

From: Jakob?

To: Marie

Date: February 9, 1851

Addresses Marie in the text, but otherwise doesn't have form of letter; J. is complaining about Not hearing from Marie

Sunday, February 9, 1851. 7 o'clock in the evening

I am alone. Paul went to Portage this morning to inquire at the post office about letters from Europe after I had checked just 12 days ago, but in vain, as usual. Outside it is calm as the grave, not the slightest breeze is moving the oak leaves that are still hanging here and there. The moon with its cold beams stands still in a sky strewn with a thousand stars; not a sound interrupts the melancholy silence of nature. Even our lonely house cricket refrains from its monotonous chirping; the whole earth appears embraced by rigid death. Solitary, like the monk in his cell, I sit in our little cabin made of earth and appear calm like the natural world lulled in its winter sleep. But it is raging inside my constricted breast as in the bowels of the Kilran [??], and dark, ominous thoughts flit through my fearful soul in wild confusion, just as the icy storm from the north drives the gray mist with incredible speed across the frenzied ocean waves. As befits a man, I have certainly born many a brutal blow of fate with a strong soul, but this all-consuming yearning is oppressing my spirit, it has broken my courage, I have become a child, bitter tears fill my eyes, my immense pain finds release in loud laments. Only someone who has been in my situation at some time in their lives will understand me; only someone sorely tried by fate can comprehend the extent of the agony that unrequited longing can create; he alone knows that the bitterest drop in the cup of a hostile fate [?]\* is the horrible fear of uncertainty. If an angry God sometimes cuts deep wounds in the poor human breast, still, all wounds, even the deepest, are scarred over by the healing effects of time. Only one wound remains open—that made by the poisoned arrow of doubt, and its victim is secured unless a final quick solution [?] saves him from the fatal effects of uncertainty. I stood isolated in the world—disappointed, bitterly betrayed by supposed friends, seduced by the educated rabble, misjudged by the poor ignorant people for whose benefit I made all my efforts, weak as they were. I had quarreled with my mother and my siblings; all hope long dead for a better future in a time too far in the future for me to experience; life had become revolting to me, behind me lay delusion and hope buried in the grave, ahead of me was a rudderless [??] future, terrifying to any sensitive man. My belief in humanity began to waver; I was at the point of despising the entire race and thus myself, who belonged to it. And then God sent an angel to rescue me from the terrible abyss toward which this sad and desolate path was steadily and quickly leading, an angel who was to guide me out of this confusing labyrinth onto the right path. He, the original source of all justice and of truth, recognized the purity of my earlier wishing and striving and would not tolerate that they should be my destruction. This angel, my savior from certain destruction, was you, Marie! In your pure and innocent soul, the creator showed me that truth and virtue are no mere [?] dream. With a magnanimity that defied the world, you encountered the man who was deserted, despised; with the noblest sacrifice, you poured balm on the wounds in my broken heart.

With heroic courage, you scorned the degenerate crowd that spit on everything pure. Your pure young soul attached itself in love to my own, and taught it to once again grasp the idea that I had just begun to hear with hate. You gave me back my life, because you took from me my terrible distrust of humanity. Yet I did not become what I had been before; from now on I was only a part of myself; the other part was and is you. Since then, I have been firmly tied to you. All my striving, all my thinking was you. To possess you was, from now on, my life's mission. Virtue and duty required difficult sacrifices from me, but the thought of your innocence and purity [and how I could, in the meantime,]\*\* learn to understand and appreciate them, enabled me to bear

the difficult separation resolutely. But at that time I didn't know the full bitterness of unfulfilled longing, the oppressive fear of uncertainty. Cease this murderous silence, send just a single word of comfort to me in my misery. Otherwise my soul will die under the burden and ardent longing will break my impetuous heart.

\*"Fatum" / fate makes sense here.

\*\*Part of what would be needed for a complete sentence is missing here.

Translated March and April 2010 by Victoria Hill of Madison WI.