

when the Shakespeare problem was still being vigorously discussed in Germany. I wish you would try to get me the following books from the Royal Library or the Reichstag Library: L. Klein, *History of Italian Drama*; Schack, *History of Dramatic Literature in Spain*; Gervinus and Ulrici's books on Shakespeare. What is your own feeling about Shakespeare? Write soon. All my love. Keep cheerful, whatever happens. Darling Sonichka, good-bye.

When are you coming to see me?

Sonyusha, will you be so good as to send Mathilde some hyacinths from me? I will pay you for them when you come.

Your Rosa

Breslau, March 24, 1918.

My dearest Sonichka,

It is such a terribly long time since I last wrote, but you have been often in my mind. One thing after another seems to take away my wish to write. . . If we could only be together, strolling through the countryside and talking of whatever might come into our heads—but there is no chance of it at present. My petition for release was rejected, to the accompaniment of a detailed description of my incorrigible wickedness; a request for a brief furlough had no better fate. I shall have to stay here, apparently, till we have conquered the whole world!

Sonyusha, when a long time passes without my having any news from you, I always get the impression that in your loneliness—uneasy, miserable and even desperate—you must be as helpless as a leaf driven before the wind. The idea makes me very unhappy. But just think, spring has come again, the days are growing so long and so light; there must already be a great deal to see and to listen to in the country. Go out as much as you can; the sky is now so interesting and so variegated with the clouds restlessly chasing one another, the chalky soil, where none of the crops have yet begun to show, must be lovely in the changing lights. Feast your eyes on it all, so that I can see it through you.

That is the only thing of which one never tires, the only thing which perpetually retains the charm of novelty and remains inviolably faithful. For my sake, too, you positively must go to the Botanical

Gardens, so that you can tell me all about them. Something exceedingly strange is happening this spring. The birds have come north four to six weeks earlier than usual. The nightingale arrived here on March 10th; the wryneck, which is not due till the end of April, was heard laughing as early as March 15th; the golden oriole, which is sometimes called "the Whitsun bird," and which is never seen till May, was already uttering its flute-like note in the grey sky before dawn fully a week ago. I can hear them all from a distance when they sing in the grounds of the lunatic asylum. I can't think what the meaning of this premature migration is. I wonder sometimes whether the same thing is happening in other places, or whether the influence of the lunatic asylum is responsible for the early return to the particular spot. Do go to the Botanical Gardens, Sonichka, towards noon when the sun is shining brightly, and let me know all you can hear. Over and above the issue of the battle of Cambrai, this really seems to me the most important thing in the world.

The pictures you have sent me are lovely. Needless to say a word about the Rembrandt. As for the Titian, I was even more struck by the horse than by the rider; I should not have thought it possible to depict so much power, so much majesty, in an animal. But the most beautiful of all is Bartolommeo Veneziano's⁴⁵ *Portrait of a Lady*. I knew nothing of the work of this artist. What a frenzy of color, what delicacy of line, what a mysterious charm of expression! In a vague sort of way the *Lady* reminds me of *Mona Lisa*⁴⁶. Your pictures have brought a flood of joy and light into my prison cell.

Of course you must keep Hans Dieffenbach's book. It grieves me that all his books should not have come into *our* hands. I would rather have given them to you than to anyone. Did the Shakespeare reach you in good time? What news from Karl, and when do you expect to see him again? Give him a thousand greetings from me, and a message: "This, too, will pass." Keep your spirits up; enjoy the spring; when the next one comes, we shall all enjoy it together. Best love. Happy Easter!

Love, too, to the children.

Your Rosa