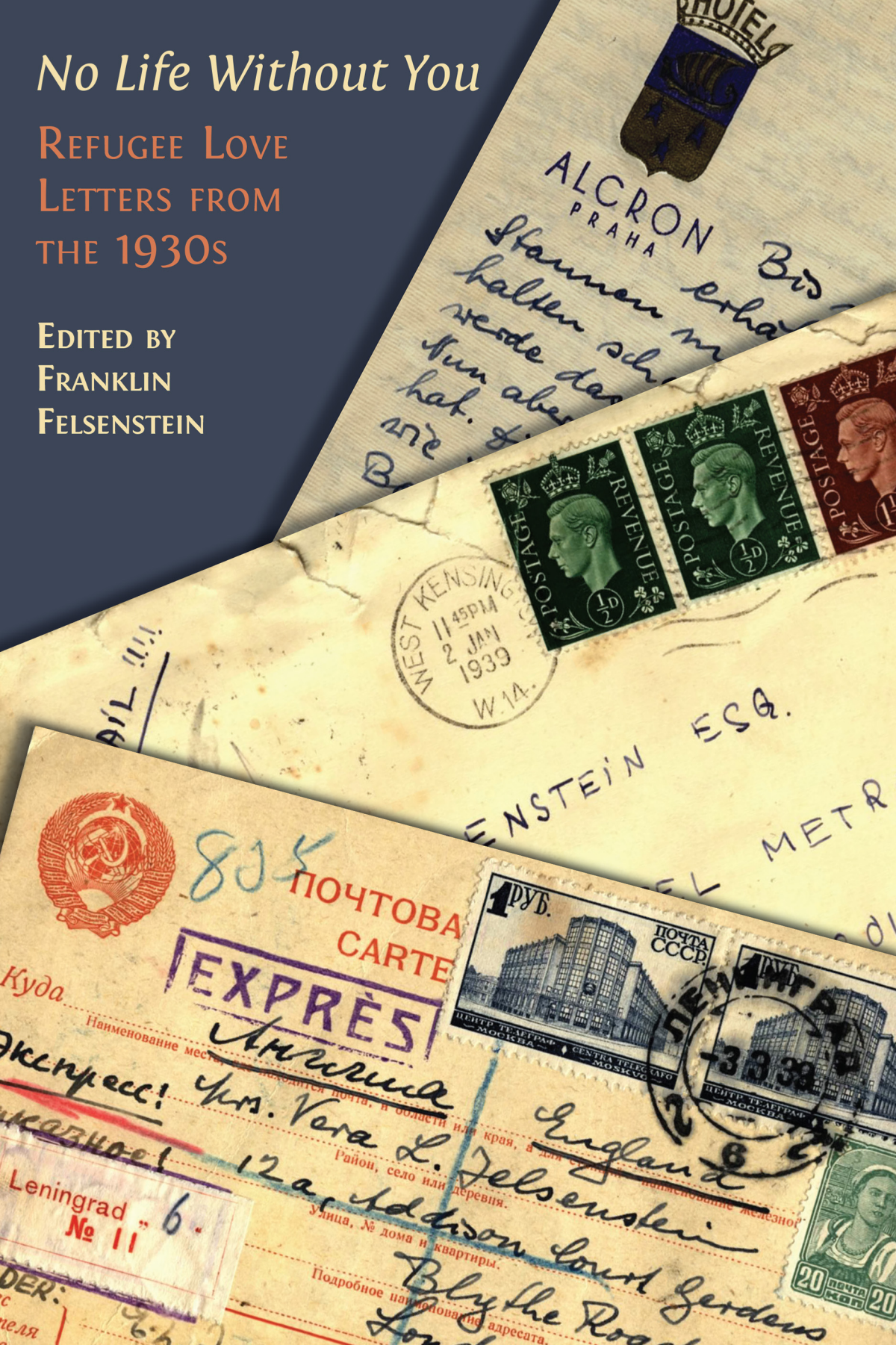


# No Life Without You

## REFUGEE LOVE LETTERS FROM THE 1930s

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# Twenty-nine: “Today, for the First Time in My Life, I Wished I Were a Man!”

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1 December 1938–23 January 1939

## POLITICAL TIMELINE, OCTOBER 1938–JANUARY 1939

- 1-10 October 1938: German army occupies Czech Sudetenland.
- 1 November 1938: Polish Jews living abroad have their citizenship renounced.
- 7 November 1938: Herschel Grynszpan, a seventeen-year-old Jew, shoots dead German diplomat Ernst vom Rath in Paris.
- 9-10 November 1938: As reprisal for Vom Rath’s assassination, Nazi leaders instigate a nationwide pogrom against Jews, known as Kristallnacht (Night of Broken Glass). Multiple synagogues destroyed, properties looted, and scores of Jews killed. Thousands rounded up and sent to concentration camps.
- 12 November 1938: Jewish community fined one billion Reichmarks to pay for damage done during Kristallnacht.
- 15 November 1938: All Jewish pupils are expelled from German schools.
- 25 November 1938: In the Soviet Union, Lavrentiy Beria appointed People’s Commissar for Internal Affairs (Chief of Police).

- November 1938: British Government allows 10,000 unaccompanied Jewish children to be admitted into Great Britain (the so-called Kindertransport).
- 3 December 1938: German decree that all remaining Jewish businesses are to be “Aryanized.”
- 6 December 1938: Germany and France sign a nonaggression pact.
- 1 January 1939: Jewish men in Germany must adopt the middle name of Israel, Jewish women the middle name of Sara.
- 11-14 January 1939: Neville Chamberlain visits Mussolini in Rome for appeasement talks designed to draw Italy away from supporting Hitler, but nothing is achieved.
- 30 January 1939: On the sixth anniversary of his accession as Chancellor, Hitler announces that, in the event of war, the Jews of Europe will be exterminated.
- January 1939: Defying blockage, “illegal immigration” from Germany to Palestine begins.

*Shortly after Mope reached England in late September, the couple set off on their postponed vacation. During their stay in the south of France, Vera was to become pregnant. After their return to England toward the end of October, they counted the days before Mope’s unavoidable departure in compliance with his restricted residence permit. His route to Moscow took him by plane through Paris, Stockholm, and Helsingfors (Helsinki), and then by train via Leningrad. Once there, a poor global market, which brought little business for Mope, only compounded his unease.*

*Much of the correspondence from this time period concerns Mope’s mounting fear that the demands of Vera’s work at Marks & Spencer risk endangering her pregnancy. Her exhilaration about her personal career when she received word that she was to be put in charge of the company’s new flagship store, the Pantheon on Oxford Street, brought only “deep depression” to Mope, who worried that, with a baby due in the summer, she was taking on far more than she should. He was relieved when the head of the welfare department at M&S ruled that the promotion was indeed too demanding for an expectant mother. Vera’s disappointment was palpable.*

*Meanwhile, the situation of the Jews in Germany (and slightly less so in Italy where Vera’s best friend Hilde still lived) was more and more dire, Vera receiving almost daily letters to try to help family, friends, and even complete*

*strangers, to escape. For all that, there were spots of light. Through the newly initiated Kindertransport scheme, Ketty Goldschmidt, Mope's eldest sister, was able to send the first two of her four children—Lassar and Gertrud—to England, to be cared for by their grandmother and other relatives until the anticipated arrival of their parents. Grete Moschytz, his other sister still in Germany, took her four children to join her husband, Norbert, in Davos, Switzerland, though permission to settle there was denied. Released from Buchenwald, where he had been incarcerated following Kristallnacht, Mope's hapless cousin, Semy, the former head partner at the Gebrüder Felsenstein, also received papers that permitted him to leave for England, though on the non-negotiable condition that he relinquish the company's remaining foreign assets to the Nazis.*

*This section takes us through to Vera's twenty-ninth birthday on 23 January 1939.*

#### MOPE TO VERA

Stockholm, 2 December 1938

I was so pleased and happy to have talked to my most beloved girl yesterday evening and I hope that you will be able to fulfill my most intense and passionate wish—to remember to take care of yourself.

I need to report to you that my extensive conversation with Schapiro in Paris followed a very harmonious course. He is counting on me participating at a commission rate of 7%. He expressly told me that his business partners are very satisfied and have great trust in my work and knowledge. That is how one bluffs oneself through life!

Please go and see the doctor, send him whatever he wants, take the medicine regularly, and take care of your health for the future citizen more so than for M&S, because that is something even the highest salary could not buy. Your Mope

#### VERA TO MOPE

London, 2 December 1938

Thank you, my Mopelein, for your telegram from Stockholm, the content of which Muttilein read to me over the phone shortly after 6 p.m. while I was at the store, and I was happy and relieved and now, I am waiting, full of impatience, for the one from Helsingfors which will arrive here, God willing, tomorrow evening.

I hope that my most beloved friend will have a good night's rest in a comfortable hotel bed tonight. I talked to Fred on the telephone a little earlier—he had called me this morning. He heard from you that I know Mr. Cooper and wanted to know how well I know him and if I could do something for his cousins who come from the same town as Uncle Joseph, or ask Mr. Cooper for help on their behalf. I told him that I only knew Mr. Cooper from his office and not, as he seemed to believe, privately, and that it would be much better to ask Otto Schiff who knows Mr. Cooper much better than I do and through whom I was introduced in the first place. He understood that and suggested that he get in contact with Joan Stiebel once again and I offered to contact Joan or Otto in the matter if he could not make any headway. I hope that you agree with the above—it seemed the right thing to do.<sup>130</sup> Your Little Witch

### MOPE TO VERA

Leningrad, 4 December 1938

Yesterday in Helsingfors, I bought a few things—a number of books, rubber shoes, and some other things—before I went out to eat. The only thing I could not get was a pocket calendar with all the Jewish and Catholic holidays, weights, measurements, etc. Maybe you could send me one when the opportunity presents itself.<sup>131</sup> Since dinner at the Hotel Torni, I asked for a day room there, lay down on the bed, and went to sleep immediately. I was dead tired. Then, last night, I went back to sleep on the train and hope that I can do the same today on my trip to Moscow. The preceding days were quite exhausting and the body demands its rights.

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130 Joseph Felsenstein, Mope's uncle, was a younger brother of Isidor, and lived in Fürth, where Fred Rau also had relatives. Following Kristallnacht, Fred made frequent trips to Germany, rescuing family members by smuggling them into Holland, often in the trunk of his car. From there, he provided papers to allow them to travel on to England. In late December 1938, using identification papers that he had acquired, Fred escorted four children of his cousins from Fürth, the Rosenbaums, across the border into Holland. Ernest Napier Cooper was the British Home Office functionary who had helped Vera following her arrival in Britain in 1933. It is unclear whether he was able to issue Fred Rau with the necessary documents to aid the escape of the Rosenbaum children and their subsequent settlement in England.

131 The complications of the Soviet dating system in the 1930s made it essential for Mope to have ready access to a western calendar.

Just now, I hear that I have to leave for the train station in half an hour. I think the letter will reach you sooner if I post it in Moscow, so I will mail it tomorrow morning. By then, it will be around 11 o'clock here (now, it is 1 o'clock here, that is 10 o'clock your time). Completely and utterly, Your Mope

VERA TO MOPE

London, 8 December 1938

My love, this afternoon, I went to see Mr. Nixon on Harley Street.<sup>132</sup> He is about thirty years old, quite likable and very pleasant. He did not even examine me, only took my blood pressure and wrote down what I should be eating, more or less what I eat anyway. He asked me if I can drink milk and suggested taking in about one and a half pints per day, since I would get one gram of calcium without medication which he considered best, considering that it would also be advantageous where milk production is concerned. I asked him about sports and he said that swimming and playing tennis were both *extremely favorable* if one did not overdo it. Additionally, he thought that I would certainly be able to work until April which satisfied me quite a bit. So, now you know approximately everything!

A little while ago, I was on the telephone with your dear mother who is doing very well and who sends you all her love. She told me, and remarked that you would probably be very interested—Hugo Hoffman from Frankfurt was able to get out of the camp.<sup>133</sup>

The mail brought me a letter from the Home Office this evening in which they ask me to mail your expired German passport to them. I found one in the desk which expired in January 1938 and if I do not find

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132 William Nixon was already a leading figure in his field; see Geoffrey Chamberlain, *Special Delivery: The Life of the Celebrated British Obstetrician William Nixon* (London, 2004).

133 Approximately 30,000 Jewish men were incarcerated at Buchenwald, Dachau and Sachsenhausen concentration camps following Kristallnacht, and only freed after they agreed to relinquish their assets and leave Germany. Hugo Hoffman (1893-1941), the husband of Mope's cousin Frieda (née Weil), was arrested and sent to Buchenwald, from which he was released on account of his service in the German Army during World War I. He escaped to England, where (with funds provided by a brother-in-law who had settled in London many years before) he opened a boarding house in Buxton, Derbyshire. Unfortunately, he was run over by a bus during a blackout in 1941 and died from the injuries he sustained.

a different one, I will send that one. I am wondering when your first letter from the U.S.S.R. will get here.

I have to close now and go to bed early for once. *Your* little witch

### MOPE TO VERA

Moscow, 9 December 1938

During the last two days, I was unable to write to my sweet little girl. Yesterday evening, I participated in a banquet where people drank a lot, as usual, and I was glad that I had a few "Alka-Seltzer" tablets which helped to clear up my head!

Until now, it has not been cold at all here, and I put the fur coat in the closet. However, the cold will come soon enough. Nothing is free! Generally, people are unhappy over the fact that my beloved did not accompany me, despite all the efforts they put into procuring the visa for you. Unfortunately, I had to explain to those people that the time right before Christmas is your busiest time at work and that your coming here right now was completely out of the question, but that I had every reason to hope and was counting on you coming here in February. You will most likely have to interrupt your work anyway at that time and the only thing I fear is that the traveling might be too strenuous for you. Otherwise, that would be a wonderful diversion for you because, when one is suddenly out of work and has to sit at home without anything to do—seemingly without a reason—it is anything but pleasant. Please discuss the question with Dr. Rothschild and the other doctor in detail. You would be able to stay here until the end of March and travel back with me then, as long as the two of them consider such a trip to be *completely* without danger to your condition.

I am *very* interested in finding out what will become of Grete and Ketty. I do hope so very much that they will be able to get out of that damned Germany soon. I wonder if Lassar will receive his permit before his sixteenth birthday. After that, it will be much more difficult to bring him in or out because he will be considered a child only until then.<sup>134</sup> I would also like to know what will become of Carlchen Rosenfeld, Semy, etc.

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<sup>134</sup> Mope's nephew, Lassar (Leslie) Goldschmidt, the oldest son of Ketty and David Goldschmidt, was born on 17 December 1922. Under terms agreed by the House of Commons in response to Kristallnacht, Jewish refugee children below the age of seventeen could be admitted into Britain through the so-called "Kindertransport"

I kiss you and embrace you most tenderly and lovingly and would be so very happy if you could come here in February. Completely, Your Mope

VERA TO MOPE

London, 11 December 1938

Today, I made a date with Hannalein to meet her for a walk. She is a straw-widow for two days, because Fred drove to the city where your former representative Michel lives to find out about an acquaintance of his.<sup>135</sup> Hanna told me that on either Tuesday or Thursday of this week, Lassar and Gertrud will come here; the former will stay with her and the latter with your dear mother. When Grete's children come over, Gertrud will be moved to live with your mother—she has already been registered at a tailoring school, and although it was *full-up*, they made a concession for her after Hanna explained the circumstances: namely that the child would not receive a permit to enter the country if she had not been accepted at a school. I will write a few lines to Ketty today to tell her how happy I am that her children are coming.

My love, I completely agree with you: that it is *the* main duty or one of the main duties of any woman to do everything within her power and her abilities to ensure that the future child will be strong and healthy, as far as that is possible. You can depend on the fact that I will do everything possible and assure you that I will do the right thing.

I still want to write a card to Annelie to find out how she is doing. My love, I wish you the best of luck for all your work, and all the most heartfelt and loving thoughts! *Your* Little Witch

MOPE TO VERA

Moscow, 15 December 1938

I am very happy to hear from you that Hugo Hoffman was released and hope that Eugen Weil, his brother-in-law, is also free.<sup>136</sup> It will not

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scheme. Approximately 10,000 children escaped from Nazi Germany in this way before the start of the war. Most of the children would never see their parents again.

135 Vera is writing in coded fashion to indicate that Fred was visiting Fürth to secure the escape from Germany of family members. "Michel" was a former functionary of the Gebrüder Felsenstein.

136 Mope's cousin, Eugene Weil (1881-1947) was among the many Jewish men who were arrested and incarcerated by the SS after Kristallnacht. Following his release,

be any consolation that so many others are feeling just as bitter about the fact that they cannot help their friends in that damned country. I am exceedingly worried about my sisters with their families and I find the helplessness against that gang of criminals and their criminal laws deeply depressing.

This evening—it is 12.30 now—I still have to go to the post office, write a letter to Schapiro, and copy my calculations, among many other things. For this reason, I now have to interrupt the conversation—I kiss you, embrace you most passionately, ever so lovingly and gently and filled with the most ardent longing, you, most beloved, you!

### VERA TO MOPE

London, 17 December 1938

Lassar and Gertrud arrived here yesterday and I already talked to him on the telephone. He will get a welcoming tie from me and Gertrud an overall. As Lassar told me, the Raus are trying to get visas for Ketty and her husband to come here, and the two younger children have been invited by your dear mother's sister to come to Amsterdam—she offered to take care of them.<sup>137</sup>

Fred called a short time ago and told me—in a very dear manner—I had asked Hanna about it last Sunday—about a method that could be used to bring people out illegally.

Completely and utterly, *Your Little Witch*

### MOPE TO VERA

Moscow, 18 December 1938

As far as business is concerning, things are not working out the way I would like them to, since they do not want to give me the contracts I had negotiated—I would really like to finalize them—for the time being, and I

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he and his family emigrated to the United States in May 1939.

137 Oma Lenchen's sister, Rachel Wolff (née Marx) lived in Amsterdam. After the Nazis occupied Holland, she fled to Paris with her son and daughter-in-law, where, in the fall of 1942, they were among the murder victims of Dr. Marcel Petiot, a collaborator who posed as a member of the resistance. The horrific circumstances are described by David King, *Death in the City of Light* (New York: Crown Publishers, 2011); see pp. 168-171, and passim.

am afraid that the prices—by the time I will be able to finalize them—will be too high to complete them. However, I can do no more than make the best effort possible, and I have been doing just that day after day.

Today is the first day of Chanukah and I really hope that you will go to Fred's. That might be a little much for my little girl, but nevertheless, I am curious to read your report, and it would really please me if you were to see a little bit of the anniversary of the Maccabees and the celebrations. The story is probably not unknown to you, but if so, it is interesting enough to become familiar with it. It even made quite an impression on Peter the Great, or so I read quite by accident today.

I love you most passionately, my little girl, and I kiss you, filled to the brim with the greatest longing, and all those little places of your face and body, where it gives you the most pleasure. I embrace you tenderly and wish that I could do so for real, and then, I could go to sleep feeling your beloved body close to mine, and the happiest thoughts would accompany me into sleep, as has happened many times before and still so *very* rarely. *Your Mope*

## VERA

Journal entry, 18 December 1938

A few dates concerning my pregnancy:

last menstruation 27. 9. 38

I assume (I would rather say I am convinced) date of impregnation after October 15 (Nizza).<sup>138</sup>

16. Oct.: swelling of the outer genitalia for about 2-3 days and complications

17. Oct.: heaviness in the limbs, temperature, headache

18. and 19. Oct.: completely unable to take any nourishment, slight apathy, weakness, repeated vomiting

20. Oct.: slow return to feeling normal

21. Oct.: got up and walked to the flower market

26. Oct.: arrival in London

27. Oct.: store, continuing constipation that can only be resolved by laxatives

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<sup>138</sup> i.e., Nice, the city on the French Riviera.

Constipation lasts for about 11–14 days after arriving in London, then goes away completely. After that, during the first two weeks of November, during the morning at the store, slight feeling of sleepiness and queasy lightheadedness until about 10.30, time of regular bowel movement, after that complete feeling of being unwell.

19. Nov.: slight flickering and headache (very light) in the morning

20. Nov. (Sunday): around 6 p.m., slight flickering again and onetime vomiting—very light

Other than that, *completely* normal; very tired in the evenings, which is to be expected considering the Xmas rush.

2<sup>nd</sup> half of Dec.: after prolonged period of standing, a very slight pain in the abdomen, similar to the preliminary phase of menstruation—after sitting down for short period, pain subsides.

All of the above-mentioned things very light and hardly worth complaining about.

I am very glad, content, and happy; I have an intelligent, kind, and fine husband whom I love most passionately and who loves me just as much. I have a career that lets me accomplish things, and I am grateful to a very kind fate every single day.

I will not and cannot make a statement about the “coming one” until later and I hope that it will be healthy and intelligent.

## MOPE TO VERA

Moscow, 19 December 1938

Those last long and content-less days of the year go by at lightning speed. It is rather strange to realize how many, many hours each day has, and to have the feeling that they are flying by anyway. My thirty-ninth birthday was an eternity ago and that is just half a year ago, and just a few hours ago, I talked to my most beloved from Victoria Station, and that took place nearly three weeks ago. Because of all that traveling, I have lost all feeling for time, but *everything* I did together with my most beloved is so infinitely close as if it just happened, and everything else that takes place away from you is in an almost forgotten past; even yesterday and how much more that which took place half a year ago?

This evening, after dinner, I slept for a little while, because the cold outside and the heated rooms produce much need for sleep, a need I give in to, since I now have the time. Today, I was able to buy another

larger batch of merchandise, but there is not much merchandise to be had right now, because the season is over and I have relatively little to do. Since it is the custom here, my colleagues and I played some games, a stupid card game the name of which I do not know. I am too untalented for the ones that require more brain power, and that is why they played a stupid one out of consideration for me—and out of decency, I cannot exclude myself. Tomorrow, I will wear the fur for the first time, because I am beginning to feel cold in the other coat. I am very glad that I have it here. There will be another big ball for New Year's Eve and we *Pushniki*<sup>139</sup> reserved a table.

It is very late at night again and I do not want to climb from my chaste bed too late tomorrow, and that is why I will close. However, before I do, as always, I want to send you my gentlest kisses and my most passionate embraces and gently caress you and your beautiful body in my thoughts. I do so long for that reality and I love you infinitely, my most beloved, you!!!

Completely, Your Mope

VERA TO MOPE

London, 20 December 1938 [postcard]

I did not write yesterday as this week is more or less like your weeks during the big sales! I promise you and it is really true that I am taking very good care of myself and as you see, I am even neglecting my sweet husband by going straight away to bed. I shall try and write to you probably to-morrow during the day. Please do *not* be sad that I have not written a letter. I am *continually* with you with my thoughts! Completely, Your Lilongo

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139 The pet name given to themselves by the foreign contingent of fur buyers working with Sojuzpushnina, the Soviet agency in charge of the sale of animal skins.

## MOPE TO VERA

Moscow, 20 December 1938

There are children one has to constantly keep under control with a stick and my darling is one of those! If I were not constantly endeavoring to temper your fervor for M&S with letters and telegrams, I am convinced that, with all your zeal for your work, you would do a lot of things that would be especially bad for your health at this particular time. I hope that I have been able to limit your wild impulse to overwork, and that means that at least *something* has been achieved. I do know you share my views that everything has to be done to let our offspring become strong and healthy, but, there is too intense an urge to work in you and someone has to keep putting on the brakes and try to reduce the respect and lessen the urge. And is there anyone besides me who has more of a claim on you and is more entitled to do so?

I embrace you with the most passionate love and the greatest longing and I kiss your eyes, your beloved mouth and many other beautiful things. *Completely*, Your Mope

## VERA TO MOPE

London, 22 December 1938

Today, I have such wonderful "*news*"!! And now I hardly know how to tell you!! They tell me that they will relocate me to the Pantheon "*Store*"<sup>140</sup> beginning January 9!!!! I could hardly breathe!

My love, I would have sent you a telegram but I know that you (probably quite beside yourself) would send one back saying, "Do not accept under any circumstances!" I called Dr. Rothschild and he said I could work until May without any problems (actually, as far as I am concerned, even longer, but since it will become obvious by then that I am expecting, it will most likely not work well for the store). My love, *please, please*, do not write in anger that I should not accept it under any circumstances. I am so very happy about it and find it so very incomprehensible that I as a foreigner will get the Pantheon Store! I would have never dreamt of it! I just talked to your dear mother on the

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140 This flagship Marks & Spencer store was built in 1938 on the site in Oxford Street where the Pantheon, an eighteenth-century structure, had stood.

telephone and gave her the news and she was also very happy. What do you have to say, my love!?

Please, please, please, do *not* say that you will not give your permission! I am sure that it will not be any more strenuous than Hammersmith and a lot healthier because the rooms in Hammersmith are cold and damp! Should they even keep the offer open after the revelation of my pregnancy, which I highly doubt unfortunately, I would have a *staff manageress* for an assistant and below her, two more assistants. On top of that, I would have *every* Saturday afternoon off and an entire Saturday off once a month. I am also curious to find out what kind of raise I will get. And now, I am afraid that I counted my chickens before they are hatched.

Today, for the very first time in my life, I wished I were a man! But nonetheless, I am anyway looking forward to our little child very, very much, and you just have to understand and forgive such a passing wish which lasts for a moment only, and it is not meant seriously anyway! Nevertheless, I was terribly pleased about the matter as such.

I love you—very, very, very much and I am very pleased and happy and content with my lot in life. Most passionately and completely, Your Little Witch

## MOPE TO VERA

Moscow, 22 December 1938

After I finished working, I went down to the restaurant to have a glass of tea and write, but it was my bad luck that there were still a few acquaintances sitting around despite the late hour and so I had to, more unwilling than willing, sit down with them. There was a married couple sitting at the table, at the end of a one-year long trip around the world. These people opened a mink farm in Wisconsin in the U.S.A. four years ago and are now working so successfully that they can afford such a long trip. The man told me that he has two thousand minks and that one thousand and five hundred of them will now be slaughtered and brought to the fur market. However, he has no idea about the prices that will be paid for his pelts at this time. As it happened, I had heard a report on the New York auction and because of that, I knew quite a bit about it. Each one of the mink females bears at least four young in the course of a year so that he can count on another large harvest next year.

The average price he will get for his merchandise lies around \$15 per piece so that he will take in approximately \$30,000 with relatively small expenses for feeding and upkeep. It is a very lucrative business that, just a few years ago, had many a farmer lose everything because they were not sufficiently informed about the question of how to feed the critters.

Today, I inspected a lot of merchandise but I was not able to make quite as much as I would have liked and I think that it will be even more difficult to make any deals during the next few days due to the *Christmas holiday*, because the Western Europeans laze around and I will be forced to wait for answers in vain.

Just now, I am reading *The Oppermanns* by Lion Feuchtwanger and it is depressing to have that disgusting time of the beginning of the Nazi era before your eyes and to relive it.<sup>141</sup> The descriptions of the individual siblings and their reactions remind me strongly of the individual responses from the diverse people at Gebrüder Felsenstein who just did not want to believe that they would be excluded from everything despite all the traditions and the recognition of their fellow citizens as highly respectable contemporaries.

While I am writing, my sweet beloved is watching me from six different photographs and I feel such an indomitable longing for the original that I can no longer describe it. On one of them, I am looking down your bathing suit, down to two of the sweetest half spheres ever and I could not imagine them to be more beautiful than the real thing, and my thoughts let me dream of other beloved places of your body, and that makes me so excited that I have to keep looking so I can imagine them as well in all their hills and valleys, even if reality keeps them hidden from me, unfortunately. I kiss all of those sweet places, which I can only imagine in my mind, sadly, and I will now take myself to my beloved in my dreams and caress her tenderly and pull all of your seductive limbs close to me and breathe in their warmth, as if I were really with you.

Completely and utterly, Your Mope

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141 Feuchtwanger's novel, published in 1933, is a particularly prescient account of the effect of Nazism on the Jews of Germany, and of the inability of assimilated Jews to comprehend the full extent of the terrors that were about to be unleashed against them.

VERA TO MOPE

London, 23 December 1938

My most heartfelt thanks for your dear telephone call! I was sooooo happy to hear your dear, beloved voice. And I was soooo very happy that you seem to be rather *pleased* about the Pantheon Store, to all appearances. Today, I will only write this very short note to my beloved, because I want to go to bed since tomorrow is another "big" day at the store! I am feeling *very well*!

I received a letter from Hilde Lewy in Genoa on Monday. Her mother-in-law received a visa to Palestine, and she is going to the U.S.A. to stay there with her sister until her departure. Hilde had to let go her girl who had been with her for three years because of the latest law passage and now has to take care of the baby, the move, and the household by herself.<sup>142</sup> They have to leave over half of their possessions behind and hope to be able to depart towards the end of January or the beginning of February. She seems very charmed by her baby.

Once again, thank you and all my love and many most loving kisses, you, my *sweetheart*!!! Most passionately and completely, Your Little Witch

MOPE TO VERA

Moscow, 23 December 1938

I am so very happy to have talked to my darling just a little while ago, and your beloved voice sounded so happy that my mood turned happy and light as well. When the call came in a while ago, I had gone downstairs, because of Pod Wychodnoi,—resigned to the fact that I would have to do without the sound of your most beloved voice today—to get something to eat and was just going to begin with very little appetite when they called me to the telephone. If you could have seen how much better everything tasted after that!!!

And now, I have not even congratulated you yet on your excellent success and advancement and I do so with *the greatest joy*, because I know and can measure what this acknowledgment—which was so very unexpected—means to you. It is really a great thing that they have chosen

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142 Mussolini introduced a raft of anti-Jewish laws in 1938, with the intention of bringing fascist Italy into line with Germany.

my loved one for such an important position and it proves how capable you are, especially after they did not take you, as a *foreigner*, as seriously as they would the *natives*. I assume that they will ask my beloved one to come to the head office for the announcement of the great event. Now, I would advise you to write a letter to your head of personnel beforehand and put it in your handbag, a letter in which you tell her about your expectant condition and give her the time at which you will most likely have to take a break from your work. You can back-date the letter just a bit if you like!

Then, when she tells you about your advancement as well as your raise, you pull out the letter and say that you had intended to let her know about the matter some time ago, but that you had hesitated because you can never be too sure during the first few months. Now, however, you felt duty-bound to call her attention to the facts, etc. This way, you will find out first of all what they were thinking concerning the raise and it proves your *fairness* with the already proven plan to call attention to your condition. I hope that these lines will reach my darling in time.

After dinner, I went for an hour long walk through the wonderful, cold, snowy night and drank hot tea afterwards. It is quite cold here but I consider the cold rather comfortable. My bronchial tubes are clear and I can breathe so very well and unimpeded. Last year, the minus temperatures were much less welcome to me. Unfortunately, the snow is removed immediately here—even while it is still falling—that is great where traffic is concerned, but I would absolutely like to experience a real winter picture of Moscow, with sleigh rides, snowball throwing children, and whatever else there is on the street where winter enjoyment is concerned.

Now I want to hurry and get to bed and try to remember the conversation with my beloved and the sweet long kiss you gave me which I did not hear, unfortunately! I embrace you with the greatest longing and filled with the *greatest* love and *great* pride for my little girl who is so capable and so successful. Completely, *Your Mope*

VERA TO MOPE

London, 28 December 1938

So—I called the *head office* this morning and was able to get an appointment for 4 o'clock with the head of personnel. I shared *that I shall have a baby*

in July! And that they would have enough time to find a replacement for the time during which I will not be there. They explained to me right away that they did not have anyone else whom they could send there and that they would be glad if I could work there until May with the condition that it is *alright for me*. And I said, "All I wanted to know was whether it's alright with you! And I only wanted to be fair and tell you!" And that was the end of the conversation. And I was so elated!!! I am all too curious to hear about the *increase* (my estimate is 10/-). Hopefully, the offer letter will come through soon.

I talked to your dear mother on the telephone a little while ago (since we closed very early today I did not go back to the store). I will go to visit her on Sunday afternoon. Alice arrived on her doorstep all of a sudden Monday evening and I am looking forward to getting to know her.<sup>143</sup>

My most heartfelt thanks for your two dear letters from the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> which I received earlier today and made waking up all the more pleasant! My love, although I do not put immense distances behind me in a short period of time, as you do, but stay in one place most of the time, I also lose all feeling for time quite often. It seems completely incomprehensible to me that I am supposed to have known my beloved for just three years at the end of next month, or better, met him back then for the very first time, and I cannot imagine, no matter how hard I try, what my life was like before that.

I just talked to Hannalein on the telephone—the poor child will also be a straw-widow over the holidays. Fred helped a few more strangers to get out of that damned country,<sup>144</sup> which is something I think is very decent of him, and next Wednesday, he has to go on another big business trip for two months. Hannalein explained to me on the telephone that she is really *fond of me* and she congratulated me on the biggest store. I thought that was very charming of her!

My love, I do not think that anything will come of my plans to join you there in February, but I also doubt that Dr. Rothschild would have agreed to that anyway.

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143 Mope's sister, Alice, had unexpectedly traveled to London from Palestine with the intention of exploring the possibility of her family resettling in England. A surviving letter from her sister Hanna to their brother Mope enunciates her plight: "Alice runs around every day in order to find a chance to build an existence for her husband, herself, and her children. Sadly, they cannot seem to get ahead in Palestine. But even here, things are difficult, as she has found out" (23 January 1939).

144 The Rosenbaum children (see note 130).

Are you happy with the Pantheon? Even if I only stayed for a very short time, two or three months, I am glad that I got M&S's biggest store and one in the West End of London, because that will be important for any kind of future work, whether for M&S or somewhere else.

My Mopeleichen, I will close now and go to bed. I kiss you in my thoughts, with the greatest tenderness, you, my love!!! *Your Little Witch*

### MOPE TO VERA

Moscow, 28 December 1938

It is not early anymore and on top of that, I had two glasses of tea with three cognacs each as medication against my cold, but I had a little rest earlier and I do not want to get up from sitting at the desk before I have sent *at least one* loving kiss by letter to my sweet one before I go to bed. Unfortunately, I was without my darling's mail again today and that means that the last of your beloved letters I received was from nine days ago today. Had I not talked to you last Friday, I would be completely beside myself, but knowing how you were feeling on the last day of the most exhausting period before *Christmas* and the following free days, I feel much calmer. I would really love to know if those three days of rest brought real rest and relaxation for my little girl and that the first day back at work today was not too exhausting.

It seems to me that the first *actual* good deed of Mr. Chamberlain was that he gave Tuesday to the London residents as a day off,<sup>145</sup> because the things he did before prove to be misdeeds over time, and I am afraid that he will add to those. Sadly, I can see more and more that my judgment concerning his politics back then was quite correct and that my rejection of the Munich surrender of the Czech Sudetenland was clearly seen, even if my darling did not want to admit it because you were under the influence of popular opinion.

Hopefully, Ketty and David can soon make it to London. It will be difficult for them to know that their children are living so dispersed, but it is a good thing that there are relatives among whom they can be distributed. What is going on with Grete and her children? I would really like to know more and hopefully nothing but good things! Also if

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<sup>145</sup> Christmas was on a Sunday in 1938, and, as a consequence, Parliament declared Tuesday, 27 December (the day after Boxing Day), a public holiday.

Semy will come to London now! You do not seem to have heard anything else about Carlchen Rosenfeld and his Lies and children, because if you had, you would have reported it. Their eldest boy is of that dangerous age and I hope that those swine do not do anything to him.

Today, I bought another batch of merchandise and I hope that my customers will be happy with the purchase. During this month, I have now made deals for around £28,000, which means that I earned £20. That is not really all that much, but the timing is not the best right now, since the fresh merchandise did not start to arrive until now. In any case, I hope to be able to take care of a few smaller things before the end of the year.

This morning, I went to my Russian lesson and even though, to the trained ear, I probably made some awful grammatical errors, I was able to make myself understood. That is not all that great, but nevertheless, it is something, and at the moment, I tend to be less critical, because otherwise, I would be and should be ashamed to open my mouth in Russian. Unfortunately, there is little opportunity to speak and hear the language, since our circle only speaks English or German and I hardly ever get together with real Russians who do not also speak English or German as well. And those Russians are from the Sojuspushnina and it would be careless of me to speak to them in their own language and risk misunderstandings that could be very expensive for the customers.

Tomorrow, I have to inspect an enormous amount of merchandise and because of that, I will close now, so I will be well-rested. There is a lot more work here now than just a few days ago, because—as I said—the new harvest has begun to come in.

I kiss you with the greatest tenderness and the most passionate love, and I am so very pleased and happy to know that you are really feeling well and that the new citizen to-be causes you little discomfort. I wonder what the decision concerning the Pantheon Store will be. Please do not be upset if you do not get it because of the expected baby. I hope with all my heart that the child will give you much more joy than all the *chain stores* on earth could give you, even if they belonged to you. Completely,  
*Your Mope*

## VERA TO MOPE

London, 29 December 1938

It is very late again! I am very tired and that is why I will only write a short greeting today, although I lay down in bed for a while around lunch time today. My love, if I do not get a decent increase for the Pantheon store, I will leave M&S, and if Dr. Rothschild and Co. do not have any objections, I will join my most beloved. Your belief that it might take until April before you can come home makes me feel very sad and maybe I can come to you after all—how much I wish for that!!! Most passionately and completely, *Your Little Witch*

## MOPE TO VERA

Moscow, 30 December 1938

I had a lot of merchandise to inspect today and I am also expecting a lot of work for tomorrow. Tomorrow evening, there will be a big New Year's Eve party in the hotel restaurant, but if I am as tired tomorrow night as I am tonight, I might go to bed. We do not work on 1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup> January and then, I will be able to rest. I can see from the letter in which you tell me about the Pantheon store just *how* happy you are with this advancement and I have to admit today that the sheer joy you took in the suggestion is worth it all, even though it is not actual coin. Sadly, your all too egotistical husband just cannot come to terms quite as quickly with the fact that he will have to forego your coming here, and I do not want you to be sad about that. After all, these long periods of separation are much more difficult for me than for my most beloved one who continues to live in the circle of the people she has chosen and only has to forego my company. That is not meant to sound bitter at all and should not be understood any differently than just a statement of fact.

I wish that the new position will bring you the satisfaction you expect from it. When I come home in April and, should you keep working until May, I would rather not come to London, because I will have to come back here in May or June. And then, I better look for one who also has time for me and leave you to M&S. Most passionately, *Your Mope*

VERA TO MOPE

London, 1 January 1939

I did not wake up until a half hour ago; I slept well into the New Year and that was a nice thing, too, because waking up called up the end of the old year clearly into my consciousness, and I am sad and *downhearted*: either you, my love, are not well and the cold I can feel despite the vast distance is more than just a sniffle and my beloved even has a fever and does not feel well? That is the first thing I am thinking and worrying about. Hopefully, hopefully, this thought is wrong and unjustified, but the fact that you did *not* go to the New Year's Eve party which had been announced some time ago makes my fear stronger and my heart heavy. Did you consult a doctor? Are the colleagues taking care of you? Did you stay in bed for a few days in order to let the warmth and even temperatures have an effect on you?

At 9 o'clock on the dot, when I left the store yesterday evening (we closed at 8.30), I imagined that my beloved was probably receiving the telegram (around midnight your time) I had posted in person around 7 p.m. and that he would drink to my health and to the health of our future little offspring who will hopefully turn out to be *just* like I imagine, for the two of us.

Mopeleichen, this is the *first* day of 1939 and *I am downhearted* and I hope that the next few years will bring us nothing but good things. I wish for us: good health, peace, sufficient professional success so we will not have any financial worries, a little child that turns out just the way it is in our dreams, and that our mutual love in all its depth and perfection will stand the test of time and stay just the way it is today. Your Veralein who is feeling just a little sad!

MOPE TO VERA

Moscow, 2 January 1939

When man was first created—so says the first book of Moses—God declared that he created him in his own image. Later, when he gave him the laws, he said, you may not have a God besides me, I am the Lord, your God, an "agitated" God. I am sure that that is not supposed to mean agitated, but jealous. Against my better judgment, I am both agitated and jealous of M&S if it begins to take over more room in my

girl's heart than I am forced to give it, and for making my beloved have such blasphemous thoughts as regretting not being a man. It seems to me that this rather innocuous remark, if made at a normal time, but at this time when my sweetest one moves toward the highest and most beautiful goal of her womanhood, added much to the bleakness I felt during the last few days of 1938. I read that and then it wormed its way into my innermost being and caused the most insensible considerations, doubts, and sadness in me. Even now, when I consider the matter in a much calmer light, I can understand that all too well, because, if your enthusiasm for your work—which can only be done by a woman in a rational manner—brings you so far that I and our togetherness appear burdensome to you, then everything has been moved from its normal channels.

Following that, you wrote that you, as a man, would have to do without me and my love and that you would rather not do that but that could only be compensation in a childless marriage. In this time of bearing fruit, I think that a woman—*my wife*—would not even be able to entertain such treasonous thoughts. After all, the remark was aimed mainly at the child you are expecting, because, without its development, you would be given the same opportunities as any man—namely the undisturbed continuation of your work. So your words mean this to me: if only I were rid of the child I would be uninhibited in my professional development. I am writing this in such a longwinded and detailed manner to make you understand my deep depression, now that it has been overcome and made way for happier thoughts. Maybe I am a little too sensitive and it is a little crazy to give so much importance to a rather hasty remark!

However, my beloved's impregnation was not just a happy experience of a few minutes to me, but with the experience I took on the responsibility of its consequences and part of those is the upshot that you will have to interrupt your work. If that places such a heavy burden on my girl, then the goal of my wishes to make you into the mother of my child is an unforgivable act of egotism on my part, an act that forces you to make sacrifices contrary to your wishes. Maybe, the real feelings of motherhood are not awakened until later in you girls, when the little creature lies in front of you visibly and its existence begins to fill your heart with joy. For me, the feeling began the moment I saw you lying there so helplessly and sick in Nice. You seemed like a small animal struck down by my lust, a small animal I had robbed of its strength and

the agility of its movements. Back then, it was only a foreshadowing of the fact that I was the guilty one, but that has been confirmed in the meantime, and the picture of those days stands in front of my eyes today, as if the knowledge had been in me even back then.

I kiss you, you poor, sweet, most beloved little girl who has been robbed of your free will by me—filled with the most immense longing for you and I wish for both of us that you will be limitlessly happy with this robbery some day and that you will feel full of joy.

Completely and totally, Your Mope

### VERA TO MOPE

London, 3 January 1939

After I was ever so filled with joy and contentment last week and also wrote to you about it from the store, there was an immense "damper" on all that high-spiritedness today! But after all, I guess that is the way it is supposed to be, because otherwise, life would not be just. I was informed by the M&S management that as I was expecting a baby, it would be better and the *only* right thing to stay in Hammersmith. As I already knew myself, it would take several months to learn the inner workings of a new store, and if I were in their place, would I give "Miss Hirsch" the Pantheon under the current conditions? The only answer I could give them was that I was *unfortunately of their opinion*.

I did not tell anyone else in the Hammersmith store about all of this, and although quite a number of girls had heard about my relocation, English people are much too polite to ask for a reason if one does not volunteer it. I am sure that *no one* can tell yet that I am expecting by looking at me, because, until now, the only sign is that I have become *much* smaller in the face and most people ask me if I have lost weight.

I took the little bottle with the urine sample to Dr. Rothschild this evening. Mutti went with me. He was very nice today and said that I could not work any longer than the end of April. I asked him in quite some detail about a trip for me to pick up my beloved, but unfortunately, he was very much against the idea; he said that, if it was a "must," then maybe one could do something like that, but otherwise *most decidedly* not. He said that if one traveled by sea, one could not only do damage to the baby, but also to oneself. You can see that I had a *very sad* day today!

Dr. Rothschild also took my blood pressure again and told me that he would not be able to feel anything for another month and that any examination before that would not make any sense, and he is completely right, of course. He advised me to also take the calcium medication you recommended from now on.

I am very, very tired this evening—that is the reason for this less than beautiful letter. I want to close now and go to sleep. Sadly, the mailman did not bring me anything from my beloved today. *Completely Your Little Witch*

### MOPE TO VERA

Moscow, 3 January 1939

Towards the evening I received your telegram with the news that nothing will come of the Pantheon store—I am sure that made you bitterly sad. My most beloved took such great pleasure in the advancement and I am sure that my complaining is the reason that nothing will come of it now. I feel such a profound aversion towards the relocation that it seems to have flowed out of me in waves, all the way to your bosses at M&S. I wonder if my sweet one is upset with me now for those emotional waves. You see, I was discouraged by the longer commute, the greater difficulties getting home, the stress that is connected with getting to know all those many new girls, and the entire getting used to the new store. I had not realized, before reading your last few letters, just how immensely close the matter was to your heart, and I finally became a little more comfortable with the idea, and now, even I feel a certain sense of woefulness that the position already given to you was taken away again. The reason is probably the short time you would be able to devote to the matter, and I can understand only too well that those people want to avoid making this important store into a test case. Well, maybe there will be another opportunity for you later, to receive that or a similar position. After all, the main thing is that they picked you as the best qualified staff manager, and that is where the main acknowledgment lies.

So my sister Alice did finally arrive in London! That young girl seems to have been gone from home for nearly two months already and apparently told herself à la Chamberlain: *try, try, try again*, until she

received her visa. I wonder if you have met her in the meantime. I am very curious to read your report.

Now, it has almost been three years since we met for the first time. Everything in me and on me, every pore, every hair, and every little piece of skin longs for your sweet nearness and I have no idea how I can stand that for another three and a half months until I can finally pull you close to me again. Completely, Your Mope

### VERA TO MOPE

London, 5 January 1939

Yesterday, the evening with your dear mother and Alice, was very harmonious. I liked Alice (and I was just a little prepared for that *not* to be the case), and I think that all of you wrong her just a little where her appearance is concerned, because I think that I would call her rather *good-looking* than not. Your dear mother told us that Grete has gone to join Norbert at his urging (he had a passport for both of them, after all), but that Grete really did not appreciate having to leave everything behind, while she had been hoping that she could sell the house before leaving and to take along at least part of her belongings. She had gone and taken the two smaller ones to Freiburg and they would come over in the same way as the older siblings.<sup>146</sup> I also found out from your dear mother that Semy is here now and that his wife will arrive in the next few days.<sup>147</sup>

Around lunch today, we were in the city, which is why I went to lie down as soon as we returned home shortly after 7, and I took care of all of my correspondence from there. We stopped by Radio-Rentals in Regent Street and ordered a radio—it will be delivered tomorrow, or rather, several will be shown so we can choose one because the different

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146 Mope's sister Grete (twin sister to Alice) followed her husband, Norbert, to Davos, Switzerland, where he was sheltering. Grete and their four children (aged between two and nine) were refused asylum in Switzerland but could not return to Germany, their house in Freiburg having been confiscated by the Nazis. Their fate remained uncertain at this time.

147 Mope's cousin, Semy Felsenstein, had been arrested and sent to Buchenwald concentration camp following Kristallnacht. He was forced to barter the remaining assets of the Gebrüder Felsenstein, including funds that were outside Germany, in order to obtain his release and the reactivation of a dormant visa to travel to England.

ones work differently, depending on the district. I agreed to rent and not buy the apparatus, and the rent, depending on the radio, is between 2/-and 3/-per week, and all repairs are taken care of by the company. I am really looking forward to having the radio, and since I so rarely get to the cinema or go to the theater now—it is usually too late for that—I am looking forward to the diversion all the more.

I want to close now and go to bed soon, but before I do, I want to send you innumerable many of the most passionate kisses—Your Lilongo

### MOPE TO VERA

Moscow, 5 January 1939

Unfortunately, I remained without your longed-for mail today, especially now when they are filled with sorrow over the Pantheon after all that joy you felt. I would so like to help you overcome all this, which would probably be much easier if I had knowledge of the particulars. I have to show more patience than I have and just keep waiting for my darling's mail. I am always speculating that that gang of criminals in Germany polices the transit mail and that is why the delivery takes place so irregularly. Nothing can be put past that rabble.

By the way, they announced on the radio yesterday that it had snowed again in London. I am sure it is very cold there and I hope that you are dressing accordingly, that is, very warmly, especially since the Hammersmith store does not really offer the ideal kind of protection from the rigors of the weather. It also snowed here today, but only very little snow has fallen so far this winter. The snowflakes are itty-bitty, but for all that, the snow is much more compact than we are familiar with in Western Europe. I still do not feel the cold as uncomfortable yet, something that has not been the case with me for the last few years. I am much less frozen and so very well equipped with my woolen underwear. The new socks your dear mother procured for me really prove to be invaluable.

A little while ago, we had a long conversation concerning the faithfulness of traveling businessmen to their wives. I seem to be the only one of the colleagues who does not dally with the local girls and in the course of the conversation, I realized that this daily writing to my little witch is a strong tool to curb my desire for sexual activity (because of the deep concentration on my dearest one) as far as it does not

concern you, and sadly, there is no chance for that anyway. One of the boys mentioned that quite a few of the Russian "virgins" wonder who I am, but they advise them not to approach me to save their graceful womanhood from being turned down. I know about a few people who are attached to their wives with deep love but they do not feel equal to being away from them for such a long time.

Today is Pod-Wychodnoi and I look back at the work period with shame, but it lasted only three days, and I did not earn even one penny. I tell you that because shared pain is half the pain and I wish nothing more than reducing your pain the same way. Other than that, my "failure" does not bother me all that much, because no one else here has been able to enter any contracts. The Russians are now asking for such high prices that I seriously doubt that there will be any contracts made. The politics driven by that is in consolidating the prices despite the bad world market, and that is actually very necessary. If the people accommodated the economic situation of the capitalized nations at the very beginning of the season, today's prices would be well under the existing contracts and a lot of merchandise would be left lying around. This way, they can be retained until the auction in March and maybe, by then, the entire situation will hopefully be much better. The main thing needed is that those fascist criminals become weakened in the meantime and I fear that Mr. Chamberlain's visit in Rome will have the opposite result. That one will sell anything that does not belong to him at give-away prices and I am curious to see what will happen when they start kneeling on his seams. I consider his politics ruinous and undermining all of Europe and it seems to me that the U.S.A. has taken the more intelligent and farsighted path with its strengthened pro-Russian stance. England will realize that soon enough. Hopefully before it is too late!<sup>148</sup>

My only regret is that I cannot be with you during this time and do everything possible to make things easier for you. Everything else, like yes Pantheon or no Pantheon, and yes contract or no contract, will soon sink into the past, and is so unimportant next to the prospect of a

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148 Mope refers here to the impending visit of Neville Chamberlain to Rome, where, in line with his policy of appeasement, he was to meet with Benito Mussolini whom he hoped would persuade Hitler against going to war. No promises were made by Mussolini. In his State of the Union address on 4 January, Franklin Roosevelt had warned that "A war which threatened to envelop the world in flames has been averted; but it has become increasingly clear that world peace is not assured."

positive future, and I wish my sweet one would come to the same way of thinking and quickly get over the lost Pantheon. Your Mope

### VERA TO MOPE

London, 8 January 1939

Dr. Rothschild, who requested that I bring him another two little bottles, one from the morning before the store and another one after, called yesterday evening to tell me that everything was in order and he wanted another two bottles next Friday, just to make sure. I am feeling excellent and I am sure that the tiredness is caused by the weather.

When I came home on Friday, the radio was there and it works really well and we can hear all the foreign stations very clearly. The installation cost 10/6 and the rent is 9/6 per month, and after six months, the rent becomes cheaper. The official fee from the post office is 10/-per year, so it is a pleasure one can afford and I am terribly happy to have it. This evening, I listened to an act from the opera *Faust* with great enjoyment and also heard the *Rhapsody* by Liszt. You can hear foreign and inland broadcasts equally well, and *the entire family* takes great pleasure in the radio.

### MOPE TO VERA

Moscow, 8 January 1939

I had thought that I could see a logical sequence in my thinking and became so obsessed with those depressing ideas that I forgot to consider, for the most part, what kind of upset I would cause for my darling. I now see my guilt more clearly than I did a few days ago and I beg you to regard the unforgivable which found its expression in unjustified jealousy of what occupied your mind so strongly, namely your work. I know how little of life my beloved can enjoy because of my being away for so long, and instead of supporting the pleasure you take in your work, I am constantly making the mistake of arguing against it. I will try very hard to do better and not allow any more of those impulsive reactions. Many things can be contained and controlled and I am making an effort, but I beg you that when I wrong you, and unfortunately, that possibility exists because of these long periods of separation and the

ever so imperfect method of communicating through letters, to not get upset.

As you have already read in my earlier letters, it cost me the same amount of strength to get used to the thought of the Pantheon, especially since I was rather prejudiced against it in general. But when I heard the sound of those bitter words "Pantheon canceled" in your telegram, I started to regret having been against the entire matter and that I had to accept part of the blame for its failure. However, when it comes right down to it, it is probably better that it happened this way and we should regard the matter as postponed and not put aside, and my beloved can look forward to working at a Pantheon in the future. After all, the sheer amount of acknowledgment you have received for your work gives you a certain amount of satisfaction—more for the soul than material gain—and the knowledge that you will be able to get work at *any* time should add more than enough to make up for the material side of it. It is really not an easy life that the two of us have to lead, so terribly far apart from each other, and still belonging together. But when it comes down to it, we should be glad that we have such a decent way of feeding ourselves—and multiplying—after we both got out of that pig sty with our health, but without any means.

I am very happy to hear that you liked Alice. People who meet her without any preconceptions usually like her, and she has many friends. But around us when we were children in Leipzig, because of her more beautiful sisters who were in part more intelligent and who were preferred as company by the brothers as well, she felt pushed against the wall so that she answered to everything in the defensive instead of reacting normally. That certainly created a skewed impression of her character. I know very well that she is much more good-hearted and eager to help than many other human beings, probably even more so than some of her siblings, who were always trying to subdue her. Added to that was her love for food which would not allow her to let a bowl of potatoes leave the table without being emptied first, despite all her wishes to retain a slim figure. I am sure that that is a little exaggerated, but the slimmer sisters ate fewer potatoes while two souls—the slim soul and the potato soul—did battle in her breast and also created disagreement in other things in her innermost being which is something she could not hide completely. I hope that you spend a pleasant Wednesday evening with her.

*Your Mope who loves you indescribably!!!*

## VERA TO MOPE

London, 13 January 1939

From the Office

I called your dear mother a little while ago and I will see her and Alice either tomorrow or Saturday around noon. Gertrud started attending school here on Monday, and Lassar is supposed to be registered at one in the next few days. He was complaining to me that he was not allowed to take his stamp collection out of the country with him, and I will give him a few from you, my love.

Yesterday morning—we are now selling small cakes and tarts in the store—I took the three girls who work at the new counter as well as the floorwalker responsible for that area on a tour of the “model bakery” where all these sweet things are produced mechanically in very hygienic conditions. I was very interested in seeing the operation: the bakery is in Hayes in Middlesex and it took over an hour for us to finally get there; and since we had had no idea of the distance, we had started much too late and did not get back to the store until about 2 o’clock. Beginning next week, M&S will introduce a forty-five-hour work week. On Mondays, Tuesdays and Wednesdays, one third of the personnel is allowed to go home at 6 o’clock, and the morning break has been extended from ten to fifteen minutes. The girls responded to this innovation with great enthusiasm, and I think that it is a step in the *right* direction!

I have not heard *anything* from Hilde in Genoa since December and she still has not answered my *long* New Year’s letter: maybe they have traveled on already, because otherwise, her silence is baffling to me. Most passionately and completely and utterly, *Your Little Witch*

## MOPE TO VERA

Moscow, 13 January 1939

Unfortunately, I was without your mail again today. It has now been three days I have been waiting without success, and only the knowledge that I talked to you for a short time yesterday and having received your telegram calm me just a bit. Of course—I am sure that it is a mistake—I am starting to think too much again, worrying about what the reason for the lack of mail could be. I am wondering if I might have written something during those days when I was feeling so depressed that might have

made you cross with me. Your voice also sounded rather matter of fact, almost cold, out of which there is a mean ghost whispering in my ear right now telling me that it could be proof of your being cross. And all that, although I am completely convinced of your love for me—it is just a constant pondering that takes hold of my brain because I have nothing better to do, because I miss you so very much and because of the infernal waiting for your ever so longed for news. Should I even write down such thoughts?

In order to show you just how difficult my job is in making a business contract, around 11.00 this morning I went to the branch office of Sojuzpushnina. I was finally received at 2.30 p.m. During the whole time, three and a half hours of waiting, I had to tell myself that this attempt would fail with a ninety per cent certainty. Although my proposal was not completely declined, and the chances for success might have risen from ten to fifteen per cent, I remained quite skeptical, and understandably so. After my visit to the branch office, I went to the warehouse. There, I waited another two hours exactly before I was admitted, and there the result was entirely negative. I did not see any merchandise at all today. Now you can imagine how the brain occupies itself during such long waiting periods and you will hardly wonder about all that brooding.

By the way, I had a conversation with a man from Hanover today—he is an employee of an animal shop and arrived here yesterday with an African elephant which comes from the Hanover Zoo. He will trade that elephant for snow leopards, reindeer, and Russian deer and take them back to Hanover. After a while, he became a little more relaxed and told me how exceedingly bad the living conditions in Germany are. For himself with a wife and child, he receives half a pound of butter per week, and the bread is moldy. You can no longer find decent fabric for suits and clothing. The discontent of the population is supposedly very great and growing at a constant rate. People in all decent circles are beside themselves over the slaughter of Jews which took place in late fall—that is when the government people showed their true faces once again.<sup>149</sup> They had tried to prepare himself for how bad living conditions were here. Now, he is completely amazed to see what excellent bread and any desired quantity of good food can be had here. They showed him the underground train and he is completely thrilled with it. There

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<sup>149</sup> The reference is to Kristallnacht.

are, after all, no grander and more beautiful stations in the whole world and everyone shares in the admiration for what was accomplished here. I wonder how he will find his way again once he returns to that country of barbarians.

After this report, I see even more confirmation in my opinion that this regime worthy of condemnation cannot hold its grip on power much longer. I just wish that my opinion had already been confirmed in fact. I am happy and overjoyed to have nothing more to do with that country and I am completely satisfied with my fate, to be a Jew, which is why I am no longer part of it. We had to get out of there, not because we are vermin, but because they knew without a question that Jewish people would have rebelled against the reigning dishonorable methods. You cannot use such methods on an old cultured people, as we Jews are, and they had to do it without us, or after we had lost all human rights.

I am looking forward immensely to the gift of a healthy, strong, intelligent child that my beloved will give me in the course of the coming year. Completely, Your Mope

VERA TO MOPE

London, 15 January 1939

After I spent the entire Sunday morning in bed sleeping and reading, I went to Hannalein's for lunch. She and I had a very pleasant chat after lunch until about 5 o'clock, sitting by the fire in her drawing room, completely undisturbed for once. I really do get along ever so well with her and I do like her a lot. Later, your dear mother and Alice joined us. As you state so correctly, Alice is a *very* dear little animal and I often feel just a little sorry for her, because she obviously means well and often does not get to the intended goal, but is completely off the mark. She is very nice and friendly to me and talks about you ever so sweetly and keeps expressing her regret over the fact that you are not here (and I?!!!!!!!!!!!!).

Hanna is very worried about Ketty and David and her two younger ones (I think I already wrote to you that Holland no longer admits any refugee children, so they cannot go to the sister of your dear mother). I promised her, if she sends me copies of the papers that have already been submitted, that I will write to Mrs. Stiebel concerning Ketty. Hanna said that they have a good and more than sufficient guarantee for Ketty,

and that David has good business connections here so he can build a new business. You will be happy to hear that Grete's two little ones have joined her in Switzerland now.

Dr. Rothschild who had requested that I send him another two little bottles,<sup>150</sup> one from Friday morning and one from the evening, called a little while ago to inform me that everything seems to be going well and that Mr. Nixon has found a *nursing home* in Courtfield Gardens (that is in the vicinity of Gloucester Road Station). As soon as I have the time, I will have a look at it with Muttilein and find out about the cost, and I will make a decision then. If you do not book a room here months in advance, you might not get one at all.

It is 1.00 a.m. now where you are and you are probably asleep by now, or maybe you are writing to me. My love, I have to close now so I can still mail this letter! *Your* little Lilongo

### MOPE TO VERA

Moscow, 15 January 1939

Before I started writing this letter, I had a little rest, because this letter is of special importance. This letter is meant to bring my most beloved my most loving, most heartfelt and gentlest good congratulations on her birthday. How I wish that I could fill this letter with all the beautiful things in the world! I wanted to make the paper like a wishing rod which makes all my beloved's wishes come true when she touches it. It is supposed to unite all the good powers of heaven and protect my sweet little girl from everything evil and sorrowful. It brings you my most longing wishes for the best health, a little one who will bring you nothing but great joy, whose character comprises everything to be a constant fountain of happiness to you; a *husband* who will always love you as hotly and passionately as he does now and will never again make the beginning of a New Year sad for you with his depressed prattle and will always be able to give you everything beautiful the world has to offer and that your heart desires.

My most beloved one is twenty-nine years old now and will be a grown little mother by the time her next birthday comes around, with all the personal knowledge of what nature demands in order to enable

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<sup>150</sup> i.e., urine samples.

a woman the fulfillment of her intrinsic purpose. How much I wish for both of us that this introduction will be easy for you and accompanied by as little pain as possible, a pain which will seem like nothing compared to the new little transaction you will give to us. I would so like to take away some of the burden that the little product is causing you in the true sense of the word, but nothing can be changed in the arrangement that the better part of creation—the *ladies*—have to deal with that by themselves.

My beloved girl, I embrace you with the gentlest, most longing, burning love. My soul and my body are filled with desire for you and I want to kiss you while you snuggle close to me, everywhere, on those little hills and in the valleys of your ever so beautiful body which seems even more delightful to me than usual now with its ripening to bear fruit, although that is difficult to imagine. Just thinking of it brings my blood to a boil and my body longs to give your body more seed to add to the one already ripening. Now, I will come to you in my dreams and become one with you so that our desire is sated and the wish for new desire awakens.

Completely and utterly, Your Mope

VERA TO MOPE

London, 19 January 1939

It is almost 11 o'clock and our visitors, a really extremely likable couple, just left. I think I already told you about them—the daughter with husband and child of a friend of Mutti's are staying here until their number to the U.S.A. is called. He is in his early forties I suppose, and she is about thirty-six, and they have a sixteen-year old son who goes to school in Switzerland and a fifteen year old daughter who started going to school here yesterday.<sup>151</sup> I regretted ever soooo much that these two ever so very likable people did not get to meet my *husbandlein* this evening, and I told them *a lot* about you—since they have no idea yet when they will be able to leave for the U.S.A., and, when you come home, you will probably get to see them as well. It is such a rare thing, although it should be something that is self-evident, to meet people

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<sup>151</sup> Vera does not identify them further. A good few German-Jewish refugees used England as a staging-post toward emigration to the United States.

from *especially* good and even luxurious surroundings who come here and immediately develop the right attitude towards everything new: their status as refugees, the strange country with its utterly strange and odd customs, their hosts (they are living with friends who invited them to stay), in short, everything their new existence brings with it. I am certain it is a question of *intelligence* and *tact*—it is really refreshing to meet people who seem to possess those characteristics and do not bring along bad manners from their former home country. My Mopeleichen, you already know how happy I am that you belong to those noteworthy exceptions so completely, and your dear mother belongs to them as well, but other than that, they are far and few between.

This evening, I received your beloved lines from January 13. I wish you were right with your prophesy that the Nazi reign has lasted long enough already and is facing its end, but unfortunately, I do not believe that to be the case yet, but to the contrary, I am afraid, *very* afraid that it will take root more deeply and extend its reach. As much as I like being here, the conviction that a country so close to Germany cannot be all that safe becomes more firmly rooted within me. I hope that I am wrong.

My love, often, there are doubts welling up inside me which I should not even put down on paper, with such a *great* distance between us—these are doubts I try to suppress immediately with very weighty reasons that speak against them: should we bring a child into such a world?!!!! I no longer think that and as I said, it is very wrong to write something like that to my beloved who is so many miles away from me and by the time he receives these lines, I can no longer understand why I ever thought that way, because I know that our child will hopefully allay all and any doubts within me and will probably add a new and so far unknown answer to the question "what for" to both of our lives. And just like my beloved has told me repeatedly: one cannot know and could not have known at any one point in time what the future will bring, and that is a good thing, too, and I am a bad person for putting such temporary thoughts on paper at all. However, on the other hand, if I did not do so, I would tell myself that I am keeping something from my beloved, even if it is something that is *not* good.

This evening, I also received a letter from a Hilde Lindheim, born Abraham, Leipz. N. 22, Goethner Str. 54 III. It was an express letter to you, in which she requests most urgently to talk to someone in person

at the Woburn House<sup>152</sup> or somewhere else on her behalf and that of her husband, and her one year old son, because they have to be out of that filthy country by the end of the month and they do not yet have permission to go to the U.S.A. despite the necessary affidavits, etc. Since she also mentions your dear mother in the letter and also her possible intervention, I forwarded the letter to her, because I do not know these people at all, and I hope that that was done with your approval! She will be a better judge than I to see if there is anything that can and should be done in this matter.<sup>153</sup>

Yesterday evening, I received a letter from Hilde Lewy in Genoa, and in the meantime, she, Walter and the baby had visited the American consulate in Naples and they hope, since all their papers, etc., appeared to be in order, that they will be able to leave on February 22. She asked me to do something for a Mr. Fuchs. It seems—I suppose it is a matter of his physical condition—he cannot go to the U.S.A. However, he cannot stay there either and would like to go to Australia and use England as a *transit station*. She enclosed his vita and excellent recommendations, among other things one from a Berlitz School in Genoa where he worked as a teacher until last November, and also a list of his assets—he has £475 in free foreign currency at his disposal and is prepared to give a potential guarantor I might find for him here a security deposit of £200. Hilde writes that he would never be a burden to any guarantor but where can one find someone who would be willing to do that for a man without a wife or children? I think that anyone who is willing to take on a guarantee for someone should have £1000 in his bank account as security, and as sorry as I feel for Mr. Fuchs, I do not see where I might find someone here who is able to take him on, or whom I might even interest in the matter.

I can understand Hilde and the worry for a friend of “her house”, and also that, with her current worries concerning the many physical and psychological demands life is placing on her just now, she cannot

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152 Anglo-Jewish communal headquarters in London.

153 Hilde Lindheim was born on 19 June 1911, thus sharing a birthday with Mope, who was twelve years her senior. Her husband was Werner Lindheim, and they had a son, Ralf, born on 14 January 1938. They left Germany for France, where Hilde was killed by a bomb on 17 June 1940 during the German invasion. Werner escaped to America via Marseilles and Casablanca. Their son, Ralf, was hidden from the Nazis in France for most of the war, and was later reunited with his father in the United States.

make herself sit down and write to me or even find the time to do so. Nevertheless, it pains me for just a short moment that she only turns to me lately when she wants something, but I am sure that I am unable to put myself in her shoes right now and I would probably not act differently either, and if I am able to do anything for Mr. Fuchs or Hilde respectively in this matter, I will try to do so, although I doubt that it will be possible.

I believe I told you last Saturday that I want to put in a good word for Ketty with Mrs. Stiebel—just as soon as Hanna sends me all the necessary paperwork with all the details, or better, the copies. I have not received anything yet and it is impossible for me to expect Mrs. Stiebel to get all the details for the Goldschmidts, which Hanna seemed to understand. She told me that Fred's secretary has all the files and that she would get in contact with her.

Although all of my clothes still fit me as before (and most of them are not loosely hanging dresses, but were made to fit rather tightly), I believe that I am gradually gaining a little belly, even though it is not really visible, or better, noticeable at all; and since Dr. Rothschild said that he would be able to feel for the expected child during the next examination around the beginning of February, that is actually rather appropriate. Completely and utterly, Your little Lilongo

### VERA TO MOPE

London, 21 January 1939

This afternoon, I am going to the *nursing home* in Courtfield Gardens to meet with the *matron* there, and Muttilein will accompany me.

I forgot to tell you in my detailed Thursday letter that an extremely tall policeman appeared the other evening and asked for Mr. and Mrs. Felsenstein. He was very charming and polite, as *all* officials here tend to be, showed me a letter from Bow Street which requested that we go there *at our earliest convenience*. I asked him to come in and showed him my papers and he was more than nice and grumbled about Hitler—after I told him that we were *Jews born in Germany*. I called Bow Street the following morning and it concerned your extension, just as I had suspected, and my name was on the paperwork quite by accident. I explained that and also why you had only received an extension from the *local office* and did not go to Bow Street after you had received your

extension. They replied that everything was in order and once you were back in the country, you should come in to have them check your papers again.

Yesterday evening, I received a letter from Annelie's mother in which she asked me to undertake steps for her and her husband in order to make it possible for them to come here until their resettlement in the U.S.A. They did not make a request until December 1938. Since she cannot give me any kind of information concerning the assets at their disposal, their case will probably be a very difficult one and I will see what can be done and will write to the Woburn House. Among other things, Mrs. Freimann writes, "Annelie sent us a telegram today to let us know that she is getting married today."<sup>154</sup>

Just a little while ago, there arrived a very dear birthday letter from Hilde Lewy in Genoa! They are now moving from their home and everything is being packed. They will ship out on either 2 or 22 February. She writes, the one thing that gives her consolation and joy despite all the difficulties is her sweet one who compensates her for everything. I wrote back a detailed letter, and I let her know that I am also expecting a baby. I am very curious to see what and when she will answer. By the way, she also told me that her brother-in-law had been offered a position at a college in the state of Georgia, U.S.A., and they are very pleased and happy to be done with the worry for him and his family.

As far as Mr. Fuchs is concerned, I learned that the chances to go to Australia for someone who has as much money as Mr. Fuchs does are quite favorable. On top of that, if an Englishman could be found as a guarantor, he would not actually run any risk, since Mr. Fuchs had more than enough assets at his disposal to pay for his stay here, so there is no need for £1000 in the bank. I do not know if that is correct, but in any case it seems reasonable to me, that if the application has already been made to the Australian government, it would be much easier to get a visa for a transit stay here. I will send all the application papers to Genoa today, since Hilde wrote to me that Mr. Fuchs has to leave Italy by January 31.

I have not heard anything from your dear mother or Hannalein since last Wednesday—I do not know if they are or will be able to do anything in the matter of Mrs. Hilde Lindheim.

You, my most beloved!!! Completely, *Your Little Witch*

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154 Annelie married Arno Herzberg, a journalist who had escaped Germany for the United States.

## MOPE TO VERA

Moscow, 22 January 1939

Today was a beautiful day full of sunshine, so I tried to exploit it as much as possible. A few colleagues and I went on a 2-4 hour sightseeing tour by car. Then, I had a bite to eat and worked until 10 p.m. At 10 o'clock, I went to the theater where I saw the film *Lenin in October 1917* which was shown to celebrate the anniversary of the death of that great man and leader of the Russian people. The film is excellent and even I was able to understand it. It shows Lenin's return to Russia and the preparations and execution of the revolution up to the dismissal of the provisional Kerenski-government.<sup>155</sup>

Today, your dear letter from January 15 reached me. My most heartfelt thanks for that! Just a little while ago, I was able to express my best wishes to my beloved over the telephone and I was able to hear your ever so beloved voice perfectly clearly, almost as if we were in the same room and not all those innumerable miles apart. It was so wonderful to talk to you and to feel your closeness at least with the ears, a closeness all five of my senses hunger for so unspeakably. Someday people will be able to see each other as well, but no matter how far technology advances, the ability to taste and feel, which belong to the most beautiful things, will never be achieved at those distances. If only time would go by faster, so I could come back to you sooner!!! However, that cannot be done either and we have to acquiesce because, through these times of separation, we will actually gain the opportunity to found an existence for ourselves which will permit us to establish our lives in a meaningful way by procreating and hoping for a sweet baby that fulfills all of our wishes.

Your letters from Sunday and Monday are lying in front of me waiting for an answer, since I only touched on the Saturday letter earlier today. As far as I remember, the Lewys had planned on turning their back on Europe around the beginning of January. You should not be surprised if they did not find the time to write, with all the jostling of the last few days, and we should expect that they will write in more detail once they are onboard the ship.

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155 As letters were randomly opened by Russian censors, it was tactical of Mope to include praise of the Soviet Union and its first leader.

My sweet one already seems to be looking beyond the surface where Alice is concerned. She is an unlucky girl, because, as you say, she always means well, but she does everything just a little off so that it constantly creates the wrong impression and sometimes even misses. I am very pleased that the entire Moschytz family no longer belongs to those one worries about acutely. If only Ketty and her people were out already as well! I also think that David will be able to rebuild an existence in no time at all, once he is in London.

But now, I have to seek the horizontal. My fruit-bearing little fruit tree has been asleep for quite some time already. I embrace you most tenderly, my most beloved one, and I am thinking of you always, filled with the greatest and strongest love.

You little apricot tree—fertilized by orange seed—full of yearning and love—

Completely and utterly, Your Mope

VERA

Journal entry, 22 January 1939

I wonder if other “expectant mothers” have strong motherly feelings for their child before it is born and if I might just be egotistical and not normal. I *wanted* a child and I *would like* a child, but still, it was unbelievably difficult for me to forswear the Pantheon store and the professional advancement connected to it. And still, it is not easy for me to see my rather good figure disappear—even if it is only temporary. Although up to now, those people who do not know cannot tell, I am sure. And despite all the rational arguments that keep telling me again and again how important it is *not* to be childless, I am often afraid to have to go through childbirth in a time that looks so forbidding, and to be no longer master of my own body. The reasons, as mentioned above, are simply rational arguments; even that might be abnormal and egotistical, because other women long for a child emotionally, I believe.

However, with my marriage, when I entered into it, did not pure rational arguments play a large role? And today, today, our marriage is flooded with the purest feeling of love, friendship, regard for the other, and friendliness? Most likely, because of this so completely harmonious and fulfilling marriage and on top of that, my work that satisfies me and offers me—field to use all—I actually do not know yet, not until I have a

child—so let us say, many of my feminine abilities and fulfills me in such a way that it also represents a reason as to why other women apparently have a very pronounced longing for a child that will fill their lives with purpose, while mine is anything but strong. I hope that my child will find and conquer its own place in my life with its appearance—how I hope for that; and that the child will take away any feelings of mourning that the loss of professional advancement might bring, and that it will give an even deeper sense to our already so deep and harmonious love and marriage partnership—and children, especially those born out of love, are supposed to do that.

Until now—I am sure it is a shame to even write something like this down—aside from the reasonable arguments (which I already listed here earlier), I only wish that I will experience everything I do not know yet—and that is another reason. My interest in living and experiencing life and exploring it in all its strangeness. I do not know if this has anything to do with being egotistical nor if other women, at least in part, feel unfulfilled and would rather exchange their reasonable arguments with that much more gentle and feminine word “emotion,” be it consciously or more often than not subconsciously. I would really like to know. I am sure that the moment I *see* the product of our love, strong and intelligent, I hope, I will feel completely overwhelmed by love.

