

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!  
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.