

IMMORTAL BELOVED

by

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For Day 16 of the 29 Plays Later Challenge responding to the music and life of Ludwig van Beethoven. This is a radio drama inspired by the so far unsolved mystery of the identity of the "Immortal Beloved" whom the composer addressed in a passionate and apparently unsent love letter of 1812.

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## CHARACTERS AND DIRECTIONS

LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN (LVB) -- The great composer, presented as a bit of a rough in the flesh, and a poet in writing

DRIVER -- Usual working class stereotype

IMMORTAL BELOVED -- She who appears in person but who can not be distinguished as being any one of the following women:

JOHANNA VAN BEETHOVEN (NÉE REISS) -- Sister-in-law of LVB

JOSEPHINE VON BRUNSVIK -- Most likely contender, to whom LVB wrote a series of love letters in 1805

ANTONIE BRENTANO -- Dedicatée of the Diabelli Variations

THERESE MALFATTI -- Owner and possible dedicatée of Für Elise

COUNTESS JULIA GIUCCARDI -- Dedicatée of the Moonlight Sonata

AMELIE SEBALD -- A flirtation

ARRIVAL AT TEPLITZ, 4AM 5 JULY, 1812

SOUND OF HOOVES AND CARRIAGE, HORSES  
NEIGH AS THEY PULL UP AND STOP

DRIVER:                   Whoa there! Easy! Easy! We've arrived -- Mister Beethoven!  
We've arrived in Teplitz, Mister Beethoven!

LVB:                        What-- what's the time? The moon is scowling at me.

DRIVER:                   It must be four o'clock, sir. That'd be early for a farmer, but  
late for a gentleman, sir.

LVB:                        [Growls].

DRIVER:                   I'll fetch up the lad to take in the nag. And the old girl to sort  
you out some supper.

LVB:                        Don't bother, don't bother. Put the horse away, I must to bed.

DRIVER:                   Would you like me to be fetching up a bit of milk for you at  
least to settle your choler?

LVB:                        I have no choler. It's four in the morning!

SERVANT: It's no sooner than what it is, that's a fact.

LVB: Preposterous, man. Listen here. You will wake me up, will you not? Tomorrow morning I have an important letter to write. I must out with it. It is She! She, my Immortal Beloved. My angel apart, my grief and my life.

DRIVER: As you wish, Mr Beethoven.

TEPLITZ -- MORNING, 6 JULY (1812)

VOICEOVER -- FIRST LETTER, BEGUN

LVB: 6 July, morning

My angel, my all, my own self -- only a few words today, and that too with pencil (with yours) -- only till tomorrow is my lodging definitely fixed. What abominable waste of time in such things -- why this deep grief, where necessity speaks?

Can our love persist otherwise than through sacrifices, than by not demanding everything? Canst thou change it, that thou are not entirely mine, I not entirely thine?

THE JOURNEY IN THE DARK, 5 JULY, 1812

CLOPPING OF HOOVES THROUGHOUT, RAIN,  
PERIODIC OTHER SOUND DETAIL, AT ONCE A  
GREAT RUSHING AND NEIGHING AND SOUND OF  
WHEELS ON THE ROAD

DRIVER: Whooooooaaaaaaaa there! Whoaaaa!

LVB: What the hell is happening, man? Can't you drive a bloody carriage?

DRIVER: Sorry sir it's dark. I'm not familiar with these roads, and the storm is treacherous. It's all I can do to keep the nags on the path. All the way from Prague they've been bucking and slipping.

LVB: You keep them on the path, I want to arrive in Teplitz in one piece. Get us there before the night is through and you'll be rewarded.

DRIVER: Why such haste Mister Beethoven?

LVB: My doctors advised me to take the waters last year when I was undergoing some personal difficulties.

DRIVER: Last year? So why are we driving through the night?

LVB: Well not for the bloody waters. There is another, more personal reason. My angel, my all, my own self. She that is not mine, nor I hers. There is no time for she suffers and I must dispatch a letter immediately. So drive fast but don't kill us!

DRIVER: Oh, a love letter, sir.

LVB: I've written the letter in my head. I always write my letters in my head. As soon as it comes to putting them on paper I throw the pen away. I can't write the way I feel! Yet now my soul and my tongue are in alignment. She is the focus, the apogee, my bright Fate! She is the Immortal Beloved!

DRIVER: Special lady eh? I had heard, if you don't mind my saying, that you was a bachelor, sir.

LVB: I've had many associations, but I am married to my art.

DRIVER: If you've got so many birds on the go, which of them's the Immortal one?

LVB: I'll never tell! Noone will ever know! Now haste to Treplitz.

DRIVER: We'll be in Treplitz in a few hours, sir. You might wanna get some kip, if you can.

LVB: In this tempest? This storm both within and without? While I ache and yearn? Nay, I shall not sleep this night.

DRIVER: Well, I've got some cooked meat and a bit of wine, and you're welcome to partake if you so wish, sir.

LVB: That would be acceptable.

DRIVER: And I can hold up my end in a conversation, such is my stock in trade as a driver.

LVB: The world is a prison in which solitary confinement is preferable.

DRIVER: Sir?

LVB: Oh, go on. Talk if you must.

DRIVER: Pff. So what's the 'van' about Mister Beethoven?

LVB: The van in 'van Beethoven' is indicative of my nobility of birth. I keep the company of aristocrats, damn it. That's what the 'van' is about.

DRIVER: I thought it was 'von' that indicated nobility of birth, sir.

LVB: None of that! None of that! A van's as good as a von and I'll not hear otherwise. Am I clear?

DRIVER: Right-o, sir, as you say. Very 'aristocratic' as you say.

LVB: Don't you forget it. Don't you forget your place, because I won't. [PAUSE] Because I won't.

TEPLITZ -- MORNING, 6 JULY (1812)

VOICEOVER -- FIRST LETTER, CONTINUED

LVB: Oh God, look into beautiful Nature and compose your mind to the inevitable. Love demands everything and is quite right, so it is for me with you, for you with me -- only you forget so easily, that I must live for you and for me -- were we quite united, you would notice this painful feeling as little as I should . . .

. . . We shall probably soon meet, even today I cannot communicate my remarks to you, which during these days I made about my life -- were our hearts close together, I should probably not make any such remarks. My bosom is full, to tell you much -- there are moments when I find that speech is nothing at all. Brighten up -- remain my true and only treasure, my all, as I to you. The rest the gods must send, what must be for us and shall.

Your faithful

Ludwig

PRAGUE, 3 JULY, 1812

LVB: Immortal Beloved! You are a brighter treasure than I can deserve. We are come together here in Prague. Love, are you mine?

IMMORTAL BELOVED: Ludwig, you still call me 'tu' rather than 'Sie'.

LVB: You are the nonpareil. Of course, tu not Sie. Only you, you alone.

BELOVED: Alone again, each of us. Alone, together. Together and alone.

LVB: My speech is nothing at all. A poor thing, rags and scraps. I have tried to write to you. You remain my true and only treasure!

BELOVED: Ludwig, your letters have been irrational, disturbed! The crossings out, the frantic changes of words into their opposite meanings, the commas like drops of blood, and the breathless sentences page after page.

LVB: There's more feeling than meaning in them. My angel, my all, my own self. Were our hearts close together, I should probably not make such remarks. My bosom is full, to tell

you so much.

BELOVED: Can our love persist otherwise than through sacrifices, than by not demanding everything?

LVB: You suffer, my dearest creature.

BELOVED: How would you arrange that we could live together. It is not a real building of heaven, our Love.

LVB: But as firm as the citadel of Heaven!

BELOVED: You can not live either with me or without me. You have already made up your mind, you will wander, far away, for a long time, and never fly into my arms and call yourself quite at home with me. You will never send me your soul to be enveloped into the realm of spirits.

LVB: I will write you again. When I get to Teplitz. When my soul is in its anguish of longing for you, even if I can't make my meaning plain because my bosom is too full to tell you.

BELOVED: You said my love made your bosom full. Why are you so unfaithful to me?

LVB: Immortal Beloved!

BELOVED: You will make us each miserable. Happy and unhappy at the same time, together and alone.

LVB: In Teplitz, you will be with me yet. Where I am, you are with me, with me, and you. I will write, and arrange to live with you.

BELOVED: Your ideas do not yearn toward me, not truly. You call me Immortal Beloved, but you are a dark creature of storm and waste, an itinerant who must burn up, burn up and burn away, so brightly. So brightly, Ludwig. You burn so brightly, but not for me.

LVB: Immortal Beloved...

TEPLITZ -- MONDAY EVENING, 6 JULY (1812)

VOICEOVER -- SECOND LETTER

LVB: Monday evening, 6 July

You suffer, you, my dearest creature. Just now I perceive that letters must be posted first thing early. Mondays -- Thursdays -- the only days, when the post goes from here to K. You suffer -- oh! Where I am, you are with me, with me and you, I shall arrange that I may live with you. What a life!

So! Without you -- pursued by the kindness of the people here and there, whom I mean -- to desire to earn just as little as they earn -- humility of man towards men -- it pains me -- and when I



LVB: Such a bond as bodies can make good of a promise between two souls. But if what you speak of is marriage, then, Beloved, it is not for me.

JOSEPHINE: Then I am not for you.

LVB: Josephine!

MUSIC: MOONLIGHT SONATA

LVB: Countess Giacciardi, Julia, do you recognise it? This is the very music I dedicated to you: the Moonlight Sonata. My Beloved...

JULIA GIACCIARDI: I was but sixteen when I became your piano pupil.

LVB: You are a dear, charming girl, who loves me and whom I love.

JULIA: Mister van Beethoven, I remember you as very ugly, but noble, refined in feeling and cultured.

LVB: For the first time I feel that marriage could make me happy. Unfortunately, she is not of my class.

JULIA: I loved you more than I did my husband.

LVB: But we must both concede, your husband is more your lover than I.

### MUSIC: FUR ELISE

THERESE MALFATTI: For Elise. It's a bagatelle I own. His pet name for me, Therese, Elise.

LVB: Fraulein Malfatti. Therese. Elise...Marry me. It is summer and the wonders of love shine in you, Beloved.

THERESE: You have a sweetness in your soul, but are so crudely wrought. Your clumsy behaviour have offended my entire family. You were barred from the house, even. Ludwig 'van' Beethoven, maker of bagatelles.

LVB: Once again, it is only in my own heart that I can seek comfort - there is none for me outside of it.

### OUTDOOR SOUNDS

CHRISTIAN AUGUST TIEDGE: Ludwig old stick, you've been gawping as Miss Sebald the whole time we've been in Teplitz, like you've been struck by the thunderbolt.

LVB: My friend, perhaps I have. You, as a poet, have felt the stirring and longing of the soul.. And the loins.. Have you not experienced those raptures, swooned from their force and been overcome and undone by their violence?

CHRISTIAN: I've also experienced a good bit of clap and misery too. Let it go Ludwig! She's just a girl, Miss Sebald.

LVB: My friend, Amalie Sebald is no ordinary girl. She is Beloved to me. I ask you, I implore you, as a poet and as a friend, send her a very ardent kiss, if no one can see us.

CHRISTIAN: You merely flirt! This is not love! Cast your mind away, Beethoven. Come, let us talk of higher things.

MUSIC: DIABELLI VARIATIONS

ANTONIE BRENTANO: Ludwig...

LVB: Mrs Brentano... Antonie....

ANTONIE: ...when did we meet? Was it here in Vienna?

LVB: I should hazard. In the tenth year of this century.

ANTONIE: You have been on very close terms with my family.

LVB: Very close, Antonie.

ANTONIE: Ludwig, you know that I venerate you. You are even greater as a man than as an artist.

LVB: You are kind and you flatter me, Antonie, but it is to your husband that veneration should be owed, not I.

ANTONIE: It's a force of your genius! Your kindness.

LVB: It boots me only to be kind to you, Beloved. I owe you that courtesy for your family's kindness.

ANTONIE: The piano trio, your inscription for my daughter. "To my little friend Maximiliane Brentano, to encourage her in pianoforte playing."

LVB: [Growls]. She has a certain deftness of touch with the keys, you see madam. I inscribed the last two to you, though there was an oversight. Because of which I have decided to dedicate what will be my last great piano work, some Variations on a theme by Diabelli, to you, Beloved mother.

ANTONIE: But this is sublime, Ludwig! The arietta is rather like some transcendental premonition of Diabelli's little waltz-tune!

LVB: And when, in the last of the thirty-three variations, the tune is transformed into a sublimated minuet, complete with delicate tracery at the top of the keyboard, do you hear that? That is a nostalgic recollection of the sonata I meant for you, and of this, our strong feeling and regard toward each other, that might never have been realized.

ANTONIE: One day all Vienna will weep for you in their thousands. In time they will build statues to you, monuments to your art and genius.

LVB: These things are but shadows of the great Love that embraces the stars and all things. It is the true meaning!

ANTONIE:

For others perhaps, but not for you, I think. Your art, your art is suffering for your love. Dedicate yourself, Ludwig. To art!

TEPLITZ -- GOOD MORNING, ON 7 JULY (1812)

VOICEOVER -- LETTER

LVB:

Good morning, on 7 July

Even in bed my ideas yearn towards you, my Immortal Beloved, here and there joyfully, then again sadly, awaiting from Fate, whether it will listen to us. I can only live, either altogether with you or not at all. Yes, I have determined to wander about for so long far away, until I can fly into your arms and call myself quite at home with you, can send my soul enveloped by yours into the realm of spirits -- yes, I regret, it must be. You will get over it all the more as you know my faithfulness to you; never another one can own my heart, never -- never! O God, why must one go away from what one loves so, and yet my life in W. as it is now is a miserable life. Your love made me the happiest and unhappiest at the same time. At my actual age I should need some continuity, sameness of life -- can that exist under our circumstances? Angel, I just hear that the post goes out every day -- and must close therefore, so that you get the L. at once. Be calm -- love me -- today -- yesterday.

CREATIVE CRISIS AND RENEWAL, 1812-16

PATRON: Mister Beethoven, it's late.

LVB: And what of it?

PATRON: I make of it nearly four years since you returned from Teplitz, that you have been in somewhat of a, dare I say, a slough?

LVB: You bloody well dare not. There's no slough. A slight slowing down of production perhaps, as my thoughts have perhaps bent away from their natural inclinations.

PATRON: These years may indeed have seen you somewhat distracted. There is, perhaps, the great distraction that afflicts us all, in Michaelangelo's term?

LVB: What the devil do you mean?

PATRON: Why, Love, Mister Beethoven.

LVB: Nay, I have never loved. There have been certain relations with certain women, and perhaps on occasion I might have fallen in what you would call 'love'. But married life, no, it would be incompatible with my inner urge, my need, to

create. To create music. To be great. Not least, the women I like are often of a social or marital status somewhat beyond my reach.

PATRON: As you say, Mister 'van' Beethoven.

LVB: Watch that! I'm of noble birth as much as you are. Not quite so much as you are, but noble nonetheless.

PATRON: Oh, nobility. What could be more dull. The ascent of the imagination, the purposing of our angel parts, these are surely more noble in life.

LVB: I don't disagree with you, sir. Not a bit. [Sighs]. Not a bit. Yes, I will write again. I will make music. I will write for the Immortal Beloved.

PATRON: Immortal Beloved! Well how Romantic, Beethoven. There have been various 'associations' with different ladies, have there not? Your reputation is not quite shall we say whiter than white, eh?

LVB: I have a reputation at least, sir, as a Gentleman. If not, then as a Composer of some small worth.

PATRON: Tell us who she is then -- the Immortal Beloved!

LVB: Nay sir, that I shall not tell, nor none shall ever know.

MUSIC OR SOUND TO INDICATE TRANSITION  
FROM SCENE TO INTERNAL

LVB: "Even in my bed my ideas yearn towards you, my Immortal Beloved..." No -- No, I cannot, must not send this letter. I will destroy it. [Sound of flame flickering] Yet why should I make this final sacrifice after no end of sacrifices. That She would make that demand, I will answer it not, neither in letter nor in deed. Immortal Beloved, how memory in Eternity is not strained. I will release the floodgates of creativity. Our longing, our desires, I will pour all of this into music. I will withdraw, retreat from this world, this world that grows quieter and further removed by the day. Sonatas, quartets, symphonies, the spirit, the geist of the world, embodied in music. For thee, there is no longer any happiness except in thyself, in thy art.

TEPLITZ -- MORNING, 6 JULY (1812)

VOICEOVER -- LETTER, CONTINUED

LVB: What longing in tears for you -- You -- my Life -- my All -- farewell.  
Oh, go on loving me -- never doubt the faithfulest heart

Of your beloved

L

Ever thine.

Ever mine.

Ever ours.

END