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Autumn Sonata

By Ingmar Bergman

AUTUMN SONATA:

Sometimes I watch my wife,
without her being aware of
my presence.

The first time she entered that room,
she said,

"It's good. I want to be here."

We'd met only a few days before,
at a bishops' council in Trondheim.

She was the correspondent
of a church magazine.

We met at lunch, and I told her about
the vicarage here.

I ventured to suggest we come here
after the conference.

On the way here, I asked her
if she would marry me.

She didn't reply.

But when we entered this room,
she turned to me and said,

"It's good. I want to be here."

Ever since then we've lived a good
and quiet life here at the vicarage.

Eva has told me about her life.

After school, she went to university.

She was engaged to a doctor,
and lived with him for several years.

She wrote two little books,
contracted tuberculosis,
broke off the engagement
and moved from Oslo to a small town
in the south of Norway,
where she started working
as a journalist.

This is the first of her books -
I'm very fond of it.

She writes,

"One has to learn to live;

I practise every day.

"The greatest obstacle
is that I don't know who I am.

"I fumble in the dark.

"Were someone to love me

for who I am,
"I might at last be able
to study myself.
"The possibility of this
is rather remote."
If I could only tell her one time
that she is loved,
unreservedly.
But I can't say it in such a way
that she will believe me.
I lack the proper words.
Can I read you my letter to Mother,
or am I disturbing you?
No, come in. Let me
switch off the radio.
I can come back later.
I would very much like
to hear your letter.
"Dearest Mother,
yesterday I ran into Agnes,
"who was visiting her parents
with her family.
"She told me Leonardo had died.
"Dearest little Mummy, I can imagine
how terrible you must feel.
"Would you like to visit us
for a few days, or weeks?
"Whichever suits you best.
"In case you get frightened
and say no directly,
"I must tell you the vicarage
is very spacious.
"You'll have your own room,
secluded and with all mod cons.
"We have a grand piano
for you to practise on.
"Wouldn't it be nice
not to have to stay at a hotel?
"Please say you'll come!
"We'll take good care of you
and spoil you.
"It's such a long time since we met.
In October it will be seven years.
"With love from Viktor

and your daughter Eva."

- That sounds very good.

- Do you think so?

- Mummy dearest! Welcome!

- Eva dear, here I am.

I'm so happy you're here.

Let me help you.

- What a long journey.

- Yes, I know.

The last bit is the worst.

But isn't it beautiful here.

- Will you stay for a while?

- I certainly will.

- How nice that you're here!

- And I want to see everything.

What heavy bags! Have you brought all your music?

- Of course. I intend to move in.

- That would be lovely.

- You must give me some lessons.

- Of course.

- Where's Viktor?

- He's not here.

We didn't expect you so early.

He'll be back for lunch.

- This is your room.

- It's charming.

What a wonderful view.

Here's the bathroom.

Very attractive and modern.

- The closet, I hope it's big enough.

- I'm sure it is.

I'm really very tired.

My back aches. I sat with Leonardo during his last 24 hours.

He was in terrible pain, despite injections every two hours.

At times he cried.

It wasn't for fear of dying, but out of pain.

There was building work going on outside, drilling and hammering.

The sun was so hot, and there were neither blinds nor awnings.

We tried to get another room, but
several wards were closed for repairs.
Towards the evening the noise
subsided and I opened the window.
The heat was like a wall outside -
it was windless.
The professor came at night,
an old friend of Leonardo's.
He said he didn't have long left.
Leonardo would have injections
once an hour,
so that he could fall asleep
without pain.
The professor left
and the nurse came in.
She thought I should eat,
but I wasn't hungry.
The smell made me nauseous.
Leonardo slept for a few minutes.
When he woke up, he asked me
to leave the room.
He called the nurse, who immediately
gave him an injection.
A few minutes later she came out.
She said that...
Leonardo was dead.
I stayed with him all night.
I thought about us having been friends
for 18 years, living together for 13.
Never a harsh or angry word
between us.
For the last two years
he knew he was hopelessly ill.
I went to see him in his villa
outside Naples as often as I could.
He was kind and considerate,
pleased by my success.
We would chat and joke,
play some chamber music.
He never mentioned his illness,
and I didn't ask.
He wouldn't have liked that.
One day he looked at me
for a long time.

Then he laughed and said,
"By this time next year,
I'll be gone,
"but I'll always be with you,
I'll always think of you."
It was nice of Leonardo to say that,
but then again he was a bit theatrical.
I can't really say I mourn him.
It feels empty, but one mustn't
bury oneself.
Have I changed much
since we last met?
- You're exactly the same.
- I dye my hair, of course.
Leonardo didn't want to see
my grey hairs.
I bought this trouser suit in Zrich,
for the car journey.
I spotted it in a window.
I went in and tried it on - perfect fit.
- Astonishingly cheap. Do you like it?
- It's beautiful.
Let's unpack. Give me a hand
with this suitcase, my back hurts so.
Can we find a board to put
under the mattress, for my back?
It's already there.
I put it there yesterday.
What's the matter, dear?
Are you crying?
- Have I said something wrong?
- It's because I'm so happy to see you.
Let's hug tightly,
as we did when you were little.
I only talk about myself.
Now you must tell, Eva dearest.
Let's sit down.
- How are you, little Eva?
- I'm very happy.
That's good. But isn't life here
very isolated?
- Viktor and I have our parish work.
- Yes, of course you do.
I often play in the church. Last month

I gave an evening recital.
I played, and then I talked about
the music. It was a great success.
- You will have to play for me.
- I'd love to.
I gave five school recitals
in Los Angeles.
Imagine, playing and talking
to three thousand children!
What a success - but awfully tiring.
There's something I have to tell you.
Helena is here.
You should have written and told me.
If I'd told you about Helena
you wouldn't have come.
- I'm sure I'd have come all the same.
- I'm sure you wouldn't.
Leonardo's death wasn't enough.
You had to drag poor Lena here, too?
Mother, Helena's lived here
for two years.
I wrote to tell you we were going
to ask her to come and live here.
- I wrote to you.
- I never received that letter.
Or you didn't bother to read it.
- Isn't that an unfair accusation?
- Yes, I'm sorry.
I can't bear to see her,
at least not today.
Mother, Helena is a wonderful person.
She's so looking forward
to seeing you.
She was so comfortable
in the nursing home.
I wanted to have her here.
- Are you sure she's better off here?
- Yes, she is.
And I have someone to care for.
Has she... I mean, has she...
Is she... worse?
Yes, of course she's worse.
It's part of the illness.
Then let's go and see her.

- Are you sure you want to?

- Do I have a choice?

I've never had a taste for people
who are unaware of their motives.

- Do you mean me?

- Take it the way you like. Come on.

My dearest Lena.

I've thought of you so often,
every day.

She's got a cold. She's afraid
she'll give it to you.

I'm not afraid - I haven't had a cold
for twenty years!

What a lovely room you have. And the
view is the same as from my room.

Helena wants you to hold her head
and look at her.

- Like this? Is this good?

- Yes.

I'm so glad Eva's taking care of you.
I thought you were still at the home.
I was going to come and see you
before I left. But this is much better.

- We can be together every day.

- Yes.

Are you in pain?

No.

Your hair looks lovely.

It's in your honour, Mummy.

If you want, I could read to you.

Would you like that?

And we could go out in the car.

I've never been to these parts.

- What is she saying?

- You must be tired.

You needn't exert yourself
further today.

Mummy's been very good.

- Doesn't Lena have a clock?

- Yes, on the bedside table.

Have my watch.

I was given it by an admirer
who thought I was always late.

- Will Lena eat dinner with us?

- No, lunch is her main meal.
Anyway, Lena is on a diet.
She ate too much at the home.
Why do I feel feverish?
Why do I want to cry?
How stupid! There I stand - shamed.
And that's the idea.
And the guilty conscience,
always the guilty conscience!
I was in such a hurry to come here.
What did I expect?
What was it I longed for,
that I didn't dare admit to myself?
This inconceivably peculiar mother!
You should have seen her
when I told her that Helena lived here.
She even managed a smile,
despite her surprise and dismay.
And then, outside Lena's door,
the actress before her entrance.
Awfully frightened - but composed.
An outstanding performance.
Why did she come?
What did she expect from a reunion
after seven years?
- Who knows?
- What did I expect?
Do we never give up hope?
Never stop being mother and daughter?
No point in crying.
Damn!
There she was, looking at me
with her big eyes.
I held her face in my hands
and I could feel
the illness tugging at
her neck muscles.
Damn!
Why can't I hold her and comfort her,
like I did when she was little?
That ravaged, soft body,
that's my Lena.
Don't cry, damn it!
A writer - I forget the name - said,

"It's like a heavy ghost that falls over you when you open the nursery door, "because you've long ago forgotten it's the nursery door."

Do you think I'm adult?

To be an adult is to be able to deal with one's dreams and expectations.

- One has stopped yearning.

- Do you think so?

Perhaps one ceases to be surprised. You look so sensible, sitting there with your old pipe.

- You're altogether adult.

- Hardly. I'm surprised every day.

- At what?

- At you, for example.

Besides, I nurture some unreasonable dreams and expectations, as well as a kind of yearning.

- Yearning?

- I yearn for you.

Those are pretty words, aren't they? Words that don't mean anything real.

I was brought up on pretty words.

Mother is never mad, or disappointed or unhappy.

She "feels pain".

You use words like that, too.

I suppose it comes with the job.

When you say you yearn for me when I'm right here, I get wary.

- You know very well what I mean.

- No.

If I knew that, you wouldn't think of saying you yearn for me.

I have to check on the roast.

Mother thinks I'm a poor cook.

She's a real glutton.

- I think you're...

- .. a wonderful cook. Thank you.

I mustn't forget she wants decaffeinated coffee.

I'll shorten my stay.

Four days - I could make that.

Then I'll go to Africa, as I planned.
This hurts, Charlotte.
Hurts.
Viktor, I've often wondered why she
suffers from insomnia. I think I know.
If she slept normally, her vitality
would crush those around her.
Insomnia is nature's way
of making her bearable.
I'll wear my red dress.
And I'm doing it out of sheer spite.
Eva will think I should wear something
more seemly after Leonardo's death.
Viktor, she will have dressed up
for dinner, you'll see.
Note the perfect clothes
which discreetly will remind us
that she's in mourning, after all.
All this anger.
All they've done is show
how happy they are to have me.
Viktor's a kind soul. Lucky for Eva,
the crybaby, to have such a good man.
I bet the shower's not working.
It is.
- What a beautiful dress!
- Does it suit me?
I met my old 'girlfriend',
Samuel Parkenhurst, and he said,
"I've just come from a fashion show,
there's a red dress that's so you."
Let's have a toast. Welcome to
the vicarage, dear Charlotte.
Eva, are my glasses on the table
by the window?
Thank you, darling.
My agent - he's so sweet.
He's my only friend these days.
Do you remember Paul, Eva?
We've worked together for 30 years.
What a lovely old instrument!
Such a beautiful timbre!
And it's newly tuned.
Now I'm happy!

- I worried unnecessarily.

- What do you mean?

I was anxious about seeing you
after all this time. I nearly cancelled.

No sugar, thanks.

This coffee isn't much fun,
but what to do when one can't sleep?

I see you're playing
the Chopin Preludes.

- Won't you play for me?

- Not now, Mother.

Don't be childish. It would give me
great pleasure to hear you play.

You told me you were hoping
your mother would listen to you.

I just dabble at it, I lack all technique.

I haven't even learnt the fingering
of this prelude. I couldn't...

Enough excuses, darling. Get to it!

My dearest little Eva.

- Is that all you have to say?

- No, no, I was just so moved.

- Did you like it?

- I liked you.

- I don't understand.

- Play something else, it's lovely.

- I want to know about my mistakes.

- There weren't any.

You didn't like the way

I played the piece.

- We all have our own opinion.

- Right.

- I want to hear yours.

- You're already cross.

I'm sad that you don't find it
worthwhile to give me your opinion.

If you insist.

We'll disregard your technique,
which wasn't so bad,

though you could have paid more
attention to Cortot's fingering,
as it helps the interpretation. But we're
only talking about the conception.

Chopin was emotional, Eva,

not sentimental.

There is a chasm between emotion
and sentimentality.

The prelude you played speaks of
suppressed emotion, not reveries.

You have to be calm,
clear and austere.

Take the first few bars...

It hurts, but he's not showing it.

Then - brief relief.

But almost instantly it fades away
and the pain remains the same,
not greater, not lesser.

A constant and complete restraint.

Chopin was proud, sarcastic,
impetuous, tormented
and very manly.

He was no sentimental old woman.

This prelude must be played
in an almost ugly manner.

It mustn't be seductive,
it should sound wrong.

Laboured, or successfully negotiated.

Like this, I'll show you.

I see.

- Don't be upset, Eva.

- I'm not upset. On the contrary.

I've worked on these preludes
for forty-five years.

Many secrets still remain,
things I do not understand.

As a child I admired you terribly.

Then I was fed up with you
and your pianos for many years.

Now I'm beginning to admire you
again, in a different way.

- Then there's hope.

- I suppose so.

- Eva, where are you?

- I'm upstairs, Mother!

There you are. I've changed
so that we can go for a walk.

- Isn't this the nursery?

- Yes, it's Erik's room.

You've just left it like this?
Viktor and I often talk of redecorating,
but we don't get round to it.
Sometimes I come here
to sit and think.
- Let's go out now.
- Wait.
Do you feel how peaceful it is here?
Erik died the day before his fourth
birthday... but you know that.
Viktor couldn't handle it - Erik and he
had a special bond.
Outwardly, I grieved for him a lot,
but deep down inside
I feel he is still alive,
that we are still close to each other.
I only have to concentrate a little
and he's right there.
Sometimes, when I'm going to sleep,
I can feel his breath on my face.
Then he touches me with his hand.
He's in his world, but we can
reach each other any time.
There is no boundary,
no insurmountable wall.
At times I wonder what the reality is like
where my boy lives and breathes.
At the same time
I know it can't be described,
as it's a world of liberated emotions.
Do you know what I mean?
To me, man is
an unparalleled creation,
like an unfathomable thought.
Everything exists in man,
from the highest to the lowest.
Man is created in God's own image,
and everything exists in God.
And so man is created,
but also the demons and the saints,
the prophets and the artists,
and all those who destroy.
Everything coexists, grows together.
Enormous patterns that constantly

change. Do you see what I mean?
In the same way, a limitless number
of realities must exist,
not only the reality we can grasp
with our blunt senses,
but a tumult of realities that arch
over and around, inside and outside.
Only fear and sententiousness
confine us.
There are no boundaries.
Not for our thoughts.
Not for our emotions.
It's anxiety that sets boundaries,
don't you think?
During the slow movement of
Beethoven's 'Hammerklavier' sonata,
you must feel you're living in a world
without boundaries,
in a movement you could never
explore or penetrate.
Let's go for a walk
before it gets too dark.
I thought I heard Helena call.
Forgive me.
Viktor, I think Eva is terribly unhappy.
I'm dismayed by the way she talks.
She's so highly strung.
Just a moment, my dear Charlotte,
and I will try to explain
how I view my wife.
When I asked her to marry me, she
immediately said she didn't love me.
- What are you saying?
- I asked, did she love someone else?
She replied that she had
never loved another person,
that she was incapable of loving.
Eva and I lived here for several years.
Then Erik was born.
We'd given up hope of having a child
and were talking about adopting.
You see, during her pregnancy,
Eva underwent
a complete transformation.

She became happy,
soft and gregarious.
She grew lazy,
ignoring the parish work
and her piano playing.
She'd sit and watch the light travel
across the mountains and the fjord.
We were suddenly very happy.
I'm quite a lot older than Eva,
and I had begun to feel that a grey film
was enveloping my existence.
I felt as though I could look back
and say,
"Oh, so this is life, this is what
it's going to be like."
But then,
everything was different.
You'll have to forgive me, Charlotte.
I still find it hard to...
A few very rich years went by.
Erik.
You should have seen Eva.
Really seen her.
I remember the time
around Erik's birth.
I was recording all the Mozart sonatas
and concertos. I was so busy.
Right. We repeatedly invited you,
but sadly you could never make it.
No.
When Erik drowned,
the film became even greyer.
But for Eva it was different.
- Different? In what way?
- Her feeling is alive.
Unspoilt.
At least that's how it seems.
And Charlotte,
if she feels that her son lives near her,
then perhaps that's how it is.
She seldom talks about it,
for fear it will hurt me,
and I suppose it does.
But what she says sounds true.

I believe her.

Of course, you're a man of God.

The little faith I have
exists on her terms.

- Forgive me if I hurt you.

- That's all right, dear.

Unlike you and Eva, I'm vague
and insecure. It's my own fault.

I think I'll feast on
a couple of proper sleeping pills.

It's so peaceful here,
just the rain on the roof.

- Do you have everything?

- Everything is perfect.

The right biscuits, mineral water,
a tape recorder, two detective novels,
my mask and earplugs, my little
extra pillow and my travelling rug.

Have some Swiss chocolate,
fresh from Zrich. Take two.

- Thanks, but I don't like chocolate.

- How strange.

You were crazy about sweets
as a child.

- Helena liked sweets, not me.

- All the better then, it's all for me.

- Good night, Mummy.

- Good night, dear child.

Viktor really is charming.

- You must take good care of him.

- I do.

Tell me, my dear,
are you happy together?

- Are you all right?

- Viktor is my best friend.

I don't know what life would be like
without him.

- He said you didn't love him.

- He told you that?

- Yes. Why?

- It's a bit surprising, that's all.

- Was it a secret?

- No.

- You don't like him saying it?

- Viktor seldom confides in people.
We were talking about you.
Ask me directly. I will answer
as honestly as I can.
Don't blow this up.
Is it so strange if a mother
is curious about her daughter?
We talked about you
with the utmost affection.
Why can't you leave people alone?
- I've left you alone far too long!
- That's true.
Give me a hug and promise me
you're not cross.
- I'm not cross.
- It's because I love you.
I love you, too.
It's not that much fun
being alone all the time.
I'm envious of you and Viktor.
And now, with Leonardo dead,
I'm so terribly lonely.
- You must see that.
- I do.
No, no, I'll soon start crying
out of self-pity.
This detective novel is not bad.
It's a new writer, Adam Kretzinsky.
Heard of him?
I met him in Madrid. He's quite mad.
I couldn't defend myself.
That is, I didn't defend myself at all.
- Should I turn this light out?
- Yes, please do.
- Tell me when you want breakfast.
- Don't bother.
- But I want to spoil you.
- Well, if you insist.
Strong coffee with hot milk, two slices
of rye bread with Jarlsberg cheese,
and one slice of toast with honey.
Right?
- And orange juice.
- I nearly forgot.

- You'll get your juice.
- Bye, little darling. Good night.
Good night, dear Mother.
Maybe I should have a look at
my accounts.
I mustn't forget to have Brammer
invest the money from Leonardo.
The house is worth quite a lot.
Yes, Leonardo, you didn't bother with
assets and liabilities.
You were beyond worldly worries.
You left all your problems
to your Charlotte.
Three million, seven hundred
and thirty-five thousand,
eight hundred and sixty-six francs.
To think you had all that money,
Leonardo. Who would have guessed?
And you left everything
to your old Charlotte.
I also have a penny or two.
That makes nearly five million in all.
What do I want with all that money?
That's it - I'll buy a nice car
for Viktor and Eva!
They can't keep their old banger -
it looks lethal.
We'll go into town on Monday
and look for a new car.
That will cheer them up,
and me, too.
"She gave him the red flower of her
innocence with quiet dignity.
"He received it without enthusiasm."
What trash!
He really was quite an idiot,
that Adam.
Even if he nearly killed himself
for my sake.
What if I buy myself a new car, and
give the Mercedes to Viktor and Eva?
Then I could fly to Paris
and buy a new car there.
Then I won't have to drive

all the way there.

Tomorrow I must

set about Ravel properly.

Christ, I've been lazy lately.

It's inexcusable, really.

Mother, dear, what's happened?

I heard your cry, but then I couldn't find you in your room.

I'm sorry if I woke you up, but I had a nightmare. I dreamt that...

No, I don't remember.

- I'll stay if you want to talk.

- No, thank you, dear.

- I'll just sit here for a while. Go to bed.

- If you say so.

- Eva!

- Yes, Mother?

- You do like me, don't you?

- You're my mother.

What an answer.

- Do you like me?

- But I love you!

That's not true.

I took a break in my career to stay at home with you and Father. Your back injury made it impossible for you to practise six hours a day, so your playing deteriorated and your reviews got poorer.

Really, Eva!

I don't know what was worse - you playing at being a wife and a mother, or you being on tour.

You made life hell

for both Father and me.

It's not true. Your father and I were very happy.

Josef loved me, and I'd have done anything for him.

Of course - you cheated on him.

I did not cheat on him!

I was totally honest with your father.

I fell in love with Martin and

went away with him for eight months.

Do you think it was so easy?
It was I who sat with Father in the
evenings, I who had to comfort him.
I had to tell him
that you still loved him,
and that you would surely come back.
I had to read your letters aloud.
Your long, affectionate, funny letters,
in which you told of
your interesting journeys.
We sat there, like two idiots,
reading your letters twice, three times.
We thought you were
the most wonderful woman alive.
Eva, you hate me.
I don't know.
Suddenly you're coming here,
and I'm so happy.
I don't know what I was imagining.
Maybe that you were sad and lonely.
I don't know, I'm so confused!
I thought I was adult, that I had
a clear picture of you and me,
of Helena's illness and our childhood.
Now I realise it's utterly chaotic.
It's Helena.
There, there. Wake up a little.
Wake up.
I'll sit here while you go back to sleep.
To you I was a doll to play with
when you had the time.
If I was ill or difficult, you'd
hand me over to the nanny.
You'd shut yourself up in your work,
no one was allowed to disturb you.
I would stand outside and listen.
I'd sneak in during your coffee break
to make sure you existed.
You were always kind...
but completely preoccupied.
If I asked you something,
I'd barely get a reply.
Mummy would like to be alone.
Why don't you go out and play?

Because you were so elegant,
I wanted to be elegant, too.
I became fussy about my clothes.
I worried that you wouldn't like
my appearance.
I was ugly.
Skinny and angular,
with big, round eyes and fat lips.
No eyebrows.
My arms were too thin and my feet
too big. I thought I looked disgusting.
Once you said,
"You should have been a boy."
Then you laughed, so I wouldn't
be upset. But I was, of course.
One day, your suitcases
stood at the foot of the stairs.
You were talking on the phone,
in a foreign language.
I prayed to God something would
happen to stop you going away.
But you always went.
You came up to me,
hugged and kissed me.
Embraced me and kissed me again.
You looked at me and smiled.
You smelt so good, so strange.
But you were a stranger to me.
You were already on your way,
you didn't see me.
And so you were gone.
I thought, "Now my heart will stop.
I'm going to die from the pain.
"I'll never be happy again.
"How could I endure
this pain for two months?"
I would cry on Father's lap.
He would sit motionless,
his soft little hand on my head.
He'd sit there for hours, smoking his
old pipe, enveloping us with smoke.
Sometimes he'd speak.
"Shall we go to the cinema tonight?"
Or, "Let's have ice cream

for dinner today."
I didn't care about either,
because I was dying.
The days and weeks went by.
We negotiated the loneliness.
We didn't have much to talk about.
It was easy with Father -
he was never disturbed.
At times he'd look worried. I didn't
know that he had financial difficulties.
But he always lit up
when I came clumping in.
We'd have a little chat, or he'd just
pat me with his pale little hand.
Or Uncle Otto would sit on the sofa,
drinking cognac.
They would mutter quietly.
I wonder if they actually heard
each other.
Or Uncle Harry would be there,
playing chess.
It would be extra quiet then.
You could hear three different clocks
ticking in the house.
Several days before your return,
I'd be feverish with excitement.
At the same time,
I feared falling ill for real,
as I knew you were afraid of
sick people.
When you came, my joy
was more than I could stand.
I couldn't speak. Sometimes you
would become impatient and say,
"Eva doesn't seem very happy
to have her mother back home."
Then I'd turn crimson,
and all sweaty.
I couldn't speak.
I didn't have any words.
You'd taken care of all the words
in our house.
- You exaggerate, Eva.
- Let me finish.

I know I'm a little drunk. But if I wasn't,
I wouldn't be saying this.
When I daren't say more, or fall silent
from shame, then you can explain.
I shall listen and understand, the way
I've always listened and understood.
I loved you, Mummy.
It was a matter of life or death,
but I didn't trust your words.
They didn't agree with
the look in your eyes.
Your voice is beautiful. I could feel it
in my whole body when you spoke,
but I knew instinctively that you
hardly ever meant what you said.
I didn't understand your words.
The worst part was that you smiled
when you were angry.
When you hated Father,
you called him "my dearest friend".
When you were fed up with me,
I was "my darling girl".
You're very quiet.
What do you want me to say?
You could defend yourself.
- Is it worth it?
- How would I know that?
You reproach me for going away,
you reproach me for staying at home.
You've probably never realised
that those years were hell for me.
My back hurt, I couldn't practise and
my recitals suffered.
Important contracts were cancelled.
My life felt meaningless.
But I always had a guilty conscience
for not being at home.
You smile ironically!
I'm trying to be honest.
I'll tell you how I reasoned -
and I don't care what you think.
Let's have it out this once,
and never again.
I'm trying to understand.

It was in Hamburg. I played
Beethoven's first,
which isn't so difficult,
and everything went well.
After the concert, I went out with
old Schmiess, the conductor,
for a bite to eat - we always did.
When we'd lingered over dinner,
I was very happy,
I could hardly feel my backache.
Then old Schmiess said,
"Why don't you stay at home
with your family
and live a respectable life,
rather than suffer
constant humiliation?"
I stared at him,
then I gave a laugh and said,
"Was I that bad?"
"No, not that bad," he said.
"But I can't help thinking of
August 18, 1934.
We did Beethoven's first together,
in Linz.
You were twenty,
and the hall was packed.
We played like gods,
the orchestra was on fire.
Afterwards, people were screaming
and stamping their feet.
The musicians showed
their appreciation.
You were wearing
a simple red summer dress,
with your hair down to your waist."
"How can you remember all this?"
I asked.
"I have it written down in my score,"
he said.
"I note down all my greatest
experiences."
That night I couldn't fall asleep.
At 3am I called your father and told
him that I'd decided to stop touring.

I was going to stay at home,
we would be a real family.
Josef was so terribly happy.
We both cried with emotion.
We spoke for two hours.
That's that. And that summer
we were...

We were happy then, weren't we?
No.

- You weren't happy?

- No.

You said you'd never been happier.

Yes. I didn't want to hurt you.

Oh, so that's how it was?

- What did I do wrong?

- I was fourteen.

For want of anything better, you
turned all your pent-up energy on me.
You felt you had neglected me,
and were going to make up for it.
I tried to defend myself,
but I didn't stand a chance.
There you were, with your tender care
and concern in your voice.
Not a single detail escaped
your loving attention.

I had a stoop,
so you set me exercises.
You exercised with me,
pleading your back as an excuse.
You thought I had too much bother
with my long hair, and cut it short.
It was horrible.

You decided my teeth were crooked,
so I had to wear braces.

I looked grotesque!

You said I was too old
for my trousers and skirts,
and had dresses made for me,
without asking my opinion!

And I didn't dare say anything,
for fear of hurting you.

You gave me books to read
that I didn't understand.

I read and I read, and then you and I
were to discuss what I had read.
You talked and talked,
but I didn't understand a thing!
I only worried about having my
ignorance exposed. I was paralysed.
One thing I learnt, though.
Not one molecule of the real me
could be loved, or even accepted.
You were obsessed, and I became
more and more scared and crushed.
I said what you wanted to hear,
made your gestures.
I wasn't even myself
when I was on my own,
as I abhorred everything
that was my own!
It was horrendous, Mother!
I still shake all over
when I think of those years.
It was horrible!
I didn't understand that I hated you -
I was convinced we loved each other.
I couldn't hate you, so my hatred
turned into a terrible anxiety.
I had nightmares, I bit my nails,
I pulled out chunks of my hair.
I wanted to cry, but I couldn't -
I couldn't utter a single sound.
I tried to scream, but only
stifled grunts came out,
which scared me even more,
as I thought I was going insane!
- Then I met Stefan.
- You couldn't have had a child!
I was eighteen, Stefan was grown-up!
We'd have coped.
- You wouldn't have coped!
- We would have!
We wanted the child, but you ruined
our relationship.
It's not true! I even said to Josef
that we had to show consideration.
You didn't see that Stefan was an idiot!

Do you know everything?
Did you hear me and Stefan talk?
Did you lie under our bed? Do you
know what you're talking about at all?
Have you ever cared about
anybody else but yourself?
I couldn't have forced
an abortion on you.
How could I stand up to you?
I was scared and insecure.
- I needed support.
- I tried to help you.
I was convinced an abortion was the
only solution. I have been until now.
All these years of hatred.
Why didn't you say something?
Because you never listen.
Because you run away from things.
Because you're emotionally crippled.
Because you actually loathe me
and Helena.
You're helplessly locked up inside
yourself, holding yourself back.
Because I loved you.
Because you thought I was a failure,
disgusting and untalented.
You damaged me for life,
just as you yourself are damaged.
You went for everything
sensitive and fragile.
You tried to stifle
every living thing you could get at.
You speak of my hatred.
Your hatred wasn't any less strong.
Your hatred isn't any less strong.
I was small and malleable
and loving.
You tied me down
because you needed my love,
just as you want everyone
to love you.
I was exposed and defenceless.
And it all took place
in the name of love.

You kept on saying you loved me,
and Father and Helena.
And you knew the intonation
and gestures of love.
People like you are lethal -
you should be locked up
and made harmless.
A mother and her daughter.
What a terrible combination...
of emotions and confusion...
and destruction.
Everything's possible and will be done
in the name of love and caring.
The daughter shall inherit
the mother's injuries.
The daughter shall suffer for
the mother's failures.
The unhappiness of the mother
shall be the daughter's unhappiness.
It's as if the umbilical cord
had never been cut.
Mummy...
is that how it is?
Is the daughter's unhappiness
the mother's triumph?
Mummy...
is my grief...
your secret pleasure?
Christ, my back hurts.
Do you mind if I lie on the floor?
It's the only thing that helps.
I remember very little
from my childhood.
I can't recall either of my parents
ever touching me,
either to caress or punish.
I was completely ignorant of anything
to do with love,
affection, touching, intimacy, warmth.
Only through music did I get a chance
to reveal my emotions.
Sometimes when I lie awake at night,
I wonder whether I've lived at all.
And I wonder whether it's the same

for all people,
or if some people have a greater
talent for living than others.
Or if some people never live,
but simply exist.
Then I'm seized with...
I'm seized with anxiety.
I see an ugly picture of myself...
I've never grown up.
My face and my body have aged.
I'm accumulating memories
and experiences.
But inside all of this,
I haven't even been born.
I don't remember any faces,
not even my own.
Sometimes I try to remember
Mother's face,
but I can't see her.
I can remember that she was big
and dark, with blue eyes,
a large nose and a full mouth.
But I can't seem to get
the different pieces to agree.
I can't see her.
In the same way, I can't see your
face, or Helena's or Leonardo's.
I remember having given birth
to you and your sister,
but all I remember of the deliveries
themselves is that they were painful.
But the pain, what did it taste like?
I don't remember.
Leonardo once said...
No, I can't remember...
Yes. "Having a sense of reality
is a matter of talent," he said.
"Most people lack this talent,
"and maybe just as well."
- Do you understand what he meant?
- Yes, I do.
- But it's really too peculiar.
- Peculiar?
- I've always been afraid of you.

- I don't see why.

I think I wanted you
to take care of me,
take me in your arms and comfort me.
I was a child.

- Does that matter?

- No.

I could see that you loved me.
And I wanted to love you,
but I couldn't. I was afraid of
your demands.

- I had no demands.

- But I thought you did.

I didn't want to be your mother.

I wanted you to know
that I was as helpless as you.

Is it true?

- What are you thinking about?

- About Leonardo and Helena.

I don't understand.

They hardly knew one another.

- We spent Easter together once.

- You left after three days.

I was playing Bartk with Ansermet
in Geneva.

I wanted to go through the concerto
with the old man in peace

It's possible I left a bit early,
the weather was awful.

Leonardo was in low spirits,
and so were you.

Why remind me

of that horrible Easter?

I'll tell you why.

Leonardo and you arrived on the
Thursday and we had a nice evening.

We drank wine, we sang and laughed,
and played some old game.

Helena wasn't so ill at that point.

She was jolly and happy
the whole evening.

Leonardo enjoyed her happiness.

He was joking and talking to her.

Helena immediately fell in love.

The two of them sat up
late into the night.
The following morning,
Helena told me
that Leonardo had kissed her.
That night we had guests.
Leonardo got drunk and played
all of Bach's Cello Suites.
He didn't seem like himself.
He was heavy and mild,
somehow enlarged.
He played badly but beautifully.
Helena sat shining in the twilight.
I had never seen anything like it.
You and I went for a walk. You talked
incessantly, but I wasn't listening.
All I could think of
was those two people.
When we returned they sat as before,
one in each end of the room.
You went upstairs to sleep.
I had to help Leo up the stairs.
He stopped outside
the door of your bedroom,
turned to face me, and said,
"Would you believe it?
"There's a butterfly
that's bouncing against the window."
When I went downstairs,
Helena sat erect on her chair.
Completely calm, completely relaxed.
There wasn't even the faintest trace
of her illness.
I won't forget her face, Mother.
I won't forget her face.
The following morning,
you left for Geneva.
Four days earlier
than we had agreed on.
On leaving, you said in passing,
"I've asked Leonardo to stay on a bit,
as I can see it's doing Helena good."
And then you smiled.
Leonardo suddenly became

restless and unhappy.

On Easter Day, he took a long walk
in the rain.

When he came back, he went up to
Helena and said he had to go,
but that they'd meet again.

Then he called you in Geneva
and spoke to you for half an hour.
He left on the last evening flight.

That night I was woken
by Helena screaming.

She complained of pain
in her hip and right leg.

She didn't think she could endure it
through the night.

At five o'clock I had to call for
an ambulance.

- So it's my fault that Lena fell ill?

- Yes, I believe so.

You don't mean that Lena's illness...?

Yes.

Not really...

You abandoned Helena
when she was one.

You continually abandoned
her and me.

When Helena became seriously ill,
you sent her to a home.

- It can't be true...

- What can't be true?

If you've got proof to the contrary,
please tell me.

Look at me, Mother.

Look at Helena.

There are no excuses.

There is only one truth,
and one lie.

- There is no forgiveness.

- You can't put all the blame on me.

You always wanted there to be
special exceptions for you.

You've established a kind of
discount system in life.

But at some point you must see

that your agreement is one-sided.
You must realise that you
carry a guilt - like everyone else.
What guilt?
Dearest Eva,
could you forgive me
for everything I've done wrong?
I will try to change.
You will teach me, we will talk.
But help me - I can't stand it
any longer.
Your hatred is so dreadful.
I haven't understood. I've been selfish
and childish.
Please hold me.
At least touch me.
Help me!
Mummy!
Come here!
Help me.
Poor little Mother,
rushing off like that.
She looked so scared,
and suddenly so old and tired.
Her face looked so small,
and her nose was red from crying.
I'll never see her again.
It'll soon be dark, and it's getting cold.
I have to go home and cook dinner
for Viktor and Helena.
I can't die now.
I'm scared of committing suicide.
One day God may want to use me,
and release me from my prison.
I feel so left out of everything.
I'm always homesick.
But when I do come home,
I realise it must be something else
that I want.
Erik!
Are you touching my cheek?
Are you whispering in my ear?
Are you with me now?
We'll never abandon each other.

The light is on in Helena's room.
Viktor is talking to her.
That's good - he's kind.
He's telling her Mother is gone.
Your mother sent her love.
She was upset and anxious,
and she'd been crying.
Eva has gone for a walk.
She was so excited about
seeing your mother.
She set her hopes too high.
I didn't have the heart to warn her.
I don't understand.
What do you want?
Try to speak slowly,
dearest Helena - I can't understand.
Eva, come here!
Sometimes I watch my wife,
without her being aware of
my presence.
She's tormented.
Ever since Charlotte rushed off
she's been so horribly tormented.
She hasn't been able to sleep.
She says she drove her mother away,
and she can never forgive herself.
- Are you going out?
- Yes, I'm going to the post office.
- Do you think you could post this?
- With pleasure.
- It's for Charlotte?
- You can read it if you want.
I'm going up to Helena.
"Dear Mother, I realise now
that I treated you badly.
"I came to you with demands
instead of with affection.
"I tormented you with a rancid hatred
that isn't there any more.
"I did wrong, and I ask you
to forgive me.
"I don't know whether this letter
will reach you.
"I don't even know if you'll read it.

"Perhaps it's too late already.

"But I hope that my discovery
won't be in vain.

"There is a kind of grace.

"I mean the opportunity we have
to take care of each other,

"to help each other,

"to show affection.

"Never again will I let you
disappear from my life.

"I'll persist.

"I won't give up, even if it's too late.

"I don't think it's too late.

"It mustn't be too late."