

Nov. 7 '39

Dear Angelic Mama,

Here is a letter to say that your daughter is healthy & happy, especially happy! It is 11 PM, I have just finished unpacking the suitcase that came from Bordeaux at last. Also I have just finished reading the August & Sept. Ladies Home Journals, obtained at the Libe for a week. It's fun to read them here, & to see their bright covers on the living room bookshelves, because they are so beautifully, peacefully American. And so trivial. If D. Thompson' weren't inside them they'd be perfectly harmless.

How do you make German potato cakes, like you used to manufacture for me, topped off with jelly? Do you know some easy, good pudding that doesn't require an oven? I just got a cookbook from the library so that I can learn to cook something fancy – like for my James. We only have 2 meals a day, & one of those is breakfast, so I like to make something good for dinner. It was easier to vary your menus in Montparnasse this summer, but now that winter is here the vegetable choice tends to be cabbage, cauliflower, or Brussels sprouts – most annoying to one who is used to the greater variety in the U. S.

It is cold comfort, Mama my pet, to learn that you were going to get a lovely present. When I left Paris I hurriedly bought you one of those darling dressmakers models bottles of Schiaparelli's Shocking perfume<sup>2</sup>. Complete in little glass case, with glass flowers around the stopper. It's now sitting on my dresser table in the bedroom, looking grand and lonely.

We live in a funny sort of life, because Jimmie works from 3 to midnight. We sleep till 10 or 11 in the morning, have brunch of coffee or tea with bread & that lovely thick French honey I used to eat at the hotel on the Rue de Vaugirard, plus a dish of Quaker oatmeal. Then we do whatever has to be done until 3 PM, when Jimmy goes off to the mines. I then finish cleaning up & making the bed, etc., set out to accomplish some worthy deed like visiting my old friends the police or the Embassy or what have you, come home by four thirty to get my market bag, set out to the Marché St. Honoré or the "Monoprix" to get the dinner. Mostly, you have to buy everything in a different shop, so that takes time. Then back to home, stopping on the way to have my milk & wine bottles filled & to buy bread. I do whatever vegetables have to be peeled & prepared, set the table, and retire to write up the day's accounts. Sometimes around five thirty Jimmy stops by on his way to the Quay d'Orsay for the

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<sup>1</sup> "Dorothy Thompson (9 July 1893 – 30 January 1961) was an American journalist and radio broadcaster, who in 1939 was recognized by Time magazine as the second most influential woman in America next to Eleanor Roosevelt. She is notable as the first American journalist to be expelled from Nazi Germany in 1934 and as one of the few women news commentators on radio during the 1930s. She is regarded fondly by some as the 'First Lady of American Journalism.'...

"Thompson wrote a monthly article for the *Ladies' Home Journal* for twenty-four years (1937–1961); its topics were far removed from war and politics, focusing on gardening, children, art, and other domestic and women's-interest topics." - Wikipedia, "Dorothy Thompson" [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dorothy\\_Thompson](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dorothy_Thompson), accessed 2014-06-29.

<sup>2</sup> Schiaparelli *Shocking* perfume: "A big cloud of civet and honey. Maybe not a scent you use when you are sitting on a crowded bus." – reviewed by Annica on Fragantica (<http://www.fragantica.com/perfume/Schiaparelli/Shocking-4876.html>). A photograph of a bottle like the one described here is appended to the end of this letter.

"Elsa Schiaparelli (1890–1973) was an Italian fashion designer. Along with Coco Chanel, her greatest rival, she is regarded as one of the most prominent figures in fashion between the two World Wars. Starting with knitwear, Schiaparelli's designs were heavily influenced by Surrealists like her collaborators Salvador Dalí and Alberto Giacometti. Her clients included the heiress Daisy Fellowes and actress Mae West.

"Schiaparelli did not adapt to the changes in fashion following World War II and her business closed in 1954."

daily propaganda the Foreign Affairs Ministry turns out & we ride over and back in a taxi, just for the heck of it. By 8:00 the dinner is on the table, because Jimmie only has an hour for it. By 9:30 or ten the dishes are washed up, I can write letters or read or when we have a guest, entertain him. At 12 :00 Jimmie appears (fun!) & I have tea & bread & butter waiting for him. We sit in the kitchen & talk & smoke till 1:30 or so. A bath, & bed. You see it isn't a bad life, & as soon as we are all settled we are going to school in the mornings so as not feel so lazy & uncultured!! Mostly we spend the time loving each other, even though we have been together purty steadily now for two whole months. How constant of us, what?

Next day (no more time)

I just got some letters from home you written [sic] a long while ago. The farm sounds so nice! I bet it's lovely in the autumn, on one of those mild fall days. What do you mean by "my" farm?

Some of the recipes I shall use, like the frageda soup, which sounds good & easy. They have a lot of dried peas, lentils etc. at all the stores. Don't worry about the food supply – it is abundant & cheap. The fact that you can't get alot of cheap green vegetables just means it's France in the winter, not that the war is doing much interfering. I wish I could make that "Easy Apple dessert", it sounds good. I haven't seen any brown sugar here, & once when I asked for it they didn't even know what I was talking about. However I have lots of time this evening, three apples, & some white sugar, so I'll try to make it with that. The People From Jugoslavia left a lot of cinnamon lying around. Someday I'll experiment on the onion soup. Unfortunately I haven't an earthen soup dish with a lid, & they are expensive as can be – all things for the kitchen are, except the food itself, and all are made for 16 people to last for 100 years.

Last night we had pork chops & apple jelly, delicious canned peas, which Jimmie & I both like, mashed potatoes, a kind of French creamy white cheese which is just cream turned very sour, delicious with sugar mixed in it, and pears. James was satisfied. He runs to "meat & potatoes" & wants a lot of those. He's sweet, by the way, & immediately appropriated the pictures you inclosed [sic] in the letter. Thanks awfully for sending it, it looks nice & collegy to me.

I'm just beginning to get regular mail letters written about Oct. 19, just before you began getting my letters. Poor unhappy parents! I'm so contrite about having made you unhappy! But you can't really even imagine the horrible month we just went through. Many a time we were ready to give up the whole struggle & come home to get married. At the very end it was too much for me & I burst into hysterical weeping in the middle of the district attorney's office & had to be led out in shame. Those people have no heart at all, all they know are their silly little regulations, but they can think of a new law every minute. I didn't want to let you know how unhappy & discouraged & unsuccessful I was. I admit now that you would have rather known the darned situation than be kept in doubt & worry, wouldn't you? But chaos was so complete, everything was so difficult, & I had so many problems that I got to feeling the only thing worth the struggle was Jimmie, & beyond that my brain didn't function. Thank God it's all over, & we are peaceful & happy as we wanted to be. With the Anchor Line ticket money we have paid off the French Gov't., & our other debts, so we haven't a worry in the world. All we concentrate on now is making each other happy.

Well, if I'm going to make that apple concoction I'd better begin.

Love to you & Jimmy,

Laura



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