Tarantella Essay, Research Paper

Tarantella “Five o’clock. Seven hours till midnight; and then four-and-twenty hours till the next midnight. Then the tarantella will be over. Twenty-four and seven? Thirty-one hours to live” (Ibsen 50). Nora ponders a moment about how not even the tarantella can save her now. The tarantella was a dance once believed to be a remedy for tarantism, resulting from the bite of a tarantula. This dance plays a huge role in the marriage between Nora and Torvald. Nora breaks the social norms, thus poisoning her marriage like a tarantula poisoning its prey with each and every bite. Social norms are rules and expectations by which a society guides the behavior of its members. Moreover, the term mores (more-ays) refers to norms that are widely observed and have great moral significance (Macionis 37). Nora does two things to disturb these norms. She forges a bank note using her father’s signature; nonetheless her father has already passed away days before this incident. The reason for forging the bank note is to pay for her husbands survival, and paying for a man is immoral in itself. Considering the time frame that this play occupies, these are two very immoral actions toward herself, her husband, and the society. These actions combine to form a poisons that eventually destroys the seemingly perfect Helmer household; not even the tarantella can bring hope. Nora was desperate to obtain the money necessary for her husband’s survival. She would have done anything, and she was at a point of no return. First off, she broke a serious social moral when she forged the bank note that she received from Krogstad. This is when the penetration of the bite technically begins in the relationship between Torvald and Nora. Second, and final, Nora paid for Torvald’s recovery trip all by herself. In society back then, the woman never took care of monetary matters, and if she did it was seen as a total disgrace to the man in the marriage. Men were the dominant and sometimes sole source of income in a marriage, and once this was seen as any different, the man felt very degraded. As this event proceeds, the bite is made even deeper and the poison enters the body. In this case, the body is considered as their marriage encased in a glass world. However, not soon enough after the wound is complete, the tarantella commences.

Torvald is about to learn of these wrong-doings by reading the letter from Krogstad when Nora begins to play the first bars of the tartantella. Nora wants to postpone the spreading of the poison, and eventual death of their marriage for as long as possible; she turns Torvald’s attention to the tartantella. She insists upon their practicing of the tartantella, which only temporarily serves as a healer of the poisonous lies within their glass world. After all of their practicing, they attend the dance. It seems to Nora that just moments after they arrive, Torvald is taking her home. Nora was hoping for their temporary healing to go on, but Torvald insisted upon their departure. Naturally, the dance didn’t clear the poisonous lies from their lives, and the eventual death of their marriage takes place. The tartantella did postpone the death of their marriage, but it didn’t serve as a cure. Nora leaves Torvald, and the play ends. The Helmer household is disheveled forever, even with the hope that the tartantella could have saved them. Nora and Torvald’s marriage was poisoned on two occasions, the forgery by Nora, and the payment for Torvald’s survival by Nora. These fights against morality eventually put an end to their relationship as does a tarantula puts an end to the lives of its prey. The poison was just too great to bear, thus gradually destroying everything in its path. The only way to stop it was probably to inform Torvald of the wrong-doings from the get go, and never allowing the poison to go any further than skin deep. Instead, Nora kept silent which in turn allowed the poison to enter her heart, and Torvald’s life. Nora began to feel differently toward Torvald which signaled changes in her heart, while Torvald’s life is changed entirely. The tarantella was the Helmer’s last hope, and since that failed, the special bond between Nora and Torvald was put to rest.