffler*) Grandpa – look here – Grandpa! (*She runs out after him.*)
- (*Johannes comes in L.F., takes a small cake from the table, holds it up in clasped bands and breaks it.*)
- (162) *JOHANNES*: Gather up the fragments that remain, that nothing be lost<sup>16</sup>. (*There is a knock*) Come in.
- (163) *THE PASTOR* (*coming in R.*): Oh, I just wanted to – as I was passing –
- (164) *JOHANNES*: The Lord be with you<sup>17</sup>.
- (165) *PASTOR*: I – I beg your pardon?
- (166) *JOHANNES*: The Lord be with you.
- (167) *PASTOR*: Thank you. Thank you very much. I see you recognise {100} me as the new incumbent. Thank you for your friendly welcome to my work here. Thank you. But – excuse me – I'm afraid I don't know who you are.
- (168) *JOHANNES*: Ah, you know me not<sup>18</sup>.

<sup>16</sup> A reference to the Gospel of John 6:12, NT, where Jesus feeds 5000 men in the desert with five pieces of bread and two small fish. Afterwards the leftovers are collected in twelve baskets.

<sup>17</sup> Johannes greets the pastor with the salutation, with which a pastor greets their congregation.

<sup>18</sup> In his illness, Johannes believes himself to be Jesus. Jesus says in the Gospel of John 10:14, NT: "I am the good shepherd. I know my sheep and my sheep know me". Jesus also says in the Gospel of John 8:19, NT: "You do not know me or my Father. [...] If you knew me, you would know my Father also."

- (169) *PASTOR*: No – I'm so sorry. I've been here such a short time, you see; I haven't yet got round to all my parishioners. You work here, I dare say? Are you a son of the house?
- (170) *JOHANNES*: I am a mason<sup>19</sup>.
- (171) *PASTOR*: Fancy that! What a splendid job – to build houses for people!
- (172) *JOHANNES*: But none will dwell in them.
- (173) *PASTOR*: Really. Well, of course, everyone's so hard up now-adays<sup>20</sup> – I know that from my own experience. And yet we live in very Spartan fashion<sup>21</sup> – my word, we do – very Spartan – most thrifty.
- (174) *JOHANNES*: They will build themselves, and they know not how to. Who shall understand these things? If they will have shoes, they go to the shoemaker; if they will have clothes, they go to the tailor. But if they will have houses to dwell in, nay, they come not to me – they will build themselves, although they know not to how to. And therefore they dwell, some in half – built hovels, others in ruins; and most of them wander about without a home at all.
- (175) *PASTOR*: Excuse me, Mr. – Mr. Borgen, I don't quite follow you. I can't quite make out; everything you say seems to be – well, so ambiguous. Your language is so – so peculiar that I really hardly know if you are joking or in earnest, or what you're doing.
- (176) *JOHANNES*: Then perhaps you, too, are one of the homeless – one of those who are in need of a dwelling?
- (177) *PASTOR*: I thought as much. The whole of our conversation has been based on a misunderstanding. So you don't know who I am, after all. I'm the parson – your new pastor.
- (178) *JOHANNES*: A-a-h! It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone<sup>22</sup> ...
- (179) *PASTOR*: Yes, but – as I just happened to be passing Borgenscroft, I thought I'd put my head in. {101}
- (180) *JOHANNES*: It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God<sup>23</sup>.
- (181) *PASTOR*: Well, but what are you driving at?

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<sup>19</sup> Johannes calls himself a mason, because in a metaphorical sense, he claims to build houses for people (which they do not wish to live in), meaning he shows them toward the truthful faith, but they won't listen. Jesus was spoken of as the "carpenter's son" (son of Joseph the carpenter) in Gospel of Matthew 13:55, NT.

<sup>20</sup> "hard up now-adays": refers to the economic struggles of the interbellum. There were three big financial crises or depressions: in 1920-22, 1929-33 and 1937-38. Of these, the crisis of 1929-33 was by far the direst because of the great unemployment rate it caused. [DSD]

<sup>21</sup> "Spartan fashion": to live sparingly. Comes from Latin, "Spartanus", which refers to the Spartan warriors' way of life. The indulgence of worldly pleasures had to be kept at a minimum in order for the Spartans to be as tough and focus as much on warring as possible.

<sup>22</sup> A reference to the Gospel of Matthew 4:4, NT, where Jesus is tempted by the Devil in the desert: "It is written: 'Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God'"

<sup>23</sup> Also a reference to the Devil's attempt at tempting Jesus in the desert in the Gospel of Matthew 4:7, NT.

- (182) *JOHANNES*: Get these hence, Satan<sup>24</sup>: for it is written –
- (183) *PASTOR* (breaking in): Look here – are you making fun of me? May I ask for an explanation? Otherwise I'm afraid I must go.
- (184) *JOHANNES*: That's it! Then the devil leaveth him<sup>25</sup>.
- (185) *PASTOR*: Who *are* you? Do you belong to some sect? If you have no respect for me as a priest, can't we at least talk together as man to man? Perhaps you're not after all a son of the house – perhaps not even from this parish. In which case, please excuse me, but who *are* you? My name is Pastor Banbull<sup>26</sup>.
- (186) *JOHANNES*: My name is Jesus of Nazareth.
- (187) *PASTOR*: No, but listen – or – oh, look here – yes, yes of course – er, no, oh, no!
- (188) *JOHANNES*: And if you have laboured and are heavy laden<sup>27</sup>, then welcome. But if you have not done so yet, then go out into the world and do so, and then come again.
- (189) *PASTOR*: My friend, you are wrong. You are not Jesus. You are a son of Mikkel Borgen of Borgenscroft.
- (190) *JOHANNES*: Yea, verily. Deemed to be a son of Joseph, which was the son of Heli, which was the son of Mattat, which was the son of Levi, which was<sup>28</sup> –
- (191) *PASTOR* (breaking in): Do you realise that you are – mentally ill?
- (192) *JOHANNES*: Yes.
- (193) *PASTOR*: What's that? Er – I see.
- (194) *JOHANNES*: And you? Do you know that you are mentally ill?
- (195) *PASTOR*: No, I do not.
- (196) *JOHANNES*: You see – I know more than you after all. Look! Your umbrella behind you – I have turned it into a serpent<sup>29</sup> ... And you don't even turn round. So certain are you in your unbelief, you who call yourself a believer. You believe in my miracles of two thousand years ago, but not in me now. Why do you believe in the dead Christ, but not in the living?
- (197) *PASTOR*: By what means can you prove that you are – that you are He whom you call yourself? {102}

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<sup>24</sup> Gospel of Matthew 4:1-10, NT.

<sup>25</sup> Gospel of Matthew 4:11, NT.

<sup>26</sup> The name "Banbull" is similar to the Danish word for "Papal bull" [bandulle]. It is a punishment decreed by the Catholic Church, which takes the form of exclusion from the Catholic Church.

<sup>27</sup> Reference to the Gospel of Matthew 11:28, NT, the words of Jesus: "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest".

<sup>28</sup> Johannes rebutes the pastor's argument that he is the son of Mikkel Borgen by referencing the Gospel of Luke 3:23-38, NT, where Luke recounts the genealogy of Joseph, which traces all the way back to the first man Adam and lastly to his creator, God: "He [Jesus] was the son, or it so was thought, of Joseph, the son of Heli, the son of Matthat, the son of Levi [...] the son of Seth, the son of Adam, the son of God."

<sup>29</sup> Reference to the 7<sup>th</sup> Book of Moses 7:10, OT, where Moses' brother Aron throws his staff on the ground in front of the Pharaoh, where the staff then turned into a serpent.

- (198) *JOHANNES*: O man of faith, that ask for proofs<sup>30</sup>? I will prove it now, as I did then, by miracles and by witness.
- (199) *PASTOR*: Do you do miracles?
- (200) *JOHANNES*: I have turned your umbrella into a serpent, and you would not even turn your head. How can one make the blind to see, if they shut their eyes tight?
- (201) *PASTOR*: What is your witness, then?
- (202) *JOHANNES*: The same as before – the omnipotence of the Spirit. My Father in heaven over all things.
- (203) *PASTOR*: But we know that already.
- (204) *JOHANNES*: Yes, and that way lies despair: you know it, but you ought to have faith in it. That is why I have come again. You confess God's omnipotence, but you have no faith in it. And so your joy is gone and your prayers languish.
- (205) *PASTOR*: You can't work miracles, because miracles don't happen. God will not break the word He has given – His world-order, the laws of nature, His plan for eternity<sup>31</sup>. It is also written in Scripture: God is not the author of confusion, but of peace.
- (206) *JOHANNES*: And such talk from my Church on earth! That first time that I wandered here, I went from miracle to miracle, so as to quicken the omnipotence of love in the eyes of mankind – to teach you to pray freely and trust boldly and to find your way to a life of thanksgiving. Woe unto thee, my Church, thou that hast betrayed me – murdered me with my own name. I am weary of thy worship, weary of thy kiss for thirty pieces of silver<sup>32</sup>. Ye children of clay, how barren of hope are the terms you offer to the spirit – I see that too. Then call me mad if you like; for my love is greater than my weariness, my faith stronger than my insight. Therefore it was I prayed to my Father and was allowed to visit this tottering world once more. Lo, here I stand; and again you, mine own, reject me. You will rather live by words than by deeds, empty profession than fulness of life<sup>33</sup>. But if a second time you nail me up to annulment, then woe, woe unto thee, thou Church of Caiaphas<sup>34</sup> and Judas, thou generation that neither showeth nor dareth seek after a

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<sup>30</sup> Reference to the pharisees and disbelievers in the Gospel of Matthew 12:38-39, NT, who demanded proof that Jesus is the son of God.

<sup>31</sup> The pastor seems to follow the rationalistic understanding of Christianity, which originated in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Christianity then was adjusted the modern scientific worldview, where beliefs in miracles were more or less rejected. [DSD]

<sup>32</sup> Reference to the Gospel of Matthew 26:14-16, NT, where Judas Iscariot betrays Jesus for 30 pieces of silver by revealing him to the Romans with a kiss.

<sup>33</sup> "Fulness of life". Perhaps more in reference to the vitalism of the 1920s than the Bible.

<sup>34</sup> Caiaphas, the Jewish high priest, who according to the gospels interrogated and delivered Jesus to the Roman prefect Pontius Pilate. [DSD]

- sign – woe unto thee! {103} It will be more tolerable for Chorazin and Bethsaida at the day of judgment than for thee<sup>35</sup>. (*He goes out L.F.*)
- (207) *PASTOR*: Really – it's too dreadful. Why ever don't they shut him up?
- (208) *YOUNG MIKKEL* (*coming in R.*): Good afternoon, Pastor. We're glad to see you at Borgenscroft. I'm the eldest son, you know – Mikkel Borgen.
- (209) *PASTOR*: Oh, that's how it is. I'm so glad to meet you.
- (210) *YOUNG MIKKEL*: Do take a seat. I was down at the fiord cutting reeds, and I noticed you arrive. A moment later I saw my wife and my father coming out by the kitchen-door-oh, I say, won't you smoke?
- (211) *PASTOR* (taking a cigar): Thanks, thanks.
- (212) *YOUNG MIKKEL*: – and saw them go up towards the school. I expect they've gone to fetch the two children. So I hurried back, in case you hadn't found anybody at home. But it takes a bit of time to come right up from the fiord. I hope you haven't had to wait too long. Did you see any of the maids?
- (213) *PASTOR*: The maids? No-no, as a matter of fact, I didn't. On the other hand, I-I-yes, isn't he your brother?
- (214) *YOUNG MIKKEL*: Have you been talking to Johannes? I hope he hasn't made a nuisance of himself.
- (215) *PASTOR*: Oh, no-not really-not at all – I mean to say, well, no. It must be very difficult for you – especially for your old father, isn't it? Oh, clear, yes. Was he born like that – like that – a little –
- (216) *YOUNG MIKKEL*: We don't often talk about it here, but – with you-you ought to be told, really ... No, he was about twenty-five when it happened.
- (217) *PASTOR*: Dear, dear. God sends us trials – yea, verily. God sends us trials.
- (218) *YOUNG MIKKEL* (*coldly*): So we're told.
- (219) *PASTOR*: Fancy-twenty-five years old! Was it-love?
- (220) *YOUNG MIKKEL*: No, it was Bjørnson<sup>36</sup>.
- (221) *PASTOR*: I beg your pardon.

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<sup>35</sup> Reference to the Gospel of Matthew 11:21, NT: “Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the miracles performed in you had been performed in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes”. Chorazin and Bethsaida are two towns which Jesus visited and faced difficulty in persuading its population, even though he performed persuasive miracles. By saying that Chorazin and Bethsaida would still be easier to persuade than the pastor, Johannes is implying that the miracles of old are in dire straits at the moment.

<sup>36</sup> Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson (1832-1910) is a Norwegian author, playwright and Nobel laureate (1903) with a large literary production in a wide variety of genres. It is later revealed in the play that Johannes’ insanity happened in conjunction with him going to see Bjørnson’s play *Beyond Our Power* [*Over Ævne I*] (1883). The play critiques the belief of miracles and religious swarming. The play had its premiere at Folketeatret in 1899. [GTL]



- (222) *YOUNG MIKKEL*: Bjørnson and Kierkegaard<sup>37</sup>. You see, Johannes {104} was studying theology; he had uncommon ability – even Dad thought so ... And it all went so smoothly to begin with. He was just a raw young student, but people came flocking to the church when he preached here in vacation-time. And – is there anything you want?
- (223) *PASTOR (embarrassed at the reference to full congregations)*: Yes, excuse me – do please excuse me – but have you an ash-tray by any chance?
- (224) *YOUNG MIKKEL*: I'm sorry, sir. Here you are.
- (225) *PASTOR*: Thank you, thank you – forgive me for interrupting you ... But then – was there a change?
- (226) *YOUNG MIKKEL*: Reading those two – he wrestled so hard with them – they filled his mind with doubt, especially Bjørnson's play called *Beyond our power*. Do you remember it?
- (227) *PASTOR*: *Beyond our power* – that antiquated work! An incurable is supposed to be cured by a miracle – I remember. It simply couldn't happen nowadays.
- (228) *YOUNG MIKKEL*: Then he got engaged. Dad wasn't at all pleased.
- (229) *PASTOR*: No?
- (230) *YOUNG MIKKEL*: Dad didn't think *that* was the way for Johannes to win through.
- (231) *PASTOR*: Win through?
- (232) *YOUNG MIKKEL*: Yes, you follow, don't you?
- (233) *PASTOR*: No, honestly, I don't ... Oh, well, like that – I see, he was to fight his way through. Fancy! Your father must have expected a great deal of him. And so – he won through? Well, and then?
- (234) *YOUNG MIKKEL*: How happy they were together, those two. You see, I ought to explain to you, sir – our family has the knack of happy marriages. You should have seen them here at home in the holidays, going about the farm together. It was like it is the first time you hear the lark. And you know what happens then?
- (235) *PASTOR*: When? No, what then?
- (236) *YOUNG MIKKEL*: The first time you hear the lark?
- (237) *PASTOR*: Yes, then it's spring. {105}
- (238) *YOUNG MIKKEL*: No, sir, then it's snow and frost, and the larks are frozen to death.
- (239) *PASTOR*: And who – if you don't mind my asking – who was the young lady? Did she come from this neighbourhood?
- (240) *YOUNG MIKKEL*: She was the daughter of a magistrate called Goll.

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<sup>37</sup> Søren Kierkegaard (1813-1855) was a Danish theologian and world-famous philosophy within the school of existentialism. In the years 1854-55 Kierkegaard attacked the Danish National Church and its worldly-focused priesthood in a collection of news-paper articles and in his own magazine, *Øjeblikket* ['The moment']. It was known as the "Storm of the Church" ["Kirkestormen"]. [DSD]

- (241) *PASTOR*: Dear me, I know Goll. He had a daughter, Agatha, who lost her life in an unfortunate way.
- (242) *YOUNG MIKKEL*: That's it – it was Agatha.
- (243) *PASTOR*: Well, but – was it – yes, now I remember, she was engaged to a theological student. Fancy! Was that your brother? Dear me, how very inter – how terrible! Just think!
- (244) *YOUNG MIKKEL*: They had been to the theatre together, where they had just seen Bjørnson's play. And Johannes was so carried away, he hardly knew what he was doing as they went home. Yes, so absent-minded that he stepped straight in front of a car.
- (245) *PASTOR*: And then she pushed him clear. Now I remember.
- (246) *YOUNG MIKKEL*: Yes, and saved his life – but lost her own.
- (247) *PASTOR*: And his mind gave way as a result – poor fellow. Terrible – terrible.
- (248) *YOUNG MIKKEL*: And then a night or two later, as she lay dead, her parents woke and heard a cry from the death-chamber. There he stood. He had taken her by the hand and was commanding her in God's name to rise up. And they – 'sh! here's Dad. We had better not – let's appear to be –  
(*Old Borgen comes in R., followed by Inger and her two children*).
- (249) *BORGEN*: Good afternoon, Pastor. Welcome to Borgenscroft.
- (250) *PASTOR*: Thank you – thank you very much. Well, I'm better late than never.
- (251) *INGER*: Good afternoon, sir. You know, I 'm –
- (252) *PASTOR*: Yes, I've seen you in church.
- (253) *INGER (to the two children)*: Come and say how-do-you-do. (*To the Pastor*) That's Maren – she's seven. And this is Ruth – nearly five.
- (254) *PASTOR*: Dear me, what nice children! Have you any more beside these two?
- (255) *YOUNG MIKKEL*: Not yet. But we *shall* have. {106}
- (256) *INGER*: Oh, Mikkel!
- (257) *PASTOR*: Yes – with God's help – yes. (*To Ruth*) Surely you're rather small to go to school, my clear. Yes, children are a great blessing, aren't they, Borgen?
- (258) *BORGEN*: Yes, indeed they are.
- (259) *PASTOR*: You know, I've had a talk with – I've seen your second son. Yes, it's very sad; and yet to us as Christian people even a dispensation like that may prove to be a blessing.
- (260) *BORGEN*: Likely enough.
- (261) *PASTOR*: And you *have* got – is it three others?
- (262) *YOUNG MIKKEL*: Two.
- (263) *PASTOR*: Yes, two – I thought so – both sound and healthy, both a sheer joy to you, eh?
- (264) *BORGEN*: That's true.
- (265) *PASTOR*: And dear little grandchildren, and a faithful daughter-in-law.
- (266) *BORGEN*: You couldn't better her.
- (267) *PASTOR*: So, you see, in spite of everything you have much to be thankful for.



- (268) *BORGEN*: I have.
- (269) *RUTH (on her mother's slap)*: I want to get down, Mummy, I want to get down.
- (270) *INGER*: There, there, Ruth, you mustn't be frightened. Such a nice gentleman.
- (271) *PASTOR*: And, after all, how fortunate you had good, kind folk to take over your farm.
- (272) *BORGEN*: The farm is *mine*.
- (273) *PASTOR*: Is it? Yes, of course, of course – yours. And I suppose you're no great age either.
- (274) *BORGEN*: Only seventy-five.
- (275) *PASTOR*: Yes, that's not – well, seventy-five – yes, you've got a good way to go yet. (*He gets up to go*)
- (276) *INGER*: We're just going to have some coffee, sir.
- (277) *PASTOR*: Oh, thank you – may I look forward to that another time? Thank you so much. But I'd better go home; I'm rather tired.
- (278) *YOUNG MIKKEL*: You must have something before you go. {107}
- (279) *PASTOR*: But – the cigar, my dear fellow – the cigar!
- (280) *BORGEN*: You are always welcome to Borgenscroft.
- (281) *PASTOR*: Thank you, Borgen. I'll take your kind invitation quite literally.
- (282) *BORGEN*: Take it in the spirit in which it is offered.
- (283) *PASTOR*: A spirit that keeps strictly to the *letter* – (*with a laugh*) not very good 'Grundtvig', I'm afraid<sup>38</sup>. Well, goodbye. God bless you all!
- (284) *BORGEN*: Thank you. Goodbye – and thank you for coming.
- (285) *PASTOR*: For *me* to thank *you*. Goodbye.
- (286) *THE OTHERS*: Goodbye.
- (287) *PASTOR (to little Ruth)*: Goodbye, my dear.
- (288) *RUTH (Shrinking from him to her mother)*: Mummy!
- (289) *INGER*: Aren't you ashamed? Such a big girl! You certainly can't go to school, if you are so timid.
- (290) *PASTOR*: We shall become friends all right in time.
- (291) *YOUNG MIKKEL*: Let's hope so.  
(*The Pastor goes out R.*)
- (292) *MAREN*: She's frightened, that's what she is. He's nothing to be frightened of, is he?
- (293) *YOUNG MIKKEL*: Such a polite, friendly man.
- (294) *BORGEN*: And the State gives him 5,000 crowns a year for that. Oil-box!
- (295) *INGER*: There, my dears, run along into the kitchen and get your tea. That's right.  
(*The two children go out R.*)

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<sup>38</sup> "Not very good 'Grundtvig'": Grundtvig's thought was that the letter kills, while the spirit gives life, which is why it isn't very good 'Grundtvig' when the pastor speaks of a spirit of the letter. It is also a reference to the Second Epistle of the Corinthians 3:6, NT.

(*looking out of the R. window*) Look, he's putting up his umbrella for that little bit of snow.

(296) *BORGEN*: Yes, it's what Isaiah says – "over all the glory shall be spread a canopy"<sup>39</sup> ... Is Anders back yet?

(297) *YOUNG MIKKEL*: No, Dad, but he can't be long now.

(298) *BORGEN* (*half to himself*): Ninety thousand crowns – I shan't sell it for less.

(299) *YOUNG MIKKEL*: What's that you're mumbling, Dad?

(300) *INGER*: Oh, Mikkel, your father has got a wild idea of selling Borgenscroft because of this about Anders. {108}

(301) *YOUNG MIKKEL*: Dad, I can't make out how you can bring yourself to talk such absolute nonsense.

(302) *BORGEN*: Really!

(303) *YOUNG MIKKEL*: Borgenscroft-which has always belonged to the family. To let people know that you allow your temper to run away with you like that!

(304) *BORGEN*: Will *you* have it, then? ... You see, Inger, he doesn't answer. Quite right, too ... When *will* you understand, when *will* you understand? If I go and lose Anders, then I've lost everything ... I didn't say anything to you, Mikkel, that day I read in your eyes that you had no share in your father's beliefs – no faith. It struck me all of a heap – made me feel quite bad. But I said nothing. I tried to make allowances. You had seen what Christianity had meant in this home – and how I got the speeches, the sing-songs and all the jollification, while your mother got the dirt and the toil and the drudgery. So I thought "Give him time, he'll change. He's still so young; the day will come..." But the years went by, and it never did come; for miracles don't happen now ... And then once more I had to face the truth that you, my eldest son – Mikkel of the farm – would never become master of the farm. And I saw how you longed to be free – free of all this half-hypocrisy, where people came and went and believed that you were one of us. And, in my own mind, I promised you should have your way; for we Borgenscroft folk – we've always been allowed, as long as any of us can remember, to be ourselves.

(305) *YOUNG MIKKEL*: And so you rang up Heiberg and asked whether Melsted was for sale.

(306) *BORGEN*: So you know that! Yes, my boy, I did, and it *will* be in eighteen months' time.

(307) *YOUNG MIKKEL*: You're a good sort, Dad.

(308) *INGER*: Are you going to turn me out of Borgenscroft, you two?

(309) *BORGEN*: That's why it was such a sad day – so terribly sad – that day you and Mikkel came and said you were engaged to be married.

(310) *INGER*: Sad? {109}

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<sup>39</sup> Isaiah 4:5, OT.

- (311) *BORGEN*: I'm your godfather. I've known you ever since you were no bigger than a coulter. I knew how splendidly you were suited to become mistress of Borgenscroft – Martha and Mary in one person. And you've not disappointed me. You've been better than my own Maren was – I can't give you higher praise than that.
- (312) *INGER*: Yes, but in that case I really can't see it was such a dreadful thing for me to get engaged to your son.
- (313) *BORGEN*: To my wrong son, Inger. You see, by this time it was Anders who was to have Borgenscroft.
- (314) *YOUNG MIKKEL (restraining indignation)*: H'm, h'm.
- (315) *INGER*: Well, I never! This time you've been a bit *too* anxious to help God look after us.
- (316) *BORGEN*: And I've had my punishment, too. But, you see, Mikkell, it was Borgenscroft I was thinking of. There is said to have been a royal castle here in olden times – do you realise that? And I've made it the parish castle, and I was hoping it would continue so under you. Well, that was not to be – though I began to grasp the meaning of it all when I saw Johannes's ability. A castle, not only for the parish, but for the whole country. The spark that was to flare up afresh in God's good time<sup>40</sup> should be kindled here at Borgenscroft... They were proud dreams that I dreamed. I was flying high. And now look at these broken wings. I hoped he would recover; he will not recover. The age of miracles is past.
- (317) *INGER*: But, grandpa dear, surely if Mikkell and I can't always stay on here, what could you want better than for Anders to get himself a wife?
- (318) *BORGEN*: Of course Anders must have a wife; that's obvious.
- (319) *INGER*: You see, there's not really much prospect of my becoming a widow at present.
- (320) *BORGEN*: Can't you understand? It isn't that Reuben is a tailor; it's – the other thing. Do you think I don't know Anders, kind and weak and easily persuaded as he is? His wife must share our creed – mine and Borgenscroft's. This is a stronghold for the whole district. All my life I have fought in Grundtvig's name {110} for twenty-five years against the spiritual death called rationalism<sup>41</sup>; for twenty-five more against the arrogance of bigotry. My dreams have vanished of ever seeing this place continued as a fortress for the spiritual life of the parish – and for

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<sup>40</sup> "God's good time" refers to the concept of Kairos: the idea of the best possible moment for God's presence.

<sup>41</sup> Rationalism is in a common sense an appeal to reason that tries not to allow religion or feelings to interfere. In a religious sense, Christian rationalism was a product of the Enlightenment in the 18<sup>th</sup> century and onwards. Rational Christianity strived to give natural arguments for miracles depicted in the Bible, and therefore it rejected any kind of belief in something which the human reason cannot comprehend.

the spiritual life of Denmark. I refuse to watch it turned into a castle of blasphemy. That's why I'm selling Borgenscroft.

(321) *YOUNG MIKKEL*: H'm – Dad's afraid of the Tabernacle.

(322) *BORGEN*: Afraid?

(323) *YOUNG MIKKEL*: Afraid of Esther's faith being stronger than Anders's; afraid that the spirit of Reuben Snipper shall triumph over the spirit of Borgenscroft.

(324) *BORGEN*: Afraid?

(325) *YOUNG MIKKEL*: And therefore means to use compulsion, resort to outside measures and threaten to sell.

(326) *INGER*: Mikkell, how *can* you!

(327) *BORGEN*: Mind what you say, Mikkell.

(328) *INGER*: Bush, Mikkell. You misunderstand your father altogether. Surely you won't - oh clear! there he comes.

*(Anders comes in R., looking utterly despondent.)*

(329) *BORGEN (sarcastically)*: Well, have you been down cutting the reeds?

(330) *ANDERS*: No, Dad. No, I've been –

(331) *BORGEN*: Well – yes, you've – you've been – yes, of course. Congratulations!

(332) *(Anders burst out sobbing.)*<sup>42</sup>

(333) *BORGEN*: What' s up? What' she bellowing about?

(334) *ANDERS*: He said no, Dad, he said no.

(335) *BORGEN*: Who said no?

(336) *YOUNG MIKKEL*: What's that you're saying?

(337) *INGER*: Come on, Anders.

(338) *ANDERS*: Reuben Snipper – wouldn't have it. I was there for over an hour – you couldn't do a thing with him – and finally he turned me out, because – because there was to be a meeting.

(339) *BORGEN*: I don't understand. Turned you out? Meeting? Reuben Snipper said no? You weren't to have his Esther?

(340) *ANDERS*: Out of the question. No hope at all. {111}

(341) *BORGEN*: Out of the question? And you – you put up with it? A son of mine! To come home and blubber – like a schoolboy who's been whipped...

(342) <sup>43</sup>*ANDERS*: What else can I do when we aren't allowed by any of you? It's insufferable.

(343) What did Esther say?

(344) *ANDERS*: She wasn't allowed to come in.

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<sup>42</sup> In the original Danish version, the Anders' line is as follows: "Aah haa haa haa."

<sup>43</sup> Line 342 is added by Asger Holde.

- (345) *BORGEN (with scornful laughter)*: Oh, do listen to that! Ha, ha! Our high-handed Mr. Snipper! Ha, ha! And why, if I may ask – and if *you* made so bold as to ask – *why* were you not to have her?
- (346) *ANDERS*: Because – because I'm not – because I'm not converted.
- (347) *BORGEN*: Really. Well, well. So that's why. So we of Borgenscroft aren't good enough for Reuben Snipper. We are too small to claim kindred with Reuben Snipper. We mustn't aim so high as that. The devil take him! So we are Turks and infidels<sup>44</sup> here at Borgenscroft – the devil take him, I say! We are useful for scaring little children in the dark, no doubt. I should like to know – I should so like to know – whether the same gentleman is man enough to say that to *me*!... Now, tell me, Anders, tell me... is it solemn earnest between you two? Do you and Esther really want each other?
- (348) *ANDERS*: Do you think I'd let myself be flung out, if we didn't?
- (349) *BORGEN*: Well, there's an answer at last with some sense in it – though it was wrong all the same. Very well, then, Anders – It's solemn earnest?
- (350) *ANDERS*: What's the good, anyway?
- (351) *BORGEN*: A son of mine doesn't ask 'What's the good?' There's always hope for anyone who sets his teeth and whose wishes are not afraid of the daylight. Always... Very well, then. Mikkel!
- (352) *YOUNG MIKKEL*: Yes, Dad?
- (353) *BORGEN*: Harness the chestnuts to a sledge-and, Inger, bring me my greatcoat. (*Young Mikkel goes out R. and Inger L.B. to do what he says.*)
- (354) *ANDERS*: Dad!
- (355) *BORGEN (to Anders)*: Let's have a foot-muff in the sledge – and put your coat on.
- (356) *ANDERS*: My word! You really are the finest Dad I've ever had. {112}  
(*Inger has returned L. B. and helped him on with his greatcoat and is finding him various other things.*)
- (357) *BORGEN*: Fur-gloves – that's right. (*Calling through the R. door to Mikkel*) Plenty of corn in the nose-bags! I shall – good Lord, I shall – what in the name of thunder does the man imagine?... Muffler – thank you. And mittens – thank you, Inger, you think of everything. Have you got a clean handker – why, you know it before I can get it out, my lass. You've soon got to know Mikkel Borgen. (*Turning to his eldest son who has come in again R.*) Now, Mikkel, that straw by the ladder there under the eaves – you can use that for chaff. And give the brood mare a half a pail of tepid water as soon as she comes round. Someone keep an eye on the sow. Mind and look after the house while I'm away... Now then, off we go – in God's name! (*He goes out R.*)

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<sup>44</sup> Turks is in this context seen as an ungodly and unchristian people and is here associated with bad manners.

(358) *INGER (to the empty room):* And yet you all say that the day of miracles is past.  
(*Sound of departing sleigh-bells.*)

*C U R T A I N*

## ACT TWO

*A low-ceilinged room at Reuben Snipper's, where a few men and women – including Reuben's wife, Kirstin, and his daughter, Esther – are seated at a prayer-meeting.\* Reuben is standing near the entrance door R. and addressing them. There is another door L.C., leading to the kitchen.*

- (359) **REUBEN** ... For we – my brothers and sisters – we have been ransomed from the power of Satan and hell. And we are a royal priesthood, a peculiar people – as it says in the First Epistle of Peter<sup>45</sup> – and we consort not with unbelievers, with the children of this world, my dear brothers and sisters. For they shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig-tree, saith the prophet Micah<sup>46</sup>... As for the new pastor, he is not for us, my friends; he is an unbeliever, full of sin and doubting. He is not certain – he said last Sunday – if it really was a miracle with Jairus's daughter<sup>47</sup>. But the Lord saith in the proverb of Solomon<sup>48</sup>: There is no wisdom nor understanding nor counsel against the Lord. Let learned preachers holloa and shout and cut all the capers they please – there's a little verse in the Book of Daniel<sup>49</sup>, how that God sent His angel and shut the mouths of the lions so that they did no hurt. And we, God's children, who are washed in the blood of the Lamb<sup>50</sup> – we know that the Lord still works his wonders among us this very day. Isn't it a miracle, Anna Maria, that you can sit there in the certainty of your being saved? Isn't it a miracle, Thatcher Kristen, that the Lord has led you to conversion and the surrender of your whole will to Him? Isn't it a miracle that a lost sinner like me can stand here and witness for you, my brothers and sisters, like a holy man – fancy the Lord being able to get something good out of Reuben Snipper! What a wonderful blessing! Let us praise and thank Him, my friends ... We thank Thee, O Lord, that through the strait gate of conversion<sup>51</sup> Thou hast led us to salvation; that Thou dost sanctify us and keep us from dancing and swearing and card-play-  
\* Though this is naive in tone, it should be taken seriously.

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<sup>45</sup> First Epistle of Peter 2:9, NT.

<sup>46</sup> Book of Micah 4:4, OT.

<sup>47</sup> Reference to one of Jesus' miracles, where he resurrects the daughter of Jairus in NT. One of the reasons why the pastor, who is more of the rationalist Christian belief, is skeptical of this particular miracle may be because the gospels somewhat contradict each other in the account. In the Gospel of Luke 8:40-56 and Gospel of Mark 5:21-43, the daughter is dying. In the Gospel of Matthew 9:18-26, however, the girl isn't specifically referred to as Jairus' daughter and has already died, why the miracle performed by Jesus may seem even more unbelievable in this account. Reuben Snipper and his congregation might be offended by the pastor's rationalistic analysis of the miracle and see it as blasphemous rejection of the miraculous capabilities of Jesus.

<sup>48</sup> From the Book of Proverbs 21:30, OT.

<sup>49</sup> Book of Daniel 6:23, OT.

<sup>50</sup> Reference to Book of Revelation 7:14, NT.

<sup>51</sup> Gospel of Matthew 7:13-14, NT: "Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it."



ing, and {114} from profaning the Sabbath – as we read in Isaiah, fifty-fifty-six<sup>52</sup>. Make us gentle to those that wander at the brink of the abyss towards the ceaseless torments of hell. Lead us, dear Master, from this vale of sorrow to the golden thrones above; and, in white robes and with palms in our hands, set us among the tens of thousands who have been<sup>53</sup> – (*There is a knock on the door*) Come in.

(360) *BORGEN*: (*entering R.*) Good evening.

(361) *REUBEN*: Good evening, Mikkel. Welcome to our meeting<sup>54</sup>.

(362) *BORGEN*: I haven't come to your meeting. I've come to have a word with you.

(363) *REUBEN*: You're welcome to that, too. Do come right in. Our little gathering will be over in a moment. Have you come in the sledge, Mikkel?

(364) *BORGEN*: Yes, Anders is looking after the horses.

(365) *REUBEN* (*calling through the R. door to Anders outside*): Anders – hi! Anders – there's room in the barn. Just put the horses in there, lad, and come here into the warm. (*Coming inside again*) Now, Mikkel, take off your cloak and then do please sit down.

(366) *BORGEN* (*to the rest of the gathering*) Good evening. (*There is a vacant chair beside him and he sits down*)

(367) <sup>55</sup>*THE OTHERS*: Good evening, Mikkel. Good evening.

(368) *REUBEN*: We're just going to have a little testimony<sup>56</sup> from Anna Maria to end up with. Now, Anna Maria, we'll go on with the meeting.

(369) *ANNA MARIA* (*standing up*): Well, I only want to say I wish everyone might get on with the L ord same as I done – that feel so good. But it usen't to be, time I were still in me sins; for then I were that mis'able, bein' as I were kind o' weighed down and crushed by me 'niquity. But then, two days afore Michaelmas<sup>57</sup>, I were saved – that year Pastor Isaaksen come over from th' other side o' the fiord to speak to us here. 'Twere that bit in our Bible: "Hold thy peace at the presence of the Lord God; for the day of the Lord is at hand; for the Lord hath prepared a sacrifice, he hath sanctified his guests."<sup>58</sup> And now I'm the happiest body alive, and I praise and thank the Lord. That's all I wanted to say.

<sup>52</sup> Book of Isaiah 56:2, OT: "Blessed is the one who does this — the person who holds it fast, who keeps the Sabbath without desecrating it, and keeps their hands from doing any evil."

<sup>53</sup> Book of Revelation 7:1-9, NT.

<sup>54</sup> In the inner Mission, meetings are held both in the mission houses as well in private homes.

<sup>55</sup> Line 367 was added by Asger Holde.

<sup>56</sup> Testimonies at inner Mission meetings are when the participants tell about their religious experiences.

<sup>57</sup> Mikkemas, from Latin "dies sancti Michaelis archangeli" ("Ærkeenglen Michaels dag"), which was a holiday in the Catholic Church (29<sup>th</sup> of September) until 1770. On the countryside in Denmark, Mikkemas is often used as an expression for the day of the Autumn harvest fests, payment term as well as changeover or moving day. [DSD]

<sup>58</sup> Zephaniah 1:7, OT.



(370) *REUBEN*: That was a good testimony. If only more souls could {115} come and make one like it! (*They sing a revivalist hymn*)<sup>59</sup>

Sinner, close no more thy ear,  
 Let the bleating of the lamb be heard!  
 Hear it holler, full of grace:  
 Take calm my bosom, by my Word.  
 O, turn around!  
 quick as a hound!  
 God's judgment will be sound!

Harden not thy soul again,  
 Before Satan firmly stand thy ground  
 No sinner shall search in vain,  
 the shadow of the Cross can be found.  
 Yes, turn around,  
 All sinners bound,  
 God's judgment will be sound!

Worldly spoils will hollow souls,  
 And worldly life shall on sin depend.  
 With a pity it began  
 in Hell's eternal flames it shall end  
 Turn, turn around,  
 His Glory bound,  
 God's judgment will be sound!

Christ us gives a holy joy,  
 O, eternal bliss He shall bring,  
 with grace and love He became  
 And His end is peace, all angels sing.  
 So, all around,  
 His grace is found,  
 So let His judgment sound!

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<sup>59</sup> The revivalist hymn in question appears in the original Danish play and is here translated by Asger Holde. It bears resemblance to the style of the hymns of the inner Mission as well as the Danish pietist priest and hymnist Hans Adolf Brorson (1694-1764) (who was very influential on the Danish National Church in the 18<sup>th</sup> century). The revivalist hymn is probably a pastiche written by Kaj Munk himself.

The original Danish version can be found in the Virtual Kaj Munk Archive's version of *The Word* on page 31: <https://arkiv.kajmunk.aau.dk/documents/933>

Well, then, good-night, brothers and sisters. We'll meet again at the Institute<sup>60</sup> – God willing – in a week's time.

*(Anders comes in R. as Reuben's flock goes out R. – though Esther goes L.B. to the kitchen.)*

- (371) *REUBEN*: Good day again, Anders. Do please sit down ... Kirstin, you can find us a drop of coffee, I expect?
- (372) *KIRSTIN* (*his wife – who has not gone out with the others – to Borgen*): Can you wait a little, while I–
- (373) *BORGEN*: Don't bother with coffee.
- (374) *REUBEN*: But it's such a biting cold wind out there.
- (375) *KIRSTIN* (*going out L.B. to the kitchen*): It won't be a moment.
- (376) *REUBEN* (*reaching for some tobacco*): Will you fill your pipe, Mikkel?
- (377) *BORGEN*: Thanks. Don't bother with that either.
- (378) *REUBEN*: You, Anders?
- (379) *ANDERS*: No, thanks, mine's alight.
- (380) *BORGEN* (*making conversation*): Bacon's going up, Reuben.
- (381) *REUBEN*: Yes, Mikkel, but eggs were down yesterday.
- (382) *BORGEN*: Were they? Have you many fowls, Reuben?
- (383) *REUBEN*: Ye-es. As many as your pigs, I expect.
- (384) *BORGEN*: Well, you know what we've come about, Reuben.
- (385) *REUBEN*: If I don't I can give a pretty near guess.
- (386) *BORGEN*: Well – what have you done with Esther? I noticed she was at the meeting.
- (387) *REUBEN*: She'll be helping her mother with the coffee in the kitchen.
- (388) *BORGEN*: I suppose she'll come in presently.
- (389) *REUBEN*: I don't expect so.
- (390) *BORGEN*: Really? Why not?
- (391) *REUBEN*: Oh, I told her she mustn't think any more about it. I feel it will make it a bit easier for her to go the way of the Lord, if she doesn't see Anders too often.
- (392) *ANDERS*: There, you see, Dad.
- (393) *BORGEN*: It's curious, Reuben; you and I both think the same.
- (394) *REUBEN* (*with a half-laugh*): We don't often do that. {116}
- (395) *BORGEN*: You see, that's what I've always felt; that it wasn't God's meaning that these two should marry.
- (396) *REUBEN*: Well, there's nothing curious about that.
- (397) *BORGEN*: No?

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<sup>60</sup> In the original play, 'the Institute' is "Fattiggaarden" ['poor house'], which was a communal labor institution, where poor people received food and shelter in exchange of labor. These poor houses were instituted in the mid-1800s and had their greatest influence toward the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The last poor houses were closed due to a social reform in 1933. [DSD]

- (398) *REUBEN*: You're Mikkel Borgen, and I'm Reuben Snipper<sup>61</sup>.  
 (399) *BORGEN*: H'm.  
 (400) *REUBEN*: Now you see how it is.  
 (401) *BORGEN*: All the same – that difference between us has nothing to do with God's meaning.  
 (402) *REUBEN*: It hasn't. But, naturally, I've more reason to notice it than you... (*as Kirstin brings in coffee from the kitchen*) Anyhow, here's the coffee, Mikkel.  
 (403) *KIRSTIN*: Will you come and sit at the table?  
 (404) *BORGEN*: If Esther can't come in, I can't sit at the table.  
 (405) *REUBEN*: All right, let Esther come in, Kirstin.  
 (406) *KIRSTIN*: She can just say good-evening. (*Calling through to the kitchen*) Esther, come and say good-evening.  
 (407) *ESTHER* (*from outside*) Yes, Mother. (*She comes in*)  
 (408) *BORGEN*: Good-evening, Esther.  
 (409) *ESTHER*: Good-evening.  
 (410) *ANDERS*: Good-evening, Esther.  
 (411) *ESTHER*: Good-evening, Anders.  
 (412) *REUBEN*: Now you'd better go out again, my clear.  
 (413) *BORGEN*: Let her stay – do.  
 (414) *KIRSTIN* (*to Esther*): Go out and fire the boiler, and keep it going.  
 (415) *ESTHER*: Very well. (*She goes back to the kitchen*)  
 (416) *BORGEN*: H'm. Anders, you may as well have your coffee in the kitchen.  
 (417) *ANDERS*: Yes, I may as well – if – (*looking at Kirstin and Reuben*) that is to say, if you don't mind.  
 (418) *BORGEN*: You could do it, anyhow.  
 (419) *KIRSTIN*: Let's all three have coffee out there – (*to Borgen*) if you are to be master here too.  
 (*She goes out L.B. with Anders.*)  
 (420) *REUBEN*: It seems you've changed your mind about God's meaning, Mikkel. {117}  
 (421) *BORGEN*: Well, Reuben, I'll be quite frank and tell you how it came about. It happened not two hours ago. It began in a fit of temper. I was as angry as old Nick<sup>62</sup>, when Anders came home and told me how you had treated him. Just as angry as I was when I heard that he had come over here on his bicycle. But now I've been sitting in the sledge, turning the whole thing over in my mind – trying to look at it from your angle as well. And I'm beginning to see that you, too, are

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<sup>61</sup> The implication here is that the daughter of Reuben Snipper the tailor isn't agreeable or wealthy enough to marry the rich farmer's son of Borgenscroft.

<sup>62</sup> *Old Nick*: A common nickname for Satan.

making a bit of a sacrifice. Well, let's do it, then Reuben. Our differences of opinion – yours and mine – our children mustn't suffer for them. Because we are Christian people, just for that very reason we must make some personal sacrifice, to enable us to make others glad.

(422) *REUBEN*: Personal sacrifice – yes, Mikkell, we must. That's just what I'm doing when I say no. For to sacrifice, maybe, my daughter's soul – why, I've simply no right to.

(423) *BORGEN*: What exactly do you mean when you speak of sacrificing Esther's soul?

(424) *REUBEN*: If you were heathens or freethinkers<sup>63</sup>, Mikkell, it would be easier for me to say yes; because to force Esther to leave the paths of the Lord wouldn't be so easy, whereas to entice and infatuate a person is, I dare say, not so difficult.

(425) *BORGEN*: Who's going to entice and infatuate?

(426) *REUBEN*: If you offered her cards and dancing and music in place of the Lord, she would know it was the work of Satan and be on her guard; but if you offer her these and at the same time allow her to 'keep God' (as you call it), this might confuse a dear, good – really, Mikkell, I suppose a man shouldn't say it of his own child, but if I didn't know from the Scriptures that all have sinned and come short of the glory of God<sup>64</sup> – and that about inherited sin as well<sup>65</sup> – then, really, I should be ready to believe that dear Esther was as pure as an angel from Heaven. But that's, of course, sinful pride in your own child.

(427) *BORGEN*: I don't know that it is.

(428) *REUBEN*: I felt, as soon as she was born, Mikkell, that there was something so – so delicate and fine about her; and she's become more and more so, as time went on. Neither of us has ever de-<sup>{ 118}</sup>-served to have such a treasure entrusted to us. Kirstin hasn't. No more have I ... Well, can't you see that, with a lass we're so fond of, we don't want to run the risk of her – but what's the good of our talking, Mikkell? You never understand me.

(429) *BORGEN*: And you never understand me.

(430) *REUBEN*: Oh, yes, I do – perfectly well. I was like you myself once.

(431) *BORGEN*: But it was too small for you. So you made a clean break and set up for yourself.

(432) *REUBEN*: Yes, Mikkell, you're right; it was too small for me.

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<sup>63</sup> *Freethinkers*: Reuben uses the expression to signify atheists or non-believers. The term originates from the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century and expresses a philosophical position along the lines of the Enlightenment, where the thinking person in question isn't bound to conventional beliefs but strives towards an open-minded attitude and perception of the world. [DSD]

<sup>64</sup> Reference to Romans, 3:23, NT.

<sup>65</sup> The original sin of Adam and Eve, which casted humanity from Paradise, in Genesis 1, OT. A foundational thought in Christianity, that all are born sinners.

- (433) *BORGEN*: And you're right, too; I don't understand you. The longer I live, the less I understand you. This parish – this parish, where the glad light of Grundtvig has blazed for more than a generation ... And yet you go and flit away to the gloom of your tabernacle. No, Reuben, have no fear; I shan't say a word against your converts – even though – even though – no, I shan't say a word.
- (434) *REUBEN*: Didn't you think Anna Maria's humble testimony was beautiful and uplifting?
- (435) *BORGEN*: I can't abide folk who mouth God's name to and fro like a screw of tobacco. Well, but – that's enough. You're just as good Christians as we are, no doubt, just as good – although – but that'll do, that'll do. Let me respect you; as for putting up with you – no, I'm danged if I can.
- (436) *REUBEN*: What is it, then, about us that you can't put up with, my dear Mikkel?
- (437) *BORGEN*: Everything – everything. People say we belong to two different persuasions, you and I. No, they're two different religions. For me, God is Creator and Father; you make God Chairman of a party. You stifle me – blaspheme against my God, the manifold God of light and life, with your Dismal Jimmy<sup>66</sup> faces and your longing for death and your tommyrot<sup>67</sup> about conversion.
- (438) *REUBEN*: That isn't true – none of it is true, my dear Mikkel. It only shows how little you understand. We don't make God Chairman of a party – because that's just what he is; we don't make the distinction. It's there, of course – the distinction {119} between good and evil, truth and untruth, belief and unbelief; and we, whom the Spirit has enlightened, we are able to see it.
- (439) *BORGEN*: Fiddlesticks<sup>68</sup>! Man's piety isn't a thing that lies on the surface. The one that promises the least may be good for the most. How dare you, miserable creatures as you say you are yourselves – how dare you judge, when Christ's own commandment–
- (440) *REUBEN*: I've heard that so often, Mikkel. But, come, let's be reasonable. The difference between God and Satan is the greatest difference in the world – we agree about that. Then, should the difference between their disciples be so impossible to fix? No, Mikkel, this time you're a long way out. Dismal Jimmies, indeed! We, whom the Spirit has enlightened – to call us Dismal Jimmies – the Sour-faced Saints – while you are the Glad Christians! As a matter of fact, do you know what I've sometimes thought, in recent years, coming across you in the village – how tired and gloomy you looked, Mikkel... But when I'm here at the table cutting out smocks and trousers, I sing out loud – lovely hymns and spiritual songs – and my heart feels so light, because the Lord has taken away my sins; and if I were to fall down dead at the table, I should go straight home to Him, to salvation and bliss.

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<sup>66</sup> *Dismal Jimmy*: old English slang for a pessimist.

<sup>67</sup> *Tommyrot*: utter foolishness or nonsense.

<sup>68</sup> *Fiddlesticks*: A violin bow, here used as slang for nonsense.

- (441) *BORGEN (impatiently)*: But the others? All the others? Bless my soul if I can see how anyone can enjoy a single hour of happiness, who believes all the time that his friends and relations, his neighbours and fellow-countrymen – in fact, the whole world except himself – will be frizzling in the everlasting torments of hell, as soon as they die! That's what you believe, isn't it?
- (442) *REUBEN*: We none of us know what happens to people at the hour of death – whether they may not be granted a period of grace in which to be converted.
- (443) *BORGEN*: Oh, that's how you save the situation. You believe that most people are converted at the moment of death?
- (444) *REUBEN*: No, no, Mikkel. No, we believe that by far the great majority of people go to hell. And you know of course yourself what it says in Matthew 7,13.
- (445) *BORGEN*: No, I'll be danged if I do! {120}
- (446) *REUBEN*: "Wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction and many there be"<sup>69</sup> –
- (447) *BORGEN (breaking in)*: But there's no need, in slavish fear of the letter –
- (448) *REUBEN*: Ah, but, Mikkel, our lives are one long joy – at the joy that awaits us one day. We don't need to resort to cards and drink and dancing and poor shifts of that kind, in order to be glad. To think that you should reproach us for loving our Saviour so much that almost every hour of the day we long for Him – long to escape from this world of sin and to be with Him in heaven!
- (449) *BORGEN*: Yes, by God, I do reproach you. Heaven help us, it's a mighty poor sort of Saviour to have – one who's enthroned somewhere in the far distance and we are to be content with just yearning for. Mine's with me pretty well every hour of the day, as you put it. He's never separated from me – except when I myself desert Him, with a bad conscience. He can ease my sorrow – and deepen my joy; He is ready to turn life for me into lasting happiness, and death into a short-lived lie.
- (450) *REUBEN*: Words, words – you've plenty of them, Mikkel; but they're not enough... But, come, we must have a wee drap more coffee, mustn't we?
- (451) *BORGEN*: No more coffee, thank you.
- (452) *REUBEN*: Yes, yes, you really must. (*Calling out*) Kirstin! . . .
- (453) Kirstin! ... Can't she hear me? Kirstin!
- (*Borgen breaks into a laugh.*)
- (454) *REUBEN*: What are you laughing at, Mikkel? Oh, then, I must fetch it myself, I suppose. . .
- (*Esther looks in from the kitchen-door.*)
- (455) *REUBEN*: Hullo, there you are, Esther. It's Madam Blue\*, my dear—can you bring her in?

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<sup>69</sup> The full quote from Matthew 7:13, NT: "Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it."



(*Esther goes out L.B. again.*)

(456) *BORGEN*: You married a strategist, eh, Reuben? A cunning one, too. Is that how you've managed to live on a bit of a warfooting in the past? {121}

(*Esther returns, with coffee-pot.*)

(457) *REUBEN*: Serve Mikkell first, my dear.

(458) *BORGEN*: Do you think I ought to, Esther?

(459) *ESTHER*: Yes.

(460) *BORGEN*: Well, only a half-cup. Isn't your mother out there in the kitchen?

(461) *ESTHER*: Yes. But – so is Anders.

(462) *BORGEN*: That's it, that's it – right up to the top.

(463) *REUBEN*: What are you three doing out there?

(464) *ESTHER*: Mother is reading aloud from "The Song of the Lamb"<sup>70</sup>.

(465) *REUBEN*: Pay good heed, my lass, pay good heed. You can put the coffee there, in case we want any more.

(*Esther goes out.*)

Well, Mikkell, you can imagine how I felt when I heard about Anders and Esther. I'm a poor man – very poor. That telephone – which I badly need as a tailor – I've got to have it cut off at the end of this quarter... Then all at once it began to look as if I was to become father-in-law to Borgenscroft. And I thought – suppose through me and my daughter, suppose by the grace of God through us, unworthy as we are, Borgenscroft were to be won for the Heavenly Kingdom. Yes, that was it, Mikkell, and the thought made my head swim – until I realized that it was mere sinful pride<sup>71</sup> – the old Adam coming out in me<sup>72</sup> – with its lust for power and outward show.

(466) *BORGEN* (*with a movement of impatience*): Tut, tut!

(467) *REUBEN*: Yes, Mikkell, it was hard to give all that up. It was a sacrifice, I can tell you. But I dare say you understand as well as I do that there's nothing to be done. All that's left is whether the Lord really means to hear my prayer.

(468) *BORGEN*: Your prayer?

\* Madam Blue: the blue enamel coffee-pot to be seen all over Denmark.

<sup>70</sup> From Book of Revelation 15:3-4, NT: "Great and marvelous are your deeds, / Lord God Almighty. / Just and true are your ways, / King of the nations. / Who will not fear you, Lord, / and bring glory to your name? / For you alone are holy. / All nations will come / and worship before you, / for your righteous acts have been revealed."

<sup>71</sup> A reference to Book of Proverbs 21:4, OT: "Haughty eyes and a proud heart – / the unplowed field of the wicked – produce sin." As well as in the Book of Sirach 10:13 in the Biblical apocrypha: "For the beginning of pride is sin". Pride is also known as one of the Seven deadly sins in Christian thought.

<sup>72</sup> *the Old Adam*: Reference to the original sin, sometimes called 'the old man' or just 'the old', e.g., in Romans 6:6: "We know that our old self was crucified with him so that the sinful body might be destroyed, and we might no longer be enslaved to sin." As well as in Ephesians 4:22, OT: "Put off your old nature which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful lusts".

- (469) *REUBEN*: Yes, Mikkel, from the day I left you and yours and was converted, there hasn't been an evening that I haven't prayed for you. You can see by that that we're in earnest; for I don't suppose you pray for me, do you?
- (470) *BORGEN*: No, I don't – that's a fact. But – {122}
- (471) *REUBEN*: Just one other thing. When I join God's other children from round about and we salute one another with a holy kiss<sup>73</sup>, according to Scripture, and sing our hymns and offer our prayers and hold spiritual converse over the coffee, then I'm so grateful and happy...<sup>74</sup> Mikkel, when you are at your congregations, do you feel at home as well, and feel that all is peaceful?
- (472) *BORGEN*: Yes. Yes, I do.
- (473) *REUBEN*: Is that truly the case, dear Mikkel?
- (474) *BORGEN*: What's the meaning with that question?
- (475) *REUBEN*: Because if you were well and content, Mikkel, why did you wish Johannes to become a – reformist, as they say? Nothing needed to be reformed, according to you.
- (476) *BORGEN*: That may be true. I had once hoped, and I believed, that Johannes was capable. I don't deny that. The great spirit that old Grundtvig gave us, it has been spread too thin. He began himself, in his old age, and it has worsened with time. Now adays at our congregations, when we rise and give our cheers to drink, it strikes me that I'm drinking tepid water, and I hover above the others, as if we're hiding for ourselves and for each other. Yes, I wish my drink to taste like spirits again, like Rum! But now?– Now there's nothing more to say. We have climbed upon a mountain top; now we must move down through the valleys.
- (477) *REUBEN*: And so the watered-down spirit of Grundtvig would help? Oh, Mikkel, won't you come over to us?<sup>75</sup>
- (478) *BORGEN*: Never!
- (479) *REUBEN*: Don't say that. Remember, we live in a land of miracles.
- (480) *BORGEN*: Land of miracles?
- (481) *REUBEN*: Miracles in men's hearts.
- (482) *BORGEN*: Faugh! That stuff!
- (483) *REUBEN*: He is mighty in all things – even to rescuing you from error and delusion.
- (484) *BORGEN*: Error and delusion?
- (485) *REUBEN*: Yes, Mikkel, the error and delusion in which you have lived your life.
- (486) *BORGEN*: Really – error and delusion.

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<sup>73</sup> Reference to Romans 16:16, NT.

<sup>74</sup> The section from the last sentence of line 471 to the first sentence of line 477 has been added by Asger Holde.



- (487) *REUBEN*: You shall not drink tepid water any longer. The Lord himself prescribes for you the sincere milk of the Word<sup>76</sup>.
- (488) *BORGEN*: Milk?
- (489) *REUBEN*: Mikkel!
- (490) *BORGEN*: Error and delusion – really! So I've lived in – can you beat it? When I took over the farm, there wasn't a grain, not a living grain, of Christianity in the village. I made a beginning, quite alone; not a soul was with me, not even my wife – no one but God. Old Becker, rationalist as he was, thundered loyally against me Sunday after Sunday. And the work advanced; the meeting-house was built; the school was built. Then the school for little ones came into being; our song went triumphing out over the parish – into people's homes, into their hearts; folk flocked to our meetings. And all this which took me nearly fifty years with God's blessing to build up, all this proceeds from error and delusion, does it?
- (491) *REUBEN*: Oh, well, if we go by outward results, there are parish missions which in the past twenty years –
- (492) *BORGEN*: And myself, my baptism, my happiness at Confirma-<sup>{123}</sup>-tion, at Communion, at prayer; the Word, the Word in my ear and the Word in my mouth – all these have been, and still are, error and delusion, delusion and error! Our old originator – old Grundtvig himself – I suppose his life, too, was error and delusion?
- (493) *REUBEN*: I've never read anything of his, Mikkel, and I really know so little about him.
- (494) *BORGEN*: You shan't wriggle out of it like that. I suppose he's lost beyond hope of redemption?
- (495) *REUBEN*: It's not for us mortals to judge, Mikkel.
- (496) *BORGEN*: Oho, then it isn't so simple after all to tell the difference between God's disciples and Satan's. Or are you afraid to give me an answer?
- (497) *REUBEN*: God's children know nothing of fear, Mikkel; for nothing can harm us. Now, look; Grundtvig – you know yourself, Mikkel, that he was one who all his life wrestled with doubt, so that conviction and the peace of God were things of which he knew nothing.
- (498) *BORGEN*: That's obvious.
- (499) *REUBEN*: And those who have followed him are unbelieving and unconverted. So in my judgment–
- (500) *BORGEN*: In your judgment?
- (501) *REUBEN*: Grundtvig is a lost soul.

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<sup>76</sup> Reference to the First Book of Peter 2:1-4, NT: “So put away all malice and all guile and insincerity and envy and all slander. Like newborn babes, long for the pure spiritual milk, that by it you may grow up to Salvation, for you have tasted the kindness of the Lord.”

- (502) *BORGEN*: In the judgment of Reuben Snipper, Nicolai Frederik Severin Grundtvig is in hell! (*Calling out*) Anders! Anders!
- (503) *ANDERS* (*Putting his head in L.B.*) Yes, Dad.
- (504) *BORGEN*: This young woman of yours – what's her name? – Esther. Yes, she shall be yours – the Devil strike me, she shall – if I have to lug her out of this reformatory myself.
- (505) *ANDERS*: Well, but Dad – (*Anders has come right in, followed by Kirstin and Esther*)
- (506) *KIRSTIN*: You forget, Mikkell Borgen, that you will be called to account for every idle word you speak.
- (507) *BORGEN*: But this evening there's nothing to record. (*To Anders*) Put the horses to.
- (508) *ANDERS*: Yes, but, Dad – {124}
- (509) *BORGEN*: Put the horses to! . . . And now I'll say good-night, Reuben.
- (510) *REUBEN*: Mikkell! Mikkell You're still too stubborn. Your proud plans for Johannes – these the Lord had to confound. Don't force Him also to –
- (511) *BORGEN*: I don't want to hear a thing about Johannes from *you*.
- (512) *REUBEN*: Not from me, Mikkell, but from the Lord. You must be tried still further. Oh, I will pray for you, so that the Lord may not give you up – but humble you utterly in the dust... (*The telephone rings. Reuben picks up the receiver at once*) What's that? Hallo, hallo – yes, it's – yes – no, not yet – yes, they're just this moment leaving – what? – no, but look – really? – yes, all right, I'll tell him – yes, I hope there'll soon be a change for the better – good-night. (*Hangs up the receiver*)
- (513) *BORGEN*: What's that? About a change for the better?
- (514) *REUBEN* (*unctuously*) Strange – wonderful, Mikkell. Verily, verily, we live in a land of miracles.
- (515) *BORGEN*: What is it?
- (516) *REUBEN*: Just as I'm saying that you must be tried still further, your son Mikkell rings up to say that Inger has been taken seriously ill.
- (517) *BORGEN*: Inger? But I expect it's only –
- (518) *REUBEN*: No, it was certainly something unusual, as I understood it.
- (519) *BORGEN*: Really? Then we must hurry.
- (520) *REUBEN*: Well, now, my dear Mikkell, I will really and truly wish for you that the Lord may reach your heart this time, however hard He may have to strike.
- (521) *BORGEN*: What's that you're saying, man? God help me, if I don't believe that you stand there and – and wish that my daughter-in-law may die.
- (522) *REUBEN*: Salvation comes before everything. Can it be won in no other way, then in the name of the Lord, dear Mikkell, I do wish it.
- (523) *BORGEN* (*in a hostile attitude*) So you do, do you?
- (524) *ESTHER*: O merciful heaven – help!
- (525) *BORGEN* (*to Reuben*): Do you know the answer to that?
- (526) *KIRSTIN*: Mikkell Borgen, be careful what you do.

- (527) *ESTHER* (calling through the house-door R. to Anders, outside) Anders, Anders, he's going to kill my father.
- (528) *REUBEN*: You dare to touch me, Mikkell!
- (529) *ANDERS* (from outside); Keep cool, Dad – don't get angry.
- (530) *BORGEN*: Just let me – there! (*He slaps Reuben's face so hard that he staggers to the floor*)
- (531) *ESTHER*: No, no!
- (532) *REUBEN*: (*half-raising himself from the floor*): I've got witnesses, Mikkell Borgen. Just because you're the big Mikkell – I suppose other people may exist.
- (533) *BORGEN* (*as he goes out R.*): Go to hell, will you!
- (534) *REUBEN*: No, no – I don't want to stand in your way. We'll meet again in the law-court – you great purse-proud hooligan! (*Borgen is heard whipping up his horses and driving off.*)
- (535) *BORGEN*: St! St! Giddy-up!<sup>77</sup>

CURTAIN

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<sup>77</sup> Line 535 has been added by Asger Holde.

## ACT THREE

*The large living-room at Borgenscroft.*

*Borgen, young Mikkel, and Johannes—the last sitting on the sofa at the back.*

- (536) *BORGEN* (coming in R., frozen stiff, covered with snow): The Doctor's car, Mikkel? What – isn't it the midwife?
- (537) *YOUNG MIKKEL*: They're both here.
- (538) *BORGEN*: Anything wrong with the child?
- (539) *YOUNG MIKKEL*: Yes – there is.
- (540) *BORGEN*: Johannes was like that, and he's the sturdiest of you all.
- (541) *YOUNG MIKKEL*: The Doctor says we must be thankful if the mother can be saved.
- (542) *BORGEN*: He says that, does he? After all, what does he know about it? He can merely do his best; but he can't decide anything. Do you think – shall I go up?
- (543) *YOUNG MIKKEL*: Inger's unconscious.
- (544) *BORGEN*: Well – yes – then, you go up, my boy, you go up.  
(*Young Mikkel goes out.*)
- (545) *ANDERS* (coming in R.): How's it going, Dad?
- (546) *BORGEN*: It'll go well enough. But you and I, Anders – we shall have a busy night.
- (547) *ANDERS*: Shall we?
- (548) *BORGEN*: Yes – praying.
- (549) *ANDERS*: All right, Dad. Both for Esther and for Inger.
- (550) *BORGEN*: Mostly for Inger, my boy. Esther – we'll manage that ourselves.
- (551) *ANDERS*: Oh, but how? It's so difficult – so impossible.
- (552) *BORGEN*: Remember what Cromwell<sup>78</sup> said to his troops, when they had to cross a river: "Trust in God, lads, and keep your powder dry." If we help Him – (*pointing upwards*) – He helps us, everything will come right. You go off to bed, Anders. We'll call you – if there's anything to call you for.
- (553) *ANDERS*: Then, shan't we pray together, Dad? {127}
- (554) *BORGEN*: My boy, when it's a matter of life and death, I prefer to pray alone.
- (555) *ANDERS*: Then, so will I.
- (556) *BORGEN*: I know, Anders, I know – and thank God you will. But get into bed first; it's as cold as ice in your room. And, as for your own affair – keep your courage up.
- (557) *ANDERS*: Not for Inger, you mean?
- (558) *BORGEN*: Yes, yes, for everything. After all, it's God's will that is being done.

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<sup>78</sup> Oliver Cromwell (1599-1658): An English puritan, member of Parliament and Lord Protector, who supposedly said to his soldiers at the Battle of Edgehill in 1642 during the English civil war (1642-1651): "Keep your faith in God, but keep your powder dry." [DSD]

(*Anders goes out L.B.*)

- (559) *JOHANNES* (*getting up from the sofa*): The Lord be with you.
- (560) *BORGEN*: Yes, that's right, Johannes.
- (561) *JOHANNES*: Strangers here to-night – distinguished visitors.
- (562) *BORGEN*: Yes, thank goodness the Doctor doesn't come every day.
- (563) *JOHANNES*: It's the Lord and two angels.
- (564) *BORGEN*: Is it Doctor Houen you call the Lord?
- (565) *JOHANNES*: No, no. The angels came first – a woman-angel and a man-angel.
- (566) *BORGEN*: I don't think there have been any others.
- (567) *JOHANNES*: Then came the Lord – the Great Prince Himself – with His scythe and hour-glass<sup>79</sup>.
- (568) *BORGEN*: That'll do, Johannes. No more for the present.
- (569) *JOHANNES*: Why are you fearful, O you of little faith<sup>80</sup>? I am not yet gone to my Father<sup>81</sup>.
- (570) *BORGEN*: Go along – go to bed.
- (571) *JOHANNES*: But in his own place he did no mighty works, because of their unbelief<sup>82</sup>.
- (572) *YOUNG MIKKEL* (*entering R.*): The child's come, Dad.
- (573) *BORGEN*: Really? Was it a boy, then, as she promised me?
- (574) *YOUNG MIKKEL*: Yes, it was a boy.
- (575) *BORGEN*: There – you see, Mikkel, Inger keeps her word. And God doesn't fail –
- (576) *YOUNG MIKKEL*: The boy's lying in a tub – in four pieces.
- (577) *BORGEN*: Mikkel! And Inger – how's Inger?
- (578) *YOUNG MIKKEL*: Unconscious. {128}
- (579) *BORGEN*: Mikkel! If you could only pray!
- (580) *YOUNG MIKKEL*: You can, Dad. (*He goes out R.*)
- (581) *BORGEN*: Yes, and I shall – I shall. Almighty – O merciful God! No more – for pity's sake, no more! Thou hast filled my cup to the brim. Hear me now: let it not

<sup>79</sup> Here, Kaj Munk connects the symbol of death (the scythe) and the symbol of time (the hour-glass)

<sup>80</sup> Reference to Matthew 8:26, NT, where Jesus questions the faith of his disciples before he performs a miracle by quieting the storm: "And he said to them: "Why are you afraid, O men of little faith?" Then he rose and rebuked the winds and the sea; and there was a great calm."

<sup>81</sup> Reference to John 20:17, NT, where the resurrected Jesus speaks to Mary Magdalene: "Jesus said to her, "Do not hold me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father; but go to my brethren and say to them, I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and to your God." This passage communicates the idea that Death is a servant to God.

<sup>82</sup> Reference to Matthew 13:57, NT: "And they took offense at him. But Jesus said to them, "A prophet is not without honor except in his own country and in his own house. And he did not do many mighty works there, because of their unbelief." This suggests that Johannes, believing himself to be Jesus, does not wish to perform a miracle at Borgenscroft because of his family's disbelief.

overflow. (*To Johannes, who is bowing to some unseen figure*) Now what are you up to?

(582) *JOHANNES*: I am bowing to the great vassal of my Father<sup>83</sup>. He has just passed through with the child. If you had had faith in me, it would not have happened. Now I can do nothing.

(583) *BORGEN (calling out)*: Anders! ... Oh, dear! Is he asleep already? Oh, dear! He has his own trouble, too.

(584) *JOHANNES*: How great must your need become, before you fall down and worship me?

(585) *BORGEN*: Johannes, will you do your old father a kindness and stay in your room to-night?

(586) *JOHANNES (gazing fixedly into vacancy)*: Ah!

(587) *BORGEN*: What are you staring at?

(588) *JOHANNES*: Can't you see him? There he is.

(589) *BORGEN (calling out again)*: Anders! Anders! Anders!

(590) *ANDERS (entering L.B.)*: Well, Dad, what is it?

(591) *BORGEN*: Take him away, take your brother away. He'll drive me out of my mind next.

(592) *ANDERS*: Johannes, come on—come along with me.

(593) *JOHANNES*: They seek to gather grapes of thorns. The vine they pass by<sup>84</sup>.  
(*Anders and Johannes go out L.F. Maren, in dressing-gown, comes in L.B.*)

(594) *MAREN*: Grandpa!

(595) *BORGEN*: Why, Maren! – aren't you in bed?

(596) *MAREN*: Yes, I am.

(597) *BORGEN*: Well, but what's this?

(598) *MAREN*: You were shouting so, Grandpa.

(599) *BORGEN*: Oh, did I wake you up?

(600) *MAREN*: Yes. You see, Ruth and I have been moved. We're in the next room. And do you know why? Because we're going to have a little brother. {129}

(601) *BORGEN*: Who told you that?

(602) *MAREN*: Mummy did. Do you think it'll be all right? If only it had been a little sister!

(603) *BORGEN*: Do you think girls are better than boys?

(604) *MAREN (with conviction)*: Oh, yes. It must be a long time since you went to school, I should think – though, of course, you were a boy once.

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<sup>83</sup> *the great vassal of my Father*: 'vassal' comes from Medieval Latin "vasallus" and means king, prince, sheriff etc., who is under the command of another king, prince, sheriff etc. In the play, the great vassal of my Father is a personification of Death, who is exercising God's will by collecting the soul of the dead child.

<sup>84</sup> Reference to the false prophets in Matthew 7:15-20, NT.

- (605) *BORGEN*: I was, Maren.
- (606) *MAREN*: I don't suppose they were so bad in those days. Now they never let you alone – always pulling your hair, or tearing your books, or messing you with ink.
- (607) *BORGEN*: But it's only the bad boys who behave like that.
- (608) *MAREN*: That's all very well – but supposing there's only one sort! Still, I'm sure Mummy has been looking forward to it. It is a pity that she's ill just now.
- (609) *BORGEN*: That's why God has decided that the little boy is not to come yet.
- (610) *MAREN*: Has he?
- (611) *BORGEN*: Yes, and now will you run along and pray to Him to make Mother well again?
- (612) *MAREN*: But He won't do that?
- (613) *BORGEN*: Won't He?
- (614) *MAREN*: No, because she's going to die tonight.
- (615) *BORGEN*: What's this nonsense you're saying, child?
- (616) *MAREN*: Yes – Uncle Johannes says so. And he's going to raise her from the dead. Just like that man – you know – that you told me about. And that little girl, too. And then we'll all of us thank God.
- (617) *BORGEN*: Maren dear, run along to bed now, will you? Is Ruth there, too?
- (618) *MAREN*: Yes, she's asleep. And, anyhow, she's much too small. She doesn't understand a thing.
- (619) *BORGEN*: No but now go to Ruth, will you, and tuck yourself well in and, before you fall asleep, say from the bottom of your heart: "Please, God, make Mummy well again. In the name of Jesus, Amen." Can you say that from the bottom of your heart? {130}
- (620) *MAREN*: Please, God, make Mummy well again. In the name of Jesus, Amen. Yes, I promise I will do that.
- (621) *BORGEN*: Now remember: from the bottom of your heart.
- (622) *MAREN*: Yes, I promise. Good-night, Grandpa.
- (623) *BORGEN*: Good-night, my precious.  
(*Johannes comes in quietly L.F., and at the same time, R., Young Mikkel.*)
- (624) *MAREN (remaining)*: Oh, look, there's Daddy.
- (625) *YOUNG MIKKEL*: I can't bear it any longer up there.
- (626) *BORGEN*: Come on, my boy, don't give in.
- (627) *YOUNG MIKKEL*: I can see what's going to happen.
- (628) *BORGEN*: Going to happen? Haven't you anything else to talk about, all of you? You seem to forget that I'm a man, too. Only a man – an old man.
- (629) *YOUNG MIKKEL*: Dad, I don't think I can bear to lose her.
- (630) *BORGEN*: You're not going to lose her, Mikkel. Now just listen. You'll see that God will –
- (631) *YOUNG MIKKEL*: Dad, I wonder if you would mind – if she does die – sparing me, as far as you can, remarks about "God's trials" and "He who has helped us



hitherto"<sup>85</sup> – and all that. I feel somehow I've too much respect for my Dad's God to be able to stand it.

(632) *BORGEN*: Mikkel – my son, my son!

(633) *MIKKEL*: And one more thing; promise me, Dad, that you will live to see Anders and Esther married; then Maren and Ruth –

(634) *BORGEN* (*clasping his hands*) O Almighty God, this is too much; now the cup is running over. Thou hast not the heart – let it not come to pass. Don't take Inger away from us. . . Mikkel, my own boy, shall we go up together?

(635) *YOUNG MIKKEL*: H'm! Are you as strong as that, old Dad?

(636) *BORGEN*: Yes, for I'm holding God's hand, holding – come!

(*They both go out.*)

(637) *MAREN* (*going to Johannes*): Uncle, is Mummy going to die soon?

(638) *JOHANNES* (*who is noticeably nearer to sanity when talking to the child*) Do you want her to, little one? {131}

(639) *MAREN*: Yes, for then you are to raise her from the dead.

(640) *JOHANNES*: That won't come to anything.

(641) *MAREN*: Why not?

(642) *JOHANNES*: The others won't let me.

(643) *MAREN*: But what will happen to Mummy?

(644) *JOHANNES*: Then your mother will go to heaven.

(645) *MAREN*: But I don't want her to.

(646) *JOHANNES*: My dear child, you've no idea what it is to have a mother in heaven... Look, wrap this rug round you. There, now you'll keep warm. And we two will sit on this settle, and I'll tell you what it's like to have your mother in heaven.

(647) *MAREN*: Yes, *you* have, haven't you, uncle? Maren – old Maren. I was named after her.

(648) *JOHANNES*: No, her name was Mary; but don't you worry about that... You see, to have your mother in heaven –

(649) *MAREN*: Is it better than having her on earth?

(650) *JOHANNES*: Well, of course it is. To have your mother in heaven is – heavenly. Then you will never be alone.

(651) <sup>86</sup>*MAREN*: Never?

(652) *JOHANNES*: No. We are never alone. Every time we do a good deed, she smiles to our Lord, and he gently nods; at once we feel how proud our mother is of us, and it makes us so happy – for a mother's smile and a child's happiness is one of the same.

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<sup>85</sup> "He who has helped us hitherto" ["han, som har hjulpet hidindtil"]: A hymn by Grundtvig, which is often used at funerals in Denmark.

<sup>86</sup> The lines 651-654 have been added by Asger Holde.



- (653) *MAREN*: But if we do something cruel, will she cry?
- (654) *JOHANNES*: She will cry, and her tears will drip down on our hearts. That is called remorse. But to every crying mother, our Heavenly Father smile, and if a cruel person feels God's smile in our mothers' tears right in our hearts, he himself will cry and he becomes soft and good.
- (655) *MAREN*: But supposing something happens to one of us?
- (656) *JOHANNES*: No one can hurt a child whose mother is in heaven.
- (657) *MAREN*: Ah, but Viggo – the blacksmith's son – broke his leg last year.
- (658) *JOHANNES*: That was only hurt to the body.
- (659) *MAREN (puzzled)* Oh... But Mummy – won't she be longing for me, and for Ruth too?
- (660) *JOHANNES*: My dear, she will always be with you. How do you think she could be in heaven, if she had to do without you? There is nobody that you are so certain is always with you as your mother who is dead.
- (661) *MAREN*: Not even your mother who's alive?
- (662) *JOHANNES*: She has so many other things to see to.
- (663) *MAREN*: Yes – milking, and scrubbing floors, and washing up. A dead mother doesn't have any of that – yes, I see.
- (664) *JOHANNES*: That's how it is.
- (665) *MAREN*: Still, I'd rather you raised her from the dead, Uncle, so that we could keep her here. {132}
- (666) *JOHANNES*: Child of the earth, earthy! ... Now you must go to bed, little girl.
- (667) *MAREN*: Good-night, Uncle. Oh, you are good.
- (668) *JOHANNES*: No one is good but God. All our goodness springs from Him.
- (669) *MAREN*: Then, you *will* do it, won't you?
- (670) *JOHANNES*: If the others will let me, I will.
- (671) *MAREN*: I shall see to that. Will you come and tuck me up?
- (672) *JOHANNES*: Yes, and two of my Father's angels shall watch over you to-night.  
(*They both go out, L.B.*)
- (673) *BORGEN (entering R.)*: O God, who art life and light, Thou canst not send us darkness and death – Thou wilt not take her away from us. Our Father, who art in heaven –
- (674) *THE DOCTOR (bursting into the room R. and making towards the door L.B.)*: Why the devil don't they bring warm water?
- (675) *BORGEN*: The other way, Doctor – through there, to the kitchen.
- (676) *YOUNG MIKKEL (Putting his head in)*: Doctor – oh, make haste, make haste!  
(*The Doctor goes out again R.*)
- (677) *BORGEN*: Almighty God! O merciful God!
- (678) *JOHANNES (coming in L.F.)*: Do you still reject my offer of salvation?
- (679) *BORGEN*: Get thee behind me!
- (680) *JOHANNES*: Woe to you who stifle the glory of God with the rottenness of your faith!

- (681) *BORGEN*: O God! O God!
- (682) *JOHANNES*: A word only – it costs you but a word.
- (683) *BORGEN*: *Johannes!* – (*to himself*) No, no, it's just madness, of course... O God, what is madness? What's the meaning of it all?
- (684) *JOHANNES*: Mikkel Borgen, now you are not far from the kingdom of God. Go the whole way with it!
- (685) *BORGEN*: Don't tempt me with –
- (686) *DOCTOR* (*coming in R.*): There, Mikkel Borgen!  
(*Johannes goes out L. F.*)
- (687) *BORGEN*: No, no, Doctor, don't say it! {133}
- (688) *DOCTOR*: The bleeding has stopped, and she's sleeping soundly. If nothing supervenes in the course of the night –
- (689) *BORGEN*: Thanks be to God – praise and honour.
- (690) *DOCTOR*: Yes, I've done a stout piece of work to-night.
- (691) *BORGEN*: You have, Doctor. Thank you, thank you... Oh, I don't know how to thank you. God bless you, God bless you!
- (692) *DOCTOR*: And now let's have a good drink of coffee.
- (693) *BORGEN*: Why, yes. (*Calling through to the kitchen*) Katinka, Katinka, we should like – she's better, (*half-hysterical with joy*) she's better, Katinka. We should like some coffee – do you understand? – some coffee... Doctor, may I steal upstairs for a moment?
- (694) *DOCTOR* (*agreeing*) Not a sound, mind you.  
(*The Pastor comes in R.*)
- (695) *PASTOR*: Good evening.
- (696) *BORGEN*: Good evening. Why, bless me, it's the parson. Good evening, Pastor, welcome once more! Do you know –
- (697) *PASTOR*: Yes, I do. Both the Doctor and the Doctor's car. That's what made me come in. Good evening, Doctor.
- (698) *DOCTOR*: 'Evening, 'evening.
- (699) *BORGEN*: Very kind of you, Pastor. Thank you, thank you. Yes, my son's wife was ill. The child is dead, but – but she's been saved. Oh, Pastor, I'm so happy. It's good of you to look in. But what on earth brings you out in weather like this?
- (700) *PASTOR*: I've been to the baker's for a home-christening<sup>87</sup>.
- (701) *DOCTOR*: Have you? How did it go? Convulsions again?
- (702) *PASTOR*: Yes, Doctor. And, you see, it's such a mite of a thing.
- (703) *DOCTOR* (*shaking his head*): Much too small. Those bakers, those bakers!
- (704) *BORGEN* (*to the Pastor*): Now then, Mr. Snowman – off with that frozen coat and take a seat. Coffee's just coming.

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<sup>87</sup> If a new-born child was not expected to survive, the priest could perform the christening in the home.

- (705) *PASTOR*: I really must go home; it's late.
- (706) *BORGEN*: The Doctor will drive you to the parsonage – bless my soul, of course he will.
- (707) *DOCTOR*: Certainly, certainly. It's such grisly weather – just listen to it. {134}
- (708) *PASTOR*: Thank you so much, Doctor; I shall be most grateful – most grateful with all this snow about.
- (709) *BORGEN*: I'll take a peep upstairs. Do sit down. (*He goes out R.*)
- (710) *DOCTOR*: They ought to send you a car in weather like this.
- (711) *PASTOR*: Oh, but one doesn't like to put people out.
- (712) *DOCTOR*: No?
- (713) *PASTOR*: Besides, I have to pay the man for every kilometre he drives me.
- (714) *DOCTOR*: Ah, have you?
- (715) *PASTOR*: And in an open vehicle, too. Quite another thing in a closed car like yours. Assuming, that is, that we can make our way all right.
- (716) *DOCTOR*: Of course we can make our way.
- (717) *PASTOR*: Well, the snow's in our faces, and the drifts –
- (718) *DOCTOR*: My good sir, it's twenty-horse – and I'm driving it!
- (719) *PASTOR*: Certainly, certainly. If you think – I only meant –
- (720) *DOCTOR*: Now I come to think of it – do you mind putting it to your people who certify death that they should fill up the certificates correctly. There was gross laxity in both the ones they did last month.
- (721) *PASTOR*: Yes, I'll do so – readily... Dear me – laxity!
- (722) *DOCTOR*: You see, they are utterly ignorant. It's scandalous, in a civilised society, to keep on such an antiquated system<sup>88</sup>. A death-certificate ought always to be made out by a doctor.
- (723) *PASTOR*: Yes, I dare say. But, looked at from the other side – quite poor people – after all, it may save them ten crowns.
- (724) *DOCTOR*: A death-certificate ought always to be made out by a doctor.
- (725) *PASTOR*: Yes, of course, that would be the most satisfactory arrangement.
- (726) *DOCTOR*: However, they all use these laymen to certify death in this neighbourhood – rich and poor alike. Though I suppose poor people are just as dead or not dead as other people.
- (727) *PASTOR*: I only thought – I mean to say, a thing has always two sides to it. One's got to bear in mind –

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<sup>88</sup> In Denmark, death-certificates were instituted by law in 1829. According to the law, a body was to be buried without a death-certificate, which had to be filled within three days. In market towns, the death-certificate had to be filled by an authorized doctor, but in the counties without a doctor, two men (often schoolteachers and parish clerks) were appointed by the county clerk to fill out the death-certificate. This has since then been changed because of a high occurrence of mistakes due to the appointed's lack of knowledge within the field – today, all deceased must be examined and their death-certificates be filled by a doctor. [DSD]

- (728) *DOCTOR*: It's scandalous, I tell you. I knew one official who {135} was positively afraid of a dead body. He would stand and just peep through the door at the corpse and say: "Good lord, yes. How dead she is!"
- (729) *PASTOR*: Just fancy! It really is a scandal – quite abominable.
- (730) *BORGEN* (*coming in R.*): She's sleeping like an angel. (*They rise and offer him a chair.*) Thank you – don't get up. (*They all three seat themselves.*) It's a positive miracle.
- (731) *DOCTOR*: In which, nevertheless, I can trace every step. All perfectly natural. You must forgive me, my good Borgen – I don't want to wound your religious susceptibilities; but as things have taken a turn for the better, I suppose there's no harm in my chaffing you a little. Now, what do you think helped most this evening – your praying or my doctoring?
- (732) *BORGEN*: God's blessing, dear Doctor, leading from my prayers to your performance – that's clearly what has helped most.
- (733) *PASTOR*: "Ora et labora" was how the old monks used to put it<sup>89</sup>.
- (734) *DOCTOR*: Perhaps you still believe in miracles, then, Pastor?
- (735) *PASTOR*: 'Believe in' – what exactly do you mean by that? Fundamentally, the physical possibility of a miracle can never be denied, since the Creator must always be lord of what He created. And yet it must be ruled out on both religious and ethical grounds; a break in the laws of nature would of course mean a disturbance of God's design for this world, and the grand thing with God is precisely that – that we can rely on Him. Put it a popular way: God could of course perform miracles, but of course he never does. And for that we are grateful.
- (736) *DOCTOR*: What about Christ's miracles?
- (737) *PASTOR*: Well – at the great turning-points in the history of the world the question shapes itself – or might shape itself – rather differently.
- (738) *DOCTOR*: Oh, so that's how it is. At decisive moments this reliable God of yours will allow a little shilly-shallying. No, my good Pastor, there never in this world *has* occurred or *will* occur {136} anything for which a sufficiently skilled, knowledgeable investigator couldn't assign a natural cause.
- (739) *PASTOR*: Well, I suppose that is more or less a matter of opinion – of faith. You are right according to your lights, and I according to mine; and we can respect each other's views.
- (740) *BORGEN*: Isn't it strange how these doctors always trust in what's least to be trusted! Still, I suppose they help so much to relieve our worldly aches and pains that in the end they themselves clean forget the existence of such things as Spirit and Eternity.

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<sup>89</sup> "Ora et labora": "Pray and work", a Latin expression from 529, back when Benedict of Nuncia established the Benedictine Order. The order had two important tasks which was to pray and work. [DSD]

- (741) *DOCTOR*: Yes, Mikkel Borgen, we doctors aren't religious; you must be grateful for that.
- (742) *PASTOR*: Surely that's going rather far.
- (743) *DOCTOR*: Perhaps you think it would be a good thing if, when we were called out on a case, we gave up and declared that this was a punishment sent from God – a miracle which only a miracle could cope with! Honestly – even from the point of view of you gentlemen – isn't it after all better for us to attempt a diagnosis; to find out the symptoms and possibly the cause; to prescribe medicine and – what's that? (*A sound is heard of someone sawing.*)
- (744) *BORGEN*: Oh, that's Johannes sawing.
- (745) *PASTOR*: Sawing?
- (746) *BORGEN*: He's got a little fretsaw in there. You know, Pastor, he thinks he's a carpenter<sup>90</sup>. You've seen him, haven't you?
- (747) *PASTOR*: Excuse me – I mean to say – but don't you think – wouldn't it perhaps be better – you know, to – send him away somewhere?
- (748) *BORGEN*: As long as I'm at Borgenscroft, my son stays with me.
- (749) *DOCTOR*: Johannes will recover all fight. Just leave him to himself.
- (750) *BORGEN*: There – you hear, Pastor. The Doctor is also a believer in miracles.
- (751) *DOCTOR*: Of course I'm a believer. I should be a poor sort of doctor, if I weren't. I believe in myself, and in my scientific {137} knowledge and the belief in the miracles it has taught me to perform. I perform miracles that really come to something... All you have to do is to enter into Johannes's ideas as far as you can and wait for an opportunity to lead him back to the situation that existed when his mind went wrong. Then you'll see.
- (752) *BORGEN* (*enthusiastic at this gleam of hope*): Oh, Doctor! Doctor!
- (753) *PASTOR*: Enter into his ideas! But, Doctor, you surely don't mean to say that you consider him –
- (754) *DOCTOR*: Yes, by God, I do. And I only wish you others would do the same.
- (755) *BORGEN*: And even though the Doctor is the very one that Johannes seems to dislike most of all, that doesn't weaken his confidence in the case.
- (756) *DOCTOR*: Not in the least. Just give him time. My method never fails.
- (757) *JOHANNES* (*coming in L.F.*): Ah!
- (758) *DOCTOR*: Greetings, Rabbi<sup>91</sup>! Has your rest been disturbed tonight?
- (759) *JOHANNES*: Yes, I've been kept awake – awake.
- (760) *DOCTOR*: Is it the angels singing above, Rabbi?
- (761) *JOHANNES*: No, there's a donkey braying somewhere. (*He goes out again L.F.*)
- (762) *DOCTOR*: Well, well. Thanks for the coffee. Time for us to be moving.

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<sup>90</sup> A reference to Jesus, who was a carpenter before his baptism.

<sup>91</sup> Rabbi: Hebrew for "my master".

- (763) *BORGEN (excusing Johannes):* Doctor, you mustn't take it amiss. You realise yourself, don't you –
- (764) *DOCTOR:* Bless you, no – not in the slightest. Of course, of course.
- (765) *PASTOR:* May I ask you, Doctor, whether this was an idea you could enter into?
- (766) *DOCTOR:* Which? I didn't really hear properly what he said – Well, just let me go up and see the patient; and then we'll drive off. (*He goes out, R.*)
- (767) *PASTOR (to Borgen):* Yes, many thanks. I'm ready when he is – Congratulations, dear Borgen, congratulations – with God's blessing for to-night. {138}
- (768) *BORGEN:* Thank you, Pastor. Ah, He hears our prayers, even though we are but dust and ashes.
- (769) *PASTOR:* I can see it's been a hard time for you.
- (770) *BORGEN:* Yes, but I wouldn't have missed it, all the same.
- (771) *PASTOR:* I know what you mean.
- (772) *BORGEN:* And yet, Pastor – quite between ourselves – in the midst of all my happiness this evening the old Mikkel Borgen still goes on the same way.
- (773) *PASTOR:* The old Mikkel – ?
- (774) *BORGEN:* Yes, knowing well enough that the day after tomorrow or in a month's time, when Inger is up and about again, he will begin to ask himself: "What have you really got out of it? Inger's now the same, and Johannes' the same, and Mik – and the whole lot of us as we were before. Old Mikkel Borgen is the same, too – and all the Doctor's remarks –
- (775) *PASTOR:* But my dear Borgen!
- (776) *BORGEN:* I know I'm ungrateful; I'm a sinner before God. Well, there's the Doctor.
- (777) *DOCTOR (coming in R.):* She's asleep – as she should be. You can safely go to bed. Good night.
- (778) *BORGEN:* Good night, best of doctors! The thanks of all of us for what you've done. I'll send along a couple of geese for Christmas.
- (779) *DOCTOR:* I'm not a veterinary. They'll die under my treatment – you see.
- (780) *PASTOR:* Good night, Borgen. I hope she'll soon be all right. And God send you a true spirit of thankfulness.
- (781) *DOCTOR:* Don't forget – a table-spoonful three times a day. (*They both go Old R.*)
- (782) *JOHANNES (entering L.F.):* Have they gone at last?
- (783) *BORGEN:* Yes, my boy, they've gone now, and now we're going to bed.
- (784) *ANDERS (entering L.B.):* What news, Dad?
- (785) *BORGEN:* Splendid, Anders. Far better than we expected.
- (786) *JOHANNES (as though demurring):* H'm. He is still standing there. He has stood there the whole time. It is she he is waiting for. {139}
- (787) *BORGEN:* Johannes, do go to bed, will you?
- (788) *JOHANNES:* Look there! Now he's going through the wall. Old man, give me your trust. I have not the power to stop him until you do.



- (789) *BORGEN*: Johannes, my dear Johannes, Inger is asleep now. There is no danger – no more need for you to be afraid.
- (790) *JOHANNES*: Listen – that is the scythe... He cut wrong, the stroke went astray.
- (791) *ANDERS*: Why, it's the Doctor starting his car – look at his lamps. Now he's backing out.
- (792) *JOHANNES*: Dazzling white! Stop, will you!
- (793) *BORGEN*: Oh, there he goes again. Johannes – please!  
(*Young Mikkel appears at the door R., leading to the stairs.*)
- (794) *YOUNG MIKKEL* (*in despair*): I knew it would happen. She's dead.
- (795) *BORGEN*: What?
- (796) *YOUNG MIKKEL*: She went off suddenly in her sleep.
- (797) *BORGEN*: Inger? It's not true, boy, it's not true.
- (798) *ANDERS*: But the Doctor's only just left her.
- (799) *YOUNG MIKKEL*: Come and see for yourselves, then.  
(*All three go out R.*)
- (800) *JOHANNES* (*alone – gazing fixedly into vacancy*): Stop! – I tell you. In my Father's name I command you: give it here, give me back the soul – you shall! ... You refuse? Then go – I shall meet you here again. When the hour of faith has come, you shall bring her back.  
(*Young Mikkel re-enters R. with the two others.*)
- (801) *YOUNG MIKKEL*: All the evening I've known it would happen, Dad.
- (802) *BORGEN*: The Lord gave, the Lord has taken away<sup>92</sup>...
- (803) *ANDERS*: The Doctor – we must ring him up.
- (804) *YOUNG MIKKEL*: If you can ring up for a doctor to cure death, Anders, then go on.
- (805) *JOHANNES*: She is not dead; she is asleep<sup>93</sup>.
- (806) *YOUNG MIKKEL*: Do you believe that, Johannes?
- (807) *ANDERS*: Mikkel – please! {140}
- (808) *BORGEN*: The Lord gave, the Lord has taken away.
- (809) *YOUNG MIKKEL* (*to Johannes*): Would you like to see your sleeper, then?
- (810) *ANDERS*: No, don't let him, Mikkel.
- (811) *JOHANNES*: Show me the place where you have laid her<sup>94</sup>.
- (812) *YOUNG MIKKEL*: Why shouldn't Johannes see her, Anders? I expect he feels it less than any of us.

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<sup>92</sup> From Book of Job 1:21, OT, where God tests the righteous Job: “And he said: “Naked I came from my mother’s womb, and naked shall I return; the LORD gave, and the LORD has taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD.”

<sup>93</sup> A reference to the before-mentioned, deceased daughter of the high priest in Matthew 9:24, NT.

<sup>94</sup> Reference to the resurrection of Lazarus in John 11:34, NT.



- (813) *BORGEN*: The Lord gave, the Lord has taken away.
- (814) *ANDERS*: You never know what he'll do next.
- (815) *YOUNG MIKKEL*: He can't hit on anything worse than what has happened already.
- (816) *JOHANNES*: Father, glorify Thy name<sup>95</sup>!  
(*The three sons go out R.*)
- (817) *BORGEN* (*after a short pause*): The Lord gave, the Lord has taken away. The Lord gave, the Lord has taken away.
- (818) *JOHANNES's Voice* (*heard from Inger's room*): Agatha! (*A moment or two later Johannes is carried in, unconscious, by Young Mikkel and Anders R.*)
- (819) *BORGEN*: Now what's happened? Oh, is he dead?
- (820) *YOUNG MIKKEL* (*bitterly*): No, Dad, this isn't the sort that dies.
- (821) *ANDERS*: He fell down senseless, directly he saw her; but he's still breathing.
- (822) *BORGEN*: Even this mercy was grudged us. Bring him in, bring him in. The Lord gave, the Lord has taken away. Blessed be the name – (*His voice drops to inaudibility, as the curtain falls.*)

*CURTAIN*

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<sup>95</sup> Reference to the prayer of Jesus in John 12:28, NT.

## ACT FOUR

*The large living-room at Borgenscroft, five days later.*

*Inger is laid out in a coffin, with nine candles at the head, the fable and arm-chairs of Act I and III having been removed. Sheets are hung over the two windows at the back and on the wall between them. Steadying himself against the wall, Borgen has his eyes fixed on her face, himself motionless except for a movement of his chin. Young Mikkel is standing in the doorway leading L.B. to the next room, where the funeral guests are assembling.*

- (823) *YOUNG MIKKEL* (*speaking off, through the door*): You'll find cigars there – please help yourselves. (*Shuts the door behind him*) There are lots of people, Dad.
- (824) *BORGEN*: H'm.
- (825) *YOUNG MIKKEL*: The Pastor's just arrived.
- (826) *BORGEN*: Then we shall be off, I suppose – to the church – in a moment?
- (827) *YOUNG MIKKEL*: Well – we must let him have his coffee first.
- (828) *BORGEN*: H'm.
- (829) *ANDERS* (*coming in R.*): Dad, they've found traces of Johannes.
- (830) *BORGEN*: Where?
- (831) *ANDERS*: Among the hillocks behind the smithy. He had dug himself through the snow down into a foxhole and made a fire and baked potatoes in the lid of an old milk-pail. And your old driving-coat was there, too.
- (832) *BORGEN*: Ah, so he's not dead – not dead yet.
- (833) *ANDERS*: Just think, Dad, he may have been there for the last five days.
- (834) *BORGEN*: And wasn't he there any longer?
- (835) *ANDERS*: No, but there were tracks that led back here to Borgenscroft.
- (836) *YOUNG MIKKEL*: Oughtn't we to be letting people in soon – to see her?
- (837) *BORGEN*: Mikkel, you'll be the death of me.
- (838) *YOUNG MIKKEL*: After the funeral, Dad, would you mind – {142} seeing to it – I mean, looking after visitors and all that? I think I'll stay in the churchyard for a while, when the others have gone.
- (839) *ANDERS*: Mikkel, you're not thinking of –?
- (840) *YOUNG MIKKEL*: Nothing, my dear Anders, nothing at all.
- (841) *BORGEN*: I'll do it, Mikkel.
- (842) *YOUNG MIKKEL*: Thank you, Dad... (*Beside the coffin*) Well, Inger, and now I suppose we must close the lid on you.
- (843) *ANDERS*: Oh, Dad – Dad!
- (844) *BORGEN*: First, let the Pastor – say a prayer, Mikkel.
- (845) *YOUNG MIKKEL* (*bitterly*): Yes, yes, there must be a full orchestra – all fit and proper. (*The Pastor comes in L.B. with the Doctor.*) Here he comes. Then he's had his coffee.
- (846) *PASTOR* (*to Borgen*): So, after all, everything isn't the same as before, I'm afraid – as you were lamenting last time.

- (847) *BORGEN*: No, we were too confident, weren't we?
- (848) *PASTOR*: Man proposes, but – ah, there she is... When I think of that day – her smile, as she offered me coffee. Oh, it's hard – it's hard.
- (849) *BORGEN*: There must be a purpose in this, Pastor, or it wouldn't have happened.
- (850) *PASTOR*: Spoken like a true believer.
- (851) *DOCTOR (to Young Mikkel)*: Remember, Mikkel, there's beauty even in sorrow – if only, as the Greeks put it, we stand like an athlete to counter the blow of fate<sup>96</sup>.
- (852) *YOUNG MIKKEL (ironical)*: And that about beauty – that's of course so important.
- (853) *DOCTOR*: Yes – don't you think so? Ah, well.
- (854) *PASTOR (to Borgen)*: Have you heard that your son Johannes –?
- (855) *DOCTOR (interrupting him)*: Tell me exactly what occurred. When he saw the body there, he called out his fiancée's name and then fainted, didn't he?
- (856) *BORGEN*: They put him to bed, and after that we were to – we quite meant – later on –
- (857) *ANDERS*: Yes, I intended to sit up with him, but – well, I was so worn out with all that had happened – {143}
- (858) *DOCTOR*: In other words, you fell asleep. And when you woke up, he was gone.
- (859) *ANDERS*: We searched and inquired and –
- (860) *DOCTOR*: So you haven't spoken to him since he fainted?
- (861) *ANDERS*: Nobody has set eyes on him.
- (862) *DOCTOR*: Then I must tell you, Borgen – you must be prepared for anything.
- (863) *BORGEN*: Yes. Pray God he may have been released!
- (864) *DOCTOR*: Death isn't the whole of it. Wait, and we shall see.
- (865) *BORGEN*: But even if he goes on living – there may be a purpose even in that.
- (866) *YOUNG MIKKEL*: Here are the certificates, Pastor.
- (867) *PASTOR (taking them)*: Thanks. Thank you for remembering them. I might well have forgotten. The Probate Court's<sup>97</sup> – and the other – that's right. Thank you. Now, shall we sing a hymn?
- (868) *YOUNG MIKKEL*: But we ought to let the people in first.
- (869) *PASTOR*: Ah, just let me – first of all... "Oh death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?"<sup>98</sup> Let us remind one another that our sore grief and bitter loss are really only proofs of God's love. May this love help you to be thankful for your memories and your hopes – memories of your dear one when she was alive,

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<sup>96</sup> *we stand like an athlete to counter the blow of fate*: The expression points toward a Stoic way of life from Ancient Greece. Founded by Zenon, the Stoics wished to achieve a "stoic calm", which means to approach all possible changes in life with calm and dignity.

<sup>97</sup> The Probate Court is the judicial department which conducts the administration of an estate and the distribution of an inheritance to the heirs of a deceased.

<sup>98</sup> 1 Corinthians 15:55, NT.

and hopes you have of her in the life to come...<sup>99</sup> Shall we pray for a moment in silence?

(870) *YOUNG MIKKEL (aside to the Pastor):* Thank you, Pastor, for those words of sympathy.

(871) *PASTOR:* Oh, you mustn't thank me.

(872) *REUBEN SNIPPER (entering R.):* Forgive me for intruding.

(873) *BORGEN:* Reuben! *You* here?

(874) *REUBEN:* Forgive me for intruding. But I would so like to say —

(875) *YOUNG MIKKEL:* I know you mean well, Reuben. But — enough has been said here already.<sup>100</sup>

(876) <sup>101</sup>*REUBEN:* Mikkel! Mikkel! The Lord does not break a bruised reed, and he will not douse the smoldering wick — but you, old Mikkel Borgen! Will you take my hand? Will you forgive me?

(877) *BORGEN:* But I was the one who struck.

(878) *REUBEN:* And I forgot the word of my Saviour and forgot to turn the other cheek. I have begged the Lord to forgive me in the sake of His Son's blood. Now you must forgive as well, Mikkel. Or will you chase me out of your house? It is well within your rights.

(879) *BORGEN:* It doesn't matter anymore.

(880) *REUBEN:* It matters, because I have something to say to you by this casket, something you all need to know before Inger is carried out. Oh, watch how she lies, so delicate and innocent — she was a good woman; I believe she believed. I find that she lies there in front of us as a sacrifice for your sins, Mikkel. But you and I are

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<sup>99</sup> The following is the full translation of the pastor's line 869, additions made by Asger Holde: "Paul proclaims: "Oh Death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?" All of us, who with Christ has come to faith, to the belief of the immortality of the soul, understand the words of the Apostle. As long as there is meaning in life, death is merely a passing, a gate, a tunnel to lead us from impermanence to eternity; from the entrance of life to life itself. This good woman, then, has only gone ahead of her love ones to the place of peace. When we grieve, it is only an egotistical love; we think only of ourselves and not of the departed, who now is in the kingdom of light, who now lives in the clear lands of God's love. If we remember this, we shall long to be in Heaven and to be with our loved ones.

And we shall remind each other that grief deepens the soul and enriches out, that light is conditioned by shadow, and what is meaningless for the souls that know not God, it has the greatest of purpose for us; because whom God loves, he chastens, and our heavy pain and our bitter longing is only proof of God's love. I shall ask this love to carry you well through these trying times and teach you to be grateful for the memories and for hope, the light and lovely memories, you have of her through this life, which now is gone, and the light and lovely hope, you have of her in the life to come, in the land, where souls never shall depart from each other with sorrow."

<sup>100</sup> Reference to Isaiah 42:3, OT: "A bruised reed he will not break, and a smoldering wick he will not snuff out."

<sup>101</sup> Lines 876-881 have been translated by Asger Holde.

perhaps equally great sinners in the eyes of the Lord. So it would only be right if I made a sacrifice myself.

(881) *MIKKEL*: Reuben! Now...

(882) *REUBEN*: Yes, but I've come to say that Inger's place shall not stand empty. The Lord taketh away – and the Lord will give again. (*Going to the door R. and calling through it*) Esther, come in now, will you? {144}

(883) (*Esther comes in R.*)

(884) *BORGEN*: Oh, Reuben, it does one good.

(885) *ANDERS (to Reuben)*: Have you brought Esther with you?

(886) *REUBEN*: There, now she's yours. That's how the Lord has bidden me atone. Now she's yours, and I have only my Saviour left.

(887) *ANDERS (going to her)*: Esther!

(888) *REUBEN*: Deal gently with her up here, won't you? For, next to Him, she is the most precious thing I have.

(889) *ANDERS*: Oh, Esther! You'll cheer us all up, won't you?

(890) *ESTHER*: Anders!

(*Young Mikkel, beside the coffin, bursts out sobbing.*)

(891) *BORGEN (quietly, to the others)*: Thank heaven – he's managed to do it... Now fetch the little girls; it's time to get this over. (*He goes up to the coffin, in Danish fashion, for a father's last farewell to the departed*) Goodbye, Inger. Thank you for all the good – thank you for everything, for everything was good. And – we shall meet again – before long. Yes, Mikkel, we do meet again; say what you like, we meet again. Otherwise, the whole thing would be too dreadful. Goodbye for the present, Inger. God cheer your soul in Paradise! (*To the smaller child*) Ruth, take your mother's hand. And you, too, Maren. Goodbye, Mummy... Bless my soul, they don't understand a thing – they're too small. And we elders, Pastor – we don't either; we're also too small.

(892) *ANDERS (going up to the coffin)*: Goodbye, Inger, and – thank you.

(893) *BORGEN*: Take the lid, Anders.

(894) *YOUNG MIKKEL*: No, you mustn't. No, don't take her away from me – you mustn't take her away, you mustn't separate us – (*sobbing*) – no, no.

(*Borgen is seen to sway and stagger a little.*)

(895) *ANDERS (concerned)*: Dad!

(896) *DOCTOR*: Borgen, you must take care of yourself. Come outside for a moment.

(897) *BORGEN*: Give me a hand – that's it. I shall soon be right. Just for a moment I felt as if my legs... There, Mikkel – do you hear, Mikkel? – her soul is in the kingdom of life and light. Whatever {145} you do or don't believe, let that console you. Her soul isn't here – you can see that, can't you?

(898) *YOUNG MIKKEL*: But her body – (*sobbing*) her body – I loved her body as well.

- (899) *BORGEN*: Your vow at baptism, Mikkel – our vow – the word from the Lord's own lips<sup>102</sup>: the resurrection of the flesh – do you hear? Pull yourself together; you're a son of the old place – pull yourself together and say your farewell to her.
- (900) *YOUNG MIKKEL*: Goodbye, my darling; goodbye, my darling, my darling – goodbye.
- (901) *BORGEN*: Now – the lid.
- (902) *JOHANNES* (*appearing in the main doorway R.*): No – not the lid!
- (903) *BORGEN*: Johannes – you! Have you come back?
- (904) *JOHANNES*: Yes, Dad, I've come back.
- (905) *BORGEN*: Dad? Did you say 'Dad'? ... Johannes! Your eyes! You're all fight again, then?
- (906) *JOHANNES*: Yes, I'm – all right, as you call it.
- (907) *DOCTOR*: You thought you saw your fiancée's dead body, and everything left you. When you came to, after fainting, you had recovered your senses. And your memory as well?
- (908) *JOHANNES*: It all came back; gradually.
- (909) *DOCTOR*: There, you see, Borgen. What did I say? My method –
- (910) *BORGEN*: No, Doctor, you mustn't say that. To God alone will I give praise for this.
- (911) *DOCTOR*: Indeed?
- (912) *BORGEN*: Yes, Doctor, yes. (*Pointing to the coffin*) Your method – there's what it comes to.
- (913) *DOCTOR*: Thanks very much, Mikkel Borgen. When things go wrong, it's thanks to me; when they go right, it's thanks to your God.
- (914) *PASTOR*: Gently, my friends, gently! Whatever may have happened, please remember that we are standing beside a coffin.
- (915) *BORGEN*: But, Johannes, Johannes, what made you disappear? Where have you been? How have you got on? Why ever didn't you say anything? {146}
- (916) *JOHANNES*: I couldn't. I had to have peace, and solitude – out in the wilds of Nature – to collect my thoughts – thousands of them.
- (917) *BORGEN*: My boy, my boy! And here you are – here you are – in your right mind.
- (918) *JOHANNES*: No, not mine but yours. My mind has become like yours – all of you. I've returned to fear; grown wise with your wisdom. For these senses that I've recovered—can I use them more wisely than to pray God to take them away again?
- (919) *BORGEN*: Johannes, don't talk blasphemy.

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<sup>102</sup> Grundtvig gave a sermon in 1825 about “The Living Word From the Mouth of the Lord”, which came to represent the Grundtvigian view on church and Christianity: that the letter of the Bible and the traditions of the Church was founded on God’s own word, which still resonates in the Creed and in the Communion.



- (920) *JOHANNES*: It's you others who are blasphemous. Is this a Christian funeral? Where is the sure and certain hope of resurrection?
- (921) *BORGEN*: Johannes, Johannes! We are poor mortals of little account.
- (922) *JOHANNES*: That's blasphemy, if you like: to be poor and little, when we have so rich and great a God. Here you all stand, as defenceless in the face of death as naked nestlings in the cat's claws of fate. You cling to your flimsy heathenish conjectures and your home-made human consolations. And yet it was for you that Christ lived, died and rose again; to you that He brought the Word, as Prometheus once brought fire<sup>103</sup>.
- (923) *BORGEN*: That's all quite true; but it's so difficult, all the same.
- (924) *JOHANNES*: I know it is. But if you hadn't enough Christian blood in you to count on the triumph of Easter<sup>104</sup>, you might at least have had the courage of prayer and have asked Him whether you might have her back. That hasn't occurred to a single one of you.
- (925) *REUBEN*: It is written: Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God<sup>105</sup>.
- (926) *JOHANNES*: That's why you could have asked whether you might. Look – I have asked. I lay in solitude and snow and begged – until I was warm and got leave. Then I ran home, happy, strong and full of expectation; and here I stand with my spirits stunned by your grief and doubting – yes, and resignation – in the midst of Christian people frozen powerless like myself. {147}
- (927) *YOUNG MIKKEL*: What can be the use of standing and shouting across my wife's dead body?
- (928) *JOHANNES*: Because, my dear brother Mikkell, you honest, consistent man, who never insulted God by pretending to believe in Him – because it's so pitiable that, while God is good and all-powerful, His earth should yet lie sprawling in wretchedness just because among His believers there isn't one who believes. Is there really nobody? Not a single one of you to support me, while I pray for a miracle to come down to us? I tell you – all things are possible to him that believeth<sup>106</sup>.
- (929) *DOCTOR*: You mustn't overstrain your nerves, Johannes Borgen.
- (930) *JOHANNES*: Inger, must you lie and rot, because the times are rotten? Well, then – let be! Put on the lid! Go on with your half-beliefs and shift for yourselves! And let me return to the darkness – to the merciful gloom of the night. (*His fire seems to die down. Dully –*) Look, there it comes already.
- (931) *MAREN* (*quietly slipping her hand into his*) Come on, Uncle, be quick.

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<sup>103</sup> The Greek myth of the titan Prometheus, who cared so much for mankind that he had created with Zeus, that he stole the fire of the gods and gave it to them. As punishment, he was chained to a rock for all eternity. Like Jesus, he acted as a kind of middleman between God/gods and mankind.

<sup>104</sup> The third day of Easter where Jesus returns to the living. [DSD]

<sup>105</sup> A quote from Matthew 4:7, NT, where Jesus refuses the temptations of Satan by referring to the Commandments.

<sup>106</sup> Reference to Matthew 9:23, NT, where Jesus exercises a spirit from a boy.



- (932) *JOHANNES (re-kindling)*: The child! The greatest in the kingdom of heaven<sup>107</sup>! I forgot *you*. Yes, yes – salvation is with the child... (*to Maren*) Now then, little girl, look at your mother. When I call on the name of Jesus, she will rise up. Now look at her, child. And, next, I shall command you, you dead –
- (933) *PASTOR (stepping forward)* I protest. (*The doctor tries to hold him back*) Let me go, Doctor. I protest. Take him out; he's still mad. This is scandalous. Miracles can't happen nowadays. Both from the ethical and religious –
- (934) *JOHANNES*: Hypocrite! Will you unwittingly do Satan's errand in the guise of godliness<sup>108</sup>? You're crippling my power. You have always persecuted prophets and stoned apostles<sup>109</sup>. Away with you!
- (935) *PASTOR*: I'll not move. I stand here in virtue of my office.
- (936) *JOHANNES*: Very well, then. Stay here to represent the State – but not God... (*He prays*) Hear me, O Father above. Give me the Word – the Word that Christ brought down to us from heaven – the creative, quickening Word of life. Give it me *now*! (*A {148} pause*) Hear me, you that are dead. In the name of Jesus, who overthrew the grave – if God will, come back to life! I say to you – woman, arise.  
(*Inger opens her eyes, with a slight movement of her head.*)
- (937) *YOUNG MIKKEL (springing to her side)* Inger!
- (938) *BORGEN*: God Almighty!
- (939) *INGER*: The child – where is it? Is it alive?
- (940) *YOUNG MIKKEL*: Yes, Inger, yes, it's at home with God; but you are living with me – with me – with me.
- (941) *BORGEN*: Lord, forgive me, forgive me. I am a sinful man.
- (942) *REUBEN*: Mikkel – this is the God of old – from the time of Elijah<sup>110</sup>. Everlastingly the same – halleluja!
- (943) *PASTOR*: Yes, but this – it's a physical impossibility. It just can't happen.
- (944) *DOCTOR (decisively)*: These amateur death-certificates must be done away with.
- (945) *JOHANNES*: Wine! Fetch her a glass of port-wine.
- (946) *ANDERS*: Yes, I'll get some. (*Anders goes out*)
- (947) *BORGEN (thinking perhaps of Bjørnson's play)*: Johannes! You're not dying, are you, Johannes?

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<sup>107</sup> Reference to Matthew 18:1-4, NT: “At that time the disciples came to Jesus, saying, “Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?” And calling to him a child, he put him in the midst of them, and said, “Truly, I say to you, unless you turn and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Whoever humbles himself like this child, he is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.””

<sup>108</sup> *Guise of godliness*: The pastor is dressed in his clerical clothing, which is a “præstekjole” [priest’s dress] in Denmark, a black dress with a white ruff.

<sup>109</sup> Reference to the stoning of the apostle Stephen in Acts 7:52, NT.

<sup>110</sup> A reference to the 1<sup>st</sup> Book of Kings 17:17-24, OT, where Elijah resurrects the son of a widow in Zarephath.

- (948) *JOHANNES*: No, I'm only a little tired. No, my dear Dad, life is just beginning for us.
- (949) *YOUNG MIKKEL*: Oh, Inger – life, life!
- (950) *BORGEN*: Life!
- (951) *(The singing of a hymn<sup>111</sup> from the next room swells louder through the open door, as Anders returns with the wine.)*  
His people now in ev'ry place  
with joyful song their Lord embrace:  
Glory be to God in the highest!

*CURTAIN*

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<sup>111</sup> The referenced hymn is by Grundtvig and is called: “Kristi stod op af døde” [“Christ rose from the dead”]. The English translation of the chorus shown here is from *Hymns in English: A Selection of Hymns from The Danish Hymnbook*, published by Det Kgl. Vajsenhus’ Forlag (2009).