

NORA.

We do a lot of things that aren't good for us, things we do because our parents tell us from an early age—our parents our churches our leaders everyone tells us that we need it, so we believe it, and the idea gets etched inside our skulls but you only think you need it because it's all you've ever been told. They tell us: "It's an expression of love, the ultimate expression of love, the one that we're all working towards" —but how does that make any sense—? to say "I love you, therefore you should tie yourself to me, and you can never leave me, you can never love anyone else, you're off limits, I own you." I own you. That's what marriage says—to me that sounds more cruel than kind. also, also— When people marry, they say, "I choose you, and I choose you forever," but who is this "you" that they're choosing? Because people change, over time people change into different people, so how can you say that "I want to be with this person" when "this person" is not going to be "this person" 3 or 5 or 10 years from now, but there you are committed, forever till death stuck, stuck either with a person you don't want to be with or with a person pretending to be a person they no longer are. This happens. All the time. And people are miserable. Yes, yes, we want to be intimate with another person, to know another person, to love that person deeply, and to be naked with that person... but why do we need a marriage for that? And why does it need to be with just one person and for the rest of your life? Seems so sad. And we know it's sad—we know it— we know it and we feel it and we go and we reach outside that contract of marriage, all the time it happens, men and women— we fail to be faithful because deep down we ache for more, because this ache is in the core of who we are— but we stomp it out, and we beat ourselves up for failing to be something we never were to begin with. And so I say, well just end it. End marriage. And it will end. I know it.

ANNE MARIE. I would have never, ever left my child if I didn't absolutely have to—

NORA. But I did. And you may not believe me but I had to leave... ..and leaving my children was the hardest part— it's the part of what I did that I hate the most, that hurts, that still hurts— don't you think there wasn't a moment that I didn't think of sending them a little letter, a little note saying "hello, mommy is thinking of you, mommy loves you, mommy misses you very very much," or on a birthday or Christmas sending a gift— I did—I bought them gifts, Anne Marie, for the first couple of years— I had a little pile of gifts for them sitting the corner of my room, I'd buy these gifts and I'd be just about to send them— and then I wouldn't because I knew that sending them would make me feel very good, but for them it could be— because I thought about them thinking about me, thinking that they must wonder about me, and thinking that I wanted to answer all of their questions— Better for there to be nothing, for there to be silence, than this thing that's somewhere halfway in between because that—that Anne Marie— would be cruel. A wound has to be allowed to heal, no matter how much you have the desire, the urge to touch it, to— It's not good for the...the healing. Do you understand? Do you.

ANNE MARIE. ...

NORA. What I did wasn't easy. It was hard. It took discipline. And I had to think past the feelings and about what's best for everyone involved. And yes, yes—! because of what you did, because of what you gave up, my children felt loved. And I am grateful. You say I'm not, but I am. And I'm so sorry if I did not make you feel that.

NORA.

...when I left here, Torvald 15 years ago, the first thing I did —because I had nothing: no home, no family, no money— was I went and lived in a boarding house. And because I had no real skills other than I could sew things— I did that—and made money sewing and bit by bit saved up what I could— Because what I really wanted to do was, for the first time in my life, be by myself. So when I saved enough money, I left the boarding house, and went and lived up north. I found what was basically an abandoned shack. And even though I was living by myself— for everything I did— every decision I made, from what I ate to when I went to bed— I could hear a voice in the back of my head that either sounded like you or my father or the pastor or or any number of other people I knew— I'd always in my head somehow manage to check with that person to see what he thought, even though that person wasn't a person but my thinking of that person. And so, as long as that continued, I'd decided that I'd live in silence, not speaking and avoiding the speaking of others— and I'd live like this until I couldn't remember what other people sounded like— until I no longer heard a voice in my head other than my voice or what I was certain had to be my voice. That was almost two years, two years of silence. And once I could hear my voice, I could think of things that I wanted that had nothing to do with what anyone else wanted. It's really hard to hear your own voice, and every lie you tell makes your voice harder to hear, and a lot of what we do is lying. Especially when what we want so badly from other people is for them to love us. So I find that I'm best—that I'm my best self if I'm by myself.

TORVALD. ...

NORA. ...but it's nice to sit with you.
