

My dearest Pupperl!

I don't know whether I have already written that I have been invited for a few days by a lady with whom I had corresponded from Vienna. I naturally and happily accepted the invitation and am now about 2 hours outside London in a real English cottage. The landscape is simply like a fairy tale. The whole "country" here doesn't look like country but rather like a huge park with wonderful expansive meadows. very very old huge trees of all kinds, oaks, beeches, birches and many tropical ones: laurel, wild chestnuts and many others which I don't know. There are sheep grazing on the meadows and horses. It is so peaceful and quiet as if one were at the end of the world and not near the biggest city of all. My hostess is a very old but sweet "teacher"! She used to have a large school. Then there are also her two sisters, also very old. One of them used to be a missionary in India. The house is squeaky clean, of course, and full of punctuality and very very quiet and for miles not an ashtray or anything similar. It is always quiet, only during the meals do they talk a little. Never sing or laugh. They constantly have some work, be it in the garden or in the house, or sewing. Once in a while they look at a book, but I think they are napping a little. Are you getting the picture? And into this house I came a bursting. And because I always know very quickly which way the wind is blowing, and because I was really very grateful for the nice invitation, I made a big effort to show my appreciation. I helped with this and that, was quiet as a mouse but observant.

They asked yesterday, could I cook ? and unfortunately I said yes (like Suserl). In short, I cooked the whole dinner last night: chicken soup, tomato sauce with potatoes and short pastry. But you can't imagine my panic and fear when they had taken me by my word that I was able to serve up a dessert for that same evening. I didn't have the faintest idea how to do it and of course, no cook book. But then I had an idea which turned out to be my salvation. Somehow I knew that there was an Austrian cook named Minna somewhere in the neighborhood. In a hopeful mood I jumped on my host's bike it was so high (they are all immensely tall) and disregarding death (the bike had no back pedal break and I can't jump off properly) I went in search of the cook. I found her! Now I have the recipe. 4 oz flour rub with 3.5 oz butter, 1 tbsp sugar and one egg yolk. Make a dough. Bake half of the dough and cover with steamed apple pieces. Then make a lattice on top with the rest of the dough. Bake again but not too much. Please remember this and try it out and for the rest of your life call it "Miracle Cake ". It has earned this name. But misery caught up with me. The Miracle Cake must have made such a wonderful impression that the usually mute hostess suddenly voiced her wish to have me stay on in their house. I should run the house for them, cook and clean etc. They like me very much (obviously I had tried too hard to please which has never happened to me before). Of course without pay, since I don't have a work permit and am not allowed to accept money. So now I don't know what to do and am very worried. You must know, my sweet Pupperl, one really has to think this over carefully. I wrote down all the advantages and disadvantages on a piece of paper: Advantage = free room and board. Learn English. Learn to run a house Learn to cook. Disadvantage = only one! Convent life. No person to talk to. No variety. Complete loneliness and extremely boring. No radio, no music, nothing. (Am getting sad). London is a wonderful city, surely I won't starve to death there either. On the other hand, one should not dismiss such an offer, maybe it would make God angry? Please ask Alice about it, she is such an expert in this field. Do you think I should try it? Maybe a dry run for about a month? Well, if I would earn a few bucks I wouldn't even hesitate, but only for the meals? I definitely wouldn't have it easy, they are expecting another person to join them.

Can you see my headache? HE (the visitor) even smokes, but without a cigarette. That can only be accomplished in the toilet. God, what misery. If only you were here then nothing would be a problem. Enough of it all. Am going to London tomorrow no matter what and there we will discuss it all at the highest court. A top Grandmufti day. Now many hundredthousand special birthday kisses and many millions God protect you, and a small, modest, uninteresting but still a small package from your ardently loving Mutti also called Maunz and Mufti. If possible, send to Ogrosi (Paul).

(Paul's letter by chance copied on same page):

Dearest Juliettchen! Am continuing this letter right away and also thank you for your detailed letter, for the poem and the golden lock of hair. Often when I sing, and this happens upon rising in the morning, or rather while washing, better yet drying, I can only remember the first two lines! Et habeat bonam pacem. Et sedet post fornacem. But I had forgotten why I knew this song and words. And now, after so many years, you brought back into my memory the whole song which we used to sing while drinking the good Bohemian beer (as students). Could the melody still be the same? Maybe you can jot down a few measures for me, it will jog my memory. Whatever I am singing now is surely my own composition. Your lock of hair will of course be filed along Gusti's and Mia's but well labeled, since they are all the same blond and easily confused. Peculiar, how the blond hair remains dominant in our family inspite of occasional mixtures. Don't laugh, but I had been just as blond as you. Not only can I prove it by old photos, but an anciently old lady who, as a young girl used to sew for us in Prague just reminded me of this fact the other day. So there is nothing to giggle about.

We got a not so happy letter from Mutti from Oct. 8th. At that time she was still undecided about the four ladies. Definitely a difficult decision. Gusti has sent wonderful photos of herself which Mutti probably got too. Imagine, for the last four weeks Gusti has been a music and French teacher at St. Catherine's college in St. Paul, Minn., USA at 45 degree north latitude and 92.5 degrees west longitude. There are about 1000 school girls between 17 and 22 years old. Gusti has free room and board plus 50. dollars a month which will be raised. In addition she is permitted to give private lessons etc. So far I have not received any description of that place but Gusti is hoping for the best. I wrote to Suserl via the Red Cross, there is no telling when she might receive the letter. I wrote Mutti on the 18th. You can write her, that I am doing very well, that I am corresponding with Belgrade but only for a summer vacation, there is no reason to plan for (a trip) right now.

You got a wealth of presents (for your birthday), you seem to be very popular and your friends are indeed very good people. Which Paprika (do you want)? The green or the red seasoning? I could send you the latter whenever you tell me, I have enough of it here. You may make drawings again, only not landscapes. The others were always funny. Habeas bonam pacem, vale bene. (Go in peace, good bye) your old Ogrosi.

Dear Mrs. Alice. Many thanks for the grandiose arrangement at Julietta's birthday. There is only ONE flower in the vast bouquet of blooms which you are constantly providing for Julietta. I hope we and Julietta can some day thank you for it all not only in words but in deeds. There must be better times ahead one day, then we will show you what we are capable of. Many best regards to you and Gretly, Ogrosi.

Mutti's letter is wonderful, keep it carefully.