

Family legend has it that to escape to America, my great-grandmother, Clara Grossinger, carried my five-year-old grandmother over the Carpathian Mountains, subsisting on grass. By the time I knew her, she was the bubbliest, giggliest adult I'd ever encountered. Her letters, like the one below, render her Yiddish accent perfectly. This thank-you note is to my father, who was stationed at Paine Air Force Base in Washington State. The "louse strike" (lousy strike) was the twelve-day New York City transit strike; the pictures she mentions are, sadly, lost; "s + f" stands for "Short and Fat," her nom de plume. The "darling sife" is, I think, a typo for "darling wife," but all the other cacography is exquisitely accurate ("anahane" = "on account of"). For some reason these phonetic letters are better than any audiotape could be. Thank you, Grandma Clara.

—Gillian Burnes

1/9/66

My darlings:

Just a fienu lince to you and I thinke you for your lovely Chanuka prasent and for your lovely latter. for every doller you sand for me ushall have a milyan dalers. I'm very happythat you 2 are happy and I wish you lock wiht the new ear. Granpa is in Florida. He feels fine there. I'm home bay myself and I fieel fine. Your pappa and mama are coming to seeme today. I cokt lokshan sup for your Pop. When you and your darling sife will com houte I wiil make patato likkes. macet soon we all miss you bout. nothing new heare the peopal are sofering anahane the louse strike but we all houp it will be a setalmant soon. I love you 2 very mucho much my 2 darlings I'm sanding you 2 dölles for the 2 of you by your sallf a malted. ever your little s & F. (picture)

(On a separate sheet.....I have a new name. the girl from epanema (Plus picture)