

Dearest S,<sup>1</sup>

I took your advice and broke down Lurcher's door. He is not so bad as after the accident (and better than June) but I am concerned. He is sleeping now face-down on his mattress by a bowl of rotting fruit. I can't think how he was planning to eat them but he won't let me throw them away. His mattress is on the floorboards and I'm leaning on a blanket box because the chairs and table have gone. I'm wondering if he found some hired help and if so where are they now? Did you send him the money?

He has stopped writing his letters. At this rate they will stop writing too and I don't know what will happen. Last month I brought a bundle through and he was at my side at once, telling me which ones to open, which ones we should answer first. He made me read the dates twice, though with Europe's lousy postal system it hardly seems worth the trouble.

We answered Elena first, then Beatrice, Klaudia, Markus (yes, there are men among the women), and after that I forget. The list of loveless lovers has grown slowly but I can't keep up the way he does. I threw in the odd suggestion from the sonnets I've memorised of late and I even offered a line from one of P's letters. I know, I feel terrible about that. It was about birds flying low over the lake and how they mirrored themselves, like love's return. I regretted it as soon as I had said it. Last week I thought I saw her buying bratwurst at the market but I followed for a few streets and it wasn't her. When I thought about it, I realised she was taller and would never wear a skirt so blue.

This morning I found some unsent letters scrunched up behind the stove. I can't remember if I told you, but I found a fountain pen that fits his toes more comfortably and his Ys finish strongly now, not tailing off the way they used to. Each letter is beautiful, painful.

I thought this project would bring his old self back and yet he's stopped. Perhaps he's tired of the deceit. It seems he cannot write without breaking off a part of him, making it new. Sometimes, when his body is balanced and the words flow seamlessly from one page to the next, his face looks calm, an expression I did not expect to see again, don't you agree?

I will write again if he does not improve, but I know you will not come. Enough. How is Herr Duckface? Has he trained your sweet peas to their frame?

With love of course,

B.

I took your advice and broke down Lurcher's door. He is not so bad as after the accident (and better than June) but I am concerned. He is sleeping now face-down on his mattress by a bar of rotting timber. I can't think now he was planning to eat them but he won't let me throw them away. His mattress is on the floorboards and I'm leaning on a blanket box because the chairs and table have gone. I'm wondering if he found some hired help and if so where are they now? Did you send him the money?

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<sup>1</sup> This letter is a work of fiction. The author, Kat Dixon, is a writer from the UK and a recent graduate of the English with Creative Writing degree at the University of Nottingham. Kat has recently moved to New Zealand, so we were delighted to find her letter in the huge pile of submissions for this issue; and even more delighted that it was as good as this. Kat works on a steam ship in Queenstown, pouring wine and scrubbing decks. Her graduate plans include finding the sunniest beach and reading as much poetry as is humanly possible. She is working on her first collection. We don't know if she means poetry or stories or interesting stones, but we await the results with interest.