

Mademoiselle
*ma très chère Cousine!*²

[Mannheim, 28th February, 1778]

You will perhaps believe or even opine that I am dead! – – have kicked the bucket? – or am in the knacker’s yard?³ – But no! Do not believe it, I beg you; [5] for believing and shiting are two different things!⁴ – How, then, could I write so beautifully if were dead? – How could that be possible at all? – – – For such a long silence on my part I do not wish to excuse myself at all, for in this case you would give me no credence; yet what is true remains true!⁵ – I have had so much to do that, although I may have had time to think about my little cousin, [10] it was too short to write, so I have had to let it be.

But now I have the honour to express My interest in your health and how you dress – Are those open wounds still gaping? – A scaly skin requires scraping. – – Have I begun to make you baulk? Do you often write with chalk? – Do I still sometimes cross your mind? – Don’t hang yourself, for that’s unkind. – Did you in anger sometimes frown At me, your empty-pocket clown? Let’s make peace with diplomatic craft, Or shall I let a bomb off aft? Ah, you laughed – – *victoria!*⁶ I’m sure which road I’m going down, Though in my trousers all is brown, And still a fortnight to Paris town. Answer, or it’ll be a pity, And so, from pretty Augsburg city, Please send me very soon a letter, Then I will receive it better, Or else, all along the way I’ve traced, Instead of letters they’ll give me human waste. ⁷Waste! – – waste! – oh, waste! – oh, sweet waste! – waste! – taste! – that’s fine, too! – [25] waste, taste! – waste! – paste! – o charming! – waste, paste! – I like that! – waste, taste and paste! – taste waste, and paste waste! – – ⁸

– – Now to come to something else: Did you dutifully have fun this Carnival? At the moment, one can get oneself more into the mood for fun in Augsburg than here.⁹ I would wish that I were with you, Mademoiselle, so that I could leap around properly with you. [30] My Mama and I both commend ourselves to your esteemed father and worthy mother,¹⁰ as well as to our little cousin, and hope that all 3 may be truly well and in good fettle. That is the case with us, praise and thanks be to God. I believe it not. The better it is,

¹ BD: Mozart’s cousin Maria Anna Thekla Mozart (1758-1841), known in Mozart’s letters as his “Bäsle” [“little cousin”].

² = “Mademoiselle, my very dear cousin!”

³ BD: The last letter was indeed long time ago: No. 0384, 3rd December, 1777.

⁴ BD: A stock phrase still heard in Bavaria and Austria.

⁵ BD: Likewise still heard in Bavaria and Austria.

⁶ = “Victory!”, “I’ve won”.

⁷ BD: Similar treatment of this subject matter in No. 0364/33 ff.

⁸ Literally, without rhymes: [10] “Now, however, I have the honour of enquiring regarding your well-being and how you are dressing – do you still have external haemorrhaging? – do you perhaps even have scurf? – – can you still put up with me a little? – do you often write with crayon? – do you still think of me from time to time? [15] – do you perhaps occasionally feel in the mood for hanging yourself? – were you perhaps even angry with me, a poor clown? do you kindheartedly wish to make peace, or, by my honour, shall I let one go!? Yes, you are laughing – – *victoria!* – – our arses shall be the sign of our peace! –Yes, I thought that you would not be will to resist any longer. Yes, yes, I am always sure of what I am doing, [20] even if I produce shite today, although I am going to Paris in a fortnight. If you want to answer me, then, from there in the town of Augsburg, write to me soon so that I get the letter, otherwise, if I am already gone, instead of a letter I will get a turd. Turd! – – Turd! – Oh, turd! – Oh, sweet word! – Turd! – Taste! – also beautiful! – [25] Turd, taste! –Turd! – Leak – Oh charming! – Turd, leak! – That gladdens my heart! – Turd, taste and leak! – Taste turd, and leak turd!”

⁹ BD: There was still official mourning at court for Elector Maximilian III Joseph of Bavaria.

¹⁰ BD: Leopold’s brother, Franz Alois Mozart (1727-1791), bookbinder in Augsburg, and spouse; cf. No. 0006/7.

it is the better.¹¹ *Apropós*:¹² how is your command of French?¹³ – May I soon write a whole letter to you in French? – [35] That will be from Paris, won't it? – Pray tell me, do you still have the *spunicunifait*?¹⁴ – I can believe it. Now, it is for you that I must, before I close, for I must finish, because I am in a hurry, for I have at this very moment absolutely nothing to do; and then, again, because I have no more room, as you see; the paper is already almost full,¹⁵ and I am already tired too; [40] my fingers are utterly burning from the sheer effort of writing; and, finally, even if there really were enough space, I have no idea what I should still write, other than the story¹⁶ that I have in mind to tell you. So hear it. It is not so long ago that this took place; it happened in this country. It has furthermore attracted much attention here, for it seems impossible; nor does anyone yet know, [45] strictly between ourselves, the outcome of the matter. Thus, to keep it brief, it was about 4 hours from here, in a place I can no longer name – – it was simply a village or the like; now, that is a thing after all, whether it was Tribsterill,¹⁷ where the shit flows into the sea, or Burmesquick,¹⁸ where the lathes turn the bent arses; in a word, it was simply a place. There was a herdsman or shepherd, who was fairly old, [50] but nonetheless still looked robust and sturdy for all that; he was a bachelor, and of substantial means, and lived in great contentment. Yes, I must say this to you before I finish telling the story, the tone of his voice was terrifying when he spoke; he always inspired fear whenever his voice was heard. Now, to treat of the matter briefly, you must know [55] – he also had a dog, which he called Barker, a very fine, large dog, white with black patches. Now, one day, he was underway with his sheep, of which he had 11 thousand altogether; he had a stick there in his hand, with a fine, rose-coloured stick ribbon. For he went nowhere without a stick. That was indeed one of his habits. Now to continue: As he had gone on this way for fully an hour, [60] he was of course tired, and sat down by a river. At last, he fell asleep, and he had a dream that he had lost his sheep, and in his terror he awoke, and saw however, to his greatest joy, all his sheep again. At last, he rose, and went on again, but not for long; for hardly had half-an-hour passed when they came to a bridge, [65] which was very long, but well secured on both sides, so that one could not fall off; now, there he contemplated his herd; and, because he had to cross, he started to drive his 11 thousand sheep across.

Now just have the composure to wait until the 11 thousand sheep are across, [70] then I will tell you the whole history to its end. I have already told you that no-one knows how it ends. But I hope that by the time I write to you, madam, they will surely be across; if not, then it is all the same to me; as far as I am concerned, they could have remained up there. In the meantime, you must indeed be content with the matter so far; I have written what I knew. [75] And it is better that I stop now than that I should make up lies. In the latter case, you would perhaps not have believed the whole shistory, but this way – – please believe me – not half of it.

But now it's time for me close, This saddest part makes me morose.¹⁹ Whoever starts must end his labours Or risk annoying all the neighbours. Greetings to true friends I send, [80] Who doubts that, let him lick me my end, From now on and for ever, Until my

¹¹ BD: Cf. No. 0364/21.

¹² Here = "By the way".

¹³ BD: Nos. 0361/7-8; 0371/37 ff.

¹⁴ BD: Cf. No. 0364/20. No convincing explanation of this has yet been given.

¹⁵ BD: Obviously not true.

¹⁶ BD: This story appears in the *Cento Novelle* in the 13th century and also in Goldoni; it therefore seems to have been generally known in the 18th century. A similar narrative style is used in Mozart's postscript to his sister in No. 0271/21 ff.

¹⁷ BD: Treffentrill by Heilbronn, known in dialect as Tripstrill, which is mentioned in a fairy tale.

¹⁸ BD: Actually Wurmansquick, not far from Salzburg.

¹⁹ Cf. No. 0364/69: the phrasing is very similar.

head again turns clever, Which leaves him ample time a-licking: It sets my anxious heart a-ticking To think I could run out of shite Before he stills his appetite.²⁰

Adieu, little Bääsle.²¹ I am, I was, I have been, I had been, I would have been, [85] Oh, if I were, Oh, if I were, Oh, that I were, would God that I were, I would to be, I will be, if I would be, Oh, that I would be, I would be, Oh, if I had been, Oh, that I had been, would God that I had been: what? – a stockfish.²² *Addieu ma chère Cousine*:²³ whither? – I am the same true cousin,²⁴
[90] Mannheim, 28th *Feb^{ro}*, 1778

Wolfgang Amadé Mozart

²⁰ Literally, without rhymes: “Now I must finish, even if it vexes me; who ever begins must also stop, otherwise it disturbs people. To all my friends my compliments, [80] and anyone who does not believe it should lick me without end, from now into eternity, until I become sensible again. That certainly gives him a long time to lick, the thought of it makes me anxious myself, I fear I might run out of shite, and he would not get enough for his meal.”

²¹ The spelling “bääsle” instead of “bäsle” [“little cousin”] suggests the bleating of sheep.

²² BD VIII: In France a term for a dull, uninterested person, used until into the 19th century.

²³ = “Adieu, my dear cousin”.

²⁴ BD: The same phrase in Nos. 0384/64-65.