

## The Storm

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## CAST

Sylvia 26  
Mat 42  
Hannah 39

*Lights out. Darkened stage. The first 36 seconds of the first movement of Beethoven's Sonata No.17 then merges into the sound of raindrops for 20 seconds.*

*Three chairs each in its own spotlight. Hannah to the left, Mat centre. Sylvia right.*

### HANNAH

So he comes home late. The children are calling. This is what I want. He works hard. I wait for spring. For the weather to turn. Sunlight shifts across the wall. A shadow. He remembers my birthday. We talk. He's talking now. He tells me about his day. Whenever it happens, I am ready.

### MAT

Her hand is in mine. Her fingers long and slender. Fragile. She smiles. I tell her everything... I put my hand on her thigh... She pulls me towards her.. Words come easily. She wears blue..... for me. A blue blouse. I hear her laugh. Here is nowhere. The weather is cool. I notice the geraniums. We meet for lunch. I feel her eyes, her skin, her perspiration.. I want to touch her. She listens.

### SYLVIA

There have been others. Always older men. I think he hears me. I'm not established. He is successful . I have a flat. I need to love. I want to love. I am independent but it's difficult. We meet. He pleases me. I need to be happy. My upbringing was difficult. My parents have passed.

*The lights dim. M SL,H C, SSR and come up again*

## HANNAH

I am not a pretty woman. Attractive yes. Men, I think, find me attractive. He did. We resonated. Not exactly love. He loved my playing I think or the music. I remember that. The Beethoven sonata... he stood by the piano turning the score. He described the notes as drops of water. More rain, then a storm. Circles on the puddles. Grey skies. Every Thursday the baby sitter comes. I go to the Mall with a friend. We sit in a cafe and drink wine. Sometimes in summer the weather is too hot. She talks about sex and herself. She's older. She's funny. She has no children. I do not tell her about myself. My teacher used to tell me that when I played, my left hand was slow. I miss the rain. We laugh a lot.

## MAT

Love inevitably fades. It grows into something different. My achievements can be described as substantial. I am always there for the children. I watch them emerging into the world. I love them. I wait. I notice things. She is a good woman. I fell in love with the music. I ask too much. I prefer the company of colleagues. I want to touch her. She is vital, ambitious, articulate. I want her magic. Above all I want to feel.

## SYLVIA

I hated school. A dead mother. An absent father. A grim faced grandmother and fear of God. No light. Fear in all the dark places... madness. Don't talk about it at school or let the neighbors know. A weekly visit. She thought I had a sister. Where's your sister? I don't have a sister. Where's your father? He's gone. He's gone. I don't know where. Into the darkness. I must find him. He must love me. Someone must love me. Surely. He must love me? All I wanted was to know what it was. I was young. He didn't need to do that. It hurt. I will never allow myself to be hurt. I will be loved.

## HANNAH

You have obligations.

## MAT

We cannot continue like this.

## HANNAH

Can you just for once be honest?

MAT

I'm no longer sure what honesty is.

HANNAH

You stopped loving.

MAT

I never stopped loving. You stopped caring. You were too busy.

HANNAH

This is going nowhere.

MAT

You reject me. I need more than this.

HANNAH

More than what?

MAT

This.

HANNAH

This?

MAT

This emptiness.

HANNAH

Emptiness?

MAT

Yes... we care for each other. There are only silences.. No.....

HANNAH

No what?

MAT

I can't explain.

HANNAH

This is all there is...

MAT

No.

HANNAH

We're not supposed to be content.

MAT

I don't know what you mean. There has to be more.

HANNAH

Are you so naive?

MAT

I don't want to lose what I have and what I have worked for.

HANNAH

We're all replaceable. Everything's replaceable, things, people, houses, children. People move around in circles replacing everything.

MAT

I want more.

HANNAH

More what? More children? More wives? More exercise? More food? More time? More tenderness.

MAT

Tenderness?

HANNAH

Do you need your mother?

MAT

That's cheap.

HANNAH

You gave me nothing.

MAT

I gave you everything. Who paid for this?...

HANNAH

You're not listening. There's a beginning, a middle and an end...  
Sometimes a fourth movement...the shadow on the wall. Remember? The  
music. You remember the music.

MAT

What?

HANNAH

The rain.

MAT

What rain?

HANNAH

In the music. Listen to the rain you said. Damn you. You said it.

MAT

What?

HANNAH

The sonata... the rain. The storm.

MAT

Are you ill?

HANNAH

Yes I am sick.

SYLVIA

I have grown. I reached beyond myself. I will grow more. Life will be rich  
with meaning and significance. With him or with another. I am very  
beautiful as in the magazines. I know the power. My acting coach told me  
I have great talent, a delicacy of feeling and touch. She said that to me. She  
never asks me to do anything twice. My friends say nothing. I am  
auditioning now. My voice is good. I will be more than just the ingenue. I  
have depth. I feel it. He tells me I have depth He sees it. He understands.  
He takes my clothes off slowly and touches me gently.

MAT

Shall we go?

SYLVIA  
Why?

MAT  
I have to pick up the children.

SYLVIA  
I would like to meet them.

MAT  
You will. There are issues I need to resolve.

SYLVIA  
Will we meet later tonight?

MAT  
Would you like that?

SYLVIA  
I would.

MAT  
Then I will come.

SYLVIA  
I want you to hold me.

MAT  
I have two children. I have responsibilities.

SYLVIA  
Are you driving?

MAT  
I will lock the gate. Set the alarm. You live on your own.

HANNAH  
I have two children. I cannot invite strangers into my life. I walk them to the school. I smile at the faces I know. They look at me as if they understand my unhappiness. I am no-one. A bus pulls up. Children's chatter lights up the air as they tumble off. We care. We love. The cycle is not broken. Only we get broken.

SYLVIA

Sometimes I go home and I cry. I have no idea why.

HANNAH

The left hand. Allegro. Why can I never get it right? You have to cross your hands and hit the note.

MAT

I hurry on.... To work... to home. My clients. I feel...

HANNAH

The smell of orange blossom. The saguaros standing sentinel. And my two wastrels, chattering. Full of hope. Ignorant. All that learning still to be done. And the pain. The repetition, over and over again. Why?

SYLVIA

He is so tender. When he kisses me our lips barely touch. He smells so clean.

MAT

I sleep less.

HANNAH

I cannot imagine myself with any other man.

SYLVIA

There was a marriage. There was a child. It's not important.

MAT

I remember her playing now. I fell in love.. with the music His certainty and hope in my chaos. His storm. His hope. His peace.

HANNAH

The left hand crosses. The spell winds up.

SYLVIA

I will be an actress. The child is not important. I need to look forward.

HANNAH

The peace is the silence between the notes. My teacher told me that.



MAT

The love.

HANNAH

The light. Passing. There on the kitchen wall. The shadow.

SYLVIA

What do I care? I have time. Time to heal. Time to love. It was not important.

MAT

Sleep. Please. Rest.

HANNAH

No fourth movement. Only the allegretto after the gentleness of the adagio. One note after another. Step by step. Time to breathe. Time to gather. One last try. The storm over.

MAT

I held her hand. Her slim fingers, cool as the morning .

SYLVIA

I will reach out. I will not be afraid. I will love.

MAT

It creeps up on me... the music and the rain.

HANNAH

No. That's not the way it works. I gave life. Two notes. He owes me two lives.. a chord where each note fits. The first notes and the last notes are mine.

MAT

The rain.

SYLVIA

Better that way.

MAT

Not that....

I know. SYLVIA

Can we...? MAT

Do we need to? SYLVIA

The audition went well? MAT

Yes. Very well. SYLVIA

Well....done MAT

Thank you. SYLVIA

I will drive you home. MAT

We must be friends. SYLVIA

Of course. Tomorrow I will take the children sailing on Lake Pleasant. MAT

I wish I could come. We must go. I am late. SYLVIA

Lock your door. It's going to rain. There's a storm coming. MAT

*The first 30 seconds of Sonata No 17 the Allegretto merges into the sound of a car crashing.*

## HANNAH

The children are so much better now. The new schools have made a big difference. My parents have been wonderful. So many friends have supported us. Shame about the girl. It rained the day of the funeral. It rains so seldom here. I give piano lessons now. and watch the sunset. The air is heavy with the smell of orange blossom. My life feels whole.

*The sound of the allegretto swells*

My left hand crosses perfectly and hits the right note.

*Curtain.*