

*July 1938. ANNA MAHLER, the daughter of Alma and Gustav Mahler, is packing a suitcase. PAUL, the chauffeur, appears with Mahler's death mask, which is wrapped in a cloth.*

- PAUL** Ah, Fräulein Anna! Your mother was looking for you. I'm supposed to give you this.
- ANNA** Where is she then? I've still got to say goodbye.
- PAUL** Your mother's gone for a walk. You should wait till she gets back.
- ANNA** But I want to leave now.
- PAUL** Oh...
- ANNA** Come on, you know that for me it's going to be quite a relief to be away from her.
- PAUL** You mustn't say that. Your mother loves you.
- ANNA** Yes, now that I've won first prize for best sculpture in the International Exhibition in Paris, which she used not to be able to stand.
- PAUL** That's unfair.
- ANNA** Truth is always unfair. Especially if you spend a lifetime avoiding it. Oh, don't make a face like that. You know I don't mean you, Paul. I'm only talking about mummy. You know what I'm really going to miss?
- PAUL** What?
- ANNA** Us playing music together. Oh yes, Paul, that wasn't so bad.
- PAUL** But we only played jazz.
- ANNA** What's wrong with jazz?
- PAUL** Your mother says it's vulgar, popular music!
- ANNA** What a shame you weren't with me in Paris. Friends took me to a jazz club. Hundreds of kids were squeezed together, dancing like mad! There was so much energy, so much vitality in their dance, and they were happy. You should have seen it, Paul, you should have felt it. It would have been just what mummy needs.
- PAUL** In what way?
- ANNA** Believe me, our world is changing fast. We're going through dark times now, but there is freedom at the end of the tunnel. And it's this poetry and music born out of suppression that is going to give voice to the new freedom. In twenty or thirty years, young people will be celebrating this poetry and new music. That's when my father's music will be finally understood. Do you know my father's music?
- PAUL** But of course! Your mother used to play it very often.
- ALMA** That doesn't mean anything. She doesn't understand it at all. And you know why? Because his music is full of pain. full of torment. Unimaginable torment. And my mother doesn't understand a bit of it. Because she's a coward.
- PAUL** I think I'd better get the car now ...

**ANNA** My father was different – he was courageous enough to admit his feelings. He had to pay a high price for it too, believe you me, but he risked it all the same. He was brave enough to take huge risks, to express his emotions his true pain. My mother never understood his music, and she never liked it. He was too great for her.

**PAUL** Why are you telling me this? ?

**ANNA** You can take my things to the car now.

**WERFEL** *(from outside:)* Alma?! Alma!!!

*Franz Werfel appears.*

**WERFEL** Ah, Anna! Isn't Alma here?

**ANNA** Mummy went out for a walk.

**WERFEL** I've just written a poem. I've got to show it to her. I hope she likes it, Maybe she'll be inspired to set it to music.

**ANNA** I'm leaving tonight.

**WERFEL** You're leaving?! – Oh, my god! How could I have forgotten! You're leaving for London, of course!

**ANNA** Franz, come in. Say Good-bye to me.

**WERFEL** I'm sorry! How could I have forgotten! I'm coming! I'm coming! I'm sorry! Anna is leaving for London...

*Franz enters.*

**ANNA** Franz, I'll miss you.

**WERFEL** But I'm sure that once you've settled down in London, Alma will visit you.

**ANNA** No, I wasn't talking about big Mummy. I'm certainly not going to miss her.

**WERFEL** Please, don't call her »big Mummy«.

**ANNA** You're a poet, Franz. Why are you so afraid of precise words?

**WERFEL** For me Alma is not precisely a big Mummy.

**ANNA** Nor is she for me. She was hardly a mummy at all. My father died when I was six years old, and I remember him much better than my mother; I think she died when I was born. As a mother. »Sometimes I feel like a motherless child«! - Give me your new poem.

**WERFEL** Oh no, I can't. I must show it to Alma first.

**ANNA** Come on! I'm going abroad. God knows if we'll ever see each other again. . There's going to be a war. I want a souvenir from you. You owe me one.

**WERFEL** *(gives her the poem)* Here !

**ANNA** Dedicate it to me.

**WERFEL** What shall I write? I don't know how to write a dedication.

**ANNA** It's your profession. You're the writer.

**WERFEL** I can write dozens of pages a day, but when it comes to writing dedications, I'm at a loss! I don't know what to write!

**ANNA** Then write this: »To Anna Mahler, who owes me her freedom, Franz«.

**WERFEL** How is that?

**ANNA** Don't you remember?

**WERFEL** Give me a clue.

**ANNA** Summertime... early morning... breakfast room...

**WERFEL** Oh my God!

**ANNA** Yes, it happened that night. Maybe it's better to let it rest.

**WERFEL** No, no. Now you've got to tell me.

**ANNA** It happened twenty years ago. In the summer of 1918. We were staying at our country house in Semmering. Mummy, little Manon and I. Mummy was very pregnant, in her seventh month, I think. Walter, who was her official husband at that time, was away from home. He was an officer in the army. It was the end of the war. There was almost nothing to eat. no meat, no bread, hardly any vegetables. I used to go every day to the forest, to pick mushrooms. It was our main dish, and I was the principal supplier of food for the family. And one day you came to visit us. It was a weekend. I liked it when you came. Mummy would entrust me with little Manon and leave me in peace. In the evening I read a story to Manon, and we went to sleep. Then I woke up in the middle of the night. I heard weird noises and voices coming from mummy's bedroom, right above my head. At first I was terribly frightened. I didn't recognize her voice. It was coarse and guttural and wild. I thought she was crying for help, but something in her voice gave me another message. It was something alien, other, that I couldn't understand. And then I recognized your voice. Your warm velvety tenor. I had a very discerning musical ear. I recognized it at once. And suddenly – like a confirmation – I heard her calling you by name amid all the groaning and shrieking, and she kept repeating your name. »Franzl, oh Franzl, its criminal, we mustn't do this ! Franzl! You're a murderer, you're killing me! Oh my God, Franzl, you're killing me!«, this kind of poetry, you know. It went on and on , with ups and downs, and every time I thought it was over, it would start again with renewed energy, the gasping and screaming and shrieking reaching ever higher pitches... But then, towards dawn, the storm calmed down, and little Manon, who was clinging to me all the time with great fear, fell asleep in my arms, completely exhausted. And so did I. In the morning our maid came running in a panic: »Anna! Quick! Quick! Your mother! I think she's dying!« I raced upstairs. When I entered mummy's bedroom I saw blood everywhere. Everywhere. Carpet, bed linen, clothes. Everywhere. And mummy was lying in the middle of it all, bleeding like a slaughtered pig. It was unimaginable. I ran down the stairs - and you came out of the breakfast room. You had a funny expression, very proud and satisfied. You saw my face , and you said...

**WERFEL** »Gucki??«

**ANNA** Yes, » Gucki, what's wrong?« - And I said: »Go call a doctor, mummy is dying.« And then your expression changed in a second. You grabbed your head, as if you'd been hit by a bullet. You murmured all kinds of nonsense, and you started to run around the house, in hysterics . “Oh my God, what have I done? What have I done?!” - You looked like a lost child. I calmed you down. I brought you home, and I took care of you, while the doctor was trying to stop mother's haemorrhage. But he couldn't do much. They took her to the hospital in Vienna, to Doctor Halban, and the next day

**Martin was born prematurely. Poor little Martin! He didn't have much chance, did he, the way he was banged out into the world. He was such a poor baby! Always whining in his tiny feeble voice, whimpering and crying. When he died ten months later, mummy didn't even come back from Berlin to his funeral. Deep in her soul, Alma is a miserable coward. - Yes. Yes, Franzl, you gave me my freedom when I was just fourteen years old. (*Her suitcase is now packed and she is ready to leave.*) Good luck, Franz! Take care of yourself!**