

Envelope:

Via U.S.S.R.

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Letter:

Shura, dear!

I'm sitting down to write you a letter in the most unexpected manner. I wanted to go to the movies and instead am writing you... I received a letter from you a long, long time ago... I don't know why, it even implored me to reply to you (that, which you wrote living "in a small village on the French Riviera (Côte d'Azur)").

I heard from your family that you are supposed to come home - when this will come to be and whether it will be soon or not, I don't even know, in any case, I want to see you and am interested in who you have become. Mosya (Moshe) wrote me that he saw you when he was in Paris, and that outwardly you had changed very little.

Oh, how I now dream of Paris, of the fact that it is impossible for me to now go study there. Especially now that I have reached, more or less, the prime in my work, I feel lacking in exercises with teachers, given the situation I am currently in, regarding trends in art (which I can only follow through articles and pictures in journals/magazines), from the works of the great masters, and from the entire art world at large.

At the moment, I am painting a full-length portrait of Mira, the approximate size of which is 2.5x1.5 arshin. This work keeps me very occupied. As a matter of fact, I started to really love painting portraits. Upon your arrival, I will make sure to paint one of you. We just have to make sure to come up with something more original for the portrait. I don't imagine it will take too much effort!

If only you weren't so lazy, and would write me more often. There are many, many things that interest me in this way. I will not ask any questions, as it is both exhausting and uninteresting. Questions limit the margins of a letter, and I am all for freedom and spontaneity.

I am currently in Harbin (Kharbine). I did not, as I initially thought, go to Shanghai. I am more than happy with my choice of house (if choosing between Harbin and Shanghai). I came to my senses and am learning English (oh, what a bore, especially taking into account the little love I have for learning languages!)

It's cold here now. I go ice-skating infrequently. Other things constantly preclude me, such as illness - 'I had a cold for the longest time', and another time some extravagant youth in the middle of some unsafe skating flew into me from the back with such force that he and I both flew forward, and after this incident I have already spent two weeks avoiding skating, such was the unlucky extent of the flight.

What entertainment do you have available in Paris, besides cinema? After all, I've heard that it is prohibitively expensive to go out to the theater or a concert, even more so for students.

Do you have friends? <<Lesk>>, it seems, has undergone total Francization, according to Mosya's letters. Are you two still friends? How does that old saying go - old feelings don't rust, I believe? He, most likely, is not planning to come to Harbin.

Tell me honestly, are you very homesick or no? I have always been plagued by the thought of this longing for the homeland. Although if I were abroad simultaneously with you, then you, I believe, would be able to minimize and help me with my grief, as a good friend -?

Are you familiar, even if indirectly, with the artistic life of Paris, do you ever go to galleries? If so, please share with me your impressions. Although I doubt that this would interest you much now.

My letter doesn't seem to be coming together like I had hoped. I do not wish to simply write about events that concern us, and yet writing about something distractedly is something I cannot do. I seem to have lost your overall essence, I think you will help me find it once more with your next letter. Speaking of which, you had promised to send me postcards from your "blessed village in the south of France". Where are they? Hurry, hurry my friend, you are a poor keeper of your promises!

I will end on this note.

Au revoir, to use your language  
Ronya

I await your quick reply.