

Das Gretchen von heute  
(Today's Gretchen)

by

Sidonie Grünwald-Zerkowitz

Translated from the German by ChatGPT,  
edited by Matthew Kuenzel

## Chapter 1

First Encounter Between Heinrich and Gretchen. They immediately feel a strong mutual attraction.

### 1. "Certainly, thousands of years ago..."

Heinrich

Certainly, thousands of years ago, I knew you very well:  
I traveled with the barbarians - You were a Greek woman.  
During the nomadic journey, I saw you at the gate, Then... as I caught your gaze, my soul soared!  
There was a call to battle!  
There was a clashing of swords!  
You stood on the steps, - It confused my mind.  
Intoxicated by your sight, I overlooked the enemy's move - There I lay, fallen to the ground, until I lost consciousness...  
And recently, in a twilight hour, I woke in a strange place - By the burning joy and pain, I recognized you at once!  
Though ages have rustled past, nothing has been swept away!  
What are eternities compared to sorrow and passion!

### 2. It Must Be a True Story ...

Gretchen

It must be a true story that your song tells:  
That thousands of years ago, a single glance bonded us...  
But then, envious gods snatched you away from my embrace, before we could celebrate our love on a blissful day, - And they transformed me into a flower, which once in a thousand years can be awakened to bloom by a single ray of sunshine.  
Now, miraculously, this sunbeam shines upon me and kisses open my blossom, in its ray I recognize you again, who are meant for me for millennia!

### 3. When I Love You...

Gretchen

When I love you, will you feel it, and will you thank me as love thanks?  
Will it be just your arms that wrap around me, without your heart also embracing me?  
Will my deep love not vanish like morning dew, which, when falling on stone rather than on sprouts, never leads to blossom?

#### 4. The Billboard of the Soul

Heinrich

I only need to read the inscription of your soul on your face, in the sound of your voice, and then I've perceived your entire being with the eye of my heart! It tells me that everything about you is genuine—your words, your actions—that everything is true. So, whether it suits you or whether it's proper, I offer my whole heart to you!

#### 5. Autumnal Verdict

Gretchen

I wandered, lost in dreams,  
- pondering over your love - past a row of acacia trees, which were enveloped in a mist of somber autumn air.

My hand was drawn to a small branch of tree leaves, hanging wearily from the twig, for its oracle never deceived the questions of my heart...

I plucked a leaf... "He loves me..."

"Wholeheartedly"... as I continued to pick;...

But, alas, at "more than anything," there the little leaf hung - withered by autumn.

#### 6. We Are Never Too Old to Love

Heinrich

We are never too old to love! Blessed are those who don't argue this And, as long as they journey through life, Are guided by love! Whether younger or older by many years, Does love care about that?! What does it matter if a few hairs at the crown begin to grey?! Does the joy of love, or the pain of love ask if worries Have carved some furrows into the face with time's plow?! Living without love would be dreadful! Thus, love does not age! And as long as strength still pulses within, Love's desires bless us! A person loves as long as they live, similar to a linden tree, Which, despite its thousand-year-old bark, keeps sprouting youthful shoots!

#### 7. Anxious Questions

Gretchen

And yet my heart timidly asks:

Is what you carry as a flower, your love, perhaps too delicate? - Is it not similar to "Chinese lantern plants," from which the stalk soon becomes bare?

For their flowers yield to the wind, hardly does a breath pass over...

My heart anxiously speaks to you:

Is what binds you to me not a thread, oh so thin! - quickly woven by the swift spider, when it enfolds two oak trunks in the very last glimmer of autumn rays,

which break as soon as something clings to them, even if it's the tiniest of bees...?

## 8. In the Bud

Gretchen

I went outdoors, wanting to see spring.  
Spring has barely begun its work in the valley and on the hills!  
The garland of leaves still remains modestly hidden in buds on the branch.  
They postpone from today to tomorrow their full unveiling.  
The sun has not yet shone as it does in springtime—  
And they hesitate, until it proves to them that it's sincere...  
Similarly, my heart is not yet ready to emerge from its bud before you.  
I still hear it anxiously and suspiciously asking:  
"How does my beloved truly feel about me?"

## 9. My Spring

Heinrich

Spring enters with jubilation!  
Already through fields and groves,  
The merry fanfares of joyful birds resound!  
One can hear the little flowers, blue and white,  
Softly whispering beneath the grass,  
Greeting each other tenderly in their flow of fragrance!  
I lean out, yearningly attuning my ear to the sounds of spring,  
Wishing to catch a word  
That would intoxicate my heart—  
That word so full of sweetness:  
"I love you forever!"  
Only when I have heard this,  
Will my spring have truly arrived!

## 10. Look First Into Your Heart...

Gretchen

Look first exactly into the heart! Then say:  
What your love is to me!  
Whether your heart merely embraces it  
Like a storm that hangs briefly in the sky,  
Which, having raged, soon settles down,  
Since it sweeps away many a blossom? -  
Look first closely into the heart! Then speak:

What your love is to me!  
Whether it flits flickering across your heart,  
And resembles the will-o'-the-wisp over the swamp,  
Which, kindled by an evil breath's greeting,  
Lures wandering feet towards the abyss -?  
Look first closely into your heart! Then speak:  
What my love would be for you?  
If it were like the sunshine to the earth: then it shall be to you,  
What to the earth the sun is in its eternal course,  
That sets and rises upon it!

11. Why do you even ask: "if it's - love,"

Heinrich

Why do you even ask: "if it's - love," "if it will last?" - "how it is justified," when lips passionately kiss and soul tumultuously pours into soul?! And if it were just a flower that suddenly bloomed in the mind, spreading fragrance in the soul's meadow, blooming just for days, or even hours? And what if it's a fleeting intoxication into which the heart sweetly dreams itself submerged! If only for a short dream, it has drunk deeply from a sea of bliss! You know, nothing lasts forever - so why waste time investigating! Enjoy this little piece of your time; ... We will see, - whether "it" will end!

12. One Step Forward, Two Steps Back

Gretchen

One step forward and two steps back...  
This is how I approach the happiness that flows gently from your love and invites me into its embrace.  
One step forward and two steps back!  
For my heart's gaze shows me and an inner voice tells me:  
The way you love me is not true love!  
And something indescribable warns me:  
You are like an uncharted mountain!  
In vain, I climb the glacier's slope!  
I never truly reach your love!  
And when my foot, inspired by love, falters and nearly slips...  
Then my fate is sealed:  
I fall, I sink...no stepping back!

### 13. Climbing the Ladder

Gretchen

Perhaps what urges you to hold me in your arms is not truly deep, warm love that gives itself freely. Maybe it's just your satiation from the fruit hanging close by... Is it now merely your skill testing itself, yearning for the high-hanging cherry? Such cherries, akin to my love that freely gives itself, cannot be reached by any skill, only by a soul that truly loves me! And the ladder one climbs in picking such cherries? It symbolizes the allure found in the mind, in the character, the kindness shown through actions!

### 14. Autumn Sprouting

Gretchen

It is, alas, autumn for many days now!  
The trees have shed the leafy adornments they wore, swept away by the northern wind!  
Tired from the summer's heat, forgetting the dream that has passed,  
They rest, with slumber upon their eyelids, in the misty air, tree by tree.  
But look, there is one barely asleep, freshly awakened to new life!  
Could it be that the autumn sun's rays, which smiled upon it, struck it deeply?  
For fresh buds are sprouting from it!  
When I gaze at the tree, I feel so well!  
As if through it, spring sends its greetings, standing so May-like in the autumn here!  
Seeing the tree bloom in autumn, a wish ignites in my heart:  
That the spring-like glow of my love could awaken your May!

### 15. The Linden Tree - The Old Youth's Self-Contemplation

Heinrich

The rugged bark seems to pretend, suggesting to those who see it that the tree is old!  
But who would believe that about the splendid linden tree, as if time had any power over it!  
Who would believe it, when with its mighty crown it adorns the young summer with fragrance, charming both ancestors and grandchildren to dance around its trunk!  
Would the sleeper resting in its shade, exchanging dreams with the tree, believe that it's old?  
Would the thirsty beetle, intoxicated by its scent, think so?  
That the nightingale, surrounded by its dense foliage, would believe the linden is too old for happiness? Surely it finds a joyful perch upon it!

### 16. Does my love scare you?

Gretchen

Does my love scare you if your forehead is surrounded by a wreath of white curls?

Doesn't the sun's gleam touch the snow crystals on the firn like it does in spring?  
Does my love scare you even if your heart has cooled and become frozen?  
No rock looms in the misty smoke, no matter how barren or hard it is,  
That in a hidden quiet crevice doesn't daringly sprout a little flower, where spring pauses  
delightfully, where sparkling dew melts into pearls!  
And if your heart were like a rock, scorched fruitlessly by the sun's heat:  
I'd wish to be the flower on the rock, quietly sprouting in its crevice!

#### 17. Threat of Loneliness

Heinrich

I bloom, a little blue flower, hidden quietly among the stalks in the field - soon the grains will  
be harvested - .. The world looks bleak to me!  
I, a poor little blue flower, will be left alone and abandoned, when harsh winds blow over the  
bare stubble in autumn!  
How comfortably could I snuggle against the maiden picking flowers there, oh, if only the  
maiden would notice the little blue flower gazing at her!

#### 18. My Avenue

Heinrich

Today, I am awakened from slumber by the solemn ringing of bells, which sounds from the  
nearby church tower and pierces my ears to rouse me. The bells serve as a reminder for all the  
devout to come to church, so that they might dedicate the beginning of the new day to  
prayer. However, the bells call me in vain to the steps of the altar! Barely do my eyelids open  
than the course of my day is already consecrated. My thoughts greet only you, my dear,  
wrapping around you! It is this greeting that consecrates my day with your presence,  
morning and night, instead of prayer.

#### 19. A Word - A Spark

Gretchen

In your letter,  
that small word:  
"I love you!"  
How it binds me!  
I must keep looking at it  
until my eyes overflow!  
The word in the letter,  
how deeply it threw  
its glow into my soul and blood!  
Perhaps written without much thought,

yet what has this word ignited in me!

20. Is the bird foolish?

Gretchen

Through the window, where the dew had frozen into flowers, I gaze thoughtfully at a tree;  
Entirely bare, the tree stretches out with its naked bark in the harsh wind.  
And yet... in its towering branches, there hangs a solidly built bird's nest!  
A little bird looks out, seemingly joyous.  
It appears to believe the tree is leafy!  
Is the bird foolish for hanging its nest so optimistically on the tree's leafless branches?  
If that's the case, then so am I, since being drawn to you, my heart, which may be tired of love  
(?), pulls me.

21. Not a Sparrow

Gretchen

The sparrows are hopping around the bare branch— when green leaves are present, the  
nightingale is the guest.  
Only when it finds itself in the crown of green leaves, does the sweet song flow from its  
throat.  
- Thus, you cannot be a branch, not a bare one, my dear!  
My heart wouldn't hang on you if it were a mere sparrow!

22. When can you find me at home?

Gretchen

Should I tell you in a "rhyme", when you might find me at home?  
- Any day!  
(No kidding), whenever your heart - leads you to me!...  
And so that you don't miss my house, I will send my soul out to guide you!

23. My Heart

Gretchen

And when you are by the quiet hermitage, just knock:  
"Is love at home?"  
At the quiet house,  
there's an iron gate, a rusty lock hangs heavily in front.



No key has yet turned in it - Love herself is the gatekeeper.  
So peculiar is this proud creature!  
Even the thousandth one is too insignificant for her! -  
You better wait until  
her house collapses...  
before she would let in someone she doesn't deem suitable!  
But go ahead and knock!  
Maybe, I think...  
Love might let you into the little house!

#### 24. On the edge

Heinrich

Yes, indeed, the dream intoxicates me that your love shines on its edge like a magical sunshine painted on butterfly wings, radiating out. And I am lifted in a sweet, blissful dream so high above the earthly realm, because the sublime joy carries me, knowing that your heart beats for me in love!

#### 25. Immense Gratitude

Heinrich

I thank you thousands of times for giving me your heart! Without love, life is bland, as bleak and frosty as winter. I feel so content and so warm, embraced by your love. I bask in love like a swarm of gnats hanging in the summer breeze. It's not riches, fame, or honor that I strive for hurriedly! It's a heart, the one dearest to me, that I seek with longing. Even though life's treasures are highly coveted, life is only truly valuable because one heart is precious to another.

## Chapter 2

Heinrich and Gretchen live in the springtime of their love.

### 26. Springtime of Love or: What do we now desire?

Heinrich

Does the sun ever question what it wants, as it gently gazes down upon the earth in the spirit of spring?

In both, love quietly weaves itself, free from all worries about what may come...

Only when the sun's ray—like a kiss—has descended into the earth's embrace...

Do they both greet, in thousands of blossoms, the happiness, that they have lovingly bestowed upon each other! ...

### 27. Life is beautiful

Gretchen

Life is beautiful!

And beautiful it is for everyone, In valleys and on heights!

The world is a paradise!

Not because it's adorned With laurel trees, From which the dreams Of ambition are plucked!

Life is beautiful Because of the flowers, That in valleys and on heights Quietly bloom for us,

That everyone from blissful hours Picks,

- Found along the way, - Adorns their path!

It extends itself fully To the deep gaze, And to the heart, that easily Opens itself to happiness! -

But whatever it holds For the circle of the sensitive, As the most splendid gift I praise - love!

Life is beautiful!

I shout in delight And have seen it Knock me to the ground! - Yet even if it inflicted wounds,

That pained me unto death, They heal in hours, As love embraces me!

Life is beautiful!

I still want to shout this, Even as I find myself On the steps of the grave!

And if there is dreaming In the fields of the hereafter:

Then there I would dream Only of - life!

### 28. You entwine me with love as with floral vines

Gretchen

You wrap me with love as if with floral vines, and I cling to you with all my thoughts. Much like a beetle spends its entire existence dreaming on the fragrant edge of the vine, trembling in ecstasy so long, until it has lived out its happiness to the fullest!

## 29. Spring and - you

Gretchen

In the meadow, the flowers speak to him, as the gentle breeze kisses them, ushering in spring;  
The sky dazzles in blue for him, as beetles perform their dances!  
Wherever a bud has not yet unfolded its fragrant layers:  
It opens up its blooming cradle chaste to his, and only his, powers!  
In a secret magical melody,  
The springs begin to murmur - joyously, the birds flit nearby - in nature, a new romance weaves!  
... And from Nature, I have borrowed all that heralds its love to the spring:  
Listen, how thousands of melodies wind around you, expressing my love for you!

## 30. Late Bloom

Heinrich

Outside my window, a chestnut tree deeply dreams its spring dreams in the midst of autumn;  
It blossoms brilliantly, sprouting new shoots, dreaming of young spring and new love...  
- Tell me, does the sun truly favor it with its rays?  
Won't the tree suffer pain and torment for this illusion?  
Isn't there a threat of frost, which the blossoms fear?  
Tell me, has the sun confided anything to you?

## 31. To the Chestnut Tree Outside Your Window

Gretchen

To those whom late flowers graciously bloom, who dream of spring in autumn, tell them: I send a heartfelt greeting to the chestnut tree outside the window! Tell me, now no worm gnaws at its uniquely rare blossoms! - Its flowers aren't blown away by autumn's storms - No migratory bird pairs up there! .... He shouldn't worry about his beauty, even if frost easily forms in autumn -; Only the frost that arrives in spring destroys the blossoms it touches! - And for those whom the sun conjures flowers in autumn, as if it were spring, their blooms remain even when the last roses have long since faded, with winter approaching! - - Tell him... that I would love to see his shoots sprouting with... eyes - ... And that I sadly send him greetings there - the distant chestnut tree!

### 32. Effects of Love

Gretchen

Have you also become deaf to the howling of the north wind and the croaking of ravens?  
Do leafless trees seem to you like temple columns?  
Do you also think that the sparrow moving quietly along the smoky, dim street is the swallow  
that soared into the fragrant air?  
When it snows heavily, does it appear to you through the foggy windowpanes as if blossoms  
are drifting in the wind, making it feel like spring inside your room?

### 33. Autumn of Life Seen through a Lens

Heinrich

The strawberry plant blooms again at the edge of the forest,  
Sunlight beats down upon it.  
I was ready to bow my head in sorrow,  
To never again think of the joy of existence;  
It has endured the frost lying in the moss,  
But fate has tricked it kindly:  
Now it must see itself in the autumn light,  
Reviving one - last time!

### 34. When a Little Leaf Comes from You

Heinrich

When a little leaf comes from you to me, how it delights and overjoys me!  
I sneak away like thieving jackdaws with gold, into a quiet, hidden nook.  
First, my eyes eagerly dive into it to see how your heart thinks of mine.  
Then I'm intoxicated by what remains attached:  
The scent of the hand that lovingly wrote it.  
And then, as my soul clings to it, I yearn to kiss you—  
And since you are not here with me to kiss, I kiss your words on the paper!

### 35. Good Morning!

Gretchen

What forces me to rise so early each day from my soft bed? - It's the dawn, in which, when it  
greet me, I see and feel you, my love! When dawn creeps into my room to open my eyelids,  
in my sweet morning dream, I think it's you coming to greet me! Then I rush towards the day  
full of joy, which brings you back so early to my soul's vision - and from my chest, songs of  
jubilation overflow!

### 36. Oh, you gentle night!

Gretchen

I kiss the hem of your garment, O night, you who summon before my soul, gently, In the merciful dream, the bright image of my distant beloved! Oh, how sweet death would be to me, if I could pass into eternity hoping, as in this dream, to see my love in the beyond as well!

### 37. Belonging Together

Gretchen

If you were to emerge from the womb of the earth as a rock, and I had just come into existence: I would feel like I should envelop your rigid being like green moss. And if you were the mirror of the vast lake: I would feel compelled from the depths to exist in you, lake, as an island embraced by your waves!

### 38. Your Kingdom

Gretchen

I can imagine, I can imagine what ignites your doubt, what in the brightness of our love casts the dark night of suspicion:

Because it seems to you that there are many differences between us - ,

You fear that sooner or later

these differences will cruelly tear apart our love!

Before true love, in the vast universe, everything is equal;

for love

transforms everything—

makes the lowly magnificent, the poor rich.

Love has placed a crown

upon your head, my dear, and you are, you are my - King

and my heart: your kingdom, yes, yours!

### 39. Morning Greeting in the Snowfall

Gretchen

"My dearest, good morning!" I whisper softly through the windowpane into the snow, as the dense, white flakes drift by in the air. I thank the snow, for it lends itself to conveying my greeting to you today. If snow sifts through your old umbrella, imagine it's kisses falling! Good morning! When you hear the snow gently tap against your window, do you know what its flakes wish to enviously tell you? They want to say: My love is pure like the snow, which shines brightly and dazzlingly in white crystals when it freshly falls from the sky. They also want to assure that such a fate does not threaten my love, the fate of the clear snow, prone to be

muddied and sullied by the slush of the streets. My love instead surrounds you, crowning you with purity like the snow that falls on a pine tree and glistens in the alpine glow!

#### 40. Yet Existence Clings to the Earthly

Heinrich

Love me, love me! But never greet me just so from - sacred distance Like the lake only gets its shimmer from the lovely evening star!

Love, girl, cannot be as pure as air in a glacier's embrace, Where despite the spring sunshine, the high icy snow does not melt! -

Human love is not made only of what's noble and pure! ...

Though the spirit soars upwards, it clings to earthly sense and being!

#### 41a. Proofs of Love

Gretchen

How? You find no belief in the love of the nightingale, because its longing is magnificently revealed in the beautiful sound of its songs?

When it pours sweet sounds into the quiet grove in the evening, is it not solely love that elicits this enchanting music from it?

Believe in the love of the nightingale, which flows through its song;

It is as true as the love of the dove, which coos in its urge for love...

And praise the love of the nightingale above that of the fish in the pond, who silently expresses his proofs of love to the sun as—spawn! ...

#### 41b. "Water! Water!"

Gretchen

A butterfly basks in the sunshine - Sometimes close, sometimes far from the boy who frolics over the meadow, eager to catch it! -

... Now he has it ... but he holds it with an inept, loose grip - I fear the butterfly will escape before he truly understands how to catch it ...

#### 42. Lily of the Valley of the Heart

Gretchen

I tried for a week to hold a grudge against you;

- My anger was justified - Yet I dislike feeling resentful!

I live my days joyfully only when I carry in my heart the beautiful image of your being,

Unobscured by any resentment!  
And during those troubled days of sulking, I felt like the earth during winter,  
Which turns away from the sun. - Oh, how desolate my heart felt!  
To sulk any longer would be foolish!  
And I quickly want to forgive you;  
Because how sweet it is - to be good to you!  
Just as the earth in spring lets the lily of the valley greet the sun,  
This song of my heart tells you:  
"Love, I am tired of sulking!"

43. Can't love bloom even in winter?

Gretchen

Why should I care that spring is breaking?  
Can't love bloom even in winter?  
Spring hasn't left my heart, Whether it's freezing or glowing.  
You always shone into my heart!  
There spring has remained,  
The spring that continues through winter,  
Blooming in the heart with love!

44. "Participating in Another's Sin"

Gretchen

How often does my soul linger with you, with all its yearning and thinking!  
How it urges to flee from here, to give itself to you, my beloved!  
Then blissfully, it secretly settles down in your solitary hermitage,  
And no sooner does it see you than it already feels at home!  
It embraces you tightly and kisses you passionately with kisses both sinful and devout...

Heinrich

- What use are such 'sinful' kisses if your own mouth has not partaken in the sin?

45. The Shore to the Brook

Gretchen

I listen as the waves gently caress the lovely edge of your shore. Though you may be clear,  
your murmuring is hard for me to understand!  
Sometimes, your crystal waters rest so gently in your bed, as if promising never to storm the  
ramparts of your shore,

as if pledging not to strip or break the fragrant flowers standing at the edge, just to pass by softly—

Yet suddenly, a wave rises, peering out towards the moon's path, as if you impatiently ask:

"May I approach the flowers now?

May I flood over the shore, across the blooming meadow?

When will what I encircle finally be wholly mine?"

#### 46. You Foolish Heart, You Poor Maid

Heinrich

You foolish heart, you poor maid, distressed by your love for fear that love might bring pain, were you to open up to it!

You envy the small stream's calm flow, which neither empties nor swells and, simply and comfortably, flows only downhill through eternity!

You are most envious in the world of the rocky reef in the sea, for wave upon wave crashes against it—yet its existence remains untouched.

You poor heart, you foolish child, who with a narrow view rejects the pleasures that are offered, cowardly shirking from life!

Happiness does not lie in stillness, nor in the heart rocking on safe waves without motion and harboring no sweet desires!

It is through the heart's prism that one who wisely enjoys the gift of existence, neither envying the motionless stone nor the quietly flowing stream!

#### 47. How long have I seen you longing quietly for my kisses

Gretchen

How long have I seen you longing quietly for my kisses, just like someone who sees cherries hanging on a tree and really wants to pick them... And even though you seem enchanted enough to kiss, I refrain from kissing; I fear that you might take the kiss and leave me behind, just like leaving the tree standing alone!

#### 48. Can you resist love?

Heinrich

Can you resist love?

The right to great pleasure?

Resist revealing your desire,

For just - a kiss!...

From your eye, from your moist eye,

From the trembling sound of your speech,

The lightning of passion is clearly visible

In its flickering flashes!



So do not shy away from my mouth,  
As it moves to kiss you!  
... Does the lightning think twice before it strikes the oak?  
No, it must strike!

#### 49. Overcoming

Heinrich

From the force that binds all beings, you poor fool, do you cowardly seek to free yourself?!  
Since love finds its way to your soul, do you slide the bolt across the shrine of your heart?!  
Do the cosmic forces that bring the heavens down to Earth and hold our feet with mighty  
spells to barren ground, which would otherwise flee, seem terrifying to you?  
Do you flee—because, uprooted by the storm of love in the depths of your mind, various  
'virtuous' principles waver—from love, to which every hour of spring owes its thought in the  
barren winter of existence?  
You wise heroine, who boasts of overcoming love, the same love that stifles your loving, you  
do not realize that in its fiery feelings, your happiness is targeted by the enemy!

#### 50. Once again it has happened

Heinrich

Once again it has happened that you denied your love,  
A hundred times in an hour with your eager-to-please mouth!  
Yet, as always, I have witnessed your love  
Shine forth from your eyes, contradicting you a thousand times over!

#### 51. Longing - a Sword

Heinrich

Your love contends with reason, which resists it as an enemy? I am very curious to see the  
outcome: Who will be the victor, who will be vanquished in the end. If it were not love, then it  
would not succumb; for nothing is as powerful as its sword: the longing that triumphs over  
everything fiercely fights for what it desires.

## 52. Characteristics of My Love

Heinrich

My love cannot be driven away for long!

For it possesses the nature of a bird in flight, quick to arrive and just as quick to vanish without a trace!

The spirit's charm in words, in gestures, a graceful trait in the countenance, draws it to you, as a grain spotted in flight draws a bird to the ground...

And just as my love approaches you, attracted by the sweetness it perceives in you:

A sound... that it may not like, ... A trait... and it is gone forever!

## Chapter 3

### Heinrich's Attempt

Heinrich tries to make Gretchen submit to his love by convincing her to adopt his perspectives on the ultimate purpose of existence, which align with those of a modern materialist. According to him, this purpose is to maximize the satisfaction of a longing for the full enjoyment of life. The naive Gretchen goes along with this for a while.

#### 53. The Swift Passage of Time

Heinrich:

Swiftly sweeps the time away, alas, it withers both body and soul! How soon we stand there, wilted and dried, a blunt instrument for the struggles imposed on us with each passing hour, both physically and mentally!

Take courage in love, ready for pleasure, join me in a union of love, let us quickly make the most of our time with mouths eager to kiss! May joy fill our cups as long as the desire for life continues to flow from us!

The kiss still plunges to my lips like lava spurting from volcanoes! And my passion urges to burst forth like the fiery breath of Titans. In my deepest chest still roars a sea of blooming desire for love!

—

You are like the furrowed field, still awaiting the right seed in its chaste grooves - hoping for ears of grain to spring forth... If love plants itself in your mind, how abundant the harvest will be!

Thus, courage for love! Ready for pleasure, united with me in a bond of love, let's swiftly make use of our time with mouths eager to kiss! May joy fill our cups as long as the desire for life continues to burst forth from us!

#### 54a. To the Soon Tired

Heinrich

Do not seek, as long as you breathe, peace in the fields of existence, you fool, and do not shut your shutters from the summer bustle of life!

Do not seek the solitary darkness too soon, and do not shy away from the sunlight because it also brings swarms of mosquitoes, some of which sting venomously!

Do not withdraw your hands from the wheel of action as long as a finger can still move!

The circle of the living consigns those from whom nothing more is hoped or feared to the dead...

Do not rashly close yourself off from life or love too soon!

And do not think about being tired as long as you breathe!

Death will soon enough bring us eternal rest.

#### 54b. The Political Sentiment of the Kiss

Heinrich

Recently, a kiss made its way to the coral gate of a mouth, which teasingly and endearingly summoned it with many charming words. The kiss hoped to be warmly received by the mouth in a surge of love... But suddenly, in its pride, the mouth denied the kiss entry.

"First, you must clearly prove to me your origin, impetuous child. Are you from plebeian circles, or are your ancestors - sixteen in number! Are you French? Russian? British? Are you Jewish, or are you not a Christian? Another thing: (if you were one of our own) are you German or a Pan-Slavist? For I only receive kisses from the like-minded elite! You should know this yourself, unless you are a kiss from common stock!"

To which the kiss replied: "I am a child of the flame of love, which every heart humbly acknowledges, yet the noble source from which I come does not recognize these 'differences!' It flickers over every barrier, the subject of the world's disputes! Do you not feel, with a thrill of delight, how nothing can resist it? ... So, if you feel as I do, let a spark swiftly sweeten your lips at the threshold! Only a fool asks where roses bloom."

#### 55. What Do I Care About Immortality?

Heinrich

What do I care about immortality!

Doesn't the immortal one scatter into dust anyway? For one day full of bliss, I would readily give it up!

Let me love as my heart desires, as long as it continues to feel!

Is "immortality" of any use when it is silently rotting, sawed by worms?

After fully indulging in the joy of life,

My thirsty heart craves more!

See how it joyfully drains the cup in long sips!

So spare me the talk of immortality, the future's glory!

If I just enjoy my little piece of time, if just - life is mine!

#### 56. To the Studious Young Man Who Stays Indoors

Heinrich

Why do you laboriously climb the steps  
toward the gray - immortality

And fail to notice that your springtime is slipping away unused?

Did you forget, you fool, that only one spring is allotted to you,

A spring whose glories once past, will never return?

Open your soul to these beauties!

Saturate your mind with them,

Before your senses fade, before your May is gone!

Lie your head in the shepherdess's lap in the meadow!

And experience how immortally beautiful the fate of loving mortals is!

She crowns you with fragrant flowers,  
Weaving her kisses into them,  
And shades you with her curls in the glowing sunshine!  
Her kiss teaches you to understand  
how insignificant immortality is,  
To understand that only those who love truly lead a blessed life!  
You'll learn in a small spot, within a brief span of time,  
To experience in a single moment the sweetest – eternity!

#### 57. Live Fully Out

Heinrich

Oh live fully, oh love fully, as long as love and life beckon!  
Oh drink to your satisfaction, as long as your heart is still strong and thirsty!  
Oh sing fully out! Oh shout with joy, as long as joy still flows from you!  
Traverse the universe in bold flight, as long as your wings still flap!  
And listen in the forest to the joyful song, as long as a bird still sings!  
And delight in every joyful sound, as long as it resonates in your ear!  
Gratefully make use of life's offerings, as long as they are presented to you!  
For the spirit withers long before the body sinks into the grave!

#### 58. Invitation

Heinrich

Come, I'll kiss you! Come, I'll embrace you with all my heart!  
Come, don't waste any time!  
Come and enjoy! Only those are truly happy, who live for today, with no care for tomorrow!  
Embrace life passionately!  
Take everything that it has to offer!  
Own the world this very moment!  
Because who knows how long it will last, and what will continue to please.

#### 59. Facing Old Age with Dread

Heinrich

I face old age with dread, fearing the time when decay gnaws at my body, finding myself  
unable to cope, disappearing even from my own sight!  
Avoiding my own reflection, not wishing to see a distorted image of myself!  
Being but a stubble, alas, amidst life's own grain, which time has reaped!  
I do not want to die like autumn passes, which, even when all blooming has long ceased,  
must outlast the tumult of storms, surviving the fall of the last leaf!

No, no! Oh gentle nature, do not let me witness times when I am merely a trace of what I once was, carrying myself through the years, feeling the agony of living ruins!  
Let me die still aglow with love, while desire still blossoms in a thousand forms!  
While all senses are still open to pleasure, when every hour still brings new hope!  
Yes, to die like a sunny, blissful summer day in a blooming garden sweetly ends, which still kisses the flowers from which its splendid shroud is woven, and drifts into the night!

#### 60. Love Keeps Age at Bay

Gretchen

Are you coming to me with a pale face, telling me that you are afraid and anxious about getting old? Are you worried that the signs of aging will one day reach your heart and mind? I will stand at the door of your heart and not let age enter! With my loving hands, I will turn away its approaching steps! Because my love will continually scatter the blossoms of youth deep into your feelings and perception, so that age will not dare to come near!

#### 61. If I were the quiet oyster

Gretchen

If I were the quiet oyster, who in her closed shell preserves white pearls, the treasures of the seas: all those pearls would be yours! If I were the bush on whose branches the most beautiful roses bloom fragrantly! All those roses would belong to you! I would scatter them along your path! But pearls nor roses on branches are what I have or what I offer! So take the best of what is mine: I sing, my love, all my songs for you!

#### 62. What I Bring You as a Grateful Heart

Heinrich

What can I bring you as a heartfelt thank-you for your magnificent bounty of songs? My goals and journey keep me bound to the earth—amongst weapons, the musical instrument rests. However, when I look up to the blue sky, I greet you, noble lady! And when my spirit soars, I feel surrounded by your gentle breath! The stars shine in your light—happiness bears your face—as long as there is a heaven above, there won't be a day that forgets you!

#### 63. Lament of the - Noble Lady

Gretchen

I do not wish to be the - noble lady!  
Nor do I want to be just your - star!

I do not wish to be the - blue of the sky!

... I would rather be your little darling!

I do not want to be something high for you, something you only look up to from afar—something that only reflects in your eyes—;

... I would rather be your little darling.

I would happily be your "blue of the sky," if you were the sun embracing it; yet it's you I want to embrace, you, who are a sweet man!

I would also gladly be your "star," if you were the heavens and I hung above; but I desire to kiss you, you who are a sweet man!

I could also be ready to be your "noble lady," a priestess at the sacred altar, if you were the god to whom I was devoted, to whom I would give my life!

64. It will not satisfy me...

Gretchen

It will not satisfy me if my love loves me in secret...

My heart must know!

My love must kiss me!

... Why do I complain in vain about the sorrow of my life?!

Love must desire what I must deny...

65. You want to thank me for the songs?

Gretchen

You want to thank me for the songs that spontaneously arise from my soul when thoughts of you weave dreams around me, carrying me to more beautiful worlds? Does spring thank the nightingale for its song? Does it thank the blooming trees and the flowers that gloriously edge the earth in fields, meadows, and hedges? Does the creator, who brings all this into being when the earth is magically touched by his breath, give thanks? Doesn't everything echo his praise? In the same way, you conjure songs from within me, letting you see the depth of my heart - and gratefully, my friend, I kneel before you!

66. Dream Interpretation

Gretchen

Before I sang my songs, before I knew you, I once had a dream at night where I found a considerable treasure of gold on a secret path. I picked up the shiny treasure and hid it in my chest cloth, carefully ensuring that no one would suspect or search for it in that spot.

However, as I moved, each step filled me with a painful anxiety: my chest cloth kept slipping, accidentally revealing the hidden treasure...

Then I awoke. I pondered what the strange dream might mean. Though I thought about it, both dreaming and awake, I only understand its meaning today:

The treasure I found on the hidden path is the gift of my singing, which I discovered within myself on a thorny path of life!

What the fluttering chest cloth revealed, which I anxiously concealed under my corset:  
It's my love that I sought to hide, but which my songs reveal—all of them!

#### 67. Pentecost Greeting

Heinrich

How are your roses doing down in the garden beds?  
I imagine they are now blissfully interacting with colorful butterflies.  
Tell the roses and butterflies that I truly envy them:  
They make better use of the beautiful days than both of us! -

#### 68. Who Will Still Cling to Me...

Gretchen

Summer has passed, and rose hips hang where wild roses once pricked the fingers of those who picked them. -  
When my own summer days are gone, who will still cling to me?!  
Alas, none of those who died of longing while courting me!

#### 69. The Philosophy of the Converted Rose

Gretchen

Let us, while still blooming on our branches and surrounded by colorful butterflies, tilt our delicate cups towards the Zephyr wind, offering our lips to the hot kiss of the sun! For the delightful time passes swiftly, during which happiness weaves its fabric around our beauty—a beauty that cruelly fades too soon, even before we have fully lived out our lives!

#### 70a. Perhaps...

Gretchen

I feel that it is not right how I live my life, that it is reckless courage to run away from happiness because of fear of what is called "sin."  
Therefore, before my hair turns gray, I will seek happiness! - Do I find it with you? ... Perhaps! ...  
In my daydreams, I see the dawn of love;  
I understand nature's hints;  
For it threatens punishment by letting what it generously gave go to the grave unused - .. Has it destined my gift of love for you? ... Perhaps! ...



I no longer want to waste the rich time of youth!  
It's time to end renunciation!  
To whom should my love be devoted?  
It should only make happy the one who can reach the heights...  
- Do you have the courage to pick the Edelweiss? ... If so, perhaps! ...

70b. And the Heart Still Wants its Dream

Cretchen

Good morning, my love, I greet you!  
I just woke up. The melodies of the howling wind,  
That eerily drift through the air,  
Roused me early from my sleep  
And shook the morning dream from me!  
Good morning, my love, I greet you!  
Awakened so early, it reminds me,  
How the burden of life's struggle  
Has been hastily rolled onto my soul,  
How it gave me no time to linger  
In the delightful, blessed dreams of youth!  
Good morning, my love, I greet you!  
Very early, my fate tore me away  
From my very first dream of love  
And placed upon me the heavy bridle  
Of duties that constrain with chains,  
Which one fulfills without heartfelt desire...  
Good morning, my love, I greet you!  
You sang me back into dreams anew;  
I continue to dream where I once stopped:  
The dream, the alert, inspiring dream of love!  
That is indeed the most beautiful gift of life,  
And the heart still wants its dream to have!

## Chapter 4

Gretchen Surrenders to Her Love.

### 71. "Defending Another's Sin"

Gretchen

If you love me as one desires to be loved by all in the universe,  
to become what one offers to the other:  
Then both soul and body give themselves to your kisses  
And I think of nothing and no one else! ...  
Do I not rush towards you like a river  
That swiftly flows foaming from the cliff to the sea,  
So that in a ceaselessly renewed outpouring  
The swelling wave empties itself?  
Your love is to me what the sun is to the meadow -  
It surrounds me with spring-like weaving!  
As the meadows only bloom for the sun,  
So will I give my entire being to you!  
Then I will not fear the sin of love!  
Thus, the envious call it love;  
What joyfully exists in the sunlight,  
Is there - to defend the sin!

### 72. So come, oh, come near to me

Heinrich

"So come, oh, come near to me so that I may eagerly grasp your hand, - so that I can look you  
in the eye, stroke your soft hair - listen to the sound of your voice, - intoxicate myself with your  
breath! It feels to me, when only from afar your love surrounds me in song, like the deceived  
son of the desert when greeted on the horizon by - merely an image formed in the air -: a  
mirage!"

### 73. Do I need to drink your kiss..

Gretchen

Do I need to, in order to drink your kiss, first press my lips to yours as a drinking jug would  
lean towards the brim of a wave?  
When I lower my eyes into yours, a sweet bliss of love flows through me;  
It must be kisses, I believe, that my heart drinks from your gaze! -

74. "Think of Me"

Gretchen

Why, my love, why do you always say, "Think of me!"?

Does the flower ever need reminding by the soil in which it is deeply rooted and nothing else desires?

Why, my love, why do you always remind me, "Think of me!"?

Does the golden sunlight also remind the little beetle that thrives in its warmth and joy?

Why, my love, why do you always tell me, "Think of me!"?

Does the stream remind the fish, which swims unaware that there could be any other place to live?

Aren't you always to me what the soil is to the flower, what the golden sunlight is to the joyful beetle, what the waves are to the fish: the source of my happiness?

75. Is it "Love"?

Gretchen

Is it love? I do not know.

I can only describe it.

But words are poor; my heart speaks to you more clearly through images:

Like a little stream that meanders over sticks and stones towards its river, my heart and eyes seek only you, blissful when they find you.

When I see you, I am overjoyed, feeling within me a resonance like buds that see spring, leaping with the joys of spring.

When I see you, it feels to me like the night—if it could feel—when it greets the heralds of the day through mists.

Just like the night that falls into the day's embrace without prolonged persuasion, I would sink into yours with great delight, wishing to—like the night in its kiss—fade away!

Is it love? I do not know.

Perhaps a kiss, which speaks better than images, might tell you... So come, ask the kiss!

76. How long, how long will it last...

Gretchen

»How long, how long will it last, The love that with ardor and shivers Passes through our soul And dazzles in a ringing song?«

- I'll tell you exactly:

Either it lasts only days, Or it lasts until souls are carried away From the Earth!

If it blooms wondrously From the loose foundation of feelings, Then it will soon fade, Withering, even as lips still kiss ...

But if it has taken root In the harmony of souls, Then it will stand tall like the linden tree Through time and - never wither!

## 77. Return - Reflection

Heinrich

I was driven away like a bird to the heights:  
What was near seemed dull to me, the distant was appealing.  
So I set out for the heights on daring wings -  
How joyless I returned from the distant flight home!  
Now how this little gate to a hut here beckons me!  
I would find my world inside it if she moved in with me!

## 78. What Was It?

Gretchen

What was it? A kiss, infused with spirit, brushed upon the edge of the lips, a sacred vow that kindred souls have united?  
What was it? What was that bliss through which existence became gainful?  
Was it a kiss of true love that consecrates the passion in heart and mind?  
Or was it merely a lightning bolt that races through the marrow in a wild state, striking indiscriminately, fueling a fiery path...?

## 79. "Silent about Sin"

Gretchen

From the bottom of my heart, I greet the flower-fringed island where, at twilights, many sinful kisses evaporated. And the flowers that sway there in the intoxicating breath of summer, because they remained silent about the sin ... I also greet the flowers!

## 80. Spring in Late Autumn

Gretchen

I already hear the chilling melodies of the North wind passing through the tree tops!  
Frost glistens where dew once shone brightly, and everything around yawns in shades of gray. - And whatever is lit by the sunbeam only shows how bare everything is now - The songs of the birds have quieted, ceased - And I feel cold to my very core!  
If only I could spend an hour now, pressing kisses to your sweet lips!  
Held close in your embrace!  
How the warmth of spring would seem to shine into my heart!

### 81. Longing Sighs in the Snowfall

Gretchen

Oh, if only I could be a fairy, to transform at will!  
Then I would wish to be the snow now, falling on you in little flakes!  
In a thousand soft crystals,  
On your eyelids, on your chest...  
Falling everywhere... kissing... Oh, what joy that would be!!

### 82. Too Small?

Gretchen

The small cloth that you sent me, I will send it back to you filled with joy, Wrapped within it  
are the kisses, The ones not given today! ...  
And with the kisses, I would also like to bind my love - ... What do you think? Wouldn't the  
cloth be too small for all of that, for all of that?

### 83. Fetching Spring Today

Heinrich

Frost flowers entwine my window, I feel the chill to my bones - The trees gaze like specters,  
shrouded in white, in the lifeless forest. -  
The cacophonous cawing of crow flocks, which loudly echoes across the barren fields, pierces  
my heart like a groaning  
For the dead nature!  
... Yet I won't have to endure the winter desolation tormenting me for much longer, And all  
the shivering, all the trembling now counts down by the hours!  
Today, I will fetch the spring, at today's twilight hour!  
Silently, I'll stealthily fetch the spring from my sweetheart's sweet kiss!  
And when blissfully I wander home, at night through the wintry expanse:  
The forest and I, we are then transformed - such is the effect of the hour spent with my love!

### 84. After the Rendezvous

Gretchen

I carry the essence of your kiss with me deep in my soul as I go home, like someone who  
happily carries home a bouquet of flowers after walking through summer fields.  
And just as the bouquet's fragrant blossoms fill a dark little room with the breath of spring, so  
too do I feel the warmth of the kiss surround me with joy, even when you're far away.  
And whenever I start to despair in the dull gray of everyday life, I recall your kiss and, with its  
lingering touch, I bring happiness home with me!

## 85. Longing Sighs

Gretchen

If I were a bush in the springtime, I would want to bear you as a blossom on me!  
If I were the rose in the dawn's glow, I would like to see you hanging as dew on me!  
If I were the cloud in a stormy sky, I would want you hanging as lightning on my edge!  
If I were the wave that crashes loudly, I would want to be edged by your foam!  
Since I am humbly a heart that dares not loudly voice its longing to you, I whisper in a song,  
softly sung to you:  
"Oh, that your kiss would linger on my lips!"

## 86. Gladly ... gladly ... gladly

Gretchen

From the heart, from the throat, close to you and in the distance, a song emerges from me,  
just this one:  
"I love you dearly, dearly, dearly!"  
To everything my eye encounters, rose, bird, evening star,  
I sing my one and only little song:  
"Gladly, ... gladly, ... gladly, dearly, dearly, dearly, dearly!"  
And my little song,  
"Gladly, gladly, gladly, gladly!"  
even permeates my slumber, and I dream  
that my beloved sings  
"Gladly! ... Gladly! ..." to me from afar!

## 87. I Wish ... I Wish ...

Gretchen

I wish to be a small flower, hidden away in a cozy corner, unseen by others,  
so that only you would know of my secret, quiet existence! -  
That only you ... would come to me, take me between your fingers ...  
And I could joyfully wither away in - your hand, the one who picked me!

## 88. Unfinished...

Heinrich

In life, there's a single bridge that carries over all chasms, formed in an instant between one  
heart and another:  
It quickly built itself between you and me, the moment my eyes met yours...

But what usually happens secretly and sweetly on such bridges—where one heart reaches out to another—we still owe each other...

I want to give myself completely... yes, entirely... to you, will you also settle your debt?

## 89. The Greatest Love

Gretchen

I did not resist you, I hope you find your love rewarding;

But what you desire, I cannot, I must not provide!

However, I will offer you the greatest thing:

The kiss, which only true love can give, when you feel me trembling lips to lips, I will breathe my soul into you!

## 90. The Kiss

Heinrich

Your kiss alone does not satisfy me!

One kiss does not quell my desire!

Have you ever deeply indulged in a kiss and yet not felt what emerges from it?

A kiss - a lightning bolt amidst the raging storm - a sweet tempest flooding the senses,

Penetrating deep into the core, darting up and down, charging through existence with fervor.

A storm that does not dissolve into rain...

It stays within the clouds, agitating and hovering...

And, with painful shivers, illuminates our paths like distant flashes of lightning...

## 91a. I couldn't be happy just thinking about more...

Gretchen

Does love have more bliss than listening to one's beloved's words, as the heart's spring opens wide with splashing and murmuring?

How? Love bestows more pleasures, like when, with silent lips, eyes deeply dive into each other's gaze - and at the soul's base,

the desire, unspoken, wells up:

to merge into one - and identical longings fill both, penetrating each other with kisses?...

Is there anything higher than a kiss, the divine enjoyment, when fervently two souls in their outpouring merge into one soul?!

And does love really offer more than what I can name:

I may, even if it delights me greatly, I don't even want to know it!

I have enough to be blissful

with what it will give to me;

I'm overwhelmed... I couldn't be happy just thinking about more... about more...

## 91b. Kissing is not healthy...

Heinrich

I breathe my soul into you through my lips,  
And yours sips and tastes from mine, becoming one.  
Your breath ignites infernal fires deep inside,  
Which only kisses seek to extinguish!  
... Kissing is not healthy! ...  
And when your trembling, fiery hand brushes across my limbs,  
It feels as if the sun showers its blaze into the valley.  
I feel like the thirsty meadows, encircled with flowers:  
A nameless longing paralyzes me - ... Kissing is not healthy! ...  
And if you could only look into my heart!  
It is weary with longing,  
Like flowered meadows that haven't been rained upon...  
Thus, I want to know no more of kisses that only lips deliver!  
Such kissing, yes, such kissing, is not healthy! ...

## 92. Not Pearls, Not Diamonds

Gretchen

I don't desire pearls or diamonds as gifts, to remind me to think of you! To me, my love bears no craving for pearls or diamonds from the jewelry store! Does love question whether a string of pearls adorns my neck as a symbol of how deeply your heart clings to me?! And if you wish to give me something that truly delights me, give me flowers that you have picked yourself! I press them to my lips first, weary, and then place them inside my prayer book, on the leaf where written in my prayers it reads: "...You are love..." full of promise. Daily, my eyes devoutly gaze upon it, and I bless the flowers that you picked for me!

## 93. Goodbye, Another Time

Gretchen

Good morning, my love! I greet you!  
Yet I greet you from a sorrowful distance!  
How I wish I could deliver my greetings to you in person!  
I was looking forward to seeing you today  
just like the lark at dawn,  
eager before her flight,  
joyful about the blue ether she'll soar through!  
Like her, I preened my feathers  
with blissful premonitions,  
thinking your gaze would make colors play on them in beauty!  
I anticipated hearing the sweetest tone  
unravel towards my heart



being near you, where the air is filled  
with warm feelings of spring!  
But now... as I am about to take flight to you,  
an unexpected weakness overcomes me,  
making me tremble with fear.  
And I sink back into the nest, wanting to wait for happiness  
until, like the lark to sunny heights,  
stronger wings will carry me!

#### 94. Delayed Confluence

Heinrich

I cannot see you today, my love!  
The fiend Chance will not have it!  
Yet, I could perish from longing, if I do not soon appease it!  
My heart is drawn towards you with powerful emotion,  
like a stream is directed towards the river's confluence.  
But even if an obstacle prevents it from declaring its love to you,  
like the stream after its longest journey, my heart must culminate in a kiss!

#### 95. Disturbed Kiss

Gretchen

When the longing takes me to you, I feel just one thing: I want to quench it!  
Whether it's allowed or not, my heart doesn't ask; it lets longing have its way...  
And like a cloud, heavy with fire, where lightning flickers and muffled thunder rumbles,  
trembling powerfully across the sea of the air towards another:  
So does everything in me press towards you, to be swallowed up into one with you!  
I feel so anxious yet so content...  
With kisses, I would like to permeate through you!  
And if chance should block us, some wicked twist at such a moment, stopping the kiss  
already on its way, that would have flashed from mouth to mouth:  
I would not part from you gloomily!  
No, like the cloud, chased away by the wing of the storm bride, quickly clears up after a brief,  
fiery light show...  
I do not harbor sorrow in my heart because chance has snatched you from my lips before I  
could completely lavish you with love's kiss!  
It feels as if my spirit is blessed, having escaped the guilt, innocent of chance...  
Carrying home longing that still glows and the bliss of... of... innocence!

96. I wish for a kiss and yet do not kiss you!

Gretchen

I would like to offer your kiss much more than just my lips...  
Letting it enter deeply into me as the ground absorbs the sunbeam...  
As the ground takes in the blazing weaving that pours into its bosom...  
From which life and flourishing blessings sprout from this kiss...  
These acts of love, that one lends to the other, every flower can reveal it, each grape's  
sweetness; -  
Our kiss, it is deemed a sin, and your mouth that kisses, it - speaks...  
Therefore - as this heart struggles - I wish for it yet do not kiss you.

97. Painful Hesitation

Gretchen

Do not be angry with me for my hesitation...  
That my lips kiss you with such uncertainty!  
I look into your soul and wonder if perhaps you... truly are... the right one!  
Do not be upset if you still see me sparing with kisses, even if I'm intoxicated with passion!...  
Can you blame my heart for fearing, wondering if love will be reciprocated with love?  
Only when the sun provides the earth with the heat, bloom, and brilliance of summer, does  
the earth turn towards it...  
So turn completely towards me first!

98. Don't Delay the Kiss

Heinrich

Do not postpone the kiss until tomorrow!  
Kiss me right here and now!  
Like fruit picked from the bush, or love picked swiftly,  
It needs to be picked quickly!  
For once off the bush, the flower withers;  
So pick it while it's blooming,  
And after the kiss, the desire fades -  
So kiss me quickly in our fervor!

99. All or Nothing

Gretchen

The violet speaks with proud courage:  
"If I'm only good for you to pick and then soon throw away,

you might as well leave me unpicked,  
remaining forever unlucky in the deep, dark forest!  
Though I'm not accustomed to happiness,  
nor do I know how ingratitude is rewarded...  
- If only I could be picked just once -  
And if you truly desire me,  
then I want to be pressed deeply against your chest!"

#### 100. Will and Love

Heinrich

Alright. Build banks for love and dam its floods!  
A worthy comrade is the - will!  
It forces love into stone banks!  
It wisely directs its flow with masterful understanding in competition, so that it does not  
destroy the fields and rolls into the bed of duties -  
That between the courtly ladies, the willows, it may meander peacefully, carrying only leaves  
dropped by the old willow -  
That it tolerates in its depths only the crab that walks backward, and on its surface, tadpoles  
and fish spawn that bask.  
For love that is such a stream, so sneaking, so shallow, so gentle, indeed, intellect with will  
easily build a shore rampart;  
But if it resembles the wild river, furiously crashing down, an overpowering primal force  
swelling high into a mighty sea!  
It sweeps away everything in its path - no bridge, no dam can resist:  
Houses collapse on the riverbank! - It uproots the oldest trunk! -  
Do not be frightened, timid girl, by this terrifying image;  
This will never happen to you;  
How could you ever love so wildly?!

#### 101. "Doubt" - "Shadow"

Heinrich

Go forth, dreamer, on sunny meadows, casting away doubts that a gloomy shadow has  
slipped into our love!  
...Isn't our love at its peak?  
And should it ever set,  
—since nothing lasts forever—  
only after a long, delightful day, then - soon enough - then lament!  
Let it shine through your heart completely, moisten it with the dew of heaven, do not cloud  
the magical light with somber doubts!  
Spring would forget to bloom if, like you, it considered:  
The autumnal north is coming, which will sweep away all blossoming! ...

## 102. The Bark and the Linden Tree

Heinrich

I remain faithful to you, no matter what evil Befalls us, sent by fate!  
What could tear me away from you, Around whom my being so tightly binds?!  
Inseparably, I hold you embraced From the crown to your roots!  
I stay close to you in stormy times, Close to you when sunshine surrounds you!  
Encircling you in the days of spring, When your rich blossoms sprout, I will bear winter with  
you, Enveloping you in desolate frost!  
I remain your loyal - bark!  
You belong to me, and I to you, And if ever the ax fells you, O Linden, The bark will face it -  
first!

## 103. To Imitate the Lord

Heinrich

In the tranquil forest stillness  
There is a green spot, Where no eyes would see us, Except God's, who loves us. -  
Only God, who daily Recreates the works of creation,  
Because he is eternally one in love  
With the universe; - only he may see us!  
He who loves the universe for all eternity And is one with it by day and night In an eternal  
embrace ...  
Otherwise, he would not have completed creation!  
There, I would like to hold you tight In the forest solitude - I want to imitate the Lord In love's  
happiness!

## 104. Pious Wishes

Heinrich

If, oh, that little garden over there were mine!  
And in that little garden, I were yours!  
If the sky were always as clear as it is now,  
And there were eternal warm sunshine:  
Then this little garden would be a holy grove,  
Where God would just be an idol made of stone,  
Because in the little garden - I alone would be God!

105. Ah, how smooth remains the pond's surface

Gretchen

Ah, how smooth remains the pond's surface,  
It is only the swan  
That glides over it gently!  
But when the waves rise  
To the sky,  
A storm rages  
And churns them up.  
How calmly my heart once beat,  
When it held quiet love within!  
But how it urges and drives me with great force,  
Since that love grew into  
Passion!

106. Extinguishing ...

Heinrich

Am I supposed to help you extinguish the blazing fire?  
... That fire was sent to your heart by divine hands!  
Look closer at the flames that have ignited within your soul!  
A common, devouring fire does not glow with such colors!  
Look closer and closer!  
It is actually the dawn  
Rising in the sky of your soul - not a burning fire that threatens!  
These are the blessing-giving rays  
That the soul often awaits with thirsty longing, oh, sometimes for a lifetime - hoping to no  
avail!  
This is indeed the light that illuminates and  
Warms the soul deeply  
And awakens everything within to bloom  
That had become frozen and still.  
This is indeed the sun of the soul,  
That rises when a pair  
Finds each other for love, for creativity,  
As if destined for each other!

107. My Longing for Roses and Swallows

Gretchen

Not between walls, pale and brown,  
Surrounded by winter's harsh cold.  
Where roses smell sweet and swallows chirp,

That's where my soul longs to dwell!

If only I could follow my heart's pull!  
I would escape to my true home.  
I'd join the swallows in their flight,  
Carry me away to where roses bloom!

There, I wish to drink with my soul  
The air, filled with the scent of roses,  
Fall down by the rosebush,  
Escaped from desolation - overwhelmed with joy!

I want to weave the bonds of love there,  
Like the sweet, trusted swallow,  
Building its nest in a land of eternal spring,  
Surrounded by the fragrance of roses!

108. Come, Flee with me to the Countryside

Heinrich

Come, flee with me to the countryside!  
Away from the rigid walls of the city,  
Where love has countless enemies  
Lurking behind those walls.

Come, flee with me to the open fields,  
Where desires grow strong and bountiful,  
And in the face of nature,  
Love can greet freely!

Come, flee with me to where birds,  
In love, freely meet!  
Where only the heavens bless  
Their pure and true union.

Come to where nature creates freedom,  
Mocks the powers of human laws,  
Blossoming and sprouting with divine strength,  
Unaffected by any obstacle.

Come out into God's nature with me,  
Listen to its breath:  
Life was not created  
To be constrained by pious conventions!

109. »Consenting to Another Sin«

Gretchen

Why do they kiss on the forest path  
So boldly in the dark of night,  
When through the ghostly branches  
The stars twinkle softly?

Love finds the courage to kiss  
Only when it is watched from above —  
And love that must shy away from human eyes  
Feels so uplifted at night!

When I look up at the stars,  
That greet me understandingly,  
It's as if they are saying to me: "We close our eyes  
So as not to disturb your happiness in love,

And we peek only through half-closed lids  
Downwards, so that love,  
Which flees the light of day, can find itself fearless;  
— We consent to its sin!"

110. In the Dream

Gretchen

When I went to bed in the evening, I looked at my beloved's picture with emotion. Not wanting to part with it, I secretly placed it under my pillow.

But the picture didn't stay there;  
In my dream, it came closer and closer to me.  
It transformed into my real, living lover and showered me with kisses everywhere.

The picture that I hid under my pillow at night  
Made it, even though my beloved was far away,  
So that I learned all about the kisses of love,  
I learned all of it thoroughly in my dreams.

111. How I Dream of You

Gretchen

Good morning! You, my love, were the night!  
I spent it with you in my dreams.  
I have never seen a day like this dream, so heavenly, so beautiful!

Ah, if only an hour would strike,  
Bringing me such joy for real!

Spring has spread a carpet of colorful flowers across the valley,  
And sent us the sunshine,  
Sent birds with their songs,  
A host of chirping cicadas to invite our love into the fields.  
We strolled out hand in hand  
Into the open, vast house of God;  
And when I saw the birds,  
Paired together in sweet freedom,  
I watched the flowers open their chalices  
To receive the pollen:  
Then it drew me to you to the ground -  
And mouth neared mouth  
Closer and closer... how sweet it was!  
Did it happen because thinking left me? ...  
My belt tore apart in two,  
And I found the courage: To kiss you ... to kiss you!

112a. Modesty

Gretchen

You scold me: cold, without true feeling, While hellish flames twist through my body, Fighting  
with - the shame that wants to suppress and - -  
- overcome them!

Inside me surges a burning urge to merge completely with you, - To embrace you with my  
whole being, To let you into every part of me!

Just like the earth, in all its naked beauty, Surrendering to the burning sun's rays:

That's how I want to lie in your arms!

... Yes, if a dream could lend me its hands, To undo the belt around my waist, To lift my dress  
for the work of love...

To shorten the struggle with my shame!

And if the dream would lay me on a pillow... Without me having to know how it happened!

May the dream's magical power Envelop my soul,

Until, while lying silently, I feel your sweet breath! ... The dream would blindfold my shame  
And I ... would be in heaven! ...



## 112b. A Strange Fellow

Heinrich

Yes, above the small window  
There's a fellow standing and watching,  
As if he wants to betray  
our love -;  
But I'm not afraid of him.  
Don't cover the window in front of him!  
He wants to serve our love;  
It's the moon, our confidant,  
That has shone on many nights of kissing. -  
He wants to light up your eyes, -  
To light up my mouth!  
So that I don't miss the spots,  
On which I'll kiss your numerous wounds! ...  
A strange fellow!  
He thinks he has to shine!  
As if I wouldn't know how to find the sweet spots  
In the dark!

## 113. The Love's Resting Place

Gretchen

My love longs to escape from the confined rooms  
and move to where the vast temple of God  
arches over tree-like pillars. It yearns to go where,  
in the twilight gloom of the forest, a circle of  
nymphs dances closely under the sparkling moonlight,  
quietly inviting love and affection.  
They beckon me, trustingly, to the secluded spot  
in the sacred depths of the forest, where a  
nymph's hand has made a bed out of a thousand  
colorful flowers for love. Let's go! We should  
follow the nymphs' invitation! Such an enchanting  
resting place calls to me. On such a pillow,  
I will fall asleep intoxicated - there, love's sin  
feels like a prayer!

## 114. I'm Coming to You ...

Heinrich

I'm coming to you as the day starts to celebrate,  
Carefully watching over the dealings of love;  
I come when it is time to cover everything with veils,  
When love's confidant, the dark night,  
draws near.

I'm coming to you when, in the quiet grove,  
Only the nightingale disturbs the calming  
flowers' rest, Filled with longing as she sings  
her lament, Until her love is finally answered...

I'm coming to you when all the creatures that,  
during the day, Joyfully hop from branch to  
branch in their innocence, Welcome the night  
and, paired in their nests with passionate love,  
Eagerly settle in...

115. - The Shirt is Torn -

Gretchen

In the middle, in the middle of kissing  
My shirt tore, and even though the belt did not mean to slip off my waist...

The shirt with the big rip,  
Which allowed me to receive your kisses,  
- Witness of my giving -  
I keep it as a memento;  
I keep it as a memento  
Of the holy first - My giving...

Of the rich, the blessed hour  
At your heart and mouth.  
It shall no longer hang on my body,  
If it is not embraced by you!

The shirt with the rip, I keep it -  
They will lay it on me when I'm on the bier!  
So that, if a grave should surround me,  
Where you do not rest beside me,  
I would be enveloped, where the shirt is torn,  
By the trace of your - kisses!

116. What Is Your Master - Reason Doing?

Heinrich

What is your master, Reason, doing?  
I send my regards to the old man!  
That we lulled him to sleep should not offend him!  
When two hearts faithfully  
Join together despite his whims,  
They have always settled their accounts with him.  
... Or is your master, Reason, just taking a nap to wake up later?  
Heart, that would be worse than bad,  
That would not be a laughing matter at all -

117. You were not created by God...

Gretchen

You were not created by the God who made humans and monkeys, and now runs away in shame when he sees his work!

A God could only have imagined you, who knew how to create something magnificent so that it pleased Him in His universe!

The God you see clinging to the universe in a kiss of passion,

Who - eternally procreating - holds the world in his embrace, never tired of kissing,

The God whose love trembles in thunderstorms and downpours,

Whose kiss makes the earth quake!

And - having invented all magic -

And the God of wild joys, who lets, with his kiss, a stream of songs so rich burst forth from his burning breath to sweeten the kiss with words!

And that stream has intoxicated my mind, my "understanding" drowned in it. -

#### 118. Sakuntala's Vision

Gretchen:

Not an hour had passed since you set me free from your embrace; the magical sweetness of your kiss still lingers on my lips. The belt you managed to unfasten from my waist lies here... as if your hands had just broken its golden clasp. My braid still isn't smoothed out, where your hand softly stroked through it. The torch of our sweet nights hasn't completely burned down. The echo of your words still sounds from every corner here. The door to our bridal chamber hasn't entirely closed behind you, my beloved. Near our rose-scented bed, which you barely left, a bleak reality now strikes like a tormenting dream: I see myself coming from a distant land to your throne, bearing the tokens of our love — our son, conceived by you. I hear you calling me mad and possessed, accusing my words of deceit and trickery — for you have long forgotten me, no longer recognizing the one who is your wife! You deny me, she whom your heart once burned for in passionate love. You refuse to acknowledge what came from our union: your own flesh and blood! I defend the truth in vain; you deny our sacred bond! What will help a woman claim her rights? The ring — it is missing from my hand!

#### 119. "God Bless You"

Gretchen

As I sneak away from his room  
The dark night sees me for the first time -  
I don't look up, as if a sign  
In my eyes would reveal what I have done...

He doesn't want to let me go alone,  
Because outside the storm is raging -

He wants to escort me through the streets  
To the edge of the village, to my house.

But I don't accept his escort,  
I don't want to walk with him openly!  
Otherwise, people would already know  
What has just happened between us!

"God bless you!", he calls softly  
After me as a farewell greeting.  
God has already abandoned me  
Since I stepped foot into your place!

#### 120. Brief Regret

Gretchen

The stars with their twinkling  
Kept me awake this night,  
They looked into my desecrated room  
And took my sleep away from me!

They wouldn't let me find peace,  
The stars that teased me,  
They knew all my sins,  
They had discovered my love.

... I had already thought of leaving you,  
Tormented by fear and regret -  
But as soon as I see them fade,  
I secretly love you anew!

#### 121. The Auction of the Heart

Gretchen

Many a buyer came forward, offering everything they had for my heart!  
How did I handle the price? Precisely! I weighed it out, bit by bit!

A poet came, wrapping me in his precious love through songs -  
Alas, to respond to his love, not even a faint echo stirred within me!

A celebrated warrior came, laying his sword at my feet.  
- The feats that made you a battle hero hold little value to my heart!

A prince came to offer me splendor and power for my love.

- Can this purchased happiness ever repay what I feel?! Is it splendor and power that ignite love?!

Even through life's springtime and beyond, my heart remained completely unsold ...  
- I won't give my love to any man, lest I squander it!

Then ... you approached. Before I could measure, to see if your offer was grand enough:  
My heart flew to you in a storm!  
... Could any weighing serve me now?!

## 122. In Coincidence Lies Destiny

Gretchen

No little bird gets caught in the thin net That spiders weave in the air, Through what we consider mere chance!  
For destiny weaves in both big and small.  
No little cloud has ever gathered In the sky to change the weather, By what they call coincidence Unleashing lightning in the clouds' cradle.  
No grain is carried by the wind To distant fields to grow As a tree, defying stormy gusts, Without destiny's intent!  
And when on winding paths Two souls find each other in love, It wasn't by "chance" they met; Destiny deserves the praise!

## 123. My Little Ring

Gretchen

The little ring, given to me for life  
As a charm by my mother on her deathbed,  
The little ring slipped off my finger  
In a moment of sweet distraction...  
It took my heart with it when it slipped away  
Tearing my heart along...  
Now, the empty spot on my hand  
Reminds me that with the ring, my sweetheart, my everything, was taken away!

## 124. When Edelweiss

Gretchen

You complain that out of all the women, who have woven garlands of joy in your mortal journey,  
Granted your love's longing whispers a tender hearing,  
Soon bringing you joy, sometimes briefly, sometimes for longer moments.

You found so few indeed,  
Who, when all the veils of initial infatuation have fallen,  
Would still remain bound to your heart.

Why do you want to quarrel with your fate?  
The daisy, the wild rose,  
Each gave you what they could: from brief blooming  
Comes brief sweet enjoyment without effort;  
- It is a bold endeavor to pick the edelweiss!  
Do you dare... Will you gratefully press it to your heart?

#### 125. Everywhere I Look...

Gretchen

Everywhere I look, My love, I only want to see you!  
Oh, how joyful everything would be, Oh, how beautiful everything would be!  
In the flowers on the meadows I would want to be greeted by you!  
I wish to hear you singing about me In the spring song of the birds!  
When I pick flowers by the stream To make you a bouquet,  
I would like to believe that, at my feet, You are the stream I am looking into!  
In the stars that gaze tenderly Into my room as I go to rest,  
I would see your eyes secretly watching To see if the little gate is open for you...  
No! No! I don't want to see you as a meadow, as a stream, as starlight!  
No, what good would it do to see you, If all of these - cannot kiss!

#### 126. The Delusions of Love?

Gretchen

Do my senses deceive me? Tell me:  
Is it really still spring outside?  
... They say that winter, as heavy as lead, Has long settled on the hills, fields, and ponds!  
What gently surrounds your cottage, Is it jasmine that greets me with its fragrance?  
... Others claim that bare trunks, like beggars, Naked and sorrowful, encircle your house!  
And what flutters warmly around your little home, Is it truly a dove cooing lovingly?  
... They say it's ravens, now hungry, Croaking and lurking around your cottage!  
God shines in the stars for me Is it really God himself, so bright at your door?  
... Am I not wandering aimlessly, Lost in the madness of love, coming to you?  
And if I step into your little room, Do you greet your one true love in me?  
Am I not a despised woman, Whom you only care for and know - at night?

127. Autumn Contemplations in the Park

Gretchen

The autumn says farewell to the meadow - She senses winter's approach:  
The sky hovers above her in gray, The lark has given way to the crow.  
And leaf by leaf hangs sadly On the branch, as if they knew, That the rough storm will soon  
reach for them That soon they would have to fall.  
And on the hollow trees there Loud flocks of crows caw, Rejoicing that autumn is leaving,  
That everything else will suffer from it!

... What does it matter to my love dream, Whether winter follows spring?!  
Where I kissed you...  
... under that tree ...  
Spring will shine for me!

128a. Foolish Wish

Gretchen

Oh, if only fairies could enchant me  
As I wish! Then my dream would be:  
To see myself in your room,  
Radiantly standing as your Christmas tree!

Richly adorned with golden gifts, I'd wish to captivately hold your gaze,  
So that wherever your hands reach,  
A piece of happiness would sprout for you!

Wrapping you in the golden glow of the gifts on your Christmas tree would be a revived life, a  
renewed dream of a long-faded youth!  
And blissfully I would thank the fairies for every branch and twig,  
Upon which I could place all the happiness that you have found with me!

...But no! I do not want the fate  
Of the tree of the Holy Christmas time!  
For as soon as its gifts are given away,  
It is contemptuously thrown aside!

128b. But what we promised there, we will keep

Gretchen

Good morning, my love, I greet you!  
Yesterday ended so well for me! I wandered to the place where, under the fragrant canopy,  
built from chestnut tree tops, my heart pledged itself to yours.

Though autumn's winds have carried away the sacred canopy, and tree by tree, their leaves stripped bare, stretch to the sky like temple pillars, destroyed by the passage of time -;  
But what we promised there, we will keep!

#### 129. Do You Really Want That It Remains

Heinrich

Do you really want  
That my love remains  
Faithful to you forever?

Even if your heart says so now,  
Believe it,  
Don't believe it!

Does the tree want  
That a bird  
Remains just a guest on its branch?

Does the rose want  
To be surrounded  
By just one butterfly?

Ask the blade of grass,  
On which dewdrops brightly sink,  
If it drinks only a single dewdrop!

Do you really want  
That my love remains  
Faithful to you forever?

#### 130. "Logic" .. "Purpose" in Love

Heinrich

Love has no purposes - It does not ask much about goals - For love, love is the only purpose and goal.

I wander over the meadows, Where lovely flowers stand, So that their fragrant breath Can blow through my soul.

I am not drawn to any goal, And without picking them, I stroll over the fragrant meadows, So that my heart may be refreshed - I drink in the flowers' fragrance To refresh my heart, body, and mind And then I walk the daily path With a happier spirit!



### 131. In Remembrance

Gretchen

I now understand why nature desires and demands that the sun embraces the Earth with its summer heat, making it brown and warm!

For it never wipes away from its brown cheeks the trace of the sun's kiss: the fruits that hang on her.

And just like the Earth, which bears the mark of the sun's kisses, I will now have to carry the mark of your kisses in my heart!...

You kissed me with the kiss of the sun, which in its descent into the Earth's womb, it gifts - fruits in remembrance!

### 132. My Loyalty

Gretchen

The autumn storms that roared wildly,  
They shook all the trees ferociously,  
So that even the last yellowed leaves  
Scattered away in the wind and weather without a trace!

As if awakened from a dream and disappointed,  
Nature yawns desolately across fields and hedges.  
And even if everything else starts to waver,  
I see an ivy vine climbing around an oak tree.

This ivy has stayed fresh and green,  
Letting all the storms pass by,  
And it remains entwined around the oak,  
Although the oak's crown has been shattered by the winds!

What in life, like this ivy,  
Will stay with you when youthful joy fades away?  
My love will be like that ivy:  
My oak tree, it will never abandon you!

### 133. When Parting

Gretchen

Suddenly I have lost all sense of everything,  
For ever since I found you, I am only for you!

Time without you seems lost to me!  
I feel like I was only born to be attached to you!

I am filled with just one feeling, one wish that consumes me:  
To bind myself to your soul so that I don't see myself without you!

Therefore, since we must part, I have one request for you:  
Let me kiss you as if to death and take my soul with you!

## Chapter 5

Heinrich embarked on a journey to Egypt to distract himself and heal from his romantic infatuation.

### 134. Afterword

Gretchen

My love, oh, has left me;  
The harvest time is over!  
But I was happy for a long time  
From what I picked  
From his sweet mouth,  
From which thousands of kisses sprang!  
My little darling has left me;  
The harvest time is over!  
Now - I still reminisce  
In the moonlight here in the forest:  
Because, where we kissed the most,  
I still kiss my love in spirit!

### 135. »Counseling Others to Sin«

Gretchen

The pines from the wooded heights, our secret concealers, send their regards to you:  
They stand close together and are aware of our love! -  
And the birds flying in flocks send their greetings to you above the ripening crops,  
They have paired up before our eyes and counsel us to sin! ...

### 136. What Are You Searching For Far From Your Beloved Homeland?

Gretchen

What are you searching for far from your beloved homeland, in the hot climate of the unyielding Sphinx? Do you believe that happiness is near, in the desert sands, where you are surrounded by barren foreign lands?

Happiness isn't found at home in pyramids or in giant graves of earthly grandeur! The heart searches in vain for sweet peace there, in the resting places of a bygone era!

Even if your eyes, for a fleeting moment, embrace the magic of otherworldly forms, you won't find even a tiny stone there to bring you happiness, one that could build a joyful foundation for your soul!

A small village, lying on a narrow strip of land, where your devout mother as a child sang you to sleep with sweet songs in a simple, old wooden cradle;

That village, and inside it your small cottage, your wife, your child, your own cherished hearth, your sweet home is the center of all wealth—alone worth all the pilgrimages of life!

### 137. The Homeland - Everywhere

Gretchen

I would like to wander with you  
With you, only with you gladly  
Through the Earth's most colorful regions,  
Even if it is far from home!

From country to country, I would roam  
Wandering through the world  
And, wherever you wanted, I would  
Happily pitch my tent!

To the place where palms lean  
In the hot sun's rays,  
Where deserts stretch out desolately,  
How gladly I would follow you there!

I would give up the happiness  
That makes me so blissful here:  
So that in every glance of mine  
My homeland would smile back at me!

The small cross here, which encircles  
The blooming fields all around,  
I would see it in the pyramids  
And the eerie Sphinx!

My little stream at the edge of the meadow  
That murmurs quietly for my delight,  
I would hear it in the Nile, where on the shore  
The crocodile suns itself!

The zephyr, which from the linden tree  
Carries the fragrance into my soul,  
I would greet it in the desert wind,  
Which blows wildly over!

And when the evening red  
Illuminates the proud ruins,  
I would think in my evening prayer:

It looked like my blooming homeland!

I would like to go out into the wide world with you,  
To travel on with you!  
For if you gave me your company,  
Then my homeland would travel with me!

138. The Bush, the Low One Here

Gretchen

The bush, the low one here,  
The bush, that I praise,  
And not those where the sun blazes,  
Those palms, those tall ones!

I praise the bush full of lilacs,  
Surrounded by birdsongs,  
Under which it's so sweet to rest -  
Under which kissing feels so good!

139. My Sunday

Gretchen

It's Sunday. For all the souls,  
Who are tormented by common labors,  
Today is a celebration, today is a rest,  
A sign of respite from weekday burdens!

And to properly sanctify the day,  
They kneel in dense rows  
In prayer before the Lord,  
Who is invisible, near from afar.

For me, a Sunday blessing comes daily  
When I line up line after line!  
- From life's weekday toil,  
The soul rests in holy glow.

Instead of prayers, all my songs  
Flow down onto the paper here,  
In which my heart presents itself to you,  
Who is my God - invisible!

140. You—getting older? Getting older—me?!

Gretchen

Don't talk about "getting older!" Don't use that word! It wasn't invented for love!  
... Wait until my arm tenderly surrounds you in the springtime impulses of my soul!  
Wait until my heart rests on yours in the wild joy of seeing each other again, like the  
rejuvenating, awakening spring sun on the frozen earth of winter!  
Then you will feel like the old earth, kissed into youth, into new growth:  
You will feel renewed youthful joy in your kisses, in thousands of sweet kisses!

141. In Every Word, Love!

Gretchen

If you write to me Even one word, It must contain love, Just like how flowers peek out  
From the spring meadows everywhere!  
My feet carry me lightly To where flowers bloom beneath them;  
Your letter brings joy to my mind Only if it greets me with love!  
Yet the letter You wrote me now With your head instead of your heart, Has deeply wounded  
my soul - As if driven over stones...

142. Already?

Gretchen

Your cool autumn greeting today, after days, after such oppressive heat, tells me:  
It's not just the season that's changing, There's an autumn feeling in our emotions too!  
When I used to read between the lines of your letters, I found love sweetly hiding, like picking  
violets hidden deep in the grass which you discover by their scent:  
But in today's letter, there are only polite flatteries, - As if a spider is already weaving her  
summer threads over your love...

143: Don't blame me

Heinrich

Don't blame me if my love can't show loyalty! The heart cannot - even if one wishes - be  
forced into faithfulness! Just as the field sprouts different flowers and shoots with the  
changing seasons, so does the heart embrace one love today and another tomorrow!

#### 144. An Everyday Fate

Gretchen

Good morning, my love! I had a dream about a grim fate:  
I was hanging, surrounded by pretty colors, On a bush as a rose.

You succeeded in what rarely happens, Picking me despite the thorns;  
For I yielded, hoping You would press me to your heart. - But as soon as your hand  
approached,  
- My pride was punished:  
I saw myself thrown among roses, That withered, plucked apart in a corner. - -

#### 145. The Short-lived Nature of Love

Gretchen

How I long for spring to come, to the mountains and the valleys!

Love steals kisses freely, hidden by May's green leaves!

Then we will walk arm in arm  
into the green meadows, where silent daisies stand,  
quietly watching kisses happen!

We will kiss softly and loudly  
there among the green fields,  
the lark that hears and sees us  
will not betray us!

Your head will rest in my lap  
there on the edge of the green field,  
the blue sky's canopy  
will lower its curtains...

Meanwhile, I watch the snow fall,  
hoping for spring's breath...  
But will your love  
experience the golden springtime?

#### 146a. The Swallows are Coming

Gretchen

The swallows are coming  
Already from over the sea; They brought the spring, so green, Here to me.  
But no one brought

Greetings from you!  
How wintry and anxious,  
How anxious I feel!  
I can't see the day  
That wakes so bright From spring's rays out  
Of the winter night!  
I can't see the blossoms On the almond tree,  
Nothing wakes me from  
My winter dream!  
I see only the swallow  
That came over the sea To the waiting little nest...  
And my heart grows heavy!

#### 146b. Autumn Was Dearer to Me

Gretchen

Autumn was dearer to me Than this Spring now is!  
Our hearts were so overwhelmed That we kissed until we were sore!

On every quiet path We would stop to kiss - Even though Autumn streaked through the  
branches, Spring breezes filled our hearts!

We wandered, arms linked, Through meadows in the moonlight And in autumn, we had  
secured May - just for us alone! ...

#### 147. There I Wander the Paths Alone

Gretchen

There I wander the paths alone,  
Where we once strolled hand in hand,  
When our love shone like the sun,  
Which tinged the forest with yellow.

Now May shines upon the forest,  
Bringing hope to all creatures;  
But I anxiously ask:  
Will such happiness await me, as in the falling leaves?

Will a sweet presence bring  
Bliss to me here,  
Or will I wait not for happiness,  
But only for sad remembrance?



148. When? ...

Gretchen

It's been so long since I've seen you!  
So long since I've kissed you, that in the meantime I could forget how sweet your kiss is, how sweet you are!  
... Isn't your heart like the peaceful forest,  
The deep, fresh, clear spring,  
In which I love to dip my soul,  
Because I see my reflection so clearly in it?  
... Isn't your voice like the chirping  
Of birds in the spring chorus?  
Doesn't it bring springtime to my heart?  
Doesn't its sound intoxicate my heart and ears?  
Did I forget it? ... Aren't you like the sky,  
The blue sky, when your arm surrounds me,  
And like the evening star in the sky,  
My being clings to yours in a kiss?  
And isn't the kiss ... - Your kiss beyond comparison?  
I remember it, the incomparable one!  
It closes the eyes of the soul  
And floats with it to the kingdom of heaven!  
For your kiss, I have one last question,  
Because I can't forget it:  
- When will my soul again  
Make that journey to heaven with it?

149. I Have a Request ...

Gretchen

I have a request for you,  
... a request,  
A wish that still remains for me:  
Oh, bring me kisses, bring them to me,  
Like those kissed by true love!  
And give them to me under the moon's gaze,  
There at the edge of the forest,  
Where our love once trusted itself to him,  
Under the chestnut tree!  
And one more request, another request,  
I have alongside that one:  
Bring me all your kisses!  
In a foreign land - don't leave any behind!

150. What Answer Will You Give Them?

Gretchen

The long winter has finally passed!  
Spring is here, eagerly awaited!  
And from the juicy grass, the fragrant flowers bloom,  
The ones my love fervently conjured up  
To join in its happiness!  
"We are here now!" they say kindly;  
But... they seem to ask me gently:  
"Has your love survived us?"  
With doubtful expressions;  
And my heart trembles anxiously.  
... What answer will you give them?

151. Is the Story Still True?

Gretchen

I send you greetings from the forest,  
From the forest that you know so well,  
Where we spent sweet, blissful hours,  
Walking hand in hand.

I listen to a pine tree there,  
Lost in a dream,  
It tells me a story  
From a beautiful, bygone time.

It tells how, in its shadow,  
In a tiny, cozy spot,  
Two hearts had experienced  
All the bliss of existence...

And in the story of the pine tree,  
Which echoes deeply in my soul,  
—Our story—  
The whole forest joins in chorus.

But because since those blissful days,  
Days and years have passed away,  
My heart shyly comes to ask you:  
"Is the story still true?"

152. How Did It Come?

Gretchen

"How did it come?" you ask, annoyed.  
Now, alas, as your passion fades,  
What sparked the fire of love,  
So that no one considered what they did...?

Why do you ask, "Where does a fire come from?"  
A tiny spark that found its way,  
Suddenly grows into bright flames  
And giant structures collapse!

"Where did the love come from?" Who asks that?  
A spark that you carry in your eyes,  
That finds its resonance in the tone of your voice,  
It fell into the heart and ignited it!

153. Anguished Cry

Gretchen

Have you, oh, forgotten longing already?  
But I can never forget it!  
And now my heart, tortured by fear, seeks the one it feels moving step by step away from it. - -  
You, who used to kiss me passionately,  
Don't treat me like clouds that surround the sky with a glowing embrace, only to - pour down  
and then leave it!

154. Send Me Roses

Gretchen

Send me roses, send me greetings!  
Fresh roses, sweet words,  
So I can press them to my lips And decorate my sickbed!  
So that the lovely gift of your heart's greetings can comfort me!  
Let me believe: in the roses, Your lips are caressing me!  
When I hold the stems in my hands And later release them,  
Let me believe, as I feel the stem pressing against my hand, that it is your hand warmly  
holding mine!  
If I prick myself on a thorn, Let me imagine it was your sharp wit!  
Send me roses, send me greetings, So that balm flows into my heart!  
Let me see love in the greeting, And I will quickly recover!

## 155. Motherly Love

Gretchen

I am so weak, I am so weary,  
Ever since they took from me  
My little child, the sweet, round one  
With the wonderfully lovely mouth,  
The cheeks so rosy, the eyes full of sparkle,  
In which I see my whole world reflected!  
My little child, I love it so deeply, so truly!  
For it is a pearl, very genuine, very rare!  
And though I now suffer the same pains  
As the oyster, from which the pearl  
Has been taken out of the shell,  
So I am willing to die,  
Proud: to bequeath my pearl to the world!

## 156a. Butterfly Kisses

Gretchen

The flower in the meadow said, The one that the butterfly was first to kiss passionately, He  
kissed her because - kisses are sweet, And that his kissing never means love.

It says that he, still dizzy from the delight, Happily flutters to the second flower, Exchanging  
kisses - flowers - as long as he can, As long as his wings carry him and flowers bloom.

- Tell me, is it as the flower says? Was your kiss: a butterfly's kiss, without - love?  
... The flower kisses many others ..., But for me - my soul remained attached to you!

## 156b. Tragic Story of Everyday Life

Gretchen

Yesterday, a wild bird chased after my gentle dove all day long until the poor creature finally  
succumbed to its desire.

Then the wild bird flew away And my dove retreated humbly Into the dovecote;  
Today it sits there, still sorrowful, bowing its head.

Now I hear the dove cooing Longingly for the bird that forced it - And it deeply touches my  
heart To hear the dove's melancholic song of yearning!

I wonder if the bird Will ever return to the dove, Or if another bird in the skies Will now fight it  
off!

## Chapter 6

Heinrich, who has become increasingly distant in his letters to Gretchen, is looking for all sorts of excuses to somehow justify ending their relationship. He unfairly accuses her of having an exuberant personality and of being overly enthusiastic about her external appearance, among other faults.

### 157. Command the Stream

Gretchen

Command the stream to stop bubbling,  
The willow tree to stop dreaming!  
Order the waterfall to hold back,  
Write silence for the nightingale's song!  
Tell the cloud what it should carry,  
Instruct the wind not to chase it away...  
It is definitely not this inner force  
That makes me want to change who I am!

### 158. I Am Only as I Am

Gretchen

I am only as I am:  
All bubbling with desire and emotion!  
I rush like a wild mountain stream; - But, whatever my waves touch, Whether it's a flower or a stone, It remains pure beneath them!

### 159. My Praise

Gretchen

Don't think my words are just flattery meant to deceive,  
Like a cat first licking your hands affectionately, only to scratch them raw when the game is over.

When I praise someone to their face, I do it wholeheartedly!

A just soul finds joy in recognizing what is good wherever it is found,  
Not like envy, which only criticizes and shames.  
Instead, it helps others achieve well-deserved victories!

Consider the great effort we go through,  
To achieve something and do it well.  
How rare are success and recognition!

And for those of us who eagerly seek appreciation,  
How could we not also offer the same to our fellow humans?  
Should we not acknowledge their worth too?

160. Philippic of the Bird-of-Paradise Addressed to other birds mocking its radiant appearance

Gretchen

Oh, go ahead and mock me! Go ahead and mock me, you birds, you many down below:  
You jackdaws, the black ones, you parrots And you - peacocks, the colorful ones,

When in the morning's rosy hue I rise towards the sun  
And smooth my silky feathers Before I dare to face the sunlight!

Laugh at my vanity, Which the sunbeams expose, When my shimmering plumage Reflects in  
their golden light!

Laugh at me with your bitter, sharp mockery, Because my finery doesn't match yours!  
Wasn't it a god who devised my attire, Who clothes both the poor and - the rich?

Laugh at me for flying so close to the sun, Enthused by the journey - When your eyes, as you  
looked up, Powerlessly shut and were dazzled!

And even if I hear your mocking, Your envious laughter in chorus, It never bothers me, I will  
never spoil your fun!

For a god made me as I am, According to his design!  
... Perhaps he had me in mind, Imagining me next to - geese and monkeys!

161. Duration of Love

Heinrich

How long does love make us happy?  
How long do its powerful charms hold sway,  
That lift our hearts away from reality,  
Enveloping us in a rapturous illusion?

Gretchen

- How long? Look at the springtime adorned field,  
Where fragrant seas of blossoms now emerge.  
How long does spring, which grants endless renewal, last?  
It seems as though it would be eternal, eternal!

It gives you an answer in its blooming flowers,

Which, alas, wither away after a brief breath,  
Burying the charm of springtime,  
Barely making way for the first to regenerate!

162. Flickering Love

Gretchen

What do I think of your love?  
It doesn't warm, nor does it last like a strong flame!  
It is like the tiny spark hidden in hard flint:  
When a piece of steel strikes the flint,  
The spark awakens from its rigid stillness - A breath - a flash - and it disappears - It barely ignites, and then it's gone in an instant!

163. Are You Doing the Right Thing?

Gretchen

How do I feel? Do I see clearly? Or are my heart and eyes deceiving me? You are pulling me out of a place where I was happy! Could it be true that I am worthless to you? You are tearing pieces from my heart bit by bit as if your thoughts of me were tangled up with your happiness like a burr caught in clothing! ... Did you find me along the path where burrs grow and brush against your clothes? And wasn't the plea of your soul: "Let me pick what you have nurtured for me!"?

164. Is it - the same?

Gretchen

Whether you bend down  
To a roadside flower  
And pluck it out of boredom,  
Or if it's a noble flower from a garden  
That loses its pride in your hand:  
Is it - the same?  
Whether your arm embraces a beautiful body  
That a loose woman willingly lends to you,  
Or if it's chaste love, which, overwhelmed by passion,  
Sweetly loses itself  
In your arms:  
Is it - the same?

165. Reward

Gretchen

Humbly, I bowed down low, Spreading at your feet All the flowers, my songs, That spring from my deepest soul!

Just as a white-flowered rock plant Humbly gives up its crown, Bending and bowing its stem To the hand that reaches for it... as a reward:

So have I given myself to you! What do you offer me in return?

"Just a greeting!" I plead with trembling; But – with silence, you greet me with scorn!

166. Modern Love

Gretchen

I thank you for your greetings,  
Which you send through an army of messengers:  
"Through the moon, the air, the flowers"  
And more of these cheap messengers!

I thank you for the "great love,"  
Which measures itself against the "infinite,"  
For the cheap, burning kisses,  
With which it kisses the "soul"!

I thank you for your "love-longing,"  
Which pours out in phrases,  
Phrases the mind writes more easily  
Than the loving heart reads them!  
And I thank you for all the sweet names  
You give me,  
And may God forgive you the lie,  
When you tell me you "love" me!

But God does not forgive lying  
If it has misled a heart!  
God, who is eternal truth,  
Rebels against lies!

And even if my heart does not seek revenge,  
This heart that only bleeds, only cries:  
The wrongdoing avenges itself,  
The wrongdoer is their own enemy!

You say you would fetch the "stars"  
"Down from the sky" for me!



But you are too cowardly to give up  
The false gold of this world for me!

To "witness our bond"  
You call upon a flock of birds  
And carefully avoid marrying  
Your love at the - altar!

You "love," modern little man,  
Who calculates and weighs and compares!  
Whose heaven never reaches higher  
Than what is graspable, countable...!

Love could not make you happy  
In a humble and cozy nest!  
You will pair up with the woman  
Who builds the nest for you!

And you will choose the sparrow bride,  
Who builds it comfortably and finely for you,  
Brings many straws and earth together,  
- Even if love does not move in!

Learn from the bird and be ashamed!  
It chooses its bride in sacred drive  
And builds its nest  
With a thousand-armed love!

Look at the springs rushing from the mountaintops,  
Which never waver back  
And foam wildly over brushwood and rocks  
Until they reach the stream!

And learn from the calm brook,  
When a torrent swells it,  
How it breaks the banks  
And wildly floods the fields!

Oh little human, transformed  
Into a caricature by "reason,"  
Man up and learn  
Nature from God's nature!

## Chapter 7

Heinrich begins to leave Gretchen, motivated only by lowly reasons for improving his material existence, to make a "sensible" marriage with another woman.

### 167. The Lost Eagle (Monologue)

Heinrich

Don't build your nest down in the valley, In the leafy crown of the linden tree!  
You are not a finch, you are an eagle, You are the true son of the heights!  
Don't be seduced by the linden tree, Even if it blossoms now in spring's splendor!  
High up in the mountains is your home, Where the air stirs above the snow-capped peaks!  
Do you want the wings, that boldly embrace a world because they are free, Do you want to  
confine them in a nest, to anxiously brood over an egg?!  
Do you want to wear out your talons and beak With the daily miserable hunt  
For the meager bees down there, because otherwise your brood will be hungry?!  
You are an eagle! You were given wings, beak, and talons for something greater!  
Return to your beckoning homeland, Turn away from everyday worries!

### 168. I Can't Bear the Thought

Gretchen

I can't bear the thought: That I might be just the star of the night to you, Shining for you  
through the night Until your day awakens with the approach of the sun!

I can't bear the thought: That I might only be the tree by the wrong path, Where you rest for a  
while, Until your longing feet find the way home!

I can't bear the thought, That I might be just the flimsy tent Sheltering you, before you set up  
the charming house On solid ground for yourself!

And because I can't bear the thought, That for a while ... I gave you everything ... My soul  
groans under your footsteps: "Mercifully open for my shame, O grave!"

### 169. Meanwhile

Gretchen

I feel humiliated that, for now, your heart shelters me, until it is firmly joined with another  
through a priest's hand for all life's hours. But who can predict if the only flowers you've  
received, the highest joys you've ever felt, are not owed to my love, which you have  
possessed? What if what seems trivial to you now, unworthy of note, will one day be the times  
you lament as the most beautiful of your life, times you would wish to buy back with an

eternity? How easily, during the long rest of your life, might you yearn for the better  
'meanwhile'!

#### 170. Blessings Are Not Found in Possession

Gretchen

Blessings are not found in possession,  
That you can measure and weigh!  
They lie in your own perspective,  
Which consciously understands what happiness has given you,  
Valuing it for its worth,  
And not longing for what fate has not - -  
- granted you!

#### 171. Permanent Bliss

Gretchen

Life overflows with gifts and offers everyone a choice.  
Each one enjoys it in their own way;  
Joy grants them their portion of soul!  
Happy is the one who, yearning for joy, is cradled by the soft, comforting waves of wealth!  
Happy is the one who, savoring existence, soars through life, drawing from its abundant  
source!  
Happy is the one who is fortunate to find true love amidst deceitful people, brightening his  
gloomy hours and weaving joy into his existence!  
Happy is the one whose work is crowned with fame, who senses that in later days his spirit  
will still shine for future generations and that hearts will beat in remembrance of him!  
But a world full of blessedness,  
With peace in the heart, cheerful courage,  
And self-contentment  
Is carried only by the noble, the good!

#### 172. Everything is Transitory

Gretchen:

And even if, human, you managed  
To gather possessions and wealth  
In struggles that deeply burdened your heart,  
A single moment can take it all away!

Even if your palace rises  
With the proudest towers:

One jolt, one blow - and it trembles  
And quickly vanishes!

And if, through intellect and bold spirit,  
You have earned honor;  
One wrong step, and it is lost,  
And you die in disgrace!

And if health makes you happy,  
Your body swelling with strength:  
In an instant, you are laid low,  
Like an oak tree being felled!

And what seemed to be your eternal wealth,  
Leading you to sinful pride:  
You only borrowed it from fate!  
It can be taken back tomorrow!

### 173. Reproach from an Outraged Soul

Gretchen

So? Now your love has run out?  
And now that you say you don't love me,  
Do you think you can easily shirk your duty?  
Cruel! Cowardly!

Didn't I resist your wild urges  
With all my strength,  
Begging fervently: "Desire only me  
If you're truly driven by love"?

You knew that I would never  
Yield to crude, undesirable lust -  
You knew me to be proudly innocent, pure,  
And still you had the heart to degrade me!

I hid from you shyly, trembling  
Like a touch-sensitive plant,  
For many years,  
Whenever your desire approached me,  
To give myself to you in love.

Then you deceived my trusting soul  
With a lie,  
So that my chaste, sensitive self  
Would yield to give you pleasure:

"Who fully surrenders to me:

Oh give yourself to me! I love you!"

- So enticingly your hand wrote -

"I'll be deeply grateful all my life!"

#### 174. The Fortune Hunter

Gretchen

Oh, how I see you feverishly striving For the vain heights your whole life long!

And to surely reach them, Whatever stands as right before you must yield beneath your step

And hinder your rise no more! ...

...Does no warning come to you in your pursuit of fortune, That on the paths of injustice, The  
slave of vile selfishness treads but briefly, Because an evil deed – yes, even punishes itself? ...

## Chapter 8

Heinrich has returned from his travels.

175. How will the reunion be?

Gretchen

How will the reunion be?  
Will love come towards me?  
This question stirs  
In my heart:  
Will your look and voice  
Draw me to you?  
Will you welcome me  
Like the blooming shrubs  
Welcome the beetle:  
With the breath of spring?  
Oh, that my heart will not be welcomed  
By you like the hot breath of the land  
By the autumn breeze, in which it freezes to frost!  
That you will not welcome me cold and stiff!

176. Are you invited to come?

Gretchen

Are you invited to come  
To where I am?  
.. The swan swims  
To the pond.  
And does the river not rush  
From the spring  
In foaming torrents  
From the rock's edge quickly?  
And doesn't the wave  
Ripple in the stream,  
So that it might follow  
The next one immediately?  
And doesn't your heart long  
To flee to the beloved,  
In joy, and also in pain  
To be with another?  
Call you? To tell you  
"I want to be with you!"?  
Whoever loves,  
Their wings carry them to me!

177. Bulletin

Gretchen

I have just been freed from his grip,  
From the sickbed now released - Now it's calling me out of the room  
Into the hustle and bustle of work.  
It pulls and drives me with such force  
To come to you,  
Just like May brings the May beetle  
Out of the earth's dark night into the sun!

I look at myself and, alas, I dare not  
Show you this face of mine...  
And I hide myself from you  
Just like a larva hides from the light;

For I still bear the marks  
Of the great illness... on me,  
Like the fields show signs  
Of being ravaged by a storm.  
My steps are not yet lively,  
Not vigorous, light, and quick;  
They do not hurry down to you  
Like a leaping mountain spring;

The face, brown and thin,  
Does not yet glow with color  
Like an apple in its dewy skin,  
Hanging invitingly from a branch.

The tortured body lost its roundness  
In the claws of illness;  
In undisturbed health  
Only the heart beats as before!  
And though with every pulse  
It urges me to hasten to you,  
I do not dare to face you,  
Until I find my way to you:

... You love me only with your eyes ...  
And not with your heart.  
And I feel that I am only worthy for you,  
As long as my cheeks bloom,

And because your eyes only caress  
And not your soul with me:  
I wait for the roses on my cheeks  
And torment myself in longing for you!

178. The Convalescing Butterfly's Longing for the Bush

Gretchen

Since I fell on my back  
O bush, through your clusters at play,  
I move from place to place  
with such trouble and effort, even on the grass.

– My wings feel so weak, so heavy,  
    As if they weren't wings at all!  
And no colors shine on them,  
    Because the sun doesn't reach deep into the grass!  
Only bland dew falls on the blades of grass,  
    Oh, how tasteless this is to drink,  
    When you're used to nectar from flowers,  
with which you rewarded my kiss!

Crawling on grass blades is a bitter thing  
    For a butterfly used to flying,  
    For it doesn't truly live  
when it can't hover freely around the bush!  
... Bah! Even if my wings are lame,  
    I must climb up to you, my bush!  
And if I can't fly: I'll walk,  
    Until I see you again!

179. A Reunion

Gretchen

You can see it in me, hear the horror,  
How I've been in death's grip for so many anxious days,  
When the life that your passion demanded from me,  
Wrenched itself out of my body,  
The life that your lustful drive forced into my womb -  
You didn't ask about the woman, the one who fell ill,  
You, to whom I owe all my suffering!

My moaning couldn't reach you!  
It didn't manage to soften you,  
To write me a warm word,  
To love me with genuine thanks!  
As if it were printed, such a story,  
Now you comfortably listen to the accounts  
Of my torment - and as hands lay the book aside, finished,  
Coldly you guide me to the door:  
"I have nothing more in common with you!"



## Chapter 9

Gretchen reminds Heinrich of his fatherly duties.

### 180. You Don't Even Want to See Your Child

Gretchen

You don't even want to see your child, A picture of charm, wrapped in a little breeze? Don't you want to look into its face, Which has been formed entirely after your own image?!

Can't you see in its sweet little limbs The reflection of yourself, rejuvenated, Blossoming anew with the joy of existence!

Nature, which has instilled love in the universe, So that, in a powerful drive, every being might see itself reborn in its offspring,

Nature has allowed you to deteriorate: To hate yourself in your own child, Holding deep resentment for the poor being, Brought forth by your blood's fervent rush!

Do you long to wither away without a trace, Like withered, childless branches, To die without a name, without a physical heir, For all eternity?

### 181a. Also a Father

Gretchen

Your actions speak with a cold heart:

"What does the child I fathered matter to me?" ... Do you know nothing of a father's duty And call yourself a man?

Measure yourself, you person of refined manners, Who often shows loud acts of charity, Who stands out among others With "high education" and a rich mind, Measure yourself against the wild beasts, Can you? - with them in their loyalty, The wild animals in the fields Who mate, with the tiger and lion, They guard the offspring they created With paw and tooth and jaw, Protecting it from enemy attacks, Bending over it affectionately?

Can you? - with them who roam Through the forest, seeking fresh prey, To bring to their young ones, To richly cover the table for them?

Can you compare yourself with the bird, Dutifully, Who lays its chicks Softly in the nest on the cushion Of its own down with faithful care?

With none of the higher animals!! For they all are driven by the sacred instinct, ... But when you once felt the urge Burning in my arms passionately, What did your "love" achieve, little man?! - May God have mercy!

To care for the offspring you yourself created  
With the noble love of a parent!  
Only creatures from the lowest ranks Procreate like you;  
Like you, they carelessly leave Their offspring - exposed to the dear sun!

181b. What Your Love Accomplished!

Gretchen

Just as the sun lovingly gazes at the brown earth,  
bringing forth an abundance of colorful flowers and fruit  
through its warm embrace!

And when the gentle breeze tenderly kisses the flower  
before the sun sets,  
the flower's scent mingles  
with the air in the valley and on the mountain slopes!

When one cloud moves toward another, they collide,  
releasing a powerful thunderstorm,  
with thunder and lightning flashing across the sky!

From their passionate embrace flows soothing rain,  
filling all the empty reservoirs  
with plentiful, much-needed blessings!

And when a bird sings longingly in the gentle spring breeze,  
it soon flies with its mate to build a nest together!

## Chapter 10

Heinrich assures Gretchen that, despite his marriage to another woman, he will remain devoted to her in faithful friendship. Gretchen is tormented by jealousy.

### 182. Dream or Reality

Gretchen

Good morning, my love. How sweet the night was!  
It strengthened my soul so much!  
I didn't sleep; I spent the night awake and thinking of you in my mind!  
With open eyes, I dreamt of you  
Such familiar dreams of memories!  
I relived the happiness I built  
From the moments spent with you.  
But then, alas, a dream took over me,  
A delusion spun by my soul:  
No, no! I don't believe it! A dream is just an illusion!  
Why be tormented thinking about it!  
My happiness stood like a house of cards  
In front of other women with red lips...  
And when they blew on it: it all collapsed...  
I trembled, because—they threatened so!

### 183. A Modern Myth of the Myrtle

Gretchen

When I look into your eyes,  
The dream always comes back to me,  
A dream of found and lost happiness,  
That I once dreamt in beautiful May:

It was in ancient times,  
- So the dream tricked me -  
When sons of men still courted fairies,  
That you noticed me at the edge of the forest.

There, forgotten, I floated quietly  
Up and down among the ancient pines  
And wove a thousand sweet songs  
Into the silent evening air.

The envious, loud winds  
Betrayed my quiet song to you;  
They swiftly carried it to your ear

Along the dark forest path. -

Seeking me, you ventured into the forest,  
Drawn deeper and higher,  
Until you finally succeeded,  
In seeing me, as I was.

And as our gazes met,  
It became clear to both of us immediately,  
That we existed only for each other,  
That I was to be yours and you were to be mine!

How quickly you learned to trade the world  
For my fragrant realm!  
I taught you to listen to the birds,  
To wander through the forest in chaste love -

But whenever fairies united in love  
With a son of Earth,  
They had to leave him, as a mockery to pure love,  
And be abandoned by him!

You too were driven back  
From my richly adorned love,  
Back to life and love  
As it is offered in the earthly valley.

And I? How were you to know,  
That a fairy's heart could bleed?  
You tore it from my body  
When you parted from me!

But my love could not falter,  
Even if it suffered unspeakable torment;  
It followed you like your own shadow,  
My soul followed you every step -

To another, you extended your hands  
At the altar on a May day -  
With my suffering, it ended -  
I lay broken on its steps ...

Then suddenly the temple halls  
Were softly filled with a mourning group of fairies  
And they turned the dying one into a myrtle -  
Which you wound into your bride's hair!!

When I look into your eyes,  
That dream returns to me  
Of found and lost happiness,  
That I dreamt in my May.

184. The Forest in Winter

Gretchen

Coming down from the Castle of Clouds  
The moon waves at me again;  
How bright it appears from the elder branches  
Blinking again in the grove!  
But they are not blossoms shining there like before, ... it is cold snow  
That I see hanging on the branches,  
Glistening in the moonlight!  
Where our love songs once floated in the May air,  
I now hear the cawing of the hungry raven,  
Who is looking for prey.  
The bed that elf hands made for us  
Under the elder tree,  
With all the wonders of May nights  
Has vanished without a trace!  
I see you with another woman,  
Wandering lovingly hand in hand  
By the elder tree;  
I - am a forgotten dream!

185. My Little Ring

Gretchen

You wear my little ring on your finger, But it's her that you keep in your thoughts!  
You give me sweet words, But you give your heart to her!  
Take it away from me, throw it wherever! I have a feeling that soon you'll regret it, Like a  
reveler who regrets waking up, Regretting the mess they made in their daze!  
May my little ring stay with you Even in your moments of intoxicating joy!  
How grateful you'll be when sober, If it leads you back to me!

186. Your Child

Gretchen

You don't want to see it?  
You don't want to love it?  
And if it perishes, won't it trouble you!  
You only had the desire  
To create something like yourself,  
And you didn't have the love  
For what belongs to you?

From humans, you received  
Just the shining image,

And you would be like  
A tree in the wilderness?  
Like the tree, you'd treat  
Your child,  
The tree that senselessly  
Scatters its seeds to the wind -  
Whether they thrive or wither  
By mere chance -?  
... No, no! Not murder,  
Your hand spreads blessings!  
For you are good,  
You will be good to the child -  
You know how it feels,  
The heart without - sin!

#### 187a. Reminiscence of Athens

Heinrich

At the summit of the Acropolis, the columns of the Parthenon stand tall and noble;  
They carry the temple's splendor far and wide over the blue Mediterranean Sea.  
As if the mountain were ashamed of its bare back, which bends before the sanctuary,  
It covers its nakedness with powerful cacti as it rises up to the Propylaea.  
And where the temple of Pallas Athena, a pagan, proudly gazes into the clouds,  
The faithful wished that something could lean on it:  
A little church, built hidden on the slope.  
Yes, the Acropolis, where the columns of the ancient temple stand:  
You also see it bearing a little church, glimmering like a swallow's nest!  
To that little church, hidden in the mountain's folds, from which the Parthenon greets far and wide,  
My secret love will be like, which, despite everything else, embraces you!

#### 187b. White and Red Roses

Gretchen

One summer I saw a rose bush,  
That had white roses,  
But red ones as well.

And when I think and would like to despair,  
Thinking that you bear them alone in your heart:

I happily remember the bush that bore  
Two kinds of roses!

188. My Rival

Gretchen

That your lips sometimes turn To another woman – Should I grieve because of this? Why, why should it matter to me?! Are the flowers jealous When the bright spring arrives And smiles at many of them: Does that bother the flowers? Should the proud lilac bush Complain because deep in the grass Spring also kisses A daisy? ...

189. The Moon Confided in Me

Gretchen

I've leaned at the window for a long time And longed for my love. The moon poured pale light Gloomily into my lonely room - And as I looked at it, It secretly confided in me, That it now has to shine elsewhere For dear kisses ... And it looked sympathetically At my unpressed bed ... Where loyal memories keep watch, When his kisses are given away ... And so that I wouldn't be upset, The moon wanted to reassure me: That my beloved will be back, When he is finished kissing there!

190. The Mountain Nymph Saying Good-Bye

Gretchen

Do not take leave of me forever!  
Return to my faithful breast!  
The shimmer that lures you away from me  
Will not lead you to secure happiness!

I do not implore you to stay  
With the fairy-body's magical splendor,  
I do not intoxicate your senses  
By abusing my sinful power! -

I do not want to pull you into the depths,  
Not bind you through that pleasure,  
Which paralyzes the mind, so that  
Anyone who is intoxicated at its breast cannot escape!

Stay here to listen to the birds' song,  
The melodies so sweet and pure,  
In which the rustling of the treetops intertwines,  
In which our love joins in!

Stay! Rest with me from the clamor  
That shrieks hopelessly into the ears  
Out there in the harvest of joys,

Upon which the mad world pounces!

No, or leave! Drink from the cup  
Full of everyday sorrows, everyday joys!  
Partake in the dearly bought meal  
That the host, life, offers you!

Greet every morning there with anxiety,  
For it pulls you roughly from your dream  
To the hard struggle with duty and cares,  
In which existence subtly flees!

Waste your soul on a lower burden,  
Which God has consecrated to higher things!  
So that daily, hourly there it may be tormented  
By dehumanizing toil!

And go, let your brain alone  
Form a marital bond, not love!  
... Can joy greet your days,  
If you sell its sunshine?!

#### 191. Love and Snowdrops

Gretchen

You love me, don't you? - Oh, speak, admit it! - But you mustn't show it, Just like the  
snowdrop remains hidden under the snow, Must you also keep your love hidden?  
Even if many cold words blow Over your love like a harsh wind:  
The snowdrop still reveals itself Even under - the hard ice!

#### 192. My Beloved Dances with Other Girls ...

Gretchen

My beloved dances with other girls;  
I'm at home alone.  
Do you think I would get jealous?  
That thought doesn't even cross my mind!  
And even if my love looks into the eyes  
Of those girls there and here,  
He brings back those sweet gazes,  
And his eyes belong to me!  
Even if he holds many bodies,  
Beautiful and young,  
His arm may encircle their bodies,  
But his heart wraps around - me!



Many clever, fine, and bold words  
Might please my love,  
He listens everywhere with his ears only,  
But he listens to me with his spirit!  
My beloved dances with other girls -  
And although I am alone,  
He comes back to me and is yet  
Is yet only mine, only mine!

193. Sure Remedy

Gretchen

How does the rose find comfort in sorrow,  
When it loves the sunlight,  
But a cloud wraps it up for a long, anxious time?  
It waits patiently on the bush,  
Soaked with tearful dew,  
Until the sun's warmth  
Is once again given to the rose!

194. Speak, Which of Us do You Love?

Gretchen

Speak, which of us do you love?  
You kiss my lips until they hurt, Meanwhile, do you ache with longing  
For her mouth instead  
of mine?  
While my senses linger on you, Do you think of her magic instead? - As one who longs for the  
sound of the ocean Sighs at a tiny brook's murmur.  
Speak, which of us do you love?  
Her, who you think is a rose in the garden, Or me, a poor little rose in the wild, To be picked  
just because it's by the road?

## Chapter 11

Gretchen's love becomes uncomfortable for Heinrich, and he wishes she would find comfort and replacement in a new love.

### 195. The Fallen Temple Columns in Athens

Gretchen

O remnants of former glory, whose brilliance once inspired and dazzled the soul!  
Once you proudly held a sanctuary where gods turned themselves into humans!  
But in the endless shift of time, which places new things in place of the old,  
You have also been desecrated by the fierce rule of a new deity!  
Now you lie fallen in the light of day, on common, grassy ground!  
And on you, a shepherd, the guardian of his turkey flock, consumes his midday meal!

### 196. That's Why I'm Glad, As Long As Love Fools Me

Gretchen

Good morning! The birds are already awake  
And calling from the trees!  
I don't feel like getting up, oh!  
I'd rather stay in my floating dreams!  
I'm not surprised that the bird woke up,  
Even though the day is still in the mist;  
Because for the bird, when it wakes up,  
It is greeted by the joy of singing and chirping!  
But what awaits me when I, alas, wake up  
Is so serious and gloomy!  
That's why I'm glad, as long as I'm fooled  
By dreams and the intoxication of love!  
So sadly, I recall the ruins  
I saw in the fields of Greece;  
... - Won't it be the same for me, when another woman becomes yours,  
As it was for those sacred ruins? - - -

### 197. Gone

Gretchen

How happy and alive your eyes were, how they shone like the sun, as long as the sweet  
passion of love burned hot within you!  
How long and passionate your kiss was. It immersed me in its flames!  
For in the outpouring of love, you breathed your soul into it!

But now your love is gone!

Even if you don't say the harsh words, like a clock that has stopped, you silently indicate: The love is gone!

#### 198. Then and Now

Gretchen

When once my love would leave me, I was not left behind all alone;

At the threshold, he would say: "See you again!"

His farewell kiss, his goodbye look.

By the kiss, by the look I could tell, That even though my love had to go away, His heart  
couldn't separate from me And that his heart remained faithful to me.

Now when I see my love leaving me, I follow him anxiously to the threshold;

I would like to silently ask for just one kiss!

But he doesn't even think of kissing!

He busily hurries away from me – oh, He offers me his hand and tips his hat, Instead of kissing  
passionately, he says – oh:

"We will still be good to each other, won't we?"

#### 199. What Should I Do with My Kisses?

Gretchen

What should I do with my kisses,

The ones burning in my heart for you?

You come close only to ignite them,

And then you flee from their flames!

So the fiery sparks follow

The one who flees far and wide –

And what I now send you in this letter

Is - a greeting from untouched kisses!

#### 200a. Sinful Moods

Gretchen

How wickedly the moon seems to be acting, Now ... it shines into my little room!

Tenderly, it lets its rays Bounce on and off me - ... If only your kisses, countless in number,

Were bouncing all over my body now!

## 200b. Why Do I Have Two Eyes and a Mouth

Gretchen

In the twilight hour, it's sweet to celebrate the end of the day's labor, like the summer day that kissed the colorful flowers and then retires in the evening. But when two eyes and a mouth have just barely tasted the sweetness and the deepest, purest reason for their creation, barely starting to work, they must already pause, must already rest, unfortunately. The eye that longs for you cannot see you; you are far from the mouth that wishes to kiss you. How idle such a resting hour is, and what torment it is to know this! ... Why do I have two eyes and a mouth if I can neither see nor kiss you?

## 201. Butterfly to Boy

Gretchen

You, who so skillfully held on, now grown tired of play, do you wish to let me go?  
"You are still young, you can easily get over my little heart, playing, joking!" -  
... - What use is youth to me when, alas, my wing dust fell prey to your hand ... oh!  
And I can never again dare to carry myself to fresh blossoms?! -  
What use is youth to me when I no longer can shine in the shimmer of purity!  
In the light - hovering with stained wings, is such youth still youth living?  
Was it that with my wings, in pride, the butterfly got caught in your net?  
Twisting, turning, touched by your hands, plucked at, nearly pulling off,  
my delicate wing in so many careless, loose ways! - ... You no longer seem aware of what  
sweet pleasure it was for you!  
Do you cast me, cruel one, after torment - as I believe - now to the dust to be preyed upon?  
Could you, with a human heart, forgive yourself such a playful cruelty?  
...and who could ever forgive the one who forgets to be - human!

## 202. Unforgivable (Butterfly to the Boy)

Gretchen

They chase after me in the groves, Reach for me, try to grab me, And catch me while I am  
intoxicated by the sun.

## Chapter 12

Gretchen rejects the idea of seeking comfort in a new love. Completely devoted to Heinrich with all her heart, she humbly and pleadingly turns to him for love.

### 203. The Night and - I

Gretchen

O silent sufferer, dark night, How your fate mirrors mine!  
Despite the moon's rays and starry splendor, Sorrow never leaves you!  
A host of stars honors you, Gazing at you with a thousand eyes;  
Yet they don't provide what you desire: The warmth that illuminates and brings joy!  
As the sun flees far away, Your existence is hopeless - Your breath longs for it and when it approaches - you are no more!

### 204. Praising Another's Sin

Gretchen

Here on the forest's high hill, you pine trees,  
Your rustling treetops in vain tell me  
That no one will come to disturb me,  
If I wanted to exchange kisses up here!  
There is only one person I want to kiss,  
My wandering leads me up to you,  
And oh, I miss that one person!  
And I will kiss no one, no one else!  
Because I am abandoned by that one,  
I come like a pilgrim to you, pine trees,  
To cry quietly in your shade,  
So that no one may disturb my sorrow!  
I'd rather forget how to kiss than  
Have another, like him, up here:  
"Only your kiss under the stars!"  
Let no one praise my kiss's sin!

### 205. Withering Women - Loose Flower Crowns

Gretchen

The rose begins to wither, its petals become loose, and in mockery of its former pride, the crown falls from its head. The rose, which once defended itself with thorns when insulted by a careless hand, is now like a worn-out dress strewn into the wind. Often, its last crimson petal finds its grave in the dirt.

I will not follow the fate of the rose! What once adorned me will never become loose! Its blossoming attire will never be stripped from my body and soul: - Virginitly!  
But the love that silently glowed within me in my early youth, I now release with the delight of song from my burdened chest. And in my songs - bouquet after bouquet - I scatter its last glowing embers!

#### 206. Just Give Me Your Excess

Gretchen

The moonlit nights here in the meadows of autumn  
Reveal the deepest secrets of nature's rituals.  
Creation, wishing to share its magic with humanity,  
Sprinkles enchantment upon the heart.  
But see, how few eyes ever witness this,  
As night after night passes by unseen!  
Habit lets us be satisfied with spring,  
Only letting the day's blue sky delight our eyes.  
In your soul, we find the gifts that nature has granted to the earth:  
The weaving of spring days and moonlit nights...  
May it be that your happiness in life is fulfilled by daytime,  
For the daylight of your feelings is now near,  
The moonlit night of your soul illuminates my life!

#### 207. Potential Love

Gretchen

There must be something more noble  
Than merely this one kind of love,  
Which, pleasantly arousing new life,  
Unites in the ecstasy of bliss!  
Yes, there is a love, a noble one,  
That springs solely from the soul,  
Filling the empty cup of existence  
With pure and precious joy!  
It is the ardor that cannot cool down,  
Even if it must renounce...  
From which the sweet emanations  
Flow in a pure, blissful soul kiss,—  
It is the ardor with which I cling  
In sacred, eternal loyalty to you,  
Even if your mouth doesn't kiss my cheek,  
And all your kisses belong - to her!

## 208. I Want to Be Your Comrade

Gretchen

I want to be your comrade!

- But I'd rather be your love! - And if it can't be different, I won't cry over it!

Take this trembling hand here!

I offer it to you as a friend.

But I'd rather use it tenderly to often stroke your soft hair!

And my pale lips vow to dedicate themselves to comforting you!

- But they'd rather borrow your kisses every hour! -

I want my eyes, filled with tears, to guide you near and far.

- How they would like to dive into yours, merging our souls! -

I will restrain this heart, giving up love,

And share the joys and pains with my beloved.

As - your "comrade"!

## 209. A Settlement

Gretchen:

Must I, then, in your heart,

Vacate my old place,

Because now a new treasure,

Alas, moves in as the mistress instead of me?

Grant me one request:

Allow me in the heart, to which I clung with my whole soul, - "a settlement!"

## 210. The Christmas Tree Among the Abandoned

Gretchen

With Christmas gifts, simple and colorful, I decorated the fir tree and sighed quietly: "Oh, if only I could dream again of those springtime dreams beneath it!"

Those dreams where I felt such blissful moments, Feeling myself in your passionate kiss, In the secluded woodlands, When the stars peeked through the dark pine trees, Shining invitingly, As if whispering to me: "So kiss him and be - his!"

That dream never came into my room; It never showed up as I tied the nuts and little candles to the Christmas tree! I closed my eyes; perhaps the dream would come, The dream that built my happiness, But through my closed eyelids, I saw you with the bride!

I saw her clinging to your arm, like gilded apples and little lights on a pine tree, sparkling on the Holy Christmas festival.

Then, while my child joyfully danced around the tree in circles, Your memory brought my wounded soul quietly to a graveyard.

To a grave where a gray stone looks bleakly into the night, Reminding me of the profound sorrow When a father's loving eyes no longer watch over us!

There, I saw myself kneeling in the snow, Weeping with my head leaned against his grave,  
And felt the father's spirit mourn with me, To whom I have shared all my sorrows!  
"My child, fate has struck many incurable wounds in my heart – You know, how I have borne  
my suffering with resignation at all times..."  
And from the peaceful resting place, My soul quietly slipped away, With a farewell hope: "I  
hope soon, father, I will rest beside you!"  
Meanwhile, the colorful candles burned out - The child's joyous laughter suddenly stopped;  
And our child asked my lonely heart: "Where is father now?"



## Chapter 13

Heinrich turns completely away from Gretchen and marries another. The child dies and Gretchen becomes despondent.

### 211. "Farewell and Be Cheerful"

Gretchen

You are leaving me to be with another:  
"Farewell, and cheerfully forget about me!"  
Pluck the carnation  
And throw it away  
And say: "Do not wither  
In the desolate place!"  
Shoot at the dove  
And hit it in the heart  
And tell it: "Do not believe  
In your pain!"  
And... leave me to be with another there -  
And say: "Be cheerful  
And - live on!"

### 212. Wilted Flowers

Gretchen

From the windowsill, out of the vase,  
Your roses, long withered and dead,  
Once bloomed delightfully to the eye  
In white and crimson red!  
Though their color has faded away,  
Though their petals have dried up,  
Their scent filled my room  
And continues to invigorate it!  
That's how love will come to be,  
Which blossomed for me briefly,  
It lives on, even if withered and gone,  
It continues to weave within my soul!

### 213. The Woman's Fading

Gretchen

You ask, my friend, how it's revealed  
When aging strikes body and soul, What suffering and feelings can be, When a woman starts  
to grow old?  
Even before she notices in the mirror, That her youth is slipping away from her, Even before  
she understands in her heart, That old age is creeping upon her,

She senses it in the man's gaze, I believe, That no longer reaches for her with desire, Because -  
like a goat at young leaves - A man's eye clings to youth!  
The woman is still surrounded by charm, Her body is full and strong, Just like on the first  
autumn day The oak forest shines in the sunlight;  
Just as trees in green weather adorn themselves To show that spring has passed, And that  
summer is leaning into autumn: So shows the fading of youth In a woman, gently at first!  
Here and there a hair starts to turn gray - And a tooth is missing from the line, - And even if  
the years' plow has not furrowed Forehead and chin with lines:  
The delicate colors that spring had painted They - fade away.  
... But what I cannot express in the song, Because no rhyme exists for it: It's the pain that a  
heart must bear When it loves - for the last time!

#### 214. What Am I to Expect

Gretchen

What am I to expect In the hard struggle of life, When love and youth have faded, Which  
helped me endure it!  
How I envy the flowers In the meadow, field, and heath, That, when their bloom is over, Swiftly  
scatter away in the wind!

#### 215. I will not find myself ...

Gretchen

I will not find myself Fading away in my youth!  
The flower tells me this, The one that, because withering is painful, Gently lifts itself off its  
stem, And buries itself...

#### 216. Alone

Gretchen

I have no joyful welcome for May,  
Even if it blooms right before my eyes!  
How can May bring joy to my soul,  
Since you didn't come?! - I am alone!  
Though May's green leaves rustle,  
And the grove echoes with birdsongs?  
If I can't listen to your voice,  
Then I hear nothing and am - alone!  
At the window where I used to lean,  
Impatient in the twilight,  
Because the time stretched too long,  
That brought you to me, to me alone:

Now I lean sadly, oh, and stare  
Into the May-filled air,  
May does not bloom for me, because I no longer await you and am - alone!

#### 217. Contemplation in May

Gretchen

Everything that the earth nurtures and fosters had grown tired of blossoming and closed its eyes to sleep in winter.

Now, the delightful month of May has awakened it from the bonds of sleep, and everything has risen again, blooming and glowing anew!

But I look forward every day to the sleep of the night because the sorrow I carry makes me unspeakably tired!

And when I close my weary eyelids, my night prayer is often: "Oh, that I would never have to wake up again in the morning!"

#### 218. Rediscovery (Upon Returning to the Countryside)

Gretchen

I have rediscovered everything

As it was many years ago: The little cottage, covered in ivy, The pair of swallows at the windowsill,

The little bench in the arbor, - The table at which I wrote to you, - Even the inkblot, I believe, Is still left from my pen! ...

And under the elder tree

The same green lawn remains,

Which served as the softest pillow

In our dreams of love -

I can still find everything from those blissful times

In the same place;

Only the blissful feelings of love

Are - gone! ... Are gone! ... Are gone!

#### 219. The Walnut Tree

Gretchen

By the walnut tree, yes, by the walnut tree, That's where I kissed you! Oh, how the walnut tree will never forget this moment. Whenever I pass by, Its leaves and nuts remind me, With a fragrance like a legend, Of the kiss we shared! Thus, my heart calls the walnut tree, Where I embraced you with a kiss, The "Kissing Tree" for the rest of my life!

## 220. What I Do, What I Drive

Gretchen

Would you really like to know  
What I do, what I drive?  
Nothing but kissed kisses  
Is it, that here I dream and write!  
As the moon draws near through the branches With its silent light flashing:  
I see - you quietly beckoning me From the forest path for a rendezvous...  
I hear the walnut tree's crown rustling  
Here in the fresh morning breeze, I see myself exchanging kisses,  
Secretly... so no one finds us!  
Oh, the kiss that I once gave here, Is not forgotten!  
Daily it rises from the grave  
Of blessed memories!

## 221. The Haunting Spirits of Love

Gretchen

Yes, here... I recognize the place,  
Where, in the moonlight, I first saw you with my eyes...  
Here I found all my happiness!  
In just a few seconds,  
Your voice reached my heart.  
And here... by the spring...  
In your company, I walked for an hour at night, Watched over by love and the moon. - But the  
moon cannot keep a heart safe!  
For soon, both of us burned with passion!  
And here... just a few years ago,  
Yes, here... I recognize that tree,  
Where, driven by our souls,  
I embraced you and you me -  
And, locked in a passionate kiss,  
Our lips couldn't part!  
And where we were together then,  
I am now alone... and lonely!  
Where once love sought after love,  
Your love, which has died, now haunts me,  
And I feel my soul shudder  
From its haunting spirit!

222. Forced to Watch

Gretchen

With unending tears,  
I walk past the fields;  
The ears of grain bend under their weight,  
And the hay is cheerfully mowed.  
Butterflies countless  
Flutter around in the sunny air  
And, content in their quiet enjoyment,  
Gently kiss the flowers.  
On the blooming earth,  
The shepherd lies and plays his flute  
And thinks of his beloved at home,  
Of his blooming sweetheart.  
And all around is bustling,  
Everything non-stop, without rest!  
Only I must remain idle!  
I can only watch happiness...  
How the birds of the same kind slip into their nest together—  
And I watch, feeling lonely!  
You, you are on your wedding trip!...

223. The Abandoned Mother at Her Child's Sickbed

Gretchen

Lonely by the little lamp's light, I keep watch at the small bed and weep. All the nightly ghosts  
Grin through the rattling window – The wind pounds on it, howling outside.  
On the pillow, fever-red,  
Powerlessly wrestling with death, My poor child moans and groans.  
All my breathing is a prayer: "Lord, oh do not take my child from me!  
See how here, crushed by fear,  
I writhe in the dust before you!  
Let me keep the life of my life, That you, all-good, have given, So that it binds me to existence,  
Where I find no more joy!"  
...As if my soul's despair Were a joke to horrifying devils, Piercing deeply through my very core  
– As a reply to my pleading – From the rotten branch not far Comes the death bird's call!

224. Oh... alone... I lay it to rest!

Gretchen

It is early morning again today, Just like once... very early... in the green meadow;  
The sky looks down on me, blue, Just like it used to sparkle, with the greenery in the dew.  
I walk along the same paths, That I once happily walked with you, When, in a sweet rain of  
kisses, I would cling to your lips with every step...  
And again, by the flowing spring, It leads me, just like it did very early with you...  
But what kind of company do I have today, In which I laboriously walk!  
I go with him—the grave digger... and cry;  
He carries in a small coffin  
To the cemetery the child, ours, yours—  
And I... alone... lay it to rest.

225. My Little Child

Gretchen

Under the blooming linden tree,  
I sat for many days with my sweet child;  
Wilted, it lay in my arms.  
The linden tree was sweetly surrounded  
by joyful birdsong -  
And my child groaned,  
struggling for breath.  
The young little bird practiced,  
Flying up and down;  
And my beloved child,  
I laid into the narrow grave.

226. Comfort

Gretchen

Some flowers float down gently, Before they can turn into fruit, Given back to Mother Earth  
By the mighty forces of the storm.  
Do not weep for the blossom, Though it did not become fruit!  
For often a worm will creep into the fruit, Sneakily - slowly killing it!

227. What I Say to Console Myself

Gretchen

What I say to console myself for the loss of my happiness?  
- You never knew of any happiness before you had it!  
Your existence was just like the bush in winter: bare,  
Upon which the golden rays of spring first conjure all the adornments!  
And I look with humility upon what I have lost,  
Like the bush that autumn has taken what spring gave to it!

228. May God Protect Your Happiness

Gretchen

When you are with her ... the other woman, - Sitting close together As comfortably as a pair of  
swallows That have built their nest together. -  
And when your loving eyes rest Upon her face, It's like the sun's warm ray Piercing into the  
earth.  
And when she relaxes in your arms So carefree, It's like a pearl Resting quietly in its shell.  
And when I see both of you so blissful, I quietly slip away - Breathing out in a thousand  
agonies:  
May God protect your happiness!

229. I Once Had a Love

Gretchen

I once had a love. Being away from him  
Was something fate had planned for me.  
But just like the zephyr, which over miles  
Carries the fragrance of blooming roses,  
In the thousand sweet letters he wrote to me from afar,  
His love always felt close to me, making my hours happy.  
And every little letter was sacred to me,  
Because his hand had touched them.  
Did I ever ask if his writing was boring?  
Just the fact that he wrote moved me deeply!  
And all those letters, where he fumbled with words about love, where he sang of love,  
I collected them all;  
They are my treasure for all my life.  
A keepsake from my beloved,  
My little jewelry box holds them as its treasure;  
The first letter he ever wrote,  
I will take with me to - the grave!

230a. The Waterman (My Story)

Gretchen

I looked down at the Danube River;  
Then you quietly approached.  
It compelled me to look into your eyes—  
I listened to your words.  
And I picked sweet flowers  
From your soul, which was glowing;  
They exuded a magical fragrance  
That deeply affected me.  
I only listened and watched,  
And forgot the risk I was taking—  
And before I could realize it,  
I was lying in your arms.  
And as I gazed into the waves  
Of the Danube River with you,  
A childhood tale about the "Waterman"  
Came to my mind,  
The Waterman who draws children,  
Who pick flowers at the shore,  
Down into the depths...  
With his enchanting magical hand.

230b. My Departure

Gretchen

I feel that soon I will say my goodbye to the beautiful world. But not out of fatigue, and not carried to my grave dead, surrounded by hypocritical sighs!  
You go ahead of me by a second, waving to me: I did not wait for you in vain, as I asked hour after hour my whole life long: "When, oh, will he be mine again?"  
And on my lifeless lips, a smile announces the trace of my last joy, because now they find you forever, they who could only seek you here.  
And, the songs I sang to you surround my ears before they close forever, once again reminding me how I greeted you in every breath!  
And the flowers, intertwined, gently lay me upon their crowns because in life I sang many thousands of songs in their praise.  
From the valley and the pastures, birds fly to my bier and sing solemn farewell psalms to me, because I was their sister in song.  
And the winds will dress festively in bright May in my honor, because I shared all my joys and sorrows with them in song so faithfully!  
And behind me, lost in time, follow the hours of the days, the hours of the nights, from which I drank the happiness of existence when I thought of you, my love!  
And no grave, no narrow one, will surround us from which the wind carries away decay!  
United with you in immortal life, my song of love resounds everywhere!



## Chapter 14

Heinrich writes in his diary one year after his marriage:

### 231. Fading Sigh of Longing

Heinrich

There by the chestnut tree That leans against your window, In the renewed dream of spring,  
My heart yearns deeply and passionately!  
If only I could be the titmouse That just returned From the long winter journey And found its  
old happiness again there! ...

### 232. First of May

Heinrich

Today I went to the the Park,, It is May 1st;  
I passed by chestnut trees And thousands of onlookers,  
Who stood there tirelessly And threw envious glances At the "decorated" carriage, At my  
decorated - happiness,  
I smiled at the envious ones And thought to myself:  
... With you by the - chestnut tree once How lovely was the first of May!

### 233. In Pairs - Lonely

Heinrich's Wife

Good morning, friend, the sun is already high and shining brightly on your pillow - and I step  
softly to your bed to kiss the sleep from your eyes!  
Let me, with the sun's hopping light, kiss you in competition!  
Oh, if only her kiss were the only rival I had!  
The pair of doves in the morning light, about to take flight together,  
see us together, but do not guess how, even when kissed by me, you are lonely!  
For she, yes she, alas, is not here, the one who holds all your thoughts -  
what worth is my kiss, my love to you, which wishes to encircle you so faithfully?!

234. I Have a House, - It Is Mine!

Heinrich

I have a house, - it is mine!

There is so much beauty and love inside, - A soft and fine bed, - My fire in my fireplace!  
In the stable, magnificent horses, They take me out in a carriage - And spirited, powerful  
friends Honor my house as guests!

I have rank and high positions, More than enough to satisfy ambition - And achievements  
plentifully flow to me And many goals have been met. -

And calm and peace spread far from my house;

For those - who pass by..., Joy greets them from the window! - -

235. The Realization - Too Late

Heinrich

I walk the path of life with two people, yet still walk it so lonely!

How could it be lit with joy, if I walked it together with you!

The path never seems adorned with flowers for two who walk together,  
If what one takes from their soul doesn't have a fragrance for the other.

The sky never greets the hearts of two who perceive it differently,  
As cloud and sunshine don't enter the heart through the same prism!

Two go through life happily, indeed,

Watching Earth's circles delightedly and the changing stride of times:

When one is powerfully drawn to the other,

Bound by magical forces, like star to star, even if time flies,

They hold each other unbreakably...

Many doves settled in my dovecote and fluttered here and there throughout the yard all day.

And when I awoke in the soft pillow at dawn,

I heard their blissful cooing:

... Who would suspect how miserable I feel!!

And the path may be beautiful for the swan, that hasn't paired with the - hen;

For it's pleasant for him on the water's way, and she scratches in the barnyard.

But such sin is not committed by animals that pair according to natural laws -

Such mad sinners are only us, who chase through life under coercion!

## Chapter 15

Gretchen dies of grief. A year after her death, Heinrich writes in his diary:

### 236. All Souls' Day

Heinrich

In the surge and bustle of the people,  
Who are flocking today  
Out to the cemetery,  
The path also led me there.  
Right beside me wobbled along  
An old man, lost in a daydream,  
His white hair told the story that  
His fighting and striving were over.  
In his hands, glowing with heartfelt warmth,  
He held a simple little wreath,  
Crafted without artifice  
From flowers and evergreen.  
In the old man's furrowed face,  
Which was fixed on the little wreath,  
I read the whole story,  
That surrounded those flowers there...  
In his dull gaze, you could read:  
"I carry you to the grave,  
Which holds the one who was my everything,  
Without whom I am so miserable now!  
Instead of laying this wreath  
On her grave, I wish I lay there with her,  
Whom I seek in all my paths!  
When will she finally take me from here?!  
Since she departed from here,  
I live in the memories of the past:  
Thinking about her, her actions  
Is all my, all my joy!  
... How I picked roses for her  
The first time from the hawthorn,  
How she nourished our child with corn—  
How I closed her eyes—  
How peacefully we walked  
The path of life together!  
We fought and suffered—  
Laughed and cried as a pair!  
Oh, that now with my walking stick  
My foot alone wanders  
The path I still have ahead of me:  
Oh, that I soon reach the end!"  
And as I looked at him,

He saw in my eyes:  
I know the story of his little wreath,  
—And tears bathed my eyelids...  
Oh, that I trampled my happiness,  
That your love gave me! ...  
I am not even allowed to cry and pray  
At your grave!