**TESMAN AUDITION TEXT:**

TESMAN: It’s infinitely strange.

HEDDA: *(coldly)* I’m overcome. More so than her.

TESMAN: It’s not just grief. It’s Lovborg too.

HEDDA: Why?

TESMAN: It makes no sense.

HEDDA: Has something happened?

TESMAN: I had a moment – this afternoon – to see him. He wasn’t there. No answer. And then Thea told me he’d been here?

HEDDA: Yes, he appeared soon after you left.

TESMAN: She told me that he’d torn his manuscript to pieces?

HEDDA: That’s what he said.

TESMAN: But why would he lie? He must’ve been deranged?

HEDDA: Yes. He was.

TESMAN: So you couldn’t give it back to him? Given his state?

HEDDA: No.

TESMAN: But you told him we have it, that it’s safe?

HEDDA: No. *(Quickly.)* Did you tell her?

TESMAN: No. But why didn’t you tell him? He’s clearly beside himself!

*Hedda stares.*

No matter. I’ll deliver it to him now and no harm done. Where is it? *(Pause.)* Hedda. Where’s the manuscript?

HEDDA: I don’t have it.

TESMAN: Why not?

HEDDA: I burnt it.

TESMAN: You burnt it?!

HEDDA: Don’t shout *(Vaguely points to where Berte is.)*

TESMAN: Christ! You burnt his *book?* What *are* you?

HEDDA: Just me.

TESMAN: Do you have any idea what you’ve done? As well as destroying a great work you’ve broken the law! It was *his* property! Even Brack can’t fix that one!

HEDDA: It may be advisable not to mention this to him. Or anyone.

TESMAN: But it’s incomprehensible! There’s no logical reason to do something so evil! What on earth *possessed* you? ANSWER ME!

HEDDA: *(Coolly)* I did it for you.

TESMAN: Me? Don’t lie!

HEDDA: When you came home this morning you were very upset. You told me how jealous you were of his talent.

TESMAN: Yes I did, but –

HEDDA: I’m your wife. I can’t bear to see you unhappy. So I dealt with your rival. As wives do.

TESMAN: But Hedda – you – really? You – *really?* You love me that much? You’ve never expressed it before.

HEDDA: Maybe you’ve never noticed? Ask your Aunt. She knows. She notices all kinds of things…

TESMAN: Are you…? *(Claps his hands)* Is it true?

*Hedda pats her belly.*

YES! Oh Hedda!

HEDDA: Don’t shout, you’ll frighten it!

TESMAN: I’m going to tell Berte. And then the world!

HEDDA: Strike me down. God spare me this farce.

TESMAN: Joy is always farcical!

HEDDA: It’s killing me.

TESMAN: *(not listening to her)*  I might do a jig. *(He does.)* Ha ha! But perhaps I won’t say anything to Berte just yet, it’s early days.

HEDDA: As you wish.

TESMAN: But Aunt J must be told immediately! I’ve gone mad – she *knows* already! Ha! But not officially. This will give her such a lift.

HEDDA: And how will she feel when she learns I burnt the manuscript to advance your career?

TESMAN: Mmm. Good point. No. It’s our secret. *(Slight pause.)* Perhaps you acted so rashly due to your condition?

HEDDA: Let’s consult Aunt J, she’s the oracle.

TESMAN: *(Calming down)* Poor old Lovborg. It’s a great shame. He wrote something so… brilliant.

*Mrs Elvsted enters, greatly agitated.*