Gina Well, it's not worth waking him up too early. Thank you, Relling. Come and help me get cleaned up, Hedvig.

Gina and Hedvig go.

Gregers How would you describe the turmoil that's going on inside Hjalmar Ekdal?

Relling I can't say I've noticed any turmoil.

Gregers What, when his whole life's been given a new foundation? How can you think a personality like Hjalmar -

Relling Personality - him! If you think he ever had any of the tendencies which you refer to as personality then they were nipped in the bud when he was a boy.

Gregers Well, that would be strange considering the loving upbringing he enjoyed.

Relling From that pair of old, twisted, hysterical maiden aunts?

Gregers They never forgot about the claim of the ideal. I suppose you're going to mock me again now.

Relling I can't be bothered. I've already had an outpouring about his two spiritual mothers but I don't think he has much to thank them for. Hjalmar's misfortune is that he's always been considered a genius within his circle -

Gregers And you don't think he is, deep down inside?

Relling Not that I've ever noticed. His father thought so, but the old lieutenant's been a fool his whole life.

Gregers What you don't understand is, he's a man with the mind of a child.

Relling When sweet little Hjalmar somehow got himself a place at university, his friends thought he was a genius as well. He was handsome - just the type young girls like - sensitive and a soft voice, and he understood very well how to recite other people's verse and mouth other people's ideas.

Gregers Are you talking about Hjalmar Ekdal?

Relling Yes - this idol who you're so blinded by.

Gregers I don't think I'm quite that blind.

Relling You're not far off, because you're another sick man.

Gregers Well, you're right there.

Relling First, you have this 'I am always right' disease. And then, worse, you go around wallowing in a semi-delirious trance of hero-worship. Why do you always need someone like that?

Gregers What's wrong with that?

Relling Because you're so pitifully wrong about your supermen! Once again you've come into a workman's cottage with your 'claim of the ideal', but there's not a person solvent in this house.

Gregers If that's how you feel about Hjalmar Ekdal, how can you take any pleasure in being with him so often?

Relling I am a doctor of sorts, and I have to take care for the sick people I share a house with.

Gregers Hjalmar Ekdal is sick as well?

Relling Most people are sick - unfortunately.

Gregers And what do you suggest for Hjalmar, then?

Relling What I usually suggest - the life-lic.

Gregers I'm not sure I -

Relling It's a stimulating principle.

Gregers And what - may I ask - sort of life-lic has Hjalmar been infected with?

Relling I'm not telling you - you've confused him enough already. I've used it on Molvik, too. I've put the idea that he's demonic into his brain.

Gregers Is he demonic?
Relling What the hell does demonic mean? It is utter nonsense I invented to save his life. But if I hadn’t done it, the poor bastard would have collapsed through self-hatred and despair years ago. And well – the old lieutenant? He’s certainly found his own cure.

Gregers Lieutenant Ekdal?

Relling What do you think about the bear-hunter wandering around up in the loft, hunting rabbits? There’s no more content a hunter in the world than the old man when he’s fooling around amongst all the rubbish. The four or five old Christmas trees are the forest at Høydal. The hens are the game in the pine-tree tops and the rabbits are the bears which he challenges – the mighty man of the outdoors!

Gregers Lieutenant Ekdal has certainly compromised the ideals of his youth.

Relling Don’t use that foreign word: ideals. We’ve our own good Norwegian word: lies.

Gregers Do you think the two are related?

Relling Like typhus and putrid fever.

Gregers I won’t give up until I’ve saved Hjalmar from your claws, Dr Relling!

Relling The worst thing for him. If you take the life-lie from an ordinary man then you take away his happiness as well.

Hedvig enters.

Relling Hello, little duck-mother – I’ll go downstairs and see if your father’s still lying there thinking about his invention.

He goes out through the front door.

Gregers I can tell from looking at you it’s not been done.

Hedvig No.

G Gregers You let yourself down when you started to do it, I expect?

Hedvig No, but when I woke up early this morning and I remembered what we’d talked about I thought it was strange.

Gregers Strange?

Hedvig Yesterday when we talked about it I thought it was lovely but when I had a sleep and remembered, I didn’t think much of it.

Gregers You can’t help being spoiled by growing up here.

Hedvig I don’t care, if only Father would come upstairs.

Gregers If only you could see the things that make life worth living – the courageous sense of sacrifice – but I still believe in you, Hedvig.

He goes out. Hedvig wanders about on the floor. There’s a knock from inside the loft. Hedvig goes up and opens the door a little.

Old Ekdal comes out.

Ekdal Hum – it’s not much fun going for a morning walk on my own.

Hedvig Didn’t you feel like going hunting?

Ekdal It’s not the weather for hunting today. It’s so dark in there you can hardly see where you’re going.

Hedvig Don’t you ever feel like shooting something else apart from rabbits?

Ekdal Don’t you think the rabbits good enough?

Hedvig What about the wild duck?

Ekdal Are you frightened I’ll shoot your duck? Never – never in the world, Hedvig, never.

Hedvig I don’t suppose you could. I think it’s probably very hard to shoot.

Ekdal Couldn’t? I could.