

# An Enemy of the People

Adaptation of Henrik Ibsen's play in which a  
courageous man refuses to back down in the face of  
hypocrisy and corruption. . . .

Adapted by Paul T. Nolan

## Characters

PETER STOCKMANN, mayor

ASLAKSEN, chairman of the major-  
ity party

HOVSTAD, editor of *People's  
Messenger*

CAPTAIN HORSTER

DR. THOMAS STOCKMANN

KATHERINE, his wife

PETRA, their daughter

MORTEN  
ELIF            their sons

MORTEN KIIL, Katherine's father

TOWNSPEOPLE, extras

**TIME:** *Late nineteenth century.*

**SETTING:** *Town meeting hall in south-  
ern Norway. Podium is up center.*

**BEFORE RISE:** *PETER STOCKMANN  
stands at podium. ASLAKSEN and  
HOVSTAD sit at his right; DR.  
THOMAS STOCKMANN and CAP-  
TAIN HORSTER sit at left. TOWNS-  
PEOPLE stand and sit downstage.  
MORTEN KIIL and PETRA stand  
down right, almost offstage.*

**TOWNSPEOPLE** (*Chanting*): Enemy of  
the people! Enemy of the people!

**1ST MAN:** He'll ruin us with his talk of  
contamination.

**2ND MAN:** What will happen to our  
property values?

**1ST WOMAN:** We need the tourist  
trade to survive.

**TOWNSPEOPLE:** Enemy of the people!

**PETER:** Ladies and gentlemen! Fellow

citizens, please come to order! (*TOWNSPEOPLE become quiet.*) Now, let us review the situation. As you all know, your town has just completed a fine set of baths.

**THOMAS:** Contaminated baths, you mean.

**PETER** (*Ignoring THOMAS*): As I was saying, the public baths are ready for the summer tourist trade. I don't need to tell you what this will mean for our town—more business, higher property values, more income for the town to build better schools, better streets.

**THOMAS** (*Rising; heatedly*): And more disease, too. Don't forget more disease, for that's exactly what you'll have if you allow the public to use those baths.

**PETER** (*Angrily*): Dr. Stockmann, will you be quiet and wait your turn? (*To TOWNSPEOPLE*) You know what the baths will mean to your prosperity. What you have heard may be only rumor. Our town medical officer, Dr. Stockmann, my own brother, wants these same baths torn down. If he succeeds—but I know you people will not let him—there will be unemployment, business failures, lower property values. Ah, but I will let Dr. Stockmann speak for himself. (*Turns to THOMAS*) Thomas?

**THOMAS** (*Rising and going to podium*): Fellow townspeople, you are my last hope. I have spoken to the council, the press, and the trade unions. For their own reasons, they have not listened. You, I think, will listen.

**1ST MAN:** Not if you tear down the baths.

**2ND MAN:** You're an enemy of the people.

**PETER** (*Rising*): Let him speak! He has asked for this meeting; let him learn,

once and for all, that he is really alone here. (*Crowd becomes quiet.*)

**THOMAS:** The idea of the baths is a good one. I have long believed that our waters could prove a valuable tourist attraction because they contain health-giving minerals. Indeed, I was the one who first brought the idea to the council.

**PETER:** You just had the idea. We had to raise the money and get the work done.

**THOMAS:** What the mayor says is true. The council did get the work done, and that's the source of the trouble. Against my advice, the baths were built in the marsh land where the spoilage from the tannery drains. The cheapest possible pipe was used. As a result, what is being piped into the baths is not our clear, health-giving water, but the sewage from the tannery, filled with lethal bacteria. I have taken samples and sent them to the university at Oslo. I have the reports.

**1ST WOMAN** (*Viciously*): Traitor!

**1ST MAN:** You will ruin our reputation.

**THOMAS:** What will happen to your reputation if the baths make us sick? Editor Hovstad (*Pointing to HOVSTAD*) was going to publish the reports.

**HOVSTAD** (*Defensively*): Don't try to make me a party to this, Thomas. When I agreed, I didn't know what your report would do to the town.

**THOMAS** (*To ASLAKSEN; imploringly*): Mr. Aslaksen, won't you speak? You are chairman of the majority party. It is your people who will suffer if these baths are allowed to operate.

**ASLAKSEN:** It is my people who will be ruined if the baths are not opened.

**2ND WOMAN:** Drive him out of town.

**1ST MAN:** Tar and feather him.

**CAPTAIN HORSTER** (*Rising and going to THOMAS*): Come on, Thomas. It is foolish to try to speak here.

**2ND MAN:** We'll remember you, too, Captain Horster.

**THOMAS** (*Defeated*): It is useless, Captain. Let's go home. (*THOMAS and HORSTER exit.*)

**PETER:** The meeting is adjourned.

**1ST MAN:** Drive the doctor out of town!

**TOWNSPEOPLE** (*Picking up chairs and exiting as they chant*): Enemy of the people! Enemy of the people!

**ASLAKSEN** (*To PETER*): Your brother may be hurt. They'll follow him home.

**PETER** (*Harshly*): It's his own affair. He brought all this on himself.

**HOVSTAD:** True. There's nothing we can do. If a man won't listen to reason, he's a fool for all his learning. One can't flout the will of the majority, no matter how right he thinks he is. (*They exit, taking chairs and podium. PETRA and KIIL move downstage. She tries to follow crowd, but KIIL holds her back.*)

**PETRA:** Don't stop me, Grandfather. The mob will kill Father!

**KIIL:** Don't worry. Mobs just yell and scream. They like that better than thinking. They will follow your father home, throw some rocks, scream, and then go home to sleep.

**PETRA:** Poor Papa.

**KIIL:** Your father may have the last laugh yet. I have a plan. (*Laughs*) Oh, what a wonderful plan!

**PETRA:** What plan?

**KIIL:** I'll tell you when the time comes. (*Blackout. PETRA and KIIL exit as curtain opens.*)

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**TIME:** *The next morning.*

**SETTING:** *Victorian living room of Thomas Stockmann's home. A broken window is up center, large stones are on floor nearby.*

**AT RISE:** *THOMAS enters, sees stones and picks one up. KATHERINE enters and surveys room.*

**KATHERINE** (*Shaking her head; sadly*): The whole house is a shambles. Windows broken. The vase Mother gave me, shattered.

**THOMAS** (*Bending to pick up another stone, then drawing back as though he has been cut, licking finger*): Broken glass—ah! I've cut my finger. Where's the glazier? I sent for him hours ago!

**KATHERINE:** He said he didn't know if he could come today.

**THOMAS** (*Disgustedly*): He's afraid to come.

**KATHERINE:** It's understandable. (*Hands him letter*) This letter came for you a few minutes ago. It's from the landlord.

**THOMAS** (*Opening letter and reading it*): He's given us notice. He wants us to move.

**KATHERINE** (*Surprised*): What?

**THOMAS** (*Still reading letter*): He says he doesn't have any choice. Public opinion would ruin him. (*Throws letter on table*) They are all cowards. The whole lot of them. I'll be glad to be rid of them when we leave for the New World.

**KATHERINE:** Have you given this business of leaving serious thought?

**THOMAS:** I can't stay here, Katherine, not after the way people have been talking, calling me the enemy of the people, breaking our windows. After last night, I know I don't belong here.

**KATHERINE:** I know you've been hurt, Thomas, but do we have to leave the country?

**THOMAS:** Every town in Norway is the same. They are ruled by the establishment, the press, the vested interests.

**KATHERINE:** What about the children?

**THOMAS:** Do you want them to grow up in a society like this? Half the people in town are insane, and the other half are stupid.

**KATHERINE** (*Scolding*): Thomas, you shouldn't talk like that.

**THOMAS:** I speak the truth. For men to say they believe in truth and then to act the opposite, that's insanity. (*PETRA enters, carrying a load of books, which she puts on table.*)

**KATHERINE:** You're home early, Petra. Did you let your students have a holiday?

**PETRA** (*Upset*): No, Mother. Mrs. Busk gave me my notice. I thought it best to leave at once.

**KATHERINE:** Oh, Petra, no!

**PETRA:** I could see that she didn't like firing me, but she was afraid to do anything else.

**THOMAS** (*Bitterly*): Afraid to do anything else! They are all afraid, merely because one man wants to speak the truth.

**KATHERINE:** I guess after the riot last night, Mrs. Busk was afraid. Perhaps you shouldn't have tried to hold a public meeting when you knew all the influential people were against it.

**PETRA:** It wasn't just the meeting, Mother. Mrs. Busk has been getting letters.

**THOMAS:** Anonymous, of course.

**PETRA:** Yes. Two of them made accusations against me. Said I had some advanced ideas for a woman.

**THOMAS:** I hope you didn't deny it. Advanced ideas, indeed! Is there any other kind of idea?

**PETRA:** I didn't deny it. Mrs. Busk has some pretty advanced ideas of her own, when she talks to me privately.

**THOMAS** (*Sneeringly*): Yes, of course, privately. I'm telling you, the sooner we get out of this place the better we will be. You'd better go pack, Petra.

**PETRA** (*Starting out*): Yes, Father. (*Exits*)

**THOMAS** (*Sighing*): It's a sorry state when even the educators are afraid to think, except privately. (*PETRA reenters with HORSTER.*)

**PETRA:** Father, we have a visitor.

**THOMAS** (*Going to HORSTER and shaking his hand warmly*): Captain Horster, welcome.

**HORSTER:** Good morning, Thomas. I thought I'd just see how things are going.

**THOMAS:** I thank you for that.

**KATHERINE:** And thank you for helping Thomas home last night. That mob might have killed him, if you had not

helped.

**PETRA:** How did you get home, Captain?

**HORSTER:** I managed. Mostly, they were just yelling.

**THOMAS:** Yes, for all their numbers, mobs are cowards. (*Picks up stones*) Look at these stones they threw at the house last night. It was fair that they called me an enemy of the people. I am an enemy—of the kind of people in this town.

**KATHERINE:** You're not really, Thomas. You shouldn't talk like that.

**PETRA:** Just laugh at them, Papa.

**HORSTER:** Give them time, Doctor. People come around to the truth in time.

**THOMAS:** Only when it's too late, after disease has broken out. But I shall be gone. When do you sail, Captain? I am anxious to leave this country.

**HORSTER** (*Gravely*): That's one of the reasons I came by. I can't take you.

**THOMAS:** Why not? Is something wrong with the ship?

**HORSTER:** The owner has relieved me of my command.

**PETRA** (*Upset*): Oh, dear. They took my school, now your ship!

**THOMAS:** I'm truly sorry, Captain.

**HORSTER** (*Brightening*): It's all right, Doctor. I can get another command with some company away from here.

**PETRA:** If you hadn't helped Papa last night, maybe—

**HORSTER:** I'm not sorry. If I had it to do

over again, I'd do the same thing. But don't take this too hard. If you still want to leave Norway, I have another idea.

**THOMAS:** Every minute I want to leave more. (*Knock on door is heard.*)

**PETRA:** I'll see who that is. (*Exits*)

**KATHERINE:** Thomas, whoever it is, promise me you won't lose your temper. (*PETER enters, followed by PETRA.*)

**PETER** (*Seeing HORSTER*): Oh, Thomas, I didn't realize you were busy. I wanted to see you alone.

**KATHERINE:** The Captain and I can wait in the other room. Come, Captain. (*HORSTER, KATHERINE, and PETRA exit. PETER looks at broken window.*)

**THOMAS** (*Sarcastically*): Maybe you'd better put a hat on, Peter. You'll catch a cold from the draft in here.

**PETER:** I'm sorry I couldn't stop the mob. But you brought it on yourself.

**THOMAS** (*Coolly*): Have you something to tell me?

**PETER** (*Reaching into his coat pocket for letter*): I have a letter for you from the Director of the Baths.

**THOMAS** (*Taking letter*): My dismissal, I assume.

**PETER** (*Matter-of-factly*): It's dated today. We are very sorry, but public opinion being what it is, we can't keep you on any longer.

**THOMAS** (*Coldly*): Whenever a man wants to do something he cannot justify, he blames it on public opinion.

**PETER:** I don't think you will have

much of a medical practice in this town anymore, Thomas. The Homeowners Association is sending a notice to all its members to avoid you. It might be a good idea for you to move somewhere else.

**THOMAS:** That's one opinion of yours I share.

**PETER:** Good. Maybe in six months or so—when things calm down—you could write a letter of apology and maybe—

**THOMAS (*Ironically*):** Maybe I could be reinstated?

**PETER:** It's possible.

**THOMAS:** And what about public opinion?

**PETER:** Opinions change. Especially if you would be cooperative.

**THOMAS:** Ah, yes, if I would be cooperative.

**PETER:** Frankly, Thomas, it's very important to us that we have a statement from you now—about your charges that the baths are contaminated.

**THOMAS (*Firmly*):** I have given you a report on the condition of the baths. It is available for publication. (*Pauses*) Ah, but I see the truth is not what you want. I told you from the beginning, Peter. I cannot change the facts.

**PETER:** Things have changed, Thomas.

**THOMAS (*Sadly*):** For me, they have. I have lost my position. My home has been stoned. My daughter and my one remaining friend have been discharged from their positions.

**PETER:** Your stubbornness is costing you a great deal.

**THOMAS (*Sternly*):** But things have not changed with your baths. They are polluted and breed disease. It would be criminal to bring people here for their health and send them away sicker than they came.

**PETER:** You're a father, a husband, Thomas. I won't even mention what you are doing to my position as mayor, since you are my brother. You have no right to hurt your family like this!

**THOMAS (*Hotly*):** I am a free man, and free men have no right to live by lies.

**PETER (*Accusingly*):** You'd like people to see this whole business as just a matter of your virtue, wouldn't you? But you had private reasons for trying to ruin the reputation of the baths.

**THOMAS (*Puzzled*):** What are you talking about?

**PETER:** I know the terms of Morten Kiil's will.

**THOMAS (*Matter-of-factly*):** As I understand it, my father-in-law's money—whatever little there is—will go to an old folks' home. What's that got to do with me?

**PETER:** Are you telling me that you don't know your children are his only heirs? You and Katherine will have use of the money during your lifetime.

**THOMAS (*Unconvinced*):** I've never heard such a thing. All I've heard from my father-in-law are complaints about taxes.

**PETER:** Well, I know the facts. He's rich, and your family will get his money.

**THOMAS:** Well, well. (*Pauses*) So Katherine is a rich heiress. Why, this means that the family is secure!

**PETER:** Wait a minute, Thomas. *Maybe* you're secure. Your father-in-law can change the will any time he pleases.

**THOMAS:** He won't. He's very pleased that I've made things uncomfortable for you and your friends. He told me so.

**PETER:** That's what I suspected. You've been attacking us just to please the old man. That's your plot.

**THOMAS** (*Angrily*): Peter, you are the most thorough scoundrel I've ever met.

**PETER** (*Hotly*): Don't think you're fooling me. When I expose your plot, no one will take your lies seriously again. (*Exits*)

**THOMAS** (*Shouting after him*): Scoundrel! (*He picks up stone as if to throw it, then puts it on table.*)

**PETRA** (*Entering*): Papa, Grandfather is here. Can you see him now?

**THOMAS:** I certainly can. (*She exits. After a moment KILL enters.*) Come in, Father-in-law.

**KILL:** You must have a good conscience today.

**THOMAS:** I suppose I have.

**KILL** (*Tapping his head*): Do you know what I have here?

**THOMAS:** I hope a good conscience, too.

**KILL:** Something better than that. A plan. (*Reaches into inside pocket, and draws out large envelope*) Look at these. (*THOMAS takes envelope, opens it, and looks at certificates.*)

**THOMAS:** These. . . these are shares in the baths. Did you buy these?

**KILL:** They were easy to buy. And cheap. Throw what stones they may, many of

the townspeople fear you speak the truth.

**THOMAS:** Of course I speak the truth! I fear, Father-in-law, that you have bought worthless stock. (*Hands envelope back to him*)

**KILL:** Not if you'll be reasonable.

**THOMAS:** What can I do?

**KILL:** First things first. Do you know what money I have used to buy this stock? It's the money that Katherine and your children are to inherit. You didn't know about that, did you?

**THOMAS** (*Incredulously*): You bought those stocks with the money for Katherine?

**KILL:** Every penny of it.

**THOMAS** (*Aghast*): Why didn't you speak to me before you did this?

**KILL:** It's too late for that now.

**THOMAS:** If only there were some doubt. But the baths are contaminated, and there's no way of cleaning them up without rebuilding the whole sewer system. That would take a couple of years.

**KILL:** If you continue with your accusations against the baths—blaming my tannery for polluting the waters—these stocks will be worth nothing. You will make your wife and children poor. Any father who would do that would be insane.

**THOMAS:** Well, then, I'm insane.

**KILL:** Thomas, you're joking. Think about this carefully.

**THOMAS** (*Considering*): Maybe some chemical could be developed. . . something that would kill the germs. But it

would take too long.

**KIIL:** So what are you going to do?

**THOMAS** (*Coldly*): Why should I do anything? If the people want to wallow in baths filled with disease, that's their business. I owe them nothing more.

**KIIL** (*Enthusiastically*): Now you're making sense, Thomas. And don't forget last night. They tried to kill you.

**THOMAS** (*Musing aloud*): Perhaps I haven't thought enough of my family.

**KIIL:** That's right, Thomas. Talk to Katherine. She's a good sensible girl.

**THOMAS** (*Upset*): But why did you do a thing like this? Risking Katherine's money and now tempting me. When I look at you, Father-in-law, I seem to think I am seeing the devil himself.

**KIIL:** If that's your attitude, I'd better leave. I'll give you some time to think this over. Be sensible, Thomas. Think of your family. (*He exits, as PETRA enters.*)

**PETRA:** Father, more visitors. Editor Hovstad and Mr. Aslaksen.

**THOMAS:** What can they want? After last night, I thought they would be ashamed to show their faces in my house. (*HOVSTAD and ASLAKSEN enter. PETRA exits, closing door.*) What could you two possibly want with me?

**HOVSTAD:** Now, Doctor, I can understand why you may resent my attitude.

**THOMAS** (*Angrily*): Your attitude! Your cowardice, you mean. Promising me your support and then turning on me at the meeting.

**HOVSTAD:** I had no choice. The editor of the paper is not his own master, you

know.

**THOMAS:** No one, it seems, is his own master in this town.

**ASLAKSEN** (*Pleasantly*): We'd have supported you if you had told us all your plans.

**THOMAS:** What are you talking about?

**ASLAKSEN:** Your father-in-law's going around town buying up all the stock in the baths.

**THOMAS:** What does that have to do with me?

**ASLAKSEN** (*Conspiratorially*): It would have been smarter to have used someone not in the family to buy the stock.

**HOVSTAD:** If you had shared the plan with us, we could have used someone who wasn't tied to you.

**THOMAS** (*Bluntly*): What do you want?

**HOVSTAD:** Perhaps it would be better for you to explain, Mr. Aslaksen, since you represent the majority.

**ASLAKSEN:** Briefly, Doctor, now that we know how matters stand, you can count on our support.

**HOVSTAD:** As soon as your attack on the baths has done its work—

**THOMAS** (*Sharply*): As soon as the price of the stocks drops further so that my father-in-law can buy the stocks cheap, you mean.

**HOVSTAD:** We can say that you took over the baths because they needed the direction of a man of science.

**ASLAKSEN:** You'll be a hero.

**THOMAS:** I see. Then we can do a few little things—nothing very expen-



sive—and announce that the baths are pure. Right?

**HOVSTAD:** Exactly! Everyone will believe you if my paper backs you.

**ASLAKSEN:** In a free society, the newspaper is strong, Doctor. And don't forget that I have the Homeowners Association as support, too. Public opinion will be no problem.

**THOMAS:** I see. (*Pauses*) What do you two want for your—your cooperation?

**HOVSTAD:** We would like to cooperate just because it's a good thing for the community. But it does take money to run a newspaper.

**THOMAS** (*Exploding*): And they call *me* the enemy of the people. Let me tell you something. You'll never get a cent from me.

**HOVSTAD** (*Coldly*): My paper will expose you, then.

**THOMAS:** Get out. Get out before I throw you out!

**HOVSTAD:** You're not serious, Doctor.

**THOMAS** (*Unrelenting*): I'm going to count to three. If you are not out by then, I'm going to throw you right through that window that your mob broke last night.

**HOVSTAD:** Now, Doctor, think what you're doing.

**THOMAS** (*Advancing toward them*): One. Two.

**ASLAKSEN:** He's crazy!

**THOMAS** (*Grabbing HOVSTAD by collar*): Three! (*HOVSTAD yells as THOMAS drags him toward window. KATHERINE, HORSTER, and PETRA rush in.*)

**KATHERINE:** Thomas! Let him go!

**HOVSTAD** (*Escaping from THOMAS*): You all saw it. An unprovoked attack. I'll have the law on him. (*Rushes out*)

**ASLAKSEN:** He's crazy! (*Rushes after HOVSTAD*)

**KATHERINE** (*Grabbing THOMAS's arm as he starts after them*): Thomas, please! Just let them go. What was that all about?

**THOMAS:** I'll tell you later. But first, Petra, I want you to take a message to your grandfather. (*Pauses*) Tell him the answer is "no, no, no."

**PETRA:** That's simple enough. I shouldn't forget it. (*Exits*)

**THOMAS:** I'm through with the whole lot of them.

**KATHERINE:** Since we are leaving, Thomas, we'll leave it all behind us.

**THOMAS:** No, Katherine, we are staying here.

**KATHERINE** (*In disbelief*): Staying here?

**THOMAS** (*Emphatically*): Yes, here is where the fight is, and here I will win. Soon I shall go into the town and look for another house.

**HORSTER:** Doctor, you can have my house. I have too much room. Besides, I'll be shipping out soon. While I'm here I'll be glad for the company.

**KATHERINE:** How kind of you, Captain. You are indeed our friend.

**THOMAS** (*Gratefully*): Thank you, Captain. That's a load off my mind. (*PETRA enters breathless.*)

**PETRA:** I met Grandfather at the corner, Papa, and gave him your message.

I'm not sure what it meant, but I think it displeased him.

**THOMAS:** Good. Did he have any message for me?

**PETRA:** Not as short as yours, but just as simple. He told me to tell you that you are a fool.

**THOMAS:** No doubt I am, in his view. Petra, we are staying here.

**KATHERINE:** But you won't be able to practice medicine here.

**THOMAS:** Yes, I shall. The poor will keep coming to me. They can't pay me, but they are the ones who need a doctor most, anyway. And the poor will listen to me. I'll doctor their minds as well as their bodies.

**PETRA:** What will you teach them, Papa?

**THOMAS:** A simple lesson, Petra. People owe their first loyalty to the truth and to giving the best that's in them, not to the establishment, or the majority, which can be a cruel tyrant.

**KATHERINE** (*Worriedly*): How shall we live, Thomas?

**THOMAS:** We'll get on, so long as I can

find honest men who will work for truth—now and in the future. (*EILIF and MORTEN enter.*)

**PETRA:** Here's your answer to the future, Papa. Eilif and Morten will continue your work.

**EILIF:** We will help you, Papa.

**MORTEN:** Even if it's weeding in the garden.

**THOMAS** (*Laughing*): That's just what it is, boys—weeding the garden. Petra, you are right. It's always the young who give us the right to hope for the future. I am a lucky man, Katherine.

**KATHERINE:** Lucky, Thomas? You?

**THOMAS:** Yes. I am lucky because I have stumbled onto an important truth: I am the strongest man in town.

**KATHERINE:** You are a sweet man, Thomas, but sometimes absurd. You have no position, no friends, no money.

**THOMAS:** But the truth is, Katherine, the strongest man in the world can be he who stands alone.

**KATHERINE** (*Smiling; putting her arm around him*): Ah, dear Thomas.

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## PRODUCTION NOTES

### An Enemy of the People

**CHARACTERS:** 8 male; 2 female; male and female extras for townspeople.

**PLAYING TIME:** 30 minutes.

**COSTUMES:** Appropriate late nineteenth-century costumes.

**PROPERTIES:** Stones, books, two letters, envelope containing certificates.

**SETTING:** Before Rise: Town meeting hall. Chairs and podium are placed before curtain. At Rise: Victorian living room, with broken window up center. Chairs, tables, bookcases, etc., stand about room.

**SOUND:** Knock on door.