

Laura in The Father

The Father is a tragedy, "The Mother" on the other hand is just a grim drama.

The Captain, Adolf, declares war on his wife Laura, and it is clear from the start that he is doomed to perish alone and abandoned on the battlefield - he is a lousy military strategist.

Is it because he has too much of what military men are traditionally claimed to have missing: Imagination? Or is he just clinging to a male role he is too weak for to shoulder or abandon?

Instead of seeing what's going on in his home, he looks for life on Jupiter. Blindly, he pushes towards disaster by wanting to do the unthinkable, to send away his daughter, the only child. Can't you get along, wonders the pastor, the brother-in-law. Can he not compromise pleads his old nanny, Margret. Think about the father and mother decide together, suggests Laura. No! Adolf wants to decide for himself! As a small child he refuses to listen and understand.

It's pretty pathetic. Despite his military rank of captain and the fact that he lives next door or even at the regiment, the clubhouse of manhood filled with uniforms, weapons and power, he becomes grumpy to his family and household. Adolf complains that he is surrounded by women, even though they are all there to look after him.

Laura thus has no choice. Society has given her husband the right to decide, so she must forge her own weapons. With poetic justice, she turns the weapon of patriarchy against itself. The opportunity men have always used to their advantage and which the soldier Nöjd takes full advantage of in the beginning of the drama: to avoid taking responsibility by casting doubt on paternity and the woman after he and the maid have children together.

Add a little blood mystery, a little clan thinking and the question about the biological fatherhood becomes the tool that drives a weak soul to madness. Then diagnose him with the sticky labels of modern psychiatry, and Adolf is lost. That his daughter loves him, lived her whole life with him and sees him as her father doesn't matter if he was deceived. He would rather exchange the obsession for the straitjacket, become a child in Margret's arms. Laura is left as the only adult in the room and Bertha runs to her: "Mother, mother!" Laura: "My own child!"

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