

# No Life Without You

## REFUGEE LOVE LETTERS FROM THE 1930s

EDITED BY  
FRANKLIN  
FELSENSTEIN





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# Thirty: “The Little Fruit That Fell From the Tree”

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25 January through 19 March 1939

## POLITICAL TIMELINE, FEBRUARY–MAY 1939

- 3 February 1939: Bomb destroys a synagogue in Budapest, Hungary.
- 9 February 1939: Anti-Jewish legislation passed in Italy.
- 20 February 1939: Massive pro-Nazi rally in New York orchestrated by the German-American Bund.
- 21 February 1939: Decree in Germany that Jews must surrender all gold and silver to the government.
- 2 March 1939: Election of Cardinal Eugenio Pacelli as Pope Pius XII.
- 15 March 1939: German troops occupy independent Czechoslovakia, soon after stripping Czech Jews of their livelihoods.
- 20 March 1939: Public incineration of so-called “degenerate art” in Germany.
- 25 March 1939: Huge “Stop Hitler” march in New York City.
- 31 March 1939: British Government affirms its commitment to defend Poland in the event of war.
- 1 April 1939: End of Spanish Civil War with victory by Francisco Franco’s Fascists.
- 30 April 1939: Tenancy protection for Jews in Germany revoked.

- 3 May 1939: Stalin appoints Viacheslav Molotov as his Commissar for Foreign Affairs.
- 15 May 1939: Women's concentration camp officially opened at Ravensbrück.
- 17 May 1939: British Government issues a White Paper restricting Jewish immigration to Palestine.
- 22 May 1939: Germany and Italy co-sign a "Pact of Steel," a military and political alliance.

*Vera was to visit a number of London maternity hospitals, eventually opting for the London Clinic, and Mope used his letters to express his ongoing belief that a woman in her condition should slow down her grueling schedule at Marks & Spencer. Vera was still trying to conceal her pregnancy from the shop girls that she trained, while (despite Mope's admonitions) keeping up her demanding agenda.*

*In Germany, Mope's sister and brother-in-law, Ketty and David Goldschmidt, were still trying to escape from Nazi rule. Through the Kindertransport scheme, they gained permission to send their two younger children, Gabriel and Alfred, to join their two siblings already in England, but they themselves were still trapped in Hamburg. In panicked response to a letter from Ketty pleading urgently for help, her youngest sister, Hanna Rau, demanded of Vera that she write to Otto Schiff, the head of the Jewish Refugees Committee, to ask him to intercede on behalf of the Goldschmidts' application for refugee status in England. Vera counseled that approaching Schiff without supporting documentation was unlikely to get anywhere, but Hanna insisted that an approach must be made. Vera reluctantly agreed to write to Schiff though warning Hanna that the absence of important particulars would likely derail the effort. Inevitably, despite best efforts, the application failed, and crucial time was lost. It remains uncertain whether a more considered intervention on Ketty's behalf would have made any difference. The Nazi authorities continued to demand full payment by the Goldschmidts of back taxes and putative liabilities before they would permit them to emigrate.*

*There were similar expectations and fears concerning Mope's cousins from Karlsruhe, Carl and Lies Rosenfeld. In early February, Vera learned that their older son, Georg, had been offered employment in England, and their younger son, Benjamin, had joined a Zionist youth group that would soon settle in Palestine. The hope remained that Carl and Lies would receive permission to depart for a new life in Jerusalem. Elsewhere, Vera's friend, Hilde Lewy and*



her family, traveled from Genoa with papers permitting them to board a ship at Naples that set sail for New York.

In Moscow, Mope's work was still sorely affected by the economic slowdown. At the end of January, approximately two months after he had left England, he became ill with a high fever and influenza, which confined him to bed for more than a week. During the time of his confinement, he was too debilitated to be able to write to Vera, deciding also that he would rather not add further worry to his pregnant wife by revealing his sickness to her.

The long hours and strenuousness of the auction itself, in which Mope more than made up for the lean months before, left him with a "deeply depressing awareness of having neglected my darling so terribly all that time." Vera's daily letters had greatly helped to sustain him through a difficult time. The details of her own condition, as unraveled through their correspondence, provide a fateful counterpoint to his own struggles. Apprised of the situation and the Leningrad auction behind him, Mope traveled back at once to be with his wife.

## VERA TO MOPE

London, 25 January 1939

Today is January 25 and three years ago today, I was introduced to my beloved, or better, he was introduced to me, or it might be better to say that he met me, because that was hardly the case on the 24<sup>th</sup>. I remember the long side of the ballroom very well and the place where we sat and drank coffee and your astonishment that the "ravishingly beautiful Englishwoman"—you surely had to be *terribly* disappointed—works for a living and of the fact that we were actually dancing towards the end of the evening, although you had told me earlier that you never dance. All of that seems years ago to me, and the following years during which my love slowly and constantly and visibly appeared to be taking on a more important, then the *most* important role in my life, fill me with happiness and joy and harmony and inner peace, despite all the difficulties of the outside happenings in the world and the bitterly long separations the two of us are forced to endure.

Today at lunch time, I received a letter from the Leipzig tax department. In it, they demand that you pay a total amount of RM 2600 as Jewish asset taxes, in payments of RM 60, with the first payment due Dec. 15, 1938, and if the payments are not made on time, a late charge

in the amount of 2% of the amount will be imposed. Nice people, aren't they? I will not send an answer and I hope that you agree with that.<sup>156</sup>

My love, I am feeling very well: I take a calcium supplement every day and also milk and cheese, just as Dr. Rothschild recommended. Although no one at the store or anywhere else for that matter has noticed anything yet, I can tell by looking at myself that *I am gradually starting to lose my slim figure*, although I can still wear my dresses. Aside from being very tired in the evening, the baby gives me hardly *any* hints of its development, with the very small exception that, if I do not eat something immediately after getting up, I start to feel a little sick around 9 o'clock without, however, feeling the slightest bit nauseous after that. So you can see that I am really doing very, very well and I am absolutely able to work. I have to close now and get this letter to the post office. Completely, Your Little Witch

### MOPE TO VERA

Moscow, 25 January 1939

As has been the case all month long, I still cannot make any deals and I find the sitting around here and having to wait downright unpleasant. As far as I can judge things, the situation in Western Europe is extremely tense once again and I am sure that that contributes to the fact that no deals can be made.

Do you have any idea about the further plans of Grete and Norbert? They can hardly sit in Switzerland forever with four kids and no money and depend on the mercy of others. If they intend to wait for visas to the U.S.A., that can only be regarded as a partial solution to the problem in the far distance. It is only a partial solution because it can only satisfy the question of location, but not the material one. As far as I know, Norbert would have to pass several exams there before he can even think of engaging in any kind of financially beneficial work. I am wondering if he has even started preparing for that. The biggest worry concerning all of these questions is the worry about Ketty and David. We have no idea of the psychological burden that is bearing down on all those poor people, but we have to try to help them before they are crushed. It is a

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<sup>156</sup> German demands for Jewish assets extended even to those it had now denied citizenship.

difficult knowledge to me that I cannot do *anything* at all from here that could contribute to helping them.

The tiredness produced by all this idleness has really taken such a hold of me that I am forced to wish my most beloved a good night and I am giving her a long and ever so tender kiss before I go to sleep. You sweet little fruit tree with an even smaller fruit, Your Mope

### MOPE TO VERA

Moscow, 26 January 1939

Despite the fears of my beloved that my optimistic supposition concerning the coming end of the Nazi criminals in Germany lacks any justification, I will continue to believe in it. However, one should not hope that everything can be brought back into even and cultured tracks immediately, tracks in which the country found itself in the past, but even a change in government in which somewhat more moderate views prevailed could dam the spread of the Nazi plague. But that does not eliminate the danger of a European war, although despite all the critical moments speaking for a war, I believe that we will escape unscathed for this year. Whatever the future will bring for us Jews is only contingently tied to the general development.

History shows in the strangest way that every time the assimilation of the Jews in any country became too prevalent a catastrophe happened to them. That can be proven again and again through thousands of years, and since the degree of assimilation does not depend on any one person but shows itself in the entirety of the Jews, I can understand my darling's thoughts and doubts concerning the right to procreate. The path of your education led to the ground being pulled out from under you, just like it was for many others, when they began to officially declare us as inferior.

Our experiences show that you have to prove to a child from the very beginning that it should be valued just as positively for what it is, namely a Jew, as any other human being, and in order to give it secure footing that will withstand all possible attacks no matter how strong they are, he has to be given Jewish knowledge and with that Jewish self-confidence. Every creature is at its natural enemies' mercy if it is not prepared, be it physically or with a strong inner footing, to meet them. Flight is only a partial escape if the spiritual equilibrium is disturbed by it, because the achieved outer security does not help to restore this

equilibrium. For this reason, one has to work at prevention and try to construct the spiritual balance as massively and firmly as possible.

When they began to race through the countryside with cars, many field and forest animals and even pets were killed and injured. The chickens, hares, and deer did not give up procreating because of it, or because people hunted and slaughtered them. The pet animal which has been robbed of its instinct to be free can only minimally protect itself against its enemy by screaming and thereby awakening the pity and emotions of its owner. The free animal teaches its young to avoid the country road, to escape the hunter, and to use its mimicry in the most appropriate way in order to protect itself. We have to learn from that in order to guarantee *those* freedoms to our children that life has to give, and that is only possible if they are familiar with all the factors that can help them understand life and arm them against all enemies, just like the animal living in freedom. As a consequence of your upbringing, you regard being a Jew as a weakness. How many people who tower above the average have made their weaknesses into factors of strength and perseverance because they acknowledged them, and those very weaknesses helped them to get above the prevailing niveau. Let your children recognize their "weakness" as strength and that is how you give yourself the right to have children.

All the other reasons to have children that my darling lists are of a much too egocentric nature to be sufficient reason on their own to give justification to the desire. Hilde Lewy's joy in her little daughter, just like the childlessness of Mr. Fuchs and the lack of the world's interest in him which results from it, is not sufficient proof that procreation is justified, but the free creature's will to procreate and the awakening of the instinct to be free and its cultivation in the newly created creature include nature's right, because freedom is natural.

It is not only not wrong that my little witch writes to me about such understandable doubts in these times, but I am deeply grateful to you for giving me the opportunity to comment on these doubts! You write yourself that our little fruit will give us another answer unknown to us to the question "what for" and without it, the answer would remain unknown, and so you say exactly the same thing I said, just using different words, when I was talking about freedom. Freedom is the will and the strength to procreate and the "what for" is the product that results, which we will come to know—with any luck.



"This lady Hilde Lindheim née Abraham" is a lady I told my beloved about some time ago. She was in love with me once and was a virgin, and when she offered herself to me, I could not bring myself to physically put an end to that condition. So she decided to go skiing and took the cold opportunity to be deflowered just to tell me that every obstacle had been removed and now, would I please?! Regrettably, I was even less able to make a decision, despite the removal of the obstacle, because I had been *ethically* unable to comply with her wishes. Poor girl, she has to be in the worst situation to turn to me for help and I would really like to help her if I knew of a way, because she is a dear and good person, and after all, one should be grateful for unrequited love that was ready to make sacrifices—even if the sacrifices themselves were wrong psychologically. The girl comes from a good middle-class family. The father was the owner of a small department store in Gohlis (a suburb of Leipzig). When she got married, I recommended to her to go abroad as soon as possible, especially since the husband was already working abroad, as far as I remember, or had some connections to foreign countries which he neglected rather stupidly because of his marriage.

I heard that people who have an affidavit for the U.S.A. and can count on being included in the quota in the near future, will be able to stay in Sweden for up to six months. The consul general for Sweden in Leipzig, Dr. Paul Hollender, told me that today.<sup>157</sup> He will probably travel back to Leipzig soon and maybe Hilde Lindheim can turn to him. Maybe other people can be helped to escape from grave danger with this knowledge. If you have a German passport, you do not even need a visa, as far as I know.

Shouldn't it be possible for Mr. Fuchs who lived in Davos often and for a long time because of his ailment, to have himself sent to Switzerland by his doctors? If he can prove that he would not be a burden to anyone, I cannot imagine that he would meet with any difficulties. Aside from the technical difficulties, the English climate might be dangerous for him. I can understand completely that Hilde wants to help her friend, and since she is not asking for herself, but, in order to help, asks for help for someone else, I find her plea understandable —just like the quickly and bravely overcome pain my beloved felt over only receiving letters with pleas from her friend. If you cannot turn to your best friends in

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157 Paul Hollender, a gentile, was the President of the Leipzig Fur Merchants Association and joint partner in the fur business of Thorer and Hollender.

times of need, who can you turn to and when the hand reaches for the ink pen in cataclysmic times—how can the brain dictate anything other than that which forms itself into a plea for help in what the brain is constantly worrying about?

It is unbelievably late and I am a bad example for my girl who also writes to me much too late at night. I kiss you on your belly which is rounding just a little and on many of those other sweet places of your beloved body and I am longing so indescribably for you and your love and the fulfillment of my love for you. Your wistful Mope

### VERA TO MOPE

London, 27 January 1939

Just as I was leaving home, Hanna called and although Muttilein told her that I was already late and in quite a hurry, she insisted on talking to me since it concerned something of *great urgency*! When you read the following, please try to be *completely* objective towards me, and if you think that I am wrong, or overly sensitive or hard hearted, *please* tell me so! Women often judge things in a narrow-minded way and I know that my most beloved only wants the best for me when he tells me that I am wrong. If he explains to me where my fault lies, I will be more than happy to have him lead me!

So—Hanna told me she had received a letter from Ketty and her brother-in-law. David writes that Ketty and his family *have* to get out of Germany immediately. Hanna told me that she is *terribly alarmed*, which is only natural, and since the matter did not seem to be progressing at all, she had hired an attorney yesterday, who had written a letter on their behalf to Woburn House. Since I had promised to intercede and contact Otto Schiff, she maintained that I should please do so forthwith. So, the first thing Hanna says to me is that I will have to go to Mr. Schiff in person. I told her that she would need to inform me of all the details first, and most of all supply me with the copies and reference numbers of the files. I asked for further details: Hanna said she assumed that David was not doing well at all where his health is concerned (at most: *a breakdown*). Then: He has excellent business connections to an English firm and they would take him on as a *half commission man*. When I asked for the name of the firm, she said that Fred thought it would be better

not to mention it because it was not certain yet and the firm would not like it!

It would have been much easier if Hanna had sat down and written down all the reference numbers, the date of the application, the name of a relative who was willing to back them financially and what plans David has once he is here, so that I would have been able to give Mr. Schiff all the necessary information. Since she did not do so, I had only half the information I actually needed and I really hate to go to Mr. Schiff and then expect him to find out the rest!

When I came home I immediately composed the enclosed letter to Otto Schiff by racking my brain as to how I could avoid mentioning the missing documents, for fear that the letter would fail to accomplish its purpose. I think the last page may change the angered look on his face back into a smile, and it was 10 o'clock by the time I was done with the letter, and I was so tired that I just fell asleep. Here is a copy of the letter that I wrote:

Dear Mr. Schiff,

I understand that my sister-in-law, my husband's eldest sister, Mrs. David Goldschmidt and her husband who are residents at Hamburg have to leave Germany. Mr. Oscar Philipp<sup>158</sup> has filled in a declaration to the effect that he is prepared to guarantee for them and their two children aged 11 and 8, should they be allowed to come over to this country. Their two elder children are already in England.

On 25 November 1938, an application for them was made to the Home Office stating all the details. Mr. Goldschmidt has been an insurance broker in Hamburg and was also an agent for an English firm there. I understand that his business connections in this country are very good. Should he get the permit, he would be able to establish himself here.

I was informed that Mr. Goldschmidt has suffered a complete breakdown and that he and his wife do not know what to do, so that I just had to try and help them to get their case through.

My husband is away in Moscow, and like everybody else, I continually get letters from Germany, mostly from people whom I hardly know, imploring me to help them. I have tried to do what I could, but in the

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158 Oscar Philipp (1882-1965) was a successful metal trader and a cousin by marriage of the Felsenstein family. His wife, Clarisse, née Weil (1888-1971) was a niece of Oma Lenchen.

above case, I feel that everything that can be done has been done and I know you are the only person who can proceed to get their case through successfully. Mr. Schiff, I cannot tell you how terrible I feel to have to approach you and ask you for a favor and your help in a time like this where I know you receive no end of applications every day.

To give you some lighter news: I was asked to take over the staff management of the Pantheon Store, the newest and largest store of Marks and Spencer's in Oxford Street, but I could not go there as I shall have to interrupt my work in a few months' time because I hope to have a baby in summer, and alas, one cannot have everything in life! I was surprised and very pleased that I was asked to go to the new Oxford Street Store, as I never thought they would choose me to undertake this job.

Many, many thanks for your great kindness! Yours ever, Vera Felsenstein

Mopelein, I know and can understand that Hanna is really terribly worried and probably acted the way she did because of it. Or is it wrong of me to judge her like that? Please let me know exactly what you think! I keep asking myself full of fear: am I just like so many other ladies in the family way, playing "the overwrought and overly sensitive one"? I do *not* think so but I want your opinion and your calm, clear view.

My love, it is very late! What a letter!!! But my love will probably understand it correctly and help me. Most passionate kisses, you, my love—Completely, *Your* little witch

### MOPE TO VERA

Moscow, 28 January 1939

This morning, when I was told that a letter had arrived for me, I thought that it would be from you. Instead, it was a letter from Hannalein—I was happy to receive it, but in no way could it trigger the kind of joy that each one of your beloved reports gives me. I already wrote to you about Ketty these last few days and how much I care about getting her the necessary help, and now, I see that Hannalein turned to you again in the matter.

Hannalein wrote that all of the Felsensteins, including Semy as well as Uncle Joseph and his son Erich,<sup>159</sup> have come to London with their wives and children, though she has not heard from Semy himself. She still cannot see what *else* she can do for Ketty and has already tried everything possible, and none of it has shown any kind of success. I wonder if she has turned to you once again in the meantime?

By the way, Hanna writes that Alice is putting a lot of effort into building a new existence for her husband and herself, but that she had to realize how "indescribably difficult a task" that proved to be. It should actually be her husband's job to take care of the relocation, but it is always the same where that one is concerned. The wife has to prepare everything and if he is dissatisfied, he gets upset because she did everything wrong. Other doctors have been able to create a new field of work for themselves in Palestine, although the relocation of people in that particular profession took on such an extraordinary configuration after they lost their health insurance in Germany. Had he gone to the countryside, he would probably have been more successful, but he did not want to do that because initially, his wife had brought out enough money to allow him to lead a life of indolence.

The old Freimanns really deserve to be beaten. How long have they known that their children are going to the U.S.A. and that he will have to give up his practice, and they did not start taking care of their own emigration until December 1938!?<sup>160</sup> I congratulate you as "close relatives" on Annelie's wedding! I hope that she was lucky in her choice and will not have to feed him as well. It is really horrible what kind of cruel disaster this rabble of criminals has brought to so many human beings, and no one can oversee when that will come to an end, because those poor refugees have no hope at all for a new existence, which is not so easily established nowadays, despite their emigration.

I did not get out into the air at all today, but that is no pleasure at the moment anyway. It has been snowing for four days now without pause, and the very fine snowflakes hit your face like little whips. My room is

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159 Joseph Felsenstein's family had been responsible for the branch of the Gebrüder Felsenstein in Fürth, near Nuremberg, that specialized in the preparation of animal bristles for the manufacture of brushes. It too had been confiscated by the Nazis. The escape from Germany of the Fürth Felsensteins was aided and made possible by Fred Rau, Hanna's husband.

160 Annelie's stepfather, Dr. Freimann, was a doctor in general practice in Leipzig until the Nazis dismissed all Jewish physicians.

heated wonderfully and I feel no desire to leave it. These lines will reach my darling more quickly than usual, because a colleague who is leaving tomorrow has agreed to take them to you. Aside from the letter, he will probably also take a broken horn comb along. Your awful *husband* broke his best one when he was cleaning it and if the same thing happens to the second one, Mope will have to wander through the streets uncombed. It would be very sweet of you if you could find a similar replacement and send it to me with one of the colleagues who is traveling here.

My little fruit-bearing tree, your male bee who fertilized you. He would so love to “fertilize” again!!!

### VERA TO MOPE

London, 29 January 1939

I talked to your dear mother for a long time yesterday evening and we talked about many things. I also told her about my telephone conversation with Hannalein and my letter to Otto Schiff and everything that is connected to that. Although she did know that Hanna had asked me to contact Mr. Schiff, she thought that it concerned the two younger children of Ketty’s. Among other things, she told me that Ketty was writing about that with such deeply felt desperation, because they have large debts there, mainly tax debts, which is why they are not permitted to leave at all. Hanna did not mention that with so much as *one word*! So how much good would a potential intervention by Otto Schiff do?! I do *not* think that was right of Hanna!

Just a short while ago, I talked to your dear mother on the telephone again, and to Alice as well. Both of them send you their heartfelt love and Alice told me how moved and overjoyed she had been that you had mentioned her in your telegram, and that she had insisted that they give her the telegram so she could take it home and show it to Julius. Then she said that she feels so much closer to Mopeleinchen because of me and that she is so very happy that “we have you!” is what she said to me! What that is based on or why, I do not know, but I found it downright heart-warming of her, although I did have to smile just a little—but no one saw that.

How sweetly and *thoughtfully* and reasonably my love judged my friend Hilde! I have tried to base the long break between her letters on outside circumstances, but it is so good to have that affirmed by you.



This letter is supposed to go to the post office today, but before that, I want to give my beloved many, many, long, sweet good night kisses in my thoughts! I love you, my Mopelein, *very, very* much! Completely and utterly, Your Little Witch

P.S. In the store, *no one* has any idea yet that I am expecting a baby!!!

### MOPE TO VERA

Moscow, 31 January 1939

Although I am dead tired and exhausted, I am still reaching for paper so I will not leave my beloved without news. After I worked all day, I was informed that the first contract for Persians had been finalized. It is of great importance to receive the first offer after closing a contract, because the prices increase from contract to contract, and I was very proud of having achieved that! Since shortly after 6 p.m., I have been trying to contact Schapiro by telegraph and telephone. Just now, a little after 1 a.m., I was finally able to reach him just to find out that a decision will not be made by him until the day after tomorrow, although the Russians insist on a decision by tomorrow morning. Since they have been kept informed through me of the activities there, that is an inexcusable sluggishness on his part and—if you lose a contract—will cost a lot of money because the prices will have risen already in the meantime. Anyway, the difficulties encountered in finding the old boy have enervated me completely.

Please do not be sad about this silly writ, but I am just too tired to try writing a "prettier" one, but at the same time, I do not want to leave my darling without any news! I kiss you most passionately and most lovingly, my little orange tree including the little orange and I long for the two of you so indescribably and tremendously. *Completely and utterly, Your Mope*

### VERA TO MOPE

London, 31 January 1939

I had a bad day today, but I suppose those kinds of days do happen here and there, and I really should not complain about it at all at such a mile-wide distance, because, by the time these lines reach you, the "bad" day

will have been forgotten already, most likely. I received the following letter from Otto Schiff earlier today:

“Dear Vera,

Many thanks for your letter of the 26<sup>th</sup>, and first of all, let me congratulate you on your wonderful news. It is indeed sad that you cannot take over the staff-management of the Pantheon Store, but I do not doubt that your baby will be ample compensation for this! Anyhow I think it is simply splendid that you were chosen for the post!

As regards your sister-in-law and her husband, I am not absolutely clear from your letter as to whether the necessary application has been lodged. If the application has been put through already I personally can do nothing as all applications have to go through Woburn House now, and the Home Office accepts them only from there. I do not quite understand what you mean. As soon as I hear from you I will do my best to be of assistance.

Yours ever, Otto Schiff

I immediately wrote to Hanna to tell her that the details she had given me over the phone were absolutely insufficient nor clear and definite. It is very *disconcerting* to me to be forced to bother Mr. Schiff twice, since he is already *overburdened* with similar requests. I asked her to send me the details that Mr. Schiff needs as soon as possible, because, since I wrote in my letter to him how extremely urgent the entire matter is, I can hardly make him wait for an answer now. Although Hanna did not offer me any other choice, I was convinced that I was not doing the right thing!

I wrote to Hanna this morning before going to the store. I have not heard a single word responding to it yet—actually, I have not heard anything else from Hanna since last Thursday, although the matter is ever so urgent. I called your dear mother a little while ago and she was kind and understanding as always. I told her about the letter from Otto Schiff and also about my letter to Hanna and asked her to use all of her influence and make Hanna realize the importance and consequences of a clearly written and most of all quickly assembled report on the facts of the matter. On the one hand, Hanna seems to be a little too casual to me and on the other hand, she cannot of course help being completely uneducated where business matters are concerned and is unaware of the importance of a clearly written report, because I am sure that she is completely willing to help Ketty. I hope that you do not think I am

judging her too harshly. I cannot change my opinion that she is not behaving correctly in this matter.

Enough now with this letter of complaint, especially since all the complaints seem more than *inane* compared to the horribly depressing newspaper reports of the last few days.<sup>161</sup>

I long for your understanding and intelligent advice, and everything else! Completely, *Your Little Witch*

### VERA TO MOPE

London, 2 February 1939

I am beginning my lines to you now, although I know that I will probably not be able to finish them before this evening. Mutti and I went to Kensington High Street to buy a pair of shoe insoles, but we were unable to find them. I am not rounded enough yet for *maternity frocks* and it would be a complete waste right now to buy anything else, so I postponed this purchase. After we got home, I lay down for a while and now, I am writing to my beloved from the horizontal. I am feeling very well and I do *not* feel even the slightest discomfort.

I called through to Hanna after she sent me the following letter with the requested information yesterday:

Dear Vera,

Many thanks for your letter which I received yesterday evening. I am very sorry that Mr. Schiff has to be bothered twice because of us. The application was sent from Woburn House to the Home Office on 25 November 1938, where it received the Reference No. S.11378. From there, it was sent back to Woburn House for further details and approval. I had hoped that Mr. Schiff would be able to expedite the matter through his connections at the Home Office.

This should answer all of Mr. Schiff's questions and I hope that everything is clear now.

Once again, my thanks for your efforts! Greetings, Your Hanna

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<sup>161</sup> Vera is referencing Hitler's widely reported speech to the Reichstag on 30 January 1939, the sixth anniversary of his appointment as German Chancellor, in which he threatened the extermination of Europe's Jews should there be a breakout of war.

Since I did not want to let any tension rise between the two of us—Hanna and me—I called her and told her rather candidly what I thought of the matter. *She* said that I had to have misunderstood her on the telephone. I told her that such things should never be discussed on the telephone in a hurry, but that she should have either come to me in person or documented everything in writing. I gave her my views on all of those things, since I consider honesty between two people who are friends the best and most intelligent policy, because otherwise, some kind of thorn will be left behind. After all of that was said, the conversation ended on a friendly note.

I kiss you—only in my thoughts, sadly—and put all my tenderness in it, you —

Completely and utterly, *Your* little Lilongo

#### VERA TO MOPE

London, 3 February 1939

Today, I am starting my letter to you at the office for once. Sadly, I have *not* received any more news from you. I am wondering if my love has forgotten about me!!!!?!!! I come back to your beloved lines from 26 January. You explained the right to procreate in such a loving way and in such an intelligent manner and I thank you for that.

I received a very sweet letter from Hilde Lewy in Genoa this evening. They are departing from Naples on 12 February. She wrote in the most charming way about our expected little child and that the joy such a little one will bring cannot even be imagined beforehand. *Your* Little Witch

#### MOPE TO VERA

Moscow, 6 February 1939

What kind of a guy was my poor, golden girl bamboozled into marrying? Since the night of 31 January, he only let his most beloved have one telegram and no other news besides that—and of course, now, my darling is thinking that I have been working very hard? No—the *husband* was lazy, like he has never been before and his bones are so stiff from all that lying around that he can hardly write. Today, I am feeling well again. I

am completely free of fever, but still feel rather weak, which the doctor projected, but I think that I will be back to being the old Mope in just a few days.

After I had finished the letter to my little witch Tuesday night, I felt a sudden chill and the thermometer showed 38.2.<sup>162</sup> So I decided to stay in bed on Wednesday, but I did not count on the nonsense lasting as long as it did. When there was no improvement Wednesday night, I asked for a doctor to come and see me on Thursday. He examined me thoroughly and determined that there was nothing wrong with me organically, and that I did not even have a bad cold. Apparently, the reason the matter dragged out for as long as it did was that I had taken quite a few aspirin and other such garbage during the days before to get over the thing I was feeling. Tomorrow, I will start working again, after I have not worked for a whole week. That is, I did do *some* work, since I was able to close the contract for the Persian pelts despite my temperature. But enough of that now!

I still have to answer many things in your dear letters in detail and I promise that I will do so, but these lines are supposed to get to the post office right away in order to put an end to the long break in my messages. Unfortunately, this writ is less than beautiful. I wish with all my heart to find just the right words to make you aware of my tremendous love for you, a love I have only been able to tell you about it in my thoughts, not in letters, for many days now. Completely and utterly, Your Mope

### VERA TO MOPE

London, 7 February 1939

Muttilein went with me to the *nursing-home* in Courtfield Gardens that had been recommended by Mr. Nixon. Unfortunately, we were unable to look at any rooms, because we were there at *feeding time* (there is no elevator or running H2O there either).<sup>163</sup> The matron is a woman of approximately thirty-eight to forty years, intelligent, reasonable, and likable, and since the matron of such a home is usually, or actually always, the main midwife and because of that, will be present during the procedure, it is of great advantage, of course, if she is likable. I made

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<sup>162</sup> 100.8 degrees Fahrenheit.

<sup>163</sup> i.e., no wash basins with running water in individual rooms.

arrangements with her to come by again on a free afternoon or a Sunday afternoon in order to inspect a room. The price is 10 guineas and up from there, and she said that there would be an extra 2 guineas per week. However, she also suggested that she would gladly give me a list of all the medical things that would be needed and would be much cheaper if one were to purchase them oneself (I get a fifteen per cent rebate at Boots<sup>164</sup> anyway). On top of that, she said that she would be happy to put together a list for me with all the necessary things for the baby, which it would need during its stay at the *nursing-home*.

Just as soon as I have gained a little more girth, I will buy a really *smart maternity frock*. Since I will probably not like myself at all with a rounded figure, I will have a much easier time accepting it if I can wear a well-cut dress that does justice to my temporarily altered appearance!!! By the way, I know that you are interested in it: I took my measurements on Sunday after I got up, just out of curiosity: Before, they were: bust 36 inches, hips 38 inches, waist 26 inches. Now, they are: bust 36-37 inches, hips 38 inches, waist 29 inches. I determined that I now look the same as those so frequently criticized madams who do not have very good figures but insist on wearing very tight-fitting dresses that emphasize all of the imperfections of their bodies in the most disadvantageous manner.

Yesterday evening, the mail man brought me a small package from Italy with a beautiful little baby jacket, hat, and little socks, everything in white decorated with pink and light blue from Hilde. I thought that was a very touching gesture—it arrived without an accompanying letter as a sample shipment—and since they are leaving next Sunday, she probably wanted to send me this dear thoughtful gift from European soil, after she had sent me a very charming letter, in which she expresses her great joy over the expected little baby.

Otto Schiff wrote the following earlier today:

“My dear Vera,

Many thanks for your letter of the 2<sup>nd</sup> of the month. I will certainly drop a note to the Home Office and ask them if they can speed up the application for Mr. and Mrs. David Goldschmidt and hope this will not take too long.

Yours ever, Otto

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<sup>164</sup> The British pharmacy chain.



I called Hanna *immediately* after the store and read the letter to her. I hope that the matter will now be expedited. That could have already happened last week, had one used a little more diligence, a *whole* week sooner, so to speak. I hope that I will soon be able to report to you about the desired success.

Alicechen called me yesterday evening because an inordinate number of relatives had announced their visit at your dear mother's to say good-bye to her. I had sent her a few lines yesterday, enclosed a few Russian postage stamps—she had asked for them—and also a small powder box in brown calf leather. I thought that it would give Alicechen a little pleasure. This evening, a letter from Carlchen Rosenfeld arrived in which he tells us that his eldest son has been here for the last eight weeks and has started to work; the younger one will go to Palestine on February 22 with a youth group, and in April, they hope to resettle in the same city<sup>165</sup> as his brother Julius. I will write to him as well and also invite the boy.

### MOPE TO VERA

Moscow, 8 February 1939

You know, I have a guilty conscience towards my little girl because of my illness, as I was forced to leave you without news for so many days. If I get to talk to you today, I will have to tell you that I was ill, because I cannot make you understand that long break in writing any other way. *Hopefully*, this news after the fact will not upset you! I am feeling *completely* well again and went back to work today. The temperature is back to normal again and by eating milk porridge and similar children's food, I was able to regain my strength.

So Hannalein has provided you with the necessary information in the meantime and I would be very glad just to know that your intervention with Otto Schiff will lead to a positive result. It is really dismal to think what endless worries one is constantly burdened with in these times, and then, we know that, with the creation of an opportunity to get out of that damned country, the main worry of rebuilding an existence will begin, and I hope that David, with all of his connections, will not be too bitter once he escapes. I am wondering if I will see those two once I

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<sup>165</sup> i.e., Jerusalem.

get back to London. I think it is very right that you expressed yourself very succinctly to Hanna. Now, I hope that the matter is cleared up and your friendship is back to the way it was. You have to explain to her *most resolutely* that, should she feel the desire to see you, she will have to come to you now, and you can tell her that I forbade you to undertake that difficult trip twice under the given circumstances, that is, to spend nine and a half hours on the bus. I already think that my darling takes on way too much and I would be ever so grateful to you if you took better care of yourself.

I am sad over the fact that you were so frightened by my having been ill. I asked the doctor from the American consulate to take over my treatment—he is very thorough—and he came over immediately, had people give him a report in the evening and asked if he should come over again and then, he came over every single day and listened to my breathing on a daily basis, brought medicine and was really great. On top of that, he demanded that I come to him sometime this week during his regular hours so he can convince himself of my complete recovery. So you can see that you have *every* reason to be pacified.

Now, I have to jump into my bed as soon as possible, because I am terribly tired. Good night, my most passionately beloved golden girl. Sleep well and sweetly and in good health and dream yourself to me, as I dream myself to you so I can take my little fruit tree into my arms in my dreams and give you a *very, very long, very, very* sweet good night kiss.

*Completely and utterly, Your Mope*

## VERA TO MOPE

London, 9 February 1939

I had *no* idea, my love, that you were ill, and apparently spent an entire week in bed. I can still hear the sound of your beloved voice in my ear and I did not like it at all, because it sounded tired and exhausted. My love, after coming down with the flu, people always feel terribly weak for another week or so, and it is *terribly* important that you take very good care of yourself during the week after, otherwise—and please, please have yourself examined for that—damage to the kidneys or the heart might be left behind. Please, please, have a urinalysis done, go to bed early and stay in if it is harsh outside until you are *completely* well again. I know just *how* exhausted one feels after the flu and how necessary it is to watch out for oneself *afterwards*.

I am supposed to go and see Dr. Rothschild Sunday morning—he wants to see me once a month; actually, that is really not necessary at all since I am feeling excellent.

I completely forgot to write that I received a postcard from Annelie from New York at the beginning of the week, and she tells me that she has been married for five days and is very happy and that her husband is busy working.

Alicechen left for Palestine early today—she called me again last night and was unable to reach me, sadly.

Most passionate kisses and all my love, you, my beloved! *Your* little witch!

### MOPE TO VERA

Moscow, 10 February 1939

I will have to travel to Leningrad in the next few days. During the upcoming auction, there will be a terrible amount of work—because the quantity of merchandise is simply enormous—and this time, I have to try even harder to satisfy the customers, since I am increasing my demands. When I talked to Schapiro about my contract with him, he was surprisingly pleasant. However, I am sure that my demands are anything but pleasing to him, but he will not be able to do without me without some difficulties, because slowly but surely, the customers have come to believe that I know a little bit about the merchandise. Life is making me modest!!! Schapiro is just a parasite, after all, and he probably does not suffer any illusions as to his role. With me, he has taken a snake to his breast, while he thought that he had caught himself a dumb one.

It is very late again and I still want to climb into the tub, after I was unfaithful to my custom of bathing in the morning for all those days. I take you in my arms most passionately, you, my beloved little orange-peach tree and hope with all my heart that you will not worry unnecessarily about your ill-bred *husband*. *Your* Mope

### VERA TO MOPE

London, 12 February 1939

I went to see Dr. Rothschild who found everything in the best order—he took my blood pressure and touched my belly and determined—I already

knew anyway—that I have very strong stomach muscles (that is because of all the gymnastics I used to be involved in) which he considered to be a very positive condition for a birth (which I also knew already). He asked me to send him another little bottle and told me that, as a former medical student, he would have expected me to bring a new one without being told. He said that I would be able to work for another two months (I think longer than that, but we shall see!!!!).

It is 10.30 in the evening and Carlchen Rosenfeld's son, Georg, whom we had invited to join us for high tea, just left. He seems to be a very nice and humble boy and has been here since the end of January, works in a factory, and lives in Ealing with his cousin.<sup>166</sup>



Fig. 82 Georg Rosenfeld, later George Rosney, in 1937 (courtesy of Audrey Rosney, his widow).

Yesterday evening, I took care of all of my letter debts; I wrote to Annelie and congratulated her in both our names. Today, I gave Muttilein a check for £26-3-8, and hope that that is alright with you. It is to pay for her rent for January and February. Since Mutti had very high gas, electricity and telephone bills and also had some additional expenses like the purchase of additional bed linens, I knew that it would be very difficult for her to pay the bill, and I hope that my actions are alright with you.

<sup>166</sup> Born in 1921, Georg Rosenfeld (later George Rosney), although still a teenager, was beyond the age to be admitted under the Kindertransport scheme but found refuge in England.

In the meantime, it is 12.30 and I have made my way to the horizontal and the ink in my pen is all gone. My love, I am happy in the knowledge of you, your love, and your intelligent and kind understanding. I am looking forward to our little baby and hope that it will represent everything I wish for in it. Completely and utterly, *Your Little Witch*

### MOPE TO VERA

Moscow, 16 February 1939

After a rather busy day—I had to work out all of my Leningrad auction specifications and send them to Schapiro and also inform him that I had acquired some other merchandise today—I had my porridge and read a little of the newspaper.

You know, I am constantly worried about whether you are really well or not. Sometimes, I am downright afraid, because the mail takes so horribly long, and what kinds of vexation and sorrows or physical discomfort can make an appearance during those everlasting days until the mail gets here? For the last few days, ever since I talked to you, I have been so worried about my beloved little witch's well-being, and I hope with all my heart that those worries are completely baseless.

How are things coming along with the *nursing home*? How blundering of the matron in Courtfield Gardens that she has no running water in the house, because it seems that she would have otherwise met with your approval! It is unimaginable in such a huge city as London that people there are so far behind the rest of the world where such simple matters of hygiene are concerned. I already wrote to you that you should pay no attention to the price, please, because it is completely wrong to try to save money in things like that.

I am very happy to hear that the tension between you and Hannalein has been dispelled. It would have been very sad if this friendship had been loosened. My opinion of the good little chick Alice seems to have also carried over to my little witch. She really appreciates it when people show themselves to have friendly feelings towards her. In any case, I am glad that you got to meet another one seventh of us and I hope that you were not too loathe to take her into your circle as well. Even as a child, she was our "funny old one" and I am sure that she will be just that as she gets older.

Apparently, we will be moving our future field of activities to Leningrad. Merchandise will now be shown in the beautiful new Palais of the Soyuzpushnina and not, as previously, in the area of the harbor. I was told that our operations will have to move there for good in the future, since most of the merchandise will be sent there for sale or auction. The climate there is not as favorable as it is in Moscow, since the air is very moist because of the many canals and the River Neva, especially in the transition period. That is exactly the time, in the spring and the fall, that I am usually with my darling, so I will hardly have to suffer under it. The warehouses around the harbor are terribly cold at this time of year, while the heating emanates the most wonderful heat in "our" new location.

Now, however, I have to get into the horizontal as quickly as possible. It is unbelievably late and I have to work tomorrow. I take my most beloved girl into my arms and I kiss you with the most beautiful and sweetest kisses which are meant to make you happy innumerable times. You, sweetest little mother-to-be, you! Most tenderly, Your Mope

### VERA TO MOPE

London, 16 February 1939

It is past 10.30 and I just jumped into the horizontal. I had the afternoon off today. After lunch, Muttilein went with me to Kensington High Street, and, at Barker's, I looked at a skirt model which I will be able to wear until the end of July, because it is a *wrap-over* skirt which can be adjusted according to the increasing girth by re-sewing a snap which I consider very practical. I intend to invest in a well-made *maternity frock* just as soon as I more noticeably gain in fullness.

Yesterday at the store, one of our *floorwalkers*, who let me know not too long ago that she will get married in March, appeared in my office crying and saying that she had to tell me something that no one, not even her mother, knew about yet, namely that she is expecting a baby towards the end of June and asked if I could help her. Since the *young man* who is part of it knows about it and is pleased with the news and since they will get married at the end of March instead of during the summer, as originally planned, I calmed her down by telling her that I did not see why she was crying and what else was making her heart heavy, and she assured me several times that since I was taking the matter that way, she



was feeling completely relieved. I arranged an appointment for her at the hospital immediately so she could be examined and a bed reserved for her for June. Although I could *not* tell anything by looking at the girl, she sobbed and told me that the girls in the store had made ugly remarks concerning the changes in her appearance and that they were talking about it. I fancy that no one knows about me yet. I wonder if that is just wishful thinking. Actually, I do not care one way or the other, but I would really like to know out of pure curiosity.

When I arrived at the Kilburn store, the typist there welcomed me—she is a Jewish girl of around twenty, an excellent stenographer and typist who probably attended a better middle school. I knew her from my time in Kilburn; she is quite intelligent and most likely grew up in a proletarian or middle-class milieu. She held out her left hand to me and showed off the *wedding-ring* on it with pride and said, "*You can wish me: all good luck, I got married on 26<sup>th</sup> December*" which I did, of course, with the greatest pleasure and I assured her that a life shared between two people is so much more beautiful! Then, she asked if she could talk to me and if I were willing to advise and help her, because there was *no one* else she could talk to: despite her two-month long marriage, she had not been with her husband yet, although she loves him; she is afraid and he respects that, and what should she do? I advised her to go to a doctor—I thought, from my point of view and since I was no more than halfway informed—that was the best advice. She agreed to go after another period of two weeks that she gave herself. Additionally, I tried to calm her down on the one hand, because she seemed to be *worried*, and on the other hand, I explained to her how important a visit to a doctor was after another fourteen days, *important* for the future of her marriage. The husband (also a Jew), if he is healthy, seems to be good-natured and unintelligent. Or is that diagnosis wrong?

These are a few sketches from the day of a *staff manageress*!!!

I am waiting for your next letter with much impatience, because that letter will probably tell me about the result of your visit to the doctor last week. I hope that he found *everything* in the best order! I am feeling *very* well, apart from an *immense* longing! Completely and utterly, *Your Little Witch*

## VERA TO MOPE

London, 19 February 1939

I called your dear mother a little while ago. She asked me if Schapiro had paid you and I told her yes, a few weeks ago, and then, she said that Hanna had come to her and told her that the expenses for Grete's flat and everything else in Davos had been *much* higher than expected and since Fred was not here, she would really like it if you could contribute £25-0-0 of the promised £75-0-0 now. (Fred will be back from South Africa in a week from Friday!). Of course, I told your mother that I will send her the £25-0-0 and I just put the check and letter for her in an envelope. I know that the agreement said payment during her stay *here*, but I could not tell your dear mother that, and I hope that it is alright with you. What I find completely *wrong* in the matter is that Norbert virtually forced Grete to go *there* with the children although she does have a permit for here. I do not know about the costs there, but I cannot imagine that Davos is a very inexpensive place. I can understand only too well that he prefers having his wife with him, but other people want that as well and have to make the greatest sacrifices in this regard! Do you agree with me? The application to Switzerland for permanent residence was denied and the permit for her to stay there is only valid until March, so Grete and the children would have to come here in May. It is up to you whether you want to comment from there on the check that is to be sent to Davos! It will be difficult from such a great distance and most likely altogether futile to respond. It probably will not make much sense.<sup>167</sup>

Hanna called a few minutes ago!!! She asked when we would be able to see each other again and I told her you had requested that she come to me, because I have to work standing up so much, but although you had said that, it would not be absolutely required to abide by that request since I am feeling *very well*. Among other things, Hanna told me that she had been informed today that a notice from the Home Office had been received yesterday and that Ketty's visit had been turned down. When the application was submitted, a petition for a work permit was

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<sup>167</sup> Mope had agreed with Fred to underwrite affidavits that would allow Grete and children to immigrate to England. Their mutual brother-in-law, Norbert Moschytz, Grete's husband, appears to have leaned for support on the generosity of the larger family without full consideration of their circumstances.

made at the same time and I am sure that all of these cases are weighing heavily right now. I felt very sorry and I would like to know if Otto Schiff's intervention had arrived there in good time. In any case, since Hanna will make another petition, I hope that his letter, had it not been received yet, will prove to be successful.

When will you finally know the date of your return, my love? But of course, I do not want you to come back earlier than is feasible to you and before you get everything done the way you think is right in order to satisfy your customers.

I kiss you innumerable times full of the gentlest love, and I am happy to know that we are together, you—Completely and utterly, *Your Little Lilongo*

### MOPE TO VERA

Moscow, 20 February 1939

Belatedly, Sojuspushnina arranged a banquet to celebrate the conclusion of the Persian lamb contracts. They called us around 6.30 to ask us to make an appearance at the Savoy Hotel at 7 o'clock. Having postponed several writing tasks, I still had a lot of work to do, so I decided work first and then "pleasure" and did not go over there until 9.20 while three of my colleagues had appeared on time. As punishment for my being late, I had to drink a wine glass full of vodka and after that, another half glass. I am not quite drunk, but feeling a little addled and the letter to my most beloved, sweetest girl will turn out accordingly and I might be reluctant to send it on its way tomorrow morning.

It would have been a serious affront, had I not shown up at all after the invitation and I had hoped, in my carelessness, that the late arrival would save me from a significant part of the alcohol consumption. As you can see, this was a complete misjudgment on my part! Nevertheless, the others also seemed to have been drinking a lot and one of the colleagues, whose wife is supposed to arrive tomorrow, drank quantities I had never thought possible, and that after I got there. Had I taken in even near that amount of alcohol, I would probably be lying under the table where the banquet took place until the July auction.

There is only *one* thing, the most *important* one, that I would like to raise here, as I have done all the days before. Please decide on the London Clinic immediately—if you have not done so already! I can hardly see a

difference in the cost compared to the earlier offers and soooo much desired comfort that there can be *no* doubt that this is the right place for my darling.

Because of that report on all the boozing, I completely forgot that we drank a toast to you as well as to our expected baby's health. I had to explain to the president of Sojuspushnina back then why it became impossible for you to come here and so, he used the occasion to drink to our son's well-being. However, I told him that I did not care if we had a boy or a girl and was only interested in your health as well as the child's.

Now, I want to close this funny, drunken letter and prepare myself for going to bed immediately after the telephone call. I am sending the most passionate and sweetest kisses that might be a little fragrant with alcohol to my most beloved little fruit tree. Most passionately and completely, *Your Mope*

VERA TO MOPE

London, 21 February 1939

At home, I found your loving telegram concerning the London Clinic. I just called the people there but I still feel like I am a terribly wasteful person and I am not completely clear whether I have the right to have a clear conscience in this matter! Most of all, my love, I would like to thank you for your love and caring and kindness and tell you that I am very *glad and happy*, once I get over my guilty conscience, to be able to go to such a hygienic and modern *nursing-home*. That is the disadvantage of my medical half-education, that I know too much to be completely untroubled and because of that, face a matter like this without critique, but still not knowing enough about medicine to actually use it for some practical purpose, or even be able call that little bit of unimportant knowledge as medical knowledge at all.

My love, it is very *good* and *sensible* of you to alter your diet to porridge and milk rice after that flu because meat, and with it protein, place too much of a demand on the kidneys. Vegetables and fruit are good as well and I hope that my beloved takes in as much fresh fruit as humanly possible, even if you do not do it gladly—*do it for my sake!!!*

My love, I have been reading the newspapers during the last few days with such extremely fearful emotions. There is so much in them about *how* ready to attack that dirty gang in Germany is and that people were expecting bad things to happen at the *beginning* of March. Even the

thought makes me feel cold and I would really like to know your view and your opinion concerning the matter, and if you see things as darkly as the newspapers.<sup>168</sup>

Most passionate, longing kisses—*I love you with all my heart and soul* and everything that makes me the person I am. *Your* little Lilongo Witch  
P.S. I am feeling extremely well!!!

### MOPE TO VERA

Moscow, 22 February 1939

You will probably have received yesterday's telegram with the request to make immediate arrangements with the London Clinic and I hope that you contacted the people there right away. I like their prospectus and from it, I can see that this place is the only appropriate one for my girl to bring the expected little child into the world. Hopefully it will work out to where they have to give you a sixteen guineas room for fourteen guineas—then you will at least have the feeling to have got something for your money. I am sure that the price will seem *reasonable* to you then! I am so exceedingly happy that the pregnancy does not seem to place too heavy of a burden on you—according to your reports at least.

You might like to find out that I procured my Finnish visa yesterday—it is valid for three months—so that I will not have to come back here again before my departure from Leningrad. I asked to have the Swedish one sent to Helsingfors. Quite a burden fell off my soul when they issued the visa immediately which was probably done because I already had the one from London in my passport!

And now, it is high time to come to the end of this letter. It is a chronometer that results from the size of the paper, because otherwise, I would continue writing ad infinitum. I kiss you, my sweetest little peach tree, full of the most passionate love and most tremendous longing, *Your* Mope

### VERA TO MOPE

London, 23 February 1939

Today, I had an especially *good* day! The mail brought me three most beloved letters as well as a telegram which requested the address change

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168 Hitler continued to threaten to annex the rest of Czechoslovakia, and occupied the country in the middle of March, only a few days later than Vera had predicted.

for the cigarette shipment. Just yesterday evening, I received a letter from Abdulla in which they inform me that the February shipment will be sent next week and ask me to let them know if another shipment is supposed to be made next month. I called them today and informed them that the February shipment should be sent to Leningrad and that I would call them again, as soon as my beloved lets me know if he wants another shipment in March; I do so hope that that will not be necessary and that my beloved will be *here*, in my company, when the next shipment is ready to be sent.

My tummy is now beginning to grow little by little—but my waist and bust measurements have increased about five centimeters as of late; by the time you come back, my love, you will find a *wife* whose measurements have undergone quite a transformation. My love, I am really feeling very well and ever since the night from 21 to 22 February I feel how the little one makes the tiniest movements within me. They say that that usually begins at the halfway point—that is, after about four and a half months into the pregnancy—and that is approximately right. I feel it during the day as well now—it is definitely not uncomfortable at all or even painful—it feels more like something moves ever so slightly and gently in the intestines.

This morning, I received a letter from our insurance agent in which he informed me that the *war-risk* has been included in our finalized insurance policy and because of that, there is an additional payment due in the amount of £1-11-0. When I called him not too long ago concerning this matter, he also said that he regarded the inclusion of *war-risk* absolutely necessary.

Mutti's good friend Emma Oppenheimer came by this afternoon—you met her once and she is a very intelligent and likable woman. The reason for her visit was that she wanted to bid us farewell since all of her paperwork for South Africa is done and she intends to leave around the beginning of April; but before she leaves, she wants to visit her grandchildren in Switzerland—they are half-Aryan and their father is still in Berlin, while their mother, Mrs. Oppenheimer's youngest daughter, is already in the U.S.A. It is difficult to say what will become of such a marriage and more than dreadful.<sup>169</sup>

Completely and utterly and most passionately, *Your Little Witch*

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<sup>169</sup> Many mixed marriages foundered because of the fierceness of Nazi racial laws. The children of such marriages were deemed "*Mischlingen*" ("crossbreeds") and

## MOPE TO VERA

Leningrad, 26 February 1939

I am really doing *very* well! I arrived here at the Hotel Astoria at 9.30 a.m. after I had a very pleasant trip—I shared a compartment with one of my colleagues. At 12.30, I received two most beloved letters from my sweet one and I am really happy about *how* lovingly you provide me with your longed-for reports. By 4 o'clock, I got caught up with all the work that had been left undone yesterday, then I went to dinner and ordered a theater ticket for this evening because I will probably not have any time for things like that in the next fourteen days or will be forced to go with customers and think of all the work waiting for me the entire time.

By the way, your friend Krämer the dentist is a big bungler. The provisional filling he claimed would last quite a while has splintered and now, I am living with a huge hole in my mouth and the hope that I will not be tortured by a toothache during the auction work. As usual, something like that happens at the most inconvenient time! I now eat compote more often in order to fulfill your wish that I eat more fruit in some form. There are enough apples and oranges available here to eat raw fruit as well, but I have a difficult time bringing myself to do that.

It seems *very* right to me that my dear mother approached you for the money for Grete, and not Hannalein. As a matter of fact, as the mother, she is *the* person to take care of things like that, since she is in London now, fortunately. Of course, it was perfectly correct of you to agree immediately and not delay the matter further by asking me first. My most beloved, you know just as well as I do how difficult it is to have to live separately and it might even be more expensive if Norbert has to pay hotel expenses in Davos and Grete keeps a household with the children in London. So, what was done is not entirely wrong, or so it seems to me anyway. There is another reason that can be mentioned, namely that resettling the children into the moist London climate might be more conducive in May than it would be right now. However, what do those people want to do after May? They can hardly be a burden on the family for the rest of their lives and I would like to know if Norbert is

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were therefore deemed to be Jewish and subject to a precarious existence if they remained in Germany.

doing anything to create a new existence for himself or if he is just sitting in Davos doing “scientific” work—at least that is what he calls it—and wants to continue living the life of a parasite.

The rejection of Ketty’s petition weighs heavily on me. The poor girl has had such a difficult time, but neither she nor David can be blamed. David has done some stupid things, but that happened more or less because he was deceived. In any case, both of them—and Ketty completely blameless—have had to suffer heavily, and I wish with all my heart that their luck will finally change.

I am really happy that my little girl has now made an agreement with the London Clinic and I do not have to worry about that any longer—that is a lot worse than the minor additional charge compared to the shack at Courtfield Gardens. So you see that you provided me with a lesser burden and not an increased one! You would only have a reason to feel guilty if you had left me up in the air during the auction. It might be a good idea to make a down payment of around five guineas to make sure that you will be accommodated. That would also have the advantage that the later *bill* would seem lower to you.

I do not believe that war will start before the summer, under any circumstances, and even then, there is not much chance for that. I am sure and hopeful that all of your worries are unjustified. It would be against all statesmanlike intelligence and foresight—although that cannot necessarily be expected from the rabble in those fascist countries—to begin a war before the harvest has been brought in. You will find that confirmed in world history.

Now, however, I have to gallop off to bed, otherwise, tomorrow’s first inspection will turn out badly. I send the most passionate, most loving, sweetest kisses to you, my golden girl. Most passionately, *Your Mope*

VERA

Journal entry, 28 February through 2 March 1939

On Tuesday, 28 February, in the afternoon between 3 and 4 o’clock, I lost our baby. On Tuesday, 21<sup>st</sup>, when I went to bed (I was at the store during the day), there were slight traces of blood. I stayed in bed on Wednesday and the doctor gave me injections. It stopped *completely* on Friday and Saturday. On Sunday, it started again, very lightly, and it came with diarrhea this time. Sunday evening, Dr. Rothschild examined me on the



inside and found my cervix closed. During the night from Sunday to Monday morning, the blood loss became heavier.

Mr. Nixon and Dr. Rothschild came over early Monday morning and Mr. Nixon also examined me and he found the cervix closed as well. He doubled the dose of Vitamin E from 3 to 6 capsules a day. No injection on Monday, because a Zonderk-Aschheim<sup>170</sup> was supposed to be performed Tuesday morning. My temperature had been around 37 degrees during the last few days (under the arm).

Was prescribed a sedative on Monday—no appetite.

Around noon, pain in the abdomen about every 10 minutes, way down, for about ½ to 1 minute, then pain spread to the entire abdomen.

Dr. Rothschild came back again around 11 o'clock to bring the bottle for the Zonderk-Aschheim. I talked to him by myself for just a moment and told him that it would probably not be necessary any longer, because I expected that the child would come during the night. By the time, we had settled down (Muttilein and I), it was around 12 o'clock and at 3 o'clock, I woke up and the pains were coming in 5-minute intervals. Towards morning, I went back to sleep for a little while, for how long or how short I do not know.

Dr. Rothschild came back early that morning and because I was bleeding, he thought that it would be better to wait with the ZA; he gave me another injection and told Muttilein that the room should be darkened and that sleep was the best thing now. After about ½ hour, the pains that were still localized in the abdomen subsided a little for about ½ hour, but then, they resumed tenfold, in intervals of about 2 minutes across the entire abdomen.

Between 12 and 1 o'clock, I took morphine twice, but the pain did not relent at all and came in intervals of 2 minutes and kept getting stronger. Then, around 3 o'clock, the doctor came back. I drew up my legs (before that, I had vomited twice, but since I had only had a little tea, nothing much came out) and I was lying on my back and as long as I did not move, the pain was a little more bearable.

Then, the doctor got on the telephone and asked for a nurse and I vomited again, with very strong tremors. Muttilein was there and afterwards, I said to her that I thought the child had come out with that. The doctor checked and there it lay together with the placenta. I felt very lightheaded, that is, physically, because the pain had stopped. The

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170 A now obsolete pregnancy test drawn from urine samples.

doctor gave me an injection to make sure that my uterus regained its original shape as quickly as possible. Then, the nurse arrived, wrapped a terry cloth towel around my belly, washed me with warm water, and then put a pad on me rather tightly. Yesterday, she poured a disinfectant on me (she came over for about 1 ½ hours, in the morning, and I was feeling much better. In the afternoon, there was a little blood.

Yesterday morning around 7 o'clock, I wrote to my darling (as the Tuesday letter and yesterday towards evening as the Wednesday letter).

I took pills to avoid infection and more capsules to ensure that my uterus kept drawing back together. Aside from the fact that I felt a little tired, I felt quite well, but I had a great need for rest.

In the evening, I took the sleep medication again and slept through the night, until now.

This is the description of the purely physical events. I felt really well during the entire pregnancy. I did not lift anything heavy nor did I do anything that could have caused this miscarriage, in my opinion. However, was I really prepared, I mean psychologically prepared, as one should be?

1. I wanted to hide the changes in my figure.
2. I was very disappointed that I could not go to the Pantheon.
3. I was sad, or rather, I had not reconciled myself with the thought that I would have to interrupt my career.
4. I was—although, from a purely intellectual point of view, and that is probably where my biggest mistake lay—that the want I felt for a child was based in intellect and reason, not in emotion, in the heart. I would really like to know to what this miscarriage can be attributed. I ask myself if I rested enough and if I should not have been working, but I hardly think that is the reason, or maybe I am lacking some hormones or there is something wrong with my abdomen. If only I knew the reason!

There is something there and I have been feeling that for a while now: that something had to happen in my life that would show me that things will not always go smoothly and that things had been going way too well for me.

Besides my beloved Mopelein, I have an angel Muttilein and what worry and trouble I caused her and how indescribable she was to me

and what pain I must have caused her. That and the horrible pain and the disappointment that I am causing my Mopelein is the worst thing of all to me! And I really, really hope that I will soon bring a healthy child into the world.

VERA TO MOPE

London, 28 February 1939

I did not write to you yesterday.<sup>171</sup> It got to be very late, and as soon as I put myself into the horizontal position, I fell asleep. I am *so* happy to hear that you have already received your Finnish visa and I hope most longingly that you will be successful in procuring your visa for Sweden as quickly as possible.

So, my Mopelein was a little, pardon me, a large drunkard last Monday. Your beloved kisses did not smell of that all the way to here and I almost said—unfortunately not! My love, I determined with regret that it seems to be very late there lately when you write and that is *not* good—you have a lot of work to do, you suffered from a bad flu not too long ago, so you *must* get enough sleep, otherwise, your kidneys will suffer!!!!

I am feeling very well and I only wish that my beloved could be with me. Nevertheless, I do know just how grateful we have to be that you have this job, and as I have told you many times before, I am *very, very* proud of my beloved who was able to become familiar with and so very good at this completely new and difficult work.

*I love you, my darling, with all my heart* and with all the intensity at my disposal.

*God bless you* and I am looking forward to seeing you so indescribably, and I kiss you again and again in my thoughts and full of the gentlest passion—

Completely and utterly, *Your Little Witch*

How long will you have to stay there *after* the auction is over?

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171 This letter was penned on the day that Vera suffered her miscarriage. Wishing to conceal the very sad news from Mope until the end of the Leningrad auction, she continues to write to him on a daily basis affirming her own good health, though (reading between the lines) the letters she writes at this time are understandably distraught and less focused than usual.

## VERA TO MOPE

London, 1 March 1939

Today is the first day of March!!! I can hardly tell you how happy that makes me, because I am hoping with so much longing that my most beloved will be here with me by the end of this month and that I will be able to finally feel his beloved embrace again. *How* I look forward to that and to everything that makes him the man he is!!!!

My Mopeleichen, hurrah that it is March!!!!!! I cannot describe to you just how happy that makes me! And now, I can think that my beloved is coming to me *this* month, can't I???? I love you very, very, very much, more than I can write to you about!!! Mopeleichen, do you know that you make me very, very, very, completely and utterly and totally happy? *Your* little Lilongo Witch

## MOPE TO VERA

Leningrad, 1 March 1939

Just now, it is 2.30 a.m., I am interrupting my work, because I cannot leave my beloved without mail for a third day in a row. Yesterday and the day before, I worked until 3 o'clock, and 3.30 respectively and since I have to get out of bed again at 8 o'clock, there is not much time left for sleeping. The catalogue of the first section, that is, foxes, martens, European polecats, etc., is twice as strong as usual, and there is an immeasurable amount of work. We are busy inspecting the merchandise from 9 to 5.30 with an hour break for lunch. In the evening, it is time for taking care of calculating the prices which is very difficult this time as well, since numbers have been printed in the catalogue, and they have to be checked in order to do a self-check concerning the particular descriptions. This only to explain to you that I only have to neglect my sweet one where letters are concerned, but never in my thoughts! All of my customers want filled-out catalogues and the auction begins Sunday afternoon and should last until Friday.

As I already told you, I will remain in Leningrad now and not go back to Moscow at all, so that the mail will also be awaited here with great longing. I intend to leave on the 30<sup>th</sup> and arrive in London in the morning of 3 April. That is a Monday and the day before Pesach.

I am deeply touched and delighted that our expected one has begun to move in a noticeable manner and I hope with all my heart that it will not give my beloved one any discomfort, because I would have to be mad at it, although I do not really know it all that well yet, and I am sure that it does not want that. I hope that the matter with the London Clinic has now been firmly finalized—please let me know!

I went to a dental clinic here because of my emptied tooth and had it filled again temporarily. It was very quick and painless and I am happy that I will not have to worry unnecessarily about getting a toothache.

Now, I have to hurry and get to bed and I will come running to you soon in my dreams—beneath your picture—and open the door ever so quietly to convince myself that my sweetest one is sleeping well and then kiss you most tenderly and take you gently into my arms so that I will not disturb your sleep, you sweetest little orange tree, and I am looking forward to the little fruit ever so much and I kiss you and it most lovingly and gently. Completely, *Your Mope*

### VERA TO MOPE

London, 2 March 1939

Today, I have the afternoon off and I sandwiched in another very lazy *half-day*, but before that, I went out into the fresh air right after lunch. Now, I am writing to you from the horizontal and I am enjoying the peace and quiet. Today, my beloved is celebrating Wychodnoi and I hope that he was able to get some rest, despite the many inspections and all the work. And that he did not have to write catalogues without pause!!!

Early today, I received a rather convoluted letter from Annelie in which she asks me to do something for her parents and make it possible for them to use England as a transit station. I had not heard anything from her parents since I sent them the application form. I will send Annelie a copy of my letter to her parents and then wait to see what she thinks of it and also bring Sweden to her attention, as you advised me to do earlier. Among other things, she writes that she had just received the news that her sixty-six-year-old father-in-law who had been sent to a concentration camp in perfect health died in the hospital. Aside from the fact that this news shocked her, she is even more worried now where her parents are concerned. She also writes that her only consolation is her husband and she would write to us about her life and her activities

another time. She had not received my letter yet when she sent her letter off to me.

I just talked to your dear mother and she sends you all her love; she was very sweet and charming, as always. She had a half fast day today and I think it is wonderful how closely she observes everything.<sup>172</sup> Among other things, she told me that your brother Adolf had spent some very restful vacation days in the Lebanon and she is very happy about that because he works very hard. Your sister Alice had written from Cyprus, the return ship was not as comfortable as the one on the way there, but that is really not all that bad after all.

My Mopeleichen, most of all, it is meant to tell you that I love you, that I am well, and that I feel such great, great, and even greater longing for you.

Completely and utterly and totally, *Your Little Witch*

VERA TO MOPE

London, 3 March 1939

Today, I received two most beloved letters from Moscow and the detailed one from the 26<sup>th</sup> from Leningrad. I was happy to hear that my mail arrived in Leningrad at just the right time and welcomed my beloved there! By the time these lines reach you, you will have passed the zenith of the auctions already. I was so very happy to hear that you were able to finalize a few more deals before your departure from Moscow.

I do hope that the tooth Krämer put a temporary filling in which fell out again will not give you any pain. Oddly enough, your judgment concerning Mr. Krämer coincides with Muttilein's whom I had sent to him a few weeks ago and she was not pleased with him at all. I have always been quite satisfied with him until now—although I do not have any expertise in this matter. In any case, I really do hope that that particular tooth will *not* give you any problems during your current stay there.

My love, I was very sad to hear that you believe you will not be able to come home before April!!!!?? It has never been that long before—but if it has to be, it just has to be!!! Nevertheless, I do *not* find that wonderful

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172 The Jewish Fast of Esther, preceding Purim, occurred on the roman calendar date of 2 March in 1939.

at all, and why is that necessary? Schapiro thought that your trip would make no sense at all unless you stayed there for the entire month of April. Do you happen to share that view???? I most decidedly do not!!! After all, we only live once and the beginning of April is bad enough, but as has been said before, if it is necessary, I do not want to stand in your way!—

I am feeling very good and I feel such a limitless yearning for my beloved!!! It is nice to know that the mail from Leningrad and back appears to take less time! Do you really know that I love you very, very, very much and *even more*, you?! —Your Little Lilongo Witch

### VERA TO MOPE

London, 5 March 1939

Today—Sunday—was a beautiful day filled with sunshine and aside from the fact that the wind was blowing rather strongly, one could really believe that spring has arrived. As usual, I spent the morning being very lazy and did not go out until the afternoon to catch a little fresh air, and I took the little bottle to Dr. Rothschild so he can examine it. I am feeling very well and the only thing missing is *you*, my love. Dr. Rothschild is very pleased with my progress and I hope that you are as well.

Yesterday evening, I received a huge bouquet of dark red tulips: I remembered that I had mentioned to the assistant cashier some time ago, when she was in my office, that tulips are my favorite flowers and that red is my favorite color. A while ago, towards the end of December, I pushed a raise through for her, but getting it through created some trouble for me. She had been working for us for ten years, left to give birth to a baby (she was married) and came back after two years. They rehired her at a ridiculously low salary and even after she had been retrained and became re-familiarized with the work, they hardly gave her an appreciable raise. I talked to the chief branch accountant, and she finally got her raise and she knew that I had procured it for her. And it appears that the bush of red tulips which was delivered without a note is meant as a sign of her gratitude. In any case, I was very happy to receive them. Generally speaking, I think and have observed that human beings on the same social background as our girls (the *assistant cashier* used to be a *salesgirl*) have a much better developed and unadulterated sense

of gratitude and express it much more freely than so-called educated people.<sup>173</sup>

Maybe you will come home at the end of the month? That is my quiet hope anyway! As soon as you have some kind of idea concerning your arrival date, please let me know about it *immediately!!!!!!!!!!* So that I can look forward to that date and I can do that a lot more once I know the date or at least the approximate date.

Most passionate, loving kisses, you, filled with longing, my Mopeleichen –

Your Little Lilongo Witch

As a matter of fact, do you know that I love you very, very much and that all of my emotions are concentrated on doing something loving for and to you, you?—

### VERA TO MOPE

London, 6 March 1939

Your dear mother spent the evening with us—she left just a little while ago—and she was sweet and charming, as always. She read a very detailed letter from Grete (Davos) to us—Grete seems to be quite comfortable there. They are still in negotiations with the U.S.A. and they still hope that things will work out for them after all, which would be a very desirable conclusion. The children seem to be very charming; she does not mention anything about her *husband*, as far as I remember. As I understand from her letter, Alice traveled over Switzerland on her way back and they met for a short time. In the meantime, your dear mother received the news from Palestine that Alice had arrived there hale and healthy and that everything went smoothly during her entry, aside from a few customs difficulties.

Yesterday, your beloved lines from 1 March arrived, so it seems that the mail is *significantly* faster from there. I was very happy to read that you now have an exact date for your arrival here, my love; so, unless Schapiro places something in our way, which I really hope will not happen, my love will be with me in four weeks. *How* I am looking forward to that day!!!

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173 Likely, the anonymously sent bouquet of tulips came from the management at Marks & Spencer, who had been informed of Vera's miscarriage, and not (as she takes pains to explain to Mope) from the assistant cashier.



I hope that the first day of the auction yesterday went by pleasantly: I was with you in my thoughts all day long, my love!!!!!! Enough, enough—it is very late!!!

Completely and utterly, *Your* little witch

I am doing very well!!!

VERA

Journal entry, 7 March 1939

I am still lying in bed and today, I have to think about a few things: I would really like to talk to my husband, when he is back, into *giving up his job*. The reasons for that are as follows:

1) A marriage is not a real marriage if you are together for 2 months and then separated again for four months. After all, you only live once; you can suffer through such hardships if you *have* to, if there is no other way, which was the case for us 1 ½ years ago.

2) If my beloved does not spend more time here, he will never get British citizenship.

3) There will come a point when they will no longer give him the Russian visa, so it would be better to put an end to it yourself and of your own accord than to wait until you are no longer *able* to do it.

4) It could be rather bad for our marriage if this constant separation continues. If I had given birth to a baby now, in July, the matter would be quite different, but the way things worked: We are in a position to take some risks, because we are only responsible for adults, not for a child.

On top of that, I want to have a child as soon as possible, but the doctor says that I am not allowed to until I have had at least two normal periods, and by then—if my beloved continues with this job—he would be gone again, so we would have to postpone the arrival of our baby by another four months, so that would be six months altogether. Should we do that? I am twenty-nine years old, not so young anymore. I want to talk to my beloved about the matter when he comes back and see what he thinks about my perspective.

I would really like to have my husband here with me—this is not a natural marriage and maybe, we can find some kind of solution, some kind of satisfactory solution, to this problem.

I really hope so!!!!!!!!!!

## MOPE TO VERA

Leningrad, 11 March 1939 [postcard]

As I already told my most beloved in my telegram last night, the auction is over now. I had an indescribable mountain of work to take care of the entire time and on average, I had about three hours per day for sleeping. Nevertheless, I feel excellent, apart from the deeply depressing awareness of having neglected my darling so terribly all that time. Unfortunately, I am just simply not able to do anything besides constantly preparing the catalogues for the auction, check the billing, etc., because otherwise, I would not have been able to finish it all.

These words are meant to be a most heartfelt little greeting to you and tell you how indescribably I love you and how unbearable my longing for you is!!!

Completely and utterly, Your Mope

## VERA TO MOPE

London, 11 March 1939

My beloved,

In the enclosed letter, I have to tell you about something that will *not* please you at all! *Please*, before you read it, go to your room or somewhere else where you can be completely undisturbed; and do not read it, should you be in a mood that is not the best.

And promise me that you will not let your head droop and that you will *not* be too unhappy!!!

Most affectionately, *Your* little witch

*Thursday, 2. III. 39*

I will work on this particular letter a little every day until it is sent off, so that it will make it possible to hurt my most beloved as little as possible—and I want *nothing* more than that! My Mopeleichen, please help and advise me as you have done so often and always in such a loving and gentle way and still do.

What would you have done in my place, if you knew that your beloved husband (it might be difficult for you to imagine that, so wherever I set a masculine sign, please choose a feminine one) is very busy with merchandise inspections and that he needs all of his strength,

his physical strength as well as his power of concentration, one hundred per cent to be up to the demands his profession places on him; that customers expect increased achievements, the highest performance from him since he is making increased demands on his employer, and that customers come to Leningrad from all four corners of the world to have him advise them advantageously, intelligently, and carefully?

Then add to that the fact that you love your husband without limits and know that this love is mutual and that everything your wife experiences affects you deeply, and the same for the other way around.

Mopeleichen, I am afraid to continue writing—can you understand that?—and I have thought long and hard about whether I should wait until your return to continue this report. Then, you would be able to look at me. Then, I could caress you gently, kiss your eyelids, and continue quietly, ever so quietly with this narration which weighs so very heavily on my soul; so here goes:

There once was a young woman who had so much happiness in her life that it made her feel afraid at times.

*Friday, 3. III. 39*

She had a husband she loved completely and he had the same feelings for her; the two of them harmonized intellectually, spiritually, and physically. They assisted each other, helped each other, loved each other, supported each other, and a wondrous harmony suffused their union.

*6. III. 39*

Even outwardly, life was good to them; they started with nothing and were able to get ahead through diligence, energy, competence, and both of them found a lot of joy in their work.

The only thing missing from making their happiness complete was a product of their love, a visible one: a child!

Mopelein, my beloved, we will have *another one*, I hope. *This one was a boy*. I am feeling completely well, my darling! Had it made sense to call you back such a short time before the auction??? You could not have helped me anyway, my beloved. It happened on: Tuesday, 28. February, in the afternoon between 3 and 4 o'clock. At home. And Dr. Rothschild was there, and, my darling—I know, and that is another deep sorrow to me, from now on, it will be difficult for me, very difficult, to get you to believe me, and that is a terrifying thought!

*Tuesday, 7. III. 39*

And now, I am doing very well again, but I do not think that you will believe me until you have convinced yourself of it in person, and God willing, you will be able to do so relatively soon *after* you receive these lines....<sup>174</sup>

*Wednesday, 8. III. 39*

The moment the child came out all further pain subsided immediately, and since the afterbirth and everything else had come with it, complete, I had no fever and there was no need for any interference by the doctor, and no further discomfort arose.

The first thing I said was: "Poor Mope!" and I have repeated the same thing every day and *uncounted* times now and I keep thinking it endlessly, and I wish nothing more than to be right next to you while you are reading these lines. The next thing I said right after that was: "When can I have a child again?"

When Mr. Nixon was here, he remarked that statistics show that 20% of all pregnancies end in *miscarriages*. The only reason I can see for me being part of this 20%, as I already mentioned earlier, is the fact that the two of us were doing *too* well, and life wanted to remind us that not everything can always proceed smoothly and unobstructed and according to our wishes.

Dr. Rothschild determined that it must have been dead for at least two weeks and it was completely impossible to establish a cause. (What I had taken as probably movements by the child, must have been movements of some inner organ!). My love, I did not lift anything heavy nor did I stretch or do anything I did not do every single day prior to this. As I said, I lay in bed, absolutely sedately, for an entire week before it happened.

Today, I left the bed for the first time so I could take a bath. I feel completely well, but since the doctor insists, I will stay in bed until the end of the week. My love, please be assured that I am doing *everything* the doctor tells me to do because I do want to have a strong and viable child very soon and I do understand that that makes it very necessary for me to follow the doctor's orders implicitly. I am trying to be very sensible!!! My Mopeleichen, I know that it is almost impossible to

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<sup>174</sup> There follows here "a chronological report," omitted here since most of the details are already contained in Vera's journal entry describing the miscarriage.

understand anything on the telephone from Leningrad, but you might feel relieved if you talked to me and convinced yourself that I am really feeling completely well again today.

By the time these lines reach you, I will have been out of bed for a while and you will realize when you hear the sound of my voice that I am fine.

My beloved, I plan on sending these lines either Friday or Saturday of this week and will be downright relieved that I will not have to send you any more letters with store reports, etc.

My letters must have shown you that I was doing well the entire time despite the events of February 28, otherwise, I would not have been able to write them at all.

*Friday, 10. III. 39...*

Please do not come back earlier because of the above report, under any circumstances, than you had planned initially. I am really feeling completely well and what sense would there be in you neglecting your duties towards the end of your current stay and offend Schapiro. Then, all of the effort I put into keeping the events secret until after the auction would have been for nothing, my love, and it cost me more, so much more energy than everything else....

My Mopelein, what I would give could I spare you this fright. My love, what would you have done in my place?? Had you come back, you would not have been able to help me anyway, and had you stayed there knowing what had happened right before the auction, your thoughts of me would most likely have paralyzed you.

*Saturday, 11. III. 39*

In the course of this day, I will send this report off; my love, I am feeling as good as ever!!!

Would you have preferred it if I had waited until your return and not written to you about it at all? I just could not have done that!!! And you can see why I did not write to you about it before, can't you, my love?!

I am looking forward to *you* and I am already looking forward to the next child even now, and I hope that I will carry it within me very soon and I hope *so* very much and with *so* much longing that my beloved—even after he reads these lines—is looking forward to all of that with me!!!

## MOPE TO VERA

Leningrad, 12 March 1939

With this letter I will begin to provide my sweetest with regular mail once again, and in just a few weeks' time, I myself will follow them. Outside, the sun is shining and it is beginning to awaken the happiest feelings inside me at the thought that it is becoming so easy now to count the days that still separate me from my little witch. I am actually quite amazed how good the enormous amount of work was for me. I was in a constant hurry in order to get everything done which was more or less successful. During the entire auction, I had an average of three and a half hours of sleep a day, but nevertheless, I was in my best form during the merchandise inspections.

Today is Sunday and Wychodnoi at the same time and I am so glad to have the same day to rest as you do. I stayed in bed until 2 o'clock although I woke up repeatedly. In my brain, there still is no real chronological order of the events during the auction and I am reporting a jumbled mess to you, but I am sure that you can understand that and excuse it as a result. By the way, my beloved really helped me in everything with her regularly arriving reports, and the greater half of the merit of having done decent work is *due to you* and I thank you for that, my little girl.

My most passionately beloved little witch, I feel such an unbearable longing for you and your love and everything that has to do with you, and I am happy to know that I will be with you in three weeks tomorrow, if everything goes according to plan. The time together will help us get over all the difficult times of separation. I am looking forward to you as never before, because this time, you will show me more loveliness than ever before.

Filled with the greatest love and longing, you, my little peach tree—  
Your Mope

## VERA TO MOPE

London, 14 March 1939

This morning, with the 11 o'clock mail, I received your beloved lines from Sunday quite unexpectedly—my most heartfelt thanks! Once again, I am certain that it was right to keep the sad news from my beloved during the auction! I hope that you agree with me! I just wish that the

day was already over—I assume that you will receive my Saturday letter tomorrow, since the mail is being transported much faster now—and I would finally know that my beloved has that behind him already. My thoughts are with you constantly and without pause and I am really worried about *how* you will take the news.

Muttilein called your dear mother this morning to let her know that I am doing well, and your dear mother said that, as soon as she could manage, she would come over again to visit me. I am always very happy to see her. She reported that Ketty's two younger children have received the permit to come over and will be here soon.

My love, if I only know what kind of mood you are in right now—if only I could kiss away all the sorrow from your forehead—but soon, soon, God willing!!!!!! My love, please do *not* be sad!!!

I kiss you innumerable times, sadly, via paper only, my beloved—*Your Little Witch*

### MOPE TO VERA

Leningrad, 16 March 1939

I got married because I loved a girl with all the truth of my soul, with all the faith of my heart. That girl knew that our happiness depends on absolute honesty towards each other and is based on that. Even before our wedding, she realized that keeping a fact that could not be kept from me shook me to my innermost core and weighed heavily on our togetherness for a long time. It was only overcome because I was convinced that this experience had given my girl a lesson for life.<sup>175</sup>

Now, we have been married one and a half years. My love for my girl has grown to immeasurable limits. Every moment, every second of my being is dedicated to her, in loving thoughts, whether I live near her or far, far away. Our love was supposed to reach its zenith through the creation of a child. My worries for my girl, my worry that she might not take care of herself, that she remains aware of her task that the carrying of a baby in the womb demands, originated in that great love I feel for her.

In February, around the 10<sup>th</sup> of February to be more exact, an almost inexplicable fear took hold of me rather suddenly, a fear that something

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175 Mope is alluding to Vera's relationship with Mitja.

had happened to my girl or the child inside her, and I also expressed that in my letters and begged, pleaded, for *truthful* reports on her well-being. I asked for telegraphed messages and I was deeply worried and concerned. Despite all the telegrams and letters that were supposed to calm me, my fear continued well into March. How many nights I lay awake and tried to imagine how my girl was doing! But that does not matter now!!!

Last night, I received a long letter which tells me that my girl has lost the child. Since February 22, she has lain in bed and she knew that there was danger, and on the day that the child left her, she sent me a telegram with the words "Very well aside from longing." I am an enemy of all heroics, because there are more lies than bravery in heroics. Instead of letting me know on February 22, that danger was approaching and letting me share in her pain as much as in her joy, my girl gave me falsified reports on experiences that were not experienced. Not only did she treat me like a wimp and feared that I would not be able to handle the facts, but she lied to me the entire time. How can I believe her now when she tells me that everything is fine??? How should I read your letters in the future? Veralein, *what* did you do?

Our love is built on truthfulness, and that is the only way it can be good and beautiful and great! And love also gives strength, more strength than necessary to overcome difficult blows of fate if they are not disfigured by lies into a horrible vision, because they will be increased a hundred-fold through falsehood. You cheated me out of sharing your pain, Veralein. You did not give me the trust I deserve—and trust is the basis of our union! I know that you wanted to make up for it, I know that with all the pain you already feel this piece of paper will give you more of the same, but should I now answer untruth with untruth? There are no diplomatic tricks between us, as far as I am concerned, and I have to tell you what I think and feel, if our love is not to be crippled by this.

Veralein, my Veralein, you knew of the joy I felt in the expected little child, but *your* well-being is much, much, much, indescribably much more important to me. If only I knew now, truthfully, that you are well again, it could help me begin to forget the sadness for the little fruit that fell from the tree before its time. But after what has happened, I can only convince myself of your well-being *in person*. You told me, via telegram and telephone, not to come home.—You send me a telegram in Dr. Rothschild's name "coming home absolutely nonsensical."—



And I love you with all my heart and share all your pain so completely and I am sitting here because Schapiro wants to earn a few more pounds and that is why my coming home would be "nonsensical!!!" I no longer understand anything, anyone! Your Mope

### MOPE TO VERA

Leningrad, 16 March 1939

I have been sitting here in my room all day today, waiting for the telephone to my beloved which was supposed to come through at 10.30 this morning. After I wrote to you a little while ago, I feel a little less overwhelmed by bleak thoughts, although I have to believe that the letter will not give you any great satisfaction. Earlier today, I did not believe that it would be possible for me to write to you at all with the awareness of having been deceived like that. However, little by little, the feeling that you wanted to do something good for me is alleviating the pain just a little. My darling cannot know me well enough to anticipate all of my reactions, because I am so very far away from you so much of the time and so often, and most of all, I know what psychological and physical pain you poor sweet girl had to suffer and how difficult it must have been for you to tell me about it after it was all over. In the beginning, you did not count on having to give up the child without carrying it to term and then, yes, then, everything was over already and you wanted to spare me. Deep within me, I am happy that there were no complications at least, no fever added to it, or that is what you tell me anyway!

You know, I have been afraid all this time that you overdo things. Once, I saw you jumping on a moving bus and I am certain that the child probably fell victim to something like that, because what else could be the reason? On top of that, I have often thought that you did not care all that much about having a child. Your vanity rebelled against it and all of my attempts to make you feel love for the developing little creature, a love that was supposed to be stronger than all the sorrow over the lost Pantheon store were not enough after all. You wanted to have the child out of love for me (and I thank you for that), but not because of your own motherly desires.

It is not right to say that fate envied our happiness and that it wanted to show us that not everything will go smoothly. There are no goddesses

of vengeance one has to make sacrifices to in order to satisfy them. We make a great part of our own fate ourselves and if the will to reach a goal is influenced by doubt, the goal will be impacted as well. Of course, many who want to rid themselves of a developing being within do not succeed despite everything they try to do, and others who wish for nothing else and wait for it with the most deeply felt motherly yearning, because they regard being a mother as the highest and most beautiful task of their womanhood, will never find that hope fulfilled. Concerning my beloved, there seems to have been a mix of both. You wished for a child because of me, but the sacrifices that ambition and vanity would be forced to make often seemed too great to you, because your yearning for a child was not as strong within you as those two characteristics controlling you.

You finally resigned yourself to losing the Pantheon store after my desperate reaction to your deeply felt sorrow, but deep inside you, you were neither able to accept the loss nor could you accept that this little creature wanted to affect your beautiful forms. But since that apparently could not be prevented, you wanted to be athletic, at least, and show everyone what a Vera can achieve despite a pregnancy. And how many things happened that I know nothing about???

But why am I writing all of this? Do I want to make stupid accusations now, after the fact, which cannot bring back what is irretrievably lost? I only want my darling to see everything clearly! My perspective might be wrong, but my thoughts are meant to stimulate yours to get as objective a picture concerning what happened as possible. You write to me that you want to have another child, but I do not want it to bring you nothing but sorrow and no joy, or causing the same worries for you as the first one. You should and have to consider if the required sacrifices seem equivalent to what you will gain by making them. You should not have a child because I long for it—like it was with the first one.

It is 7 o'clock in the evening and I have not left my room at all today, still hoping that I will be able to talk to you and also hear you. Tonight, after I had just cancelled my request so I would not disturb you after midnight, your call came through. Sadly, I had to guess what you were saying as, with a poor line, I did not really understand a single word. I take you into my arms with the gentlest love, and I cannot say what I would give if I could be with you right now!

Your Mope

## VERA TO MOPE

London, 17 March 1939

*How* I look forward to the day when I no longer have to put things down on paper. My Mopelein, *how* would *you* have handled the matter in my place? I can only tell you again that I did not have the slightest idea, until Monday, February 27, that I would lose our child. And on Tuesday, the only day when I really did not feel well at all, it happened, and what sense would it have made then to let you know? You would have come back, you would have lost your position, you would *not* have been able to change *any* of the facts, so what would you have done in my place?????

When I received your beloved Sunday letter, in which you tell me so lovingly how my regular letters had helped you get over the difficult auction work, I felt so relieved and happy and I had the feeling that I did something good and right. And now, I no longer know what is right—although I still feel, when I think about it, that I did not have any other choice. However, I did not count on one great factor: I did not think it would ever be possible to lose my *beloved's* trust because of it. I was too sure and too convinced that the two of us trust each other so completely that my love, after the initial shock, would be able to understand the situation in such a way that the thought of my being unable to send him truthful reports would disappear in the background completely. My beloved, it is terribly difficult to be forced to be so far apart for such a long time!!!! —

I can only say and repeat: please, please, come as *soon* as you can, that is, as soon as you are finished with your work there. I wish I could have some idea of what my most beloved has to take care of now, after the auction is over, and could judge how important it is. My love, please take care of *everything* related to business the way you usually do, so you can leave there with a clear conscience, and then, as soon as everything is done, come to me, but *not* by air!!!

Oh, so, after our telephone conversation, you do not want me to read the next two letters?!?!?!? What would you do in my place? Of course, I will read them and *I love you*, even if you wrote angry letters to me. In my thoughts, I snuggle into your beloved and yearned for embrace and I kiss you quietly and tenderly and gently, here and there and everywhere, you, my beloved. I am completely and utterly, *Your* little Lilongo-witch

## VERA TO MOPE

London, 19 March 1939 (mailed to Mope in transit through Stockholm)

Yesterday evening, as your cable was read to me on the telephone, I was more than happy, and I hope that you will have received my telegraphed answer very shortly after. As far as I know, it only takes about an hour for a telegram to arrive, at least that is what the Via Northern clerk told me. I am *so happy* I can hardly tell you just how happy. When and where will you arrive, my love? Apart from everything else, I do not like the political developments of the last few days at all, and so, I am relieved to know that you will begin your trip home tomorrow.<sup>176</sup>

Yesterday morning, I received a very dear and detailed letter from Hilde Lewy from New York. I had written her a letter at the beginning of this week but had not sent it off yet—because I had lost her address, or rather, the address of her brother with whom they are staying temporarily. She seems to have been so pleased with the telegram from “Vera Mope” and she said that it had been the last greeting from Europe before they left and the first good wishes on their way to the U.S.A. They want to go to the south of the country, maybe even to Atlanta, because Hilde’s brother-in-law found work in the south and they do not want to be too far away from him. For the time being, they have no firm plans as to what they want to do, but they do not want to stay in New York under any circumstances. Hilde’s entire letter made me very happy. I finished mine to her this morning and sent it off.<sup>177</sup>

My love, I really can hardly wait now until you are finally, finally here. And in the meantime you have come to understand, haven’t you, just why I had to send reports that were not quite in line with the truth for those two and a half weeks? First of all, everything happened so suddenly, secondly, you would not have been able to help me, my love, and right afterwards, I was feeling completely well again, thirdly, you would have lost your position, most likely, and fourth, I love you so indescribably, my Mopeleichen, and I know that now, after you have had the time to think about everything again, you understand me, don’t you, you?!!

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176 German forces invaded Czechoslovakia on 15 March. The inaction of the western nations greatly emboldened Hitler’s territorial ambitions.

177 The descendants of Hilde and Walter Lewy still live in Atlanta, GA.

I am looking forward to you and I hope that we will have a child very soon, very, very soon!!! In my thoughts, I kiss you full of tenderness and love and I wish you a good and comfortable trip and I accompany you with my thoughts, you—

Completely and utterly, *Your* little Lilongo-witch

