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POTATO NOSE: 1977 MASTER MANUSCRIPT



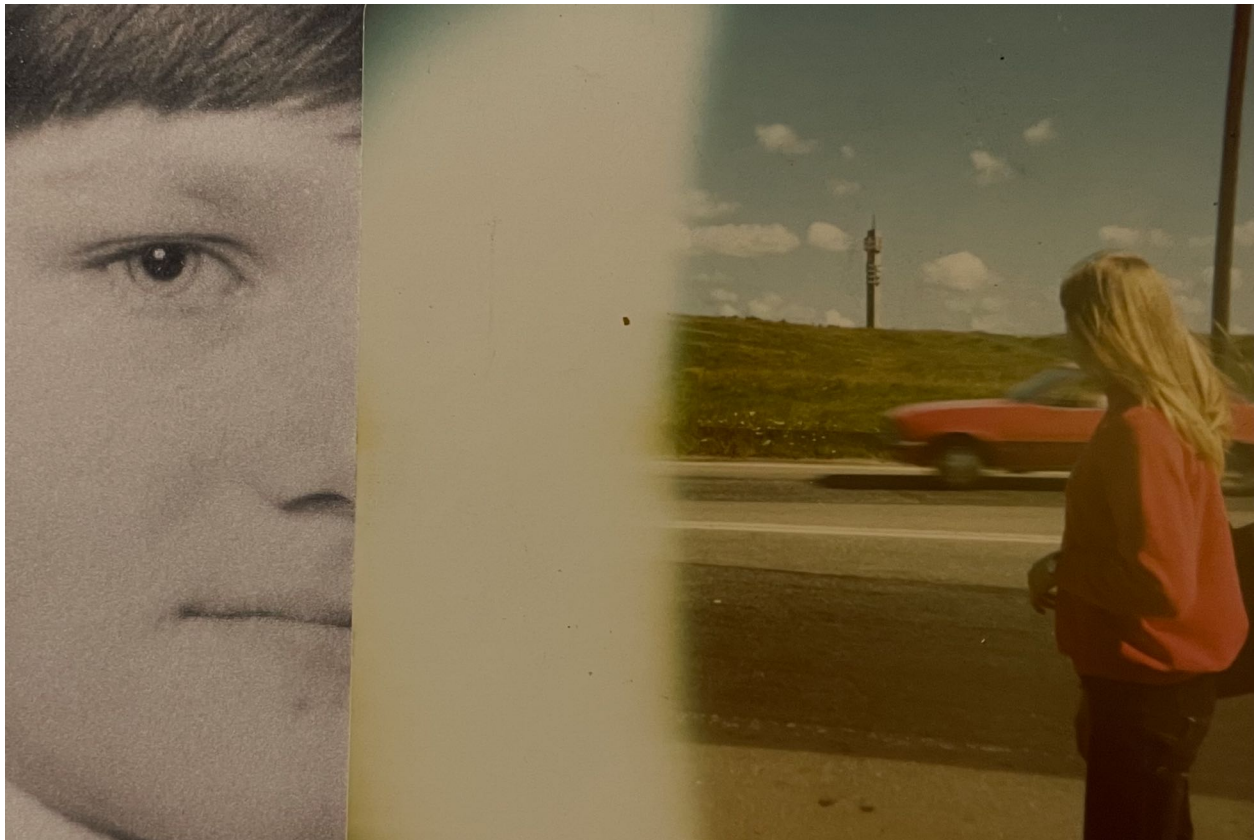
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DEDICATION

For M.

Now, people here have no idea the thrill of waiting for a letter from the person you love. - Ian McKellen¹



¹ 2024, Graham Norton Show <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IFG3yf5iH6U>
Graham Norton: Ian McKellen, I've heard you tell a very sweet story. I think you were eight or nine and you met a special someone.
Ian McKellen: Yes, we were on holiday in North Wales. And staying in the same guesthouse was a lovely girl called Wendy who was from the Midlands. And we were very sweet on each other and used to go walks together and hold hands. I remember that. And when we parted after a week, I realized that this must be love. I'd heard about love, but this was it. This was it. And so I wrote a letter to Wendy and, oh, blissfully got a return letter from her. And we started a correspondence. Now, people here have no idea the thrill of waiting for a letter from the person you love. Because they're there instantly, aren't they? They weren't when I was nine years old. You had to wait. And if the letter wasn't there at eight o'clock in the morning, worry not, because there was a second delivery. And then another one in the afternoon. And when that didn't happen, you said, well, there's always tomorrow. It was a great, great thing. Anyway, eventually it faded out and I turned in another direction.

EPIGRAPHS

If you read someone else's diary, you get what you deserve.

- David Sedaris

Dear Diary You're one of the 'musts' for peace of mind.

- Sylvia Plath, Diary entry October 11 1945

I am myself the matter of my book. - Michel de Montaigne (1533 - 1592)

All dance exists in memory. This is what makes dance such a supremely human art. It leaves no physical evidence. The dancer steps, he pushes the earth away and is in the air. One foot comes down, followed by the other. It's over. We agree, dancer and watcher, to hold on to the illusion that someone flew for a moment.

- Bill T. Jones, Last Night on Earth

DISCLAIMERS

Original Text Translation

This diary presents a direct translation from Swedish to English, preserving the original text exactly as written.

Graphic Novel

A Note on the Translation

In this graphic novel I have translated my diary written in Swedish in 1977 into English. I have sought to remain as faithful as possible to my original voice, language, and meaning. In adapting the diary to the graphic novel form, I have made minor edits and omissions for brevity, flow and to accommodate the pace and structure. No new material has been added to the original diary text itself.

THE PROLOGUE: 24 PAGE COMIC

Potato Nose, Narratio Retrógrada

Potatis Näsa: Omvänd Ordning

Prologue to Potato Nose: 1977/ Potatisnäsa: 1977

Narratio retrógrada (or retrograde narrative) refers to a storytelling structure where the plot unfolds in reverse, starting with the conclusion or a later event and working backward toward the origin.

Page 1

Potato Nose: Narratio Retrógrada
Katarina Thorsen **September 2026**
NO EXIT

Page 2

Epigraph: There is only one of you in all time. – Martha Graham
© Katarina Thorsen, katthorsen.com

Page 3

SHAME

It would have been around 1999 or 2000.
"You should get sick more often," he said, admiring my disappearing frame as I got out of the tub, shivering with fever and a bad stomach.
I'd been sick for days and had lost a lot of weight.

Less of me is more.

Around the summer of 1984, she pulled me to the front of the studio.
"This is what a dancer's body should look like," she said, pointing to me.
My body was so slim because I was recovering from three weeks of radiation therapy.

Less of me is more.

Now I understand that I came to believe this was the theme of my life.

Less of me is the right way to be.

Take up less space.

Meet the expectations I believed others had of me.

Be more ashamed.

Be sick.

Being sick also brought forgiveness - or, more rightly, what I interpreted as forgiveness.

It also made people sick with worry.

I couldn't win.

Jeeeeeeeeezus.

This may all be too much navel-gazing... even for me.

Apologies in advance.

As I began thinking about this comic, I realized there were markers scattered through my life.

Not pain points so much as plot points.

Medical appointments.

Treatments.

Moments when I had to take care of my body.

I've gathered those bare-bones plot points because they offer a way back to 1977, when I struggled with body autonomy, personal autonomy, and what would become a recurring health condition that required intervention.

Christmas 1976.

I received a new diary.

It became my life raft through 1977, first in Sweden and then after we moved to Canada.

Since that Christmas, diaries, journaling, and art have been my sacred space.

Now I'm 64.

My body is my own.

There's beauty in witnessing its changes.

I don't want to deny aging or pretend it isn't happening.

I have the privilege of witnessing its biology.

Of witnessing history.

My body is my diary too.

Every scar.
Every swelling.
Every wrinkle.
Every ache.
Every change is an entry.

Perhaps Potato Nose: Narratio Retrógrada isn't only a story told backwards.
Perhaps it's a story that reverses the story I have always believed.

Page 4

Pleomorphic adenoma is the most common benign salivary gland tumour.
Most often arising in the parotid gland, it is slow-growing, painless.
Although benign, it can recur if not completely excised and has a small risk of malignant transformation if left untreated for many years.

I think I'll begin with the recent phone call from the ear, nose, throat surgeon.
What stayed with me wasn't the outcome.
It was the familiar, immediate embarrassment of taking up his time, taking up space, as though my body needed to apologize for requiring attention.

April 20, 2026

Doctor (ENT surgeon): *I reviewed your MRI.
It shows multiple tumour beds that are most likely pleomorphic adenomas, the same kind you've had before.
They're usually benign, but they can change over time.
There are also some atypical cells.*

Me: That is what I expected. What are my options?

Doctor: *Option 1: we can monitor them, but I'm not comfortable with that because of the atypical cells.
Option two: we can do surgery, but there's a significant risk of facial nerve damage.*

Me: I don't care about the cosmetic side of things.
What worries me is my eye.
As an artist, I need full control of it, and facial nerve damage could affect my blinking and eyelid closure.

Doctor: *Understood.*
Sounds like protecting your eye is key.

Me: What's the third option?

Doctor: *I'd like to refer you back to RadOnc at VGH to discuss radiation therapy again.*
It's not the usual approach, but your situation isn't typical, and I'd like their opinion.

Me: What if we just wait and repeat the MRI down the road?

Doctor: *I'd rather hear from the radiation team first, then we'll decide together.*
The good news is this isn't urgent.
These tumours are slow-growing.
The challenge is their location and all the scar tissue from your previous surgeries, which makes operating very difficult.
Your case is also exactly the kind we're researching... people who have recurrences many years later.

Me: That's actually pretty cool.

Doctor: *It is.*
We'll get the RadOnc team's opinion, then we'll decide on the best path forward.

Me: Okay, thanks so -

[CLICK!]

Underneath here: actual journal page from **March 12, 1987.**

Page 5

March 17, 2026.

Shopper's Drug Mart
Refill: Zero.
Lorazepam.
One milligram quantity.
One tab.
Dissolve.
Under the tongue.
30 to 60 minutes before the MRI.

For extreme claustrophobia.

But what also stayed with me this time was that I'm the one who gets to decide what happens next.

St. Paul's Hospital, Burrard Street.
MRI Radiology Department.

Page 6

March 11, 2026.

Dr. P (ENT surgeon) called and confirmed the biopsy results:
benign pleomorphic adenomas with rare atypical cells.
Low-grade carcinoma cannot be completely excluded.

Because of my tumour history, scar tissue, and the tumour's location near the facial nerve, they will proceed cautiously. The next step is an MRI. It will take one to two months for an appointment.

The familiar embarrassment is rising.
But it turns out there really were tumours in there.
Ah...
This journey isn't about my health.
It's to push aside the weak me and awaken the dancer again.:
extended spine, chin up, eyes to the back of the theatre.

Old and new tumours.
My left parotid gland was removed in the late 1970s.
Ugly mole, one of too many.
Two small tumours in the thyroid.

February 24, 2026.

The ultrasound itself turned into a surprisingly long process as Dr. B surveyed my cheek, jaw, and neck. I was then called into the biopsy room for a Peri Parotid Lymph Node, fine needle aspiration (FNA). Dr. S was so gentle. I felt a tiny prick when the needle went in, but after that, I couldn't feel it. I could, however, hear it. Inside my skull. Scrape, scrape, scrape.

I was overly relieved they didn't cover my eyes.
My fucking claustrophobia.

When I cranked my eyes way up and to the left, I could watch everything on the ultrasound screen!

Fascinating.

Meanwhile, another set of thoughts started swirling in my brain:

Are you doing this for attention?

Are you making a bigger deal out of this than it is?

Why take up these folks' time?

Vancouver General Hospital, Ultrasound Radiology, Gordon and Leslie Diamond Health Centre, Laurel Street.

Page 7

February 3, 2026.

Got a phone call from ENT.

Requisition for an ultrasound and needle biopsy has been made. I am on the wait list.

January 9, 2026.

First meeting with Dr. P, ENT surgeon.

Journal entry, 2.55 PM:

Ubered to the Diamond Centre.

I'm in the coffee shop downstairs as I am early.

I'm not nervous at all, just curious.

My face's left side - sometimes quiet, often strange sensations ranging from pain to prickly soda bubbles.

My familiar.

Am I really dancing with "this gives me an out"?

I recall taking Mamma to this centre in 2008 to see the liver specialist, but she was deemed too far advanced for whipple surgery.

Vancouver General Hospital, Ultrasound Radiology, Gordon and Leslie Diamond Health Centre, Laurel Street.

September 22, 2025.

Downtown Radiology, Kiefer Street.

Journal entry:

Waiting at the ultrasound in Chinatown.

This is where I brought Mamma in November 2007 to do an ultrasound on her pancreas.
It was not good news.

I am flooded with feelings.

JAW/PAROTID AREA
NECK, THYROID

Page 8

A diary is a negotiation with the ultimate truth that the goal of life is death.

Maybe every diary is an act of narcissism.
Or maybe it is a refusal to let a life disappear without someone recording that it mattered.

Denman Medical Clinic, West End.

FOR LEASE

September 9, 2025.

I found another tiny lump.
Maybe nothing.
Maybe a recurrent pleomorphic adenoma.

I decide to go to the doctor.
I remind myself: I'm allowed to ask questions.

Page 9

Who gets to keep the story of my body?

Doctors have written parts of it.
Hospitals have stored parts of it.

Other people have reacted to it - sometimes becoming so frightened and overwhelmed that their fear became another thing for me to carry.
Believing that was my role.
I think that that is why I'm a hermit now.

My medical records were lost in 2003 when my family doctor closed his practice.

It feels strange to know that part of my own history has simply disappeared.

So my diaries, journals, and collections of old letters become another way of piecing together the medical history.

Maybe this comic is another kind of medical record.

Not an official one.

Just my own record.

A way of saying: I was here.

This happened to me.

Study of Puberty, 1894, by Edvard Munch.

Page 10

When I look back at every stage of my life, I think I've been misinterpreting the assignment.

A dance teacher calling my body exemplary, even after radiation.
My (then) life partner admiring what sickness had done to my body.

Doctors measuring it, scanning it, opening it, taking charge of it.

Doing their job.

Meaning?

The most beautiful meaning ever assigned to my body was lending it to my children so they could grow inside it.

January 31st, 1988

Lions Gate Hospital, North Vancouver.

Page 11

I now come to a point in **1984** when my written diaries began to melt into my sketchbooks.

Up until then, my sketchbooks had mostly been about drawing things I loved - trolls, dogs, dance.

My diaries were mostly words, with the occasional photo.

But that year came a moment - the turning point (also one of my fave movies, btw) - when a diary + sketchbook became journaling... became therapy.

A place where I could be raw and honest, and ugly.

Oh God... 1984 ripped me wide open.

I was in absolute shock.

Heartbroken.

Terrified.

But I followed my broken heart, and I made some of the craziest, boldest, weirdest, and best decisions of my life - even though they were also the hardest.

This is the page from that day...

This isn't the place to unpack the context.

That's for another time.

February 28th, 1984.

Dörren stängs.

Child. Adult.

Page 12

"I sing to the body electric... To be surrounded by beautiful, curious, breathing, laughing flesh is enough..." - Walt Whitman.

Page 13

"I sing [to my] body electric... To be surrounded by [my] beautiful, curious, breathing, laughing flesh is enough..." - my edit

Page 14

Summer 1983, radiation.

In 1983, I was referred to the B.C. Cancer Agency at Vancouver General Hospital to discuss radiation treatment for the recurrent tumours growing in the area of my left parotid gland.

Dr. Stuart Jackson, head of radiation oncology, B.C. Cancer Agency, Vancouver. Dr. Albino D. Flores, radiation oncology, specializing in head and neck cancers. I remember having about three weeks of radiation.

After every radiation treatment, my mom and I would walk down Broadway about a block or so from Vancouver General Hospital and have our \$2.95 breakfast at Jukebox Johnny's at Heather and Broadway. At first, it was wonderful. Eventually, I couldn't stomach the food anymore, but we went anyway.

It was my favorite part of the day. Dr. Jackson wrote Radiation as a Cure for Cancer, the History of Radiation Treatment in British Columbia, published by the B.C. Cancer Agency in 2002. I lost my hair, my skin burned, the teeth on that side eventually became crumbly.

The nerves on that side still behave strangely, the left side of my face as an odd companion. One side effect that stands out as strange, the thought of Duncan High's chocolate cake mix became disgusting to me, but my mother never used cake mix. She was Swedish, she made incredible food, nothing from a box, yet somehow during radiation the thought of Duncan High's chocolate cake mix became absolutely disgusting to me.

And then there was the mask. Back then, they made a hard, clear plastic mask to hold your head and body in position so you wouldn't move during radiation. When they began making the initial plaster mask over my face, I panicked.

They had planned to cover my eyes. Fuck this, I couldn't do it, so they left openings in my eyes.

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The surgeries.

Lionsgate Hospital in North Vancouver.

A few months before the radiation treatments began, I had undergone my 4th surgery.

But when the surgeon opened me up, he saw how quickly the tumour had returned (and that the cells were beginning to show more aggressive tendencies).

He decided, *We can't do this again.*

He referred me to the BC Cancer Agency.

Because my medical records were **lost in 2003**, I've had to piece together the timeline of my surgeries from letters my mother had written to her best friend in Sweden over the years.

(Those letters were sent to me around 2014.)

I know for sure that the fourth surgery was **May 25, 1983** because it was the same day as the U2 concert at Queen Elizabeth Theatre in Vancouver.

I'm not a huge U2 fan, but I did have a ticket.

I ended up giving it to my friend who lived across the street.

I remember waking up the next day in my hospital bed with her face right up to mine and, in my memory, she's basically yelling at me: "You should have been there!"

My third surgery was in **October 1979**.

My second surgery was in **March 1979**.

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516 East Braemar Road, North Vancouver.

The past has happened.
Fear happened.
But also tenderness.
And passion.
And love.

Peo was my childhood love.
We were engaged at age 3!
One of my first childhood memories is sitting on the kitchen counter with Peo on Råbäcksgatan in Grums, Värmland, (no adults around) eating (too many) sugar cubes.

Diary entry, **December 16, 1977**.

Peo and I never dared talk to each other when we saw each other in person in Sweden this past summer.
Oh, I regret it so.

I wrote to him from the hospital after they shaved my hair before the operation and told him everything.
I was crying and it felt good to write to him.
To my surprise, he has written back.

Autumn 1977.

A repeated post-surgery scene comes to mind of sitting in the bathtub in the larger bathroom upstairs.
I'm leaning my head forward towards the faucet.
Mamma is gently washing my hair for me so as to avoid the bandage wound on the left side.

Page 17

M.

November 21, 1977.

Letter to M. to me in North Vancouver.

*I think your student photo is really cute.
You don't have a big nose.
Maybe it just looks like that in certain angles.
Be happy for that.
Nothing helps me no matter what angle I sit.
I'm glad the operation went well.
Lucky, lucky, lucky... Tumour.
Yuck, yuck, yuck.
Please don't.
Ah, please don't get another tumour because then I will lose my spirit.
I have been so worried!*

We met in dance class in Stockholm in 1975.
Ours was a strange, passionate love that I can only liken to Juliet and Pauline in *Heavenly Creatures*.
M. lived in Huddinge, southwest of Stockholm.

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My first surgery was in **early November 1977.**

I had the same surgeon for all four surgeries.

Dr. Norman Edgar Hamilton, October 30, 1934 to August 30, 2023, chief surgeon at Lionsgate Hospital.

He was so kind and so gentle.
And a master surgeon.
I felt safe with him.

Temporal Branches, Zygomatic Branch, Masseter Muscle, Parotid Duct, Buccal Branch, Buccal Muscle, Buccal Branches, Triangularis Muscle, Anterior Facial Vein And Artery, External Auditory Canal Skin, Parotid Gland, Tip Of Mastoid, Facial Nerve V11, Posterior Belly Of Digrastic Muscle, Great Auricular Nerve, Posterior Branch, External Jugular Vein, Sternocleidomastoid Muscle, Posterior Branch Of Facial Vein.

When someone asks me, *What is the most favorite meal you've ever had?* I immediately think of the half banana and one arrowroot cookie on the children's ward after my first surgery.
It was divine.

Lions Gate Hospital Children's Ward in North Vancouver.

Page 19

I first felt a lump in **Summer 1977** in Sweden.
It was hard beneath the skin, right by my left earlobe.

I remember going to the specialist with Mama, walking through the mysterious hallways of Huddinge Sjukus: his empty corridors, arrows on the floor, a lone patient lying on a bed. It was eerie. We had nervous laughing attacks.

Since we were already packing to move to Canada in **August 1977**, the doctor told us to see a doctor as soon as we arrived.

Dr. Maldus Maritz (1924 - 2000) was our family doctor in North Vancouver. Estonian-Swedish, he reminded me of Max von Sydow.

Walking backwards through my life now, the 64-year-old me steps aside, illuminating the earlier versions of myself.

September 1977

516 East Braemar Road, North Vancouver.

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Why Potato Nose?

Diary entry, **July 29, 1977**.

*Yesterday we were in town shopping.
All of a sudden, unexpectedly, someone said hi to me.
It was Mikael A.
He has such a nice and kind face.
I said hi back, very naturally.
It felt good for once to not be tense and for him to have said it first.
I didn't notice him at first, so he really meant it.
Otherwise, they usually avoid me, so they don't have to say hi.*

*Boy, it's a sin to be as ugly as I am.
When I look in the mirror, I practice what I should look like when I laugh, etc without looking ugly.*

I hate it when I am natural and then see myself in the mirror and see the world's largest nose that would break the world record for the largest potato. - Nina.

Skam arkiv.

Skam Arkiv = Shame Archive.

Page 21

1977.

Bläsvägen 8, Östertälje, southwest of Stockholm.

Nothing changes the past.
My body still lived through what she lived through.
The darkness still did what it did to me.

Milton Thorsen, 1976-1989.

My 1977 Holly Hobby diary, **December 24th, 1976 to December 31st, 1977.**

But what changes now is authorship.

My diary is the authority.

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Stay tuned for Potato Nose 1977, the graphic novel.

Target release 2028.

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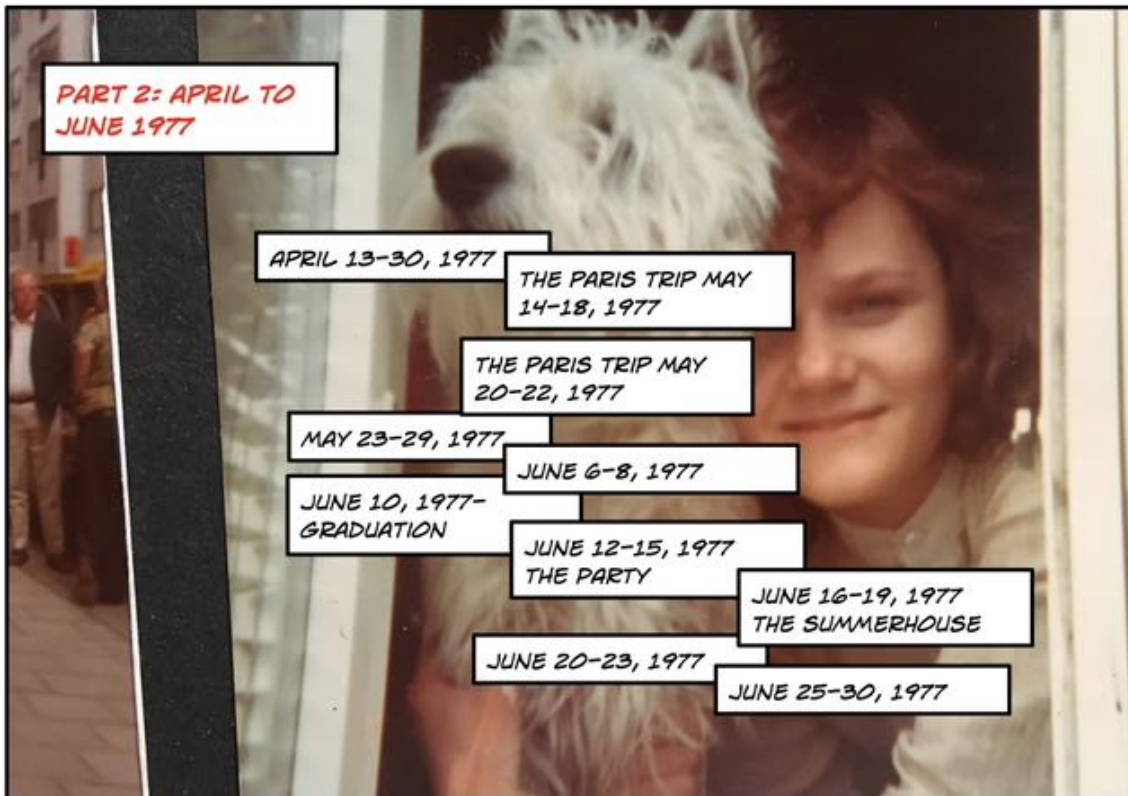
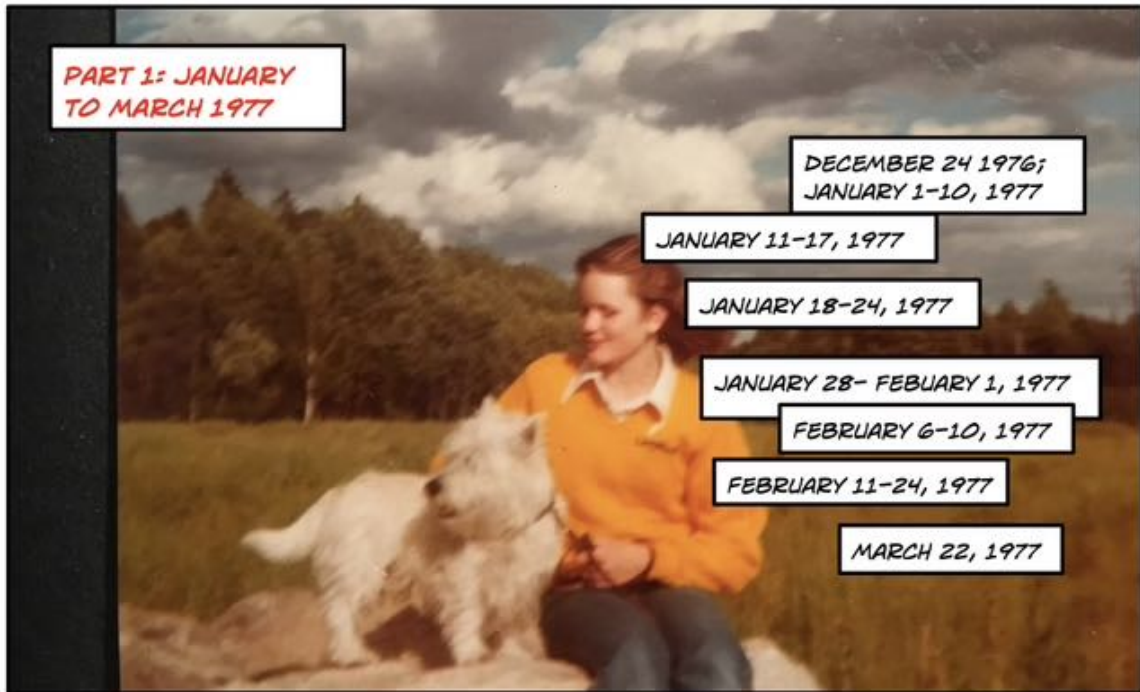
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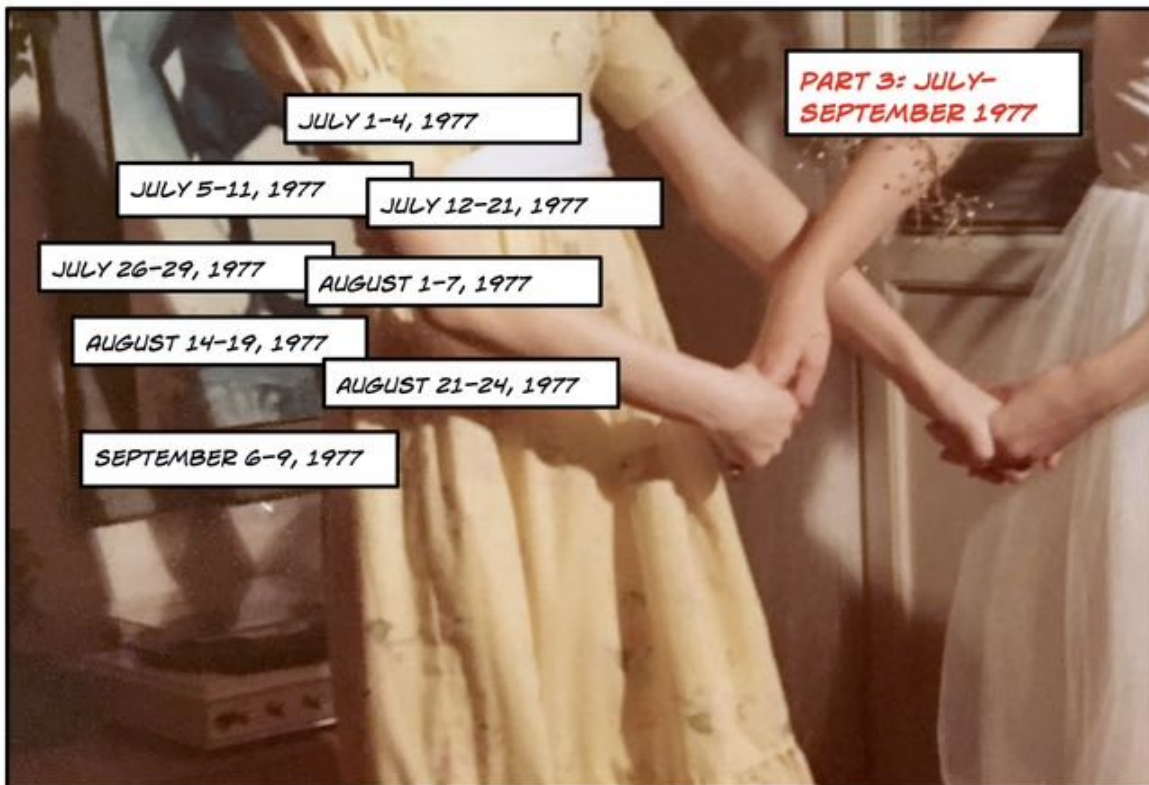
Dedicated to Toby Thorson, January 13th, 2000 to December 23rd, 2015.
You led me outside and somehow helped me find my way back to myself.

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Potatis, Näsa, 1977, Stortorget.

THE 1977 DIARY: ENGLISH TRANSLATION





January - March 1977

24 DECEMBER 1976

Dear Diary,
Christmas Eve

Hi,

All year I have longed for a diary. To think I got such a nice one as you. I got you from my friend in Canada, Dana Hardy. Too bad I have to wait until January 1st to begin writing as each page is dated.

I have to write down what I got for Christmas:

- Christmas dress
- Chocolate
- Slippers
- Holly Hobbie Calendar
- Snoopy stuffed animal
- Cat poster
- Ear muffs
- Clay
- Westie poster
- Hat
- Nail polish
- Necklace
- 200 kronor
- Dog book
- Canvas
- Diary
- Pajamas
- 1977 school calendar
- Calculator
- Westie stickers
- East German doll
- 1977 jewelry box
- Necklace
- Cards
- Cactus
- Pins

JANUARY 1, 1977

At last. Imagine a whole year has gone by. This year went by so fast. We live in Sweden. Ballet has become my life. Lori, my friend from Grade 7 in Canada, was here for the summer, and we have a new queen- Silvia. We attended their wedding (outside the church) and I got to see her. She is so fine. We have a new government (doesn't interest me so much but I am glad Prime Minister Palme is gone). I met prima ballerina Anneli Alhanko, and premier dancer Per Arthur Segerström. I have become crazy about animals- mostly dogs- and most important of all- we have a new dog- Milton! He is my best friend. Today we went to the cinema and saw Flåklyparens Grand Prix. My favorite character was Ludwig. I have to buy a Ludwig doll. It's the #2 film in Sweden. I hope to audition for the Opera Ballet (Operan). - Nina

JANUARY 2

I hope that Lillemor- my ballet teacher- lets me audition. Wow. I think I would make it in - maybe. Of course, I wouldn't dare say that to anyone. I want to be a ballerina or an animal rehabilitator, or an illustrator. I am going to sleep, for the first time, in Fredrik's top bunk, but when I climbed up the ladder, my pen broke. So, I don't think I can write very well. I have to hide you from Fredrik, because he always wants to read you.

[I can only imagine what he thought would be written on the first two pages]

[Rockwell's "Boy reading sister's diary, Mar. 21, 1942]

I feel spoiled from all the presents that I got. Maud has come home. I hope she likes her present. We were at the Orwald's for half the day and ate dinner. Funny, their dog, is in heat. I hate Gitte and Lena. Will tell you tomorrow. I wrote a letter to Kathy. - Nina

JANUARY 3

As I mentioned, I hate Gitte and Lena. They were my best friends at school, but I had a feeling they didn't want me hanging around. I was the 5th wheel. When we were going on a field trip to Birka, they never bothered to pick me up at our meeting spot as planned. I missed the field trip. The

relationship ended there. They are always trying to show off and they speak a little extra loud when they talk about dogs.

Anders bought me the Touch of Class album. I hope I can remember the choreography. The ballet on TV was so beautiful. Mom and Dad are finally beginning to believe that I could be a ballerina. Maud is coming over tomorrow. We have the whole house to ourselves. These are the dances we have choreographed so far:

1. Ellery Queen
2. The Glove.
3. I have created a Lord Peter Wimsey dance.

[\[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7cV_Fk9nzP0\]](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7cV_Fk9nzP0)

I am going to start dieting now. Tomorrow I will tell you about Lori. - Nina

JANUARY 4

When Lori was here last summer, she had changed so much. She has short hair, glasses, epilepsy, was grumpy and complained. But I still like her. We had a fight on the raft on the lake, but we eventually forgot it. I didn't want to wake up to another day with her here. But I have changed my mind now.

Maud came over today and we danced like crazy. The dances we have created are now:

1. Ellery Queen
2. The Rabbits' dance (mice, actually)
3. I pick flowers en Pointe, but now we are going to both dance
4. Bull Fighting
5. The Dolls' Party.

We also have costumes. Maud has bought masks- really nice ones.

Fredrik and I are so hyper. I have to stop being like this. And eating. As soon as I finish this page I will stop. I eat all the time.

Milton, my darling, has been chewing on his rawhide bone today.
- Nina

JANUARY 5

Yesterday I looked through an old dog show program and found Milton's maternal grandfather, Blomendahl Moondog, and his paternal grandfather, Ruthborgs Bimbo. That was exactly 9 days

before Milton was born. I was in Stockholm today and bought Pointe shoes with Maud. I was going to buy a purse, but everything was so expensive. We were in Stor & Liten and searched for a Ludwig doll, but they didn't have any. Maybe they will have them in Norway. What stuffed animals the store had! Almost life size! And a Holly Hobbie bed. Just think if one could afford it.

I think Maud is so nice, but there is one thing she does that makes me feel embarrassed. When I want to go into a store, she always complains that she is tired. But I always have to hang after her.

I have not bit my nails! Got a present from Lori. - Nina

JANUARY 6

Today I am writing at 9:30 AM. No one is awake. Yesterday I got two presents from Lori- a deck of cards with Snoopy, and a necklace. I have to write to Lori, Linda, and Dana.

Rudolf Nureyev was on TV yesterday, but just for a little while. I would also like to become a jazz dancer.

Fredrik and I were horsing around in the bathroom and I laughed so hard that I peed my pants. I am so ashamed. I have to stop doing that. Today I have to paint and draw, write, clean and go for a walk with Milton.

The Cupido store is good but expensive and everything goes so fast there, you don't have time to think. They have a lot of nice posters there.

Today I am not going to be hyper and I have to help mom. I am not allowed to run to the fridge. Harry Belafonte was on TV. He sings so beautifully. Have to start going to bed earlier. - Nina

JANUARY 7

The wonderful film- Beatrix Potter's World- was on TV again. It is about a little girl who draws and writes stories and the Royal Ballet perform in the film. I love it. I don't want to be a jazz dancer. Nothing can beat classical ballet!

The snowy weather has returned. Fredrik and I were out skiing and I thought it would be so glorious to ski on top of the snow, but the skis broke through the frozen layer and I slammed head first into the icy layer- skinning my nose and cutting my chin. We laughed.

Maud called today and asked me to sleep over at her house on Friday after ballet class. I have made a skirt and I have to bring it with me. I can't believe that school and ballet starts on Monday. I am looking forward to it. I am going to buy a purse tomorrow. Milton is sleeping now.
- Nina

JANUARY 8

Today I went into the woods with Milton and followed animal tracks. I found rabbit tracks and deer tracks. I found a spot where a fox had killed a rabbit and there was fur and blood everywhere. That's not a bad thing, because one has to kill to survive, but when humans kill each other in unnecessary ways for unnecessary reasons, I want to scream. I dreamt about war last night: *the city was being bombed. Our neighbor sat in the tub and a soldier came in through the bombed out ceiling and she sang for him. He fell asleep and she ran away. We moved to our summerhouse, and the traffic line-ups were really long. Milton was along. And my ballet pictures. Our bomb shelter was under our summerhouse.* I hate it. War was on TV yesterday. Today at school we were trained what to do in the event of a nuclear war. Will it ever happen? When I walked home from the bus there was an air raid siren drill. I ran all the way home. - Nina

JANUARY 10

I didn't have time to write yesterday and now I have to write fast because it is very late and I don't want to be tired in the morning. We were out on the lake yesterday (Malmsjön). The ice was about 12 cm thick. Fredrik caught a little perch. Milton loved being out on the ice. We could walk all the way out to the two islands. We roasted hot dogs and marshmallows. I can't understand why my feet freeze all the time. It is so painful.

Every night I say: *Good night Milton, Tippy, Fredrik, Anders, Mamma, Pappa, all animals in the whole world, ballet, Lillemor, Anneli Alhanko, Per Arthur Segerström, Maud, Kathy, all people, everything, all everything, all, good night Milton, good night Thorsen.* It's a habit.

Today I started school and ballet. The ballet sweatshirts don't arrive until next week. School was usual. Typical me, I forgot my ruler and had to borrow one from Ulla Hyllman and because of that, I was late for Religion class. Blah! I have to some Math tomorrow, and French.

Gitte and Lena are proud because they went to a great cat show. I would have liked to have gone, but didn't have time. They don't need to brag about it.

Maud is in my ballet group now. It's really fun. Next time I am going to have to ask Lillemor, my dance teacher, about the Opera Ballet audition recommendation. I don't dare. Maud is really good. I have to express myself and keep my bum in and maintain my balance. I had my hair in pigtails. Not terribly ugly, but not nice either.

I am going skiing tomorrow. I had the dress on today. Milton is cute. Good night. - Nina

JANUARY 11

33.5/40- a "B" on Child Development. I thought I would do better. Ulla-Betta likes the little old lady sculpture I made her and she put it in her window.

I don't dare to ask Lillemor about the audition. What if she thinks I think I am good enough to get in though? I have to ask tomorrow.

It's like this- everyone stares at me at school again. I hope it's because I have such a nice dress and not because they think that I am retarded. I wish I wasn't so shy and when I try to speak only a hacking cough comes out of my mouth.

If I got three wishes, they would be:

1. Be a ballet dancer
2. Be as good as Nadia Comaneci in gymnastics
3. Milton and the whole family live for all eternity.

I can almost do the Russian splits. I have to write to Lori. Tomorrow I have French and English homework. I have a new Swedish teacher. I hope PE goes well. - Nina

JANUARY 12

The pointe shoes fit! Tomorrow, Maud and I will buy protective toe covers for our pointe shoes. I am so stupid. I forgot to say thank you to Lillemor for the card. She asked me if I had gotten it. I said thank you very much then, at least. There is no way I dare to ask her about the Opera Ballet. If I wait awhile, maybe it will be better. Maud is really good at piqué pirouettes. I am jealous. But not in that way, you know. I am glad we are in the same group.

Kicki is back in sewing class. Now I long for sewing class instead of hating it. The crocheting project is taking a long time. New Swedish teacher: Ulla-Britt. She is nice and it is easy to understand and she is quick. But Gjidborg was also really nice.

What are Maud and I going to make for Lillemor? Milton is a little tired, but is eating well. -Nina

JANUARY 13

Tomorrow the Carlsson's are going to be here. That will be so fun. Hope their dog, Kingen, is coming along, because in that way, Milton has a friend visiting too.

Today Maud and I went into the city to buy pants and tights. Ann-Charlotte is back at ballet. She has been attending another school once a week. You can tell she is benefiting from that! (sarcasm) Ha! She's turned ugly in some way. Her hair. She is braggy, proud, and bad! I miss ballet! We met Jeannette at Cupido. She goes to the State Ballet School now. I am so jealous. They have a new type of skirt at Cupido- short, pink. Super cute.

Gripland is a silly teacher. Instead of saying letters, he sometimes says names and it is hard to understand him. I almost forgot my homework but I remembered just in time. Lucky. I think Milton has an ear infection. Poor Milton. - Nina

JANUARY 15

I forgot to write yesterday. We have two new students in our ballet class. It ruins everything. They have gone to the Opera Ballet, but had to leave, and so went to the State School. Their names are Karin and Carina. They are so good! And supple. And tiny. I get so irritated that I am not that good. But they do not have good point when they jump. Until now, I was one of the most flexible in the class and thought I had a good chance at getting into the Opera Ballet, but now I'll have to go

through the rest of the year depressed. Maud feels exactly the same. They are so sure en pointe and have good balance. Stupid me was going to show off. Then Lillemor says, "Do tendu jetés en balance." God, I have such a bad sense of balance. The pointe shoes really hurt. Everything went wrong, and the sweatshirts won't arrive for another two weeks. My ballet suit is so see-through. Blah! Now I don't dare to ask Lillemor about the Opera Ballet. What am I going to do?

Today the family went into the city. Ah, my feet hurt so badly. The Carlsson's are so nice. Rolf and Kingen did not come along. Anki is really nice but we are so different. I wonder if I would have been like her if we had stayed in Sweden. I mean Grums. Oh dear! Milton is so in love with Eivor. Typical me, I am jealous. I feel sorry for Milton. Tomorrow I have to take him for a long walk in the woods. Cute, sweet, nice, rare, my best friend and darling Milton! How I love you! Don't be sad!
- Nina

JANUARY 17

Didn't have time to write yesterday. Tomorrow I have a Religion exam. I hope it goes well.

Mom has a cold. I want to do what Mom would like me to do. Yesterday I tried on jeans from Caroline from Canada. They are not big, but they are loose. Mamma thinks they are nice. But I wouldn't dare wear them to school. I want to do what you want me to do, Mom. I don't want you to have to go to work and to wear yourself out. I know I am lazy.

At school, I feel so boring. I am so bad at talking about interesting things. Nobody is interested in who I am. I hope it will be better in Grade 10. I am going to take Biological Sciences.

Maud has gotten some new material for a skirt. Do you think we can put together a show? You have to have permission and to rent out a venue, and to get people to attend. But our dances are so short. But I am sure it will be fine.

Tomorrow I am going out with Milton; I want him to like me. I had to tell him he was bad when he nipped at me. But he has a right to be grumpy sometimes. Sweet Milton, deep down I am not mad!

Everyone is talking about a school camping week. I don't want one. Just think all those ones, you know- Steven and those ones. You know the ones. You know how they are. I wouldn't dare and I wouldn't want to be away from home for a whole week. I don't have anybody to be with. I hope it doesn't happen.

There is a parent meeting at ballet and I am going to ask Lillemor, along with mom and dad, if I can audition for the Opera Ballet. I think I dare now. I have to draw something. Good night! 10:11 PM! Go to bed. - Nina

JANUARY 18

(Karin and Carina aren't so good after all.) Yesterday when I went into the changing room at ballet, I told the girls that Gary Gilmore was executed 15 minutes ago. Maud said his last wish was to be executed today. In the newspaper it had said that he might be executed in a month. Then later they announced on TV that he was executed 4:07 PM Swedish time. I noticed in the paper that he could sketch so well.

[January 17, 1977: Gilmore executed by firing squad
Gary Gilmore, the convicted murderer, was executed today by firing squad in the Utah state prison in Salt Lake City. The death penalty had been controversially reinstated in the United States in 1976 and Gilmore was the first prisoner to be executed under the new law. Gilmore fought the justice system to ensure he would be executed quickly.]

A plane crashed in Bromma the other day. 22 people died. Everyone. It's terrible. And they found a dog on a leash under the plane. Poor thing.

Queen Silvia is pregnant. Wonder if it will be a prince or a princess.

Thomas Hedlund is gross. He hovers over me. He borrowed my comb today. And it turned all white! I rinsed it off. He has bought new cowboy boots. Duck feet. It's not easy.

Milton feels good. - Nina

JANUARY 19

When I was walking at Central Station, an old man came up to me. He only had time to say- *Do you have a...?* I was so scared, that

I turned away immediately. Poor him! Why did I have to be so stupid? I would like to go back and give him 100 kronor. I feel so sorry for him. There is nothing dangerous about him. When I was on the subway, an old woman was standing beside where I was sitting. I was talking to Maud. Another lady stood up instead of me to give the old woman a sear. I feel ashamed.

Maud was pushed down the stairs at her school, and she hurt her knee so she can't dance. That is too bad. She is watching the class instead. My leg hurts. Tomorrow I am going to put my hair in a bun. I get so flushed in ballet class. Purple-red. How do I get rid of it? Every time the same thing. The new two students have been to Ellen Rasch's ballet school.

Tomorrow is Milton's birthday. - Nina

JANUARY 20

Milton's 1st birthday! I bought him dog chocolates, Frolics, and he got a flower and a long walk. You can tell he has changed. I remember when he first came into our family. When he fell every second step, and when you had to run after him with a cloth to clean up the mess! When he ate, he jumped into the food bowl, and gobbled up the pabulum and became round as a ball. And when I showed him in the dog show! Puppy class - 6th place! 25 puppies. Fredrik and Milton came in 3rd in the dog/owner look-alike contest. He did not like obedience training. He chased after a teacup poodle the whole time. When he first lifted his leg to pee, it was so funny! All of a sudden- there it was! His best friend is Kingen. I have saved his 5 teeth. Gitte said happy birthday to him. He loves the lake. Happy birthday Milton! - Nina

JANUARY 24

I have 4 pages to write now! I slept over at Maud's on the 21st, so I couldn't write then. I didn't have time on the other days.

Guess where I am sitting now? Yep, the train. I just ate an egg salad sandwich. I got 41/51 on my Religion exam- an "A".

Now the train is about to stop in Rönninge. I hope that not too many people get on. Or that someone sits beside me. Too late! A lady has sat down.

Maud says that at ballet last Friday, Lillemor was watching me a lot. I am so glad. She showed me how to keep my tummy in. We did floor work the whole time. It's really hard.

It is fun sleeping over at Maud's house. But you don't really know how to behave when eating and stuff like that. They have a little wooden board to put your sandwich on. (It's hard to write on the train.) Maud's little sister, Gisela, is totally in love with my Snoopy stuffed animal. Maud has created a dance. She picks flowers. We are going to put her dance and my dance together.

Station stops continue: Tumba. Tullinge. Huddinge. Stuvsta. Älvsjö. Stockholm S. Stockholm C. I can't write any more. Too many people. I am so tired of trains and buses and Rosenberg school. How am I going to have time for senior high school and ballet next year?

Now I am going to take a bath and read Geography and History. Tomorrow we have half day.

In ballet, I got to stand in front of the mirror and work on my swayback. It is hard. Carina and Karin are so talented. Lillemor always asks them to show how it's done etc. But she looks at me a lot too. I am ugly in the mirror.

What kind of shirt should I wear? I have gotten better at school. I am not so shy anymore. Aija and Eva say they want to come and watch the year-end class at ballet. I would like that, but I hope I don't get red in the face. Now I have to take a bath. Tomorrow I will go to Glasberga with Milton. That will be so nice. Maybe I will ski. Milton is a little stubborn and growls but so cute.

I miss Tippy, our first dog, so much. I wonder if he would remember me if we went back to Canada. Wouldn't it be great if he and Milton liked each other and we could have two dogs?

Maud and I went to see the movie, Bugsy Malone. What a movie! Just kids. If only I could be in a film like that. And they speak in such a cute way. Bugsy and Blousey were so cute together. I would really like to be involved. It's a lot better over there. In Sweden, the films are so boring. I dream of being Blousey and to collide with Bugsy and he would want to be with me and he would try to make me a better dancer and to

get a job. It stirs the butterflies in my tummy just thinking about it. Or- I would want to like someone and we would be shy in the beginning and we would help each other and stuff like that.

Now I have to do my stupid homework. I wish something fun would happen to me like being in a film. To get into the Opera Ballet. Instead, I go to school, hang out on the train, walk through the gross Central Station. Someone would recognize me and when I walk on the street, they would say, "That's Katarina. She is so talented." Now all they do is whisper behind my back. Sigh. - Nina

JANUARY 28

Right now I am sitting at school. It is lunchtime. Today is January 28. I am so tired of school. Guess who just sat down. Thomas Hedlund. He is so creepy. Everybody must think that I like him. But it is just a coincidence that we sit on the same bench in the same classes. And we even have the same kind of pencil case. I have to try to forget about him.

I am so mad that I sprained my ankle during PE and it hurts so much. I hope I can dance en pointe today. I need the training. I hope my gym socks will help me support the foot.

I have my hair pulled back with barrettes. It's ugly, but I can't have my hair down because my hair is so static. I hope everybody thinks that I think it looks good. It looks nice at home but never at school.

Gitte and Lena have begun talking to me again. But it will never be the same. I gave a few cutouts to Lena about Labs.

We had a French test yesterday. It was as hard as I could ever have imagined. What if I got an "A"? I hope for a "B" at least. I think I am starting to lose my English.

I have to write three letters but I just don't have the time.

We have half a professional day on Wednesday. We played handball. We won every match except for the last. I tried to get the ball from Gunilla but I fell and hit my backside. It really hurts. I think PE is dangerous. I could break my leg and be unable to dance.

On Saturday, Maud and I are going to Maxim Theatre to watch the Opera Ballet. They will perform 4 pieces.

After History today, I have to talk to Hakegård about Biological Sciences. I would love to go to art school afterwards and do animated film. But it is hard work.

I had to stand in front of the mirror at ballet last Monday and work on my swayback. I have already written about that. Do you know that I am one of the best in the class on grand jetés?

Yesterday, the weather was so wet and windy that the ground was almost like a lake. But today it is freezing and sunny.

When I get my Balettakademien sweatshirt, I am going to wear it when I train. Boy, it hurts when you write this much.

Carina was sick last Wednesday and Karin isn't any good at all alone. I don't bother with them anymore.

Milton needs a haircut now. I walk often and far with him now and it feels great. If I open my mouth and blow gently on Milton he goes crazy and wags his tail. He is so cute.

I have decided to ask Lillemor about the audition today, but now I have twisted my ankle, so it will be hard to do my best. Maud didn't know that Lillemor smokes. I knew that and I think it's too bad.

They have changed the school bell and it is very loud.
- Nina

FEBRUARY 1

I am sitting at school again. We were at Västergård Gymnasiet yesterday. I was very nervous on the way there. I met Catharina there. She was just as nervous. It is the world's largest school. I don't now how I will find my way around. We went up one staircase, and there was a door labeled A123. Then you go down another staircase and up the same staircase you went up before, and now the door is labeled B123! I will I find my way there? Chemistry and physics seems so hard. I wonder if I will make this. I am going to look at Anders' textbooks and see how they are. I don't want to take another major but I wish there was more art classes and things like that. In the four-year technical major, you get to do masonry and woodwork in the first year.

No one has said anything about my new jeans. I have gotten new ones. *Wings*. They look tight, but they aren't.

Maud and I were at the Opera Ballet on Saturday. They did four dances. *Flower fest in something... Meeting Death... Beyond the Ages... Othello*. Nils Åke Häggbom was there. Svalberg sat in the row behind us. We bought a really nice poster for 10 kronor. Guess who we met there? Lillemor! She just said hi and nothing more. She is rather dry after all.

At school, we had sex education. I don't have any experience. People talk about their experience and we watch films on techniques. When we first moved here, I overheard girls talking about the *p-pill*. I thought they meant penicillin.

Eva Sjöblom is so depressing. Mikael Anderson is so silly around her and she wants to break up with him but doesn't know how she will tell him. I overheard her telling Aija that during Art class. It's all so dumb. Maybe one shouldn't ever have a boyfriend.

I walked home with Catharina and Christer Rodmalm. I wish he would talk to me. I feel so dumb and so dry. Me, in my silly hat. I really think it's comfortable but I don't know what they think at school. But you know what? He offered me some of his pop! Maybe not very romantic. I guess he was just being polite. But still. I said no thanks. Maybe that was wrong. I should maybe have said yes. I don't know, and today he borrowed my pen. But he probably likes Catharina instead. Catharina said that she drank wine last Saturday and was dizzy. I will never taste a single drop! I wonder what it looks like when a guy or a girl from my class is drunk?

I probably saw the worst thing ever today. A girl in my school, who is not very tough and does not have tight jeans and who reminds me of Thomas Hedlund, smokes! I don't understand how people can smoke.

Tomorrow we have Gripland in History and Geography. Affe and Hyllman are away on a retreat. Gitte is in England at the Crufts Dog Show. I would love to show Milton there, but that wouldn't work because first he needs to be champion! I got my Balletakademien sweatshirt. It's really gorgeous. Red with white lettering.

FEBRUARY 6

I am going to wear my sweatshirt in the morning. Then everyone will know that I dance ballet. Imagine the teachers. I have also bought pointe shoe protectors and now it won't be so loud when I jump and stuff.

I have mini skis now. They are really hard to control but really fun. Sometimes they fall off and it is really hard to climb up the hill with them.

I have a little contact with Carina at ballet now. I just wish I wouldn't be so flushed when I dance. I was going to ask Lillemor today about the audition, but she had a class right afterwards, and luckily so- for I would never have dared.

Magnus Ericson was here for a visit. I think he's grown taller. We got a whole box of Lifesaver lollipops. Karin and Peter may come this summer to visit.

I have filled in my choices for courses for Biological Sciences. French and German, first choice. French and Spanish, second choice.

We might move to Portland, Oregon next year. I have to sleep now.

FEBRUARY 10

It's the 10th today. I am in the school library. We've had an hour of French and have one more hour to go. I have such a stomachache because I didn't eat any lunch. I wanted to study French. It's boring reading French.

Music is a very unnecessary course. We don't learn anything. She tells us it is not a lesson. Then she doesn't tell us what we are supposed to do. I feel sorry for her. She is old and has a crooked mouth.

I try not to be prejudice against Assyrian men. But there are so many Assyrians in Stockholm now. They surround me on the train, smelling of beer and teasing me. I end up curled up in a corner.

I dreamt that Maud and I were going to Germany and I had only packed pajamas. I called mom and she came with clothes. Then Catharina and Aija and everyone in the class picture came.

I wrote an essay for Swedish, 8 pages. I got 17/30 on a Math test. Two points over 50%. I am actually relieved. Gitte is still in England at the Dog show. Lena talks to me now and we worked together on Social Studies.

Yesterday we finished early and I wanted to go home early to drop off my schoolbooks and then go to ballet. I also needed to go to the bathroom. Mom forgot to put out the key. So Fredrik had to sit outside and wait.

Milton was rather grumpy this morning. Lillemor is driving me crazy. All we hear- *Karin, Carina, Charlotte...* She doesn't pay any attention to the rest of us. It gets tiring, and you don't know if you are making mistakes or doing it correctly. Anna and Katarina want to be in our show. We are going to ask Marie too. It's starting to get serious. Maud says we can rent a theatre in Huddinge. We want to show our dances to middle schools. My pen is running out.

FEBRUARY 11

I hardly ever have time to write in you- just when I have some time at school. Now I have a whole half hour to write and I am in the mood.

I may perm my hair. I hope it works. And I would pin it back behind my ears. Sometimes my hair looks terrible. My hat looks like a big egg. Yesterday I walked home from school and didn't touch my hat just to see what it would look like if I left it alone. I thought it would look good but my heavens! The hat had ridden up so it stuck straight up and you could see my ears. Blah! I feel like everybody is looking at me at the bus stop and commenting on my ugly hat. Now I am going to perm my hair, and cut my bangs, and Mom is going to buy me a flowered scarf to have a round my head.

Mom has bought herself a leather jacket (black). It is really nice and fits her perfectly. It is definitely her style. She wants me to buy a gabardine coat and I certainly want to. I can't understand how Maud can afford what she buys. First she bought herself a ballet plate for 72 kronor, then an enlargement of a ballet photo for 49 kronor. (I can hear Gripland yelling at some kids next door) Then she buys herself a coat and two pairs of jeans.

I have created a dance about a troll but I don't know what kind of costume I should wear. This new pen is much better. Not so messy.

I am going to sleep over at Maud's this weekend. But not tonight. It will be great to be back at the barre this afternoon. We have the whole weekend free. I love ballet. It doesn't matter too much that Lillemor doesn't pay attention but sometimes I get grumpy about it. Now that my pointe shoes have a protective toe cover, I hardly make a sound when I leap. I wonder if we will have a whole lesson en pointe soon. Do you think I could be a ballerina? My dream is to go to the Opera Ballet. Live close, yet on the countryside. Have a dog that I take for long walks (Milton, of course) and not do anything other than dance, paint and take care of the dog. Mom wants me to be a doctor. I am interested in the human body but I don't think I could do the various subjects needed. I find chemistry and math so difficult.

There is a girl in Järna who has come down with polio. The family refuses to get vaccines. I wonder why? Poor girl. I hope she doesn't get paralyzed or dies.

Maud, Marie and I walk around Central Station and yelled at everyone who walked by in fur coats- *Animal Killer!* Gjidborg has a fur coat and I think it is so creepy. Poor animals. And idiot humans! Idiots! Leave them alone!

The cold weather has come back and we skate during PE. We have to wear stupid helmets. Fredrik laughed when I told him we wear hockey helmets. *Girls in hockey helmets! HA HA HA!* I agree with him. We look stupid. And me with my hat.

I told you earlier that we might move to Portland. Dad is going on a business trip soon to check out the job in Portland and to go on holiday in Vancouver for a week. I wish I could come along and dance for Mrs. Vanneck. He doesn't think he could get a job in Vancouver. If he does get a job in Portland, we would drive to Vancouver on weekends and in that way I could dance for Mrs. Vanneck on Saturdays. I would wear leg warmers and stuff. If we move I would buy new jeans and clogs.

Delbrook School in North Vancouver has burnt down. All the students have to go to Balmoral now. Dana wrote yesterday. Milton is always hunting rabbits and foxes. - Nina

FEBRUARY 12

I don't feel good. I can hardly talk. I have a large mouth ulcer and a swollen gland. And I am so tired.

I asked Lillemor about the audition. She actually said she would keep her eye out for the age requirements for scholarships. This could mean something. At the lesson yesterday, she asked me to demonstrate fondue- all of a sudden. Maybe this means she will pay more attention to me. Gissi got mad at Lillemor and left the class and slammed the door. I wonder if she will come back.

Dad, Fredrik and I were going to see King Kong but Fredrik wasn't allowed in, so we went to see the animation, Asterix, instead. Wonderful! I want to be an animator.

Milton was nauseous today. I want to move. - Nina

FEBRUARY 14

Yesterday, I didn't have time to write. I was going to put my hair up but it looks all right anyways. I'll do it tomorrow instead.

I have to try to get my act together on my mini skis. I shouldn't be that hard.

The mouth ulcer is so painful and I am so tired and I feel nauseous. I am staying home from ballet today and will go to the nurse.

I want to perm my hair. I have to wait until Mom gets her paycheck. Lassie was on TV yesterday. It was good. It's only about dogs. I told myself not to cry but I did it anyway. It hurt so much. I know it's only a film but the tears came anyway. (Thomas Hedlund just sat down on the bench next to me).

I feel so sorry for Milton, being home all day by himself. When I come home I will take him for a walk, play with him, brush him and wash him. He needs a trim. I'll write more after I have been to the nurse.

I am home now. Mom ordered time at the medical clinic. The nurse put some purple stuff on the ulcer. It stung!

Lena is talking to me a lot. We sit at the same bench. But when we stand at the bus stop it's like we don't know each other.

Milton was happy to see me. - Nina

FEBRUARY 24

Maud writes:

Hi Katarina, I have to write a few lines, even if I could just call. When you told me you may be moving, I became very sad. Even if it sounds dumb, I cried when I got home. It just came out, until finally there was a big lake on the floor. I have never had a better friend in my life. You probably think I am very silly now, but enough about that. I hope we will be together during spring break.

Blah, blah, I hope Karin and Karina are not in our group. They just think they are something because they have gone to the Opera Ballet School. I hope you don't become that way when you get in. Because you will get in.

My dad will get the film back this week, so this weekend you can come and look at it. I have sent along some dance pictures. They may not be all that nice, but you can have them anyway. See you. Maud

MARCH 22

So long since I last wrote. I have had so much to do. Five tests last week. Now it's spring break. I am going with Fredrik and his friends to Bugsy Malone.

Maud and I were thinking of visiting my great aunt Helga. But she has an ear infection so we can't go.

I have been to the doctor about the bump on the left side of my face. It's by my ear but they don't know what it is. They say I should go to Huddinge Hospital and get a biopsy.

Aija got a concussion when we had our hockey tournament.

Anna, Katarina and Marie are joining Maud and I for our dance show. Maud and I have filmed some of the dances and now during Spring Break we will watch it. It will be so fun. It will be so fun.

I got highest marks in Biology. What a surprise! I have 4 cavities. Blah! Now we have to leave for the film.

I feel so strange when I watch the movie. It is so cute. Blousey and Bugsy suit each other so much. I wish that would happen to me. It's so sad. Why can't something special happen to me? Why do I stay in the same spot all the time?

I have sent in my application to the Opera Ballet School. Lillemor wrote a letter of recommendation. What if I get in? Then I would rise up. Then if we move to Canada or the US, I would rise even higher. Stand taller. Then I would fully concentrate on ballet. I want to visit Hollywood and Disneyland. I have never seen it. What if someone offered me a roll like Blousey or just the part of a dancer? Bugsy. When I see him, a feeling explodes inside me. What does it mean?

It's so boring at Balettakademien. It's just Karin and Carina all the time. I have to leave there. There's nothing there to strive for. Dad is in Canada now. He hasn't called yet, but Mom has called Margareta. Dad was at MacMillan Bloedel with Magnus. I think he found a job. I hope so. It will be nice when he gets back.

I started crying the night before my History exam. I didn't have the energy to study. Mom said it doesn't matter. But I got pretty good marks anyways.

I got my period. I had such a stomachache that day. It was a Saturday. When I got home, there was red in my underwear. I still have it a little bit. I want to try to use tampons but I don't dare. Pads are so big. I hope no one can tell during PE. Otherwise, it's not so bad.

We played lacrosse with the boys. I got a goal. Steven was goalie. Steven is in the local town basketball league.

I have permed my hair. It's wonderful and it feels longer somehow. It cost 70 kronor! It's curly at the bottom. My hair was boring before. I always had it in pigtails at school. I want to start wearing my hair in a ponytail and a bun at ballet.

Lillemor participated in a dance conference. It got rather a bad review in the paper. I have bought a hair dryer and a curling iron.

I went to the city with Milton. He has a hard time on the train but not too bad on the bus. He will get his haircut tomorrow and that will be nice for him to get rid of all that excess fur. I have to tell the dog trimmer to use a mouth guard on Milton. He nipped at Mom the other day when she tried to put cream on his paws. They are raw from the road salt.

Gitte and Lena have started talking to me a lot now. When Gitte was sick last Friday, Lena and I were together the whole day, but it wasn't all that fun. We saw each other today when Mom and I walked to look at Henning Sjöström's mansion. We didn't say hi. Gitte's dog, Kompis, and Lena's dog, Castro, fight a lot. They are nervous around other dogs. They are supposed to be training to not bother with other dogs, but it doesn't seem to be working. Milton doesn't mind other dogs and he isn't doing obedience training.

It's so nice out. They don't have any snow in Vancouver right now. When we move back, we'll probably have the worst winter in decades. That's what happened when we moved here.

[In fact, there was a major January storm when we moved back, shutting down schools etc. It was dubbed the "Blizzard of 1978"]

Last Thursday we had sports day and Catharina and I chose skates. It was boring and my feet froze. We left early. Helene in my French class chose slalom. She has the world's best looking ski clothes. She looks so professional. Her brother knows Anders. He is in the US and does ski ballet. Dad says that when we move, we'll get skis and all the equipment and ski in the Pacific Northwest mountains. Wonderful. I have 10 million letters to write. I have to go to bed. Good night.

April - June 1977

APRIL 13

My birthday. I am 15 now. I feel big on the inside but small on the outside. I wonder if I will always feel this small and young. In one way, I hope so. Then I can stay younger longer. Time flies. I wonder what I will be doing and who I will be when I am 18. I'll have to just live a day at a time. It's probably for the best.

APRIL 23

Saturday. Lord, it's exactly 10 days since I wrote. I sure have a lot to write. But guess what I did today? I auditioned at the Opera Ballet. I have danced at the Opera Ballet! My number was H1. We get an answer in 2 weeks. I wasn't nervous till afterwards. So long for now. See you in the morning. Good night. - Nina

APRIL 25

Now I am sitting on a bench and waiting for the train to come and take me to ballet. These endless trains. I am so glad I am going to move. Not that I would be glad to move from the Opera Ballet should I get in. But everything else. The trains, Central Station, gross people stumbling around with beer cans, tagging along after people, and that horrible, horrible school where nothing is fun. One doesn't dare to speak to anyone at anytime about anything. All those stupid girls that walk around painting their faces and talking about clothes, and parties and who think that they can decide what everyone else should wear. As soon as you don't have tight enough jeans, they whisper. I will be relieved not to be tormented by Assyrian men. I'll explain more later. Too many people around me right now.

APRIL

The audition for the Opera Ballet. Number H1. I went to the 3rd level foyer. Karin and Carina were there. Typical, I thought. I wasn't nervous though. Mom and Dad came along. The exam was 40 minutes delayed. Then they opened the doors. There were at least 20 judges. I was so scared for the improvisation part of the exam. But this was different. We did a regular ballet class instead. During the lesson, the judges asked me to do a demi-plié. I guess they were checking turnout. Svalberg was in the middle of all the judges. When I was going to do waltz steps, it didn't go so well. I think that's why I didn't get in.

No, I didn't get in... This is how the letter read: *To guardians of Katarina Thorsen (H1), regarding completion of audition for the Opera Ballet student program, Saturday April 23, 1977. We regret to inform you that we cannot offer a position to your son/daughter in our student school. We thank you for your interest.*
Sincerely,

The Royal Theatre Ballet School
Gösta Svalberg

Do you think this meant that there was no room for me? That if they had had room, I would have gotten in? Svalberg signed it himself. But I won't give up. I read about a ballerina that didn't get into the Opera Ballet and now she dances in Leningrad.

THE PARIS TRIP MAY 14-22

MAY 14

Our trip to Paris:

Södertälje → Helsingborg

The Helsingborgs hotel is called "Stads Motell." There are many TV's outside of the room and one inside the room. We are traveling (Mom, me, Aunt Siv and cousin Gunilla) together on a bus trip. Our room number: 109. Orwald's: 108. We have a colour TV. We bought food from a convenience store and ate in our room. I watched Nadia Comaneci. She didn't win. The bus trip to Helsingborg was really long. I saw a windmill.

MAY 15

In the bus in front of us, there is a man who looks like Hitchcock. We are having a great time. Dad came home today. Too bad we missed him.

Helsingborg → Helsingör → Köpenhamn → Germany → Arnhem-Velp Crest Hotel.

Bought souvenirs. Expensive souvenirs: wind mills, cigar for Dad, stickers, small wooden shoe ship for Fredrik, Dutch cookie jar for mom. German mouse and pincushion for me. Stole a small stainless steel creamer from a German restaurant because of the rude service. Watched German TV. Didn't understand a thing. 4 channels. Drove by a concentration camp in Holland.

We were on the ferry for an hour. A lot of people and a nice restaurant. Had ground beef patties. Excellent!

Old lady by herself on the bus. Really cute. She always wears blue and buys postcards all the time.

Nilla and I have nicknames for everyone on the bus:

Hitchcock

Dandruff Man

The Old Lady

The Lady with the red-blue glasses

She with the Bun

The Owl

The Chauffeur

The Leader

MAY 16

Holland → Brussels

Unknown soldiers grave. Nuclear power plants. The central square in Brussels. The peeing boy. The restaurant, the chicken, pineapple. NATO headquarters. Comic of Mickey Mouse in French.

→ Paris

Sightseeing Paris by night. Consulate restaurant. Singer. Bought a record. Eiffel Tower. Arc de Triumphe. Tasted wine in Montmartre. Gross! Church. Dark. And cold. View over Paris. Gorgeous. Fountain by the Eiffel Tower. Sacre Coeur. The Consulate. Got a red ribbon. *She with the Bun* got a little drunk. Started to sing and waltz. -Nina

MAY 17

Sightseeing Paris by day. Winery. Madeline Church. Caves St. Michelle. Place de la Concorde. Eiffel Tower. Notre Dame. Rennes Saint Placide. Rue de Rennes. Notre Dame. So beautiful. Restaurant. Vegetables. Schnitzel. Winery. Dome of the Invalid. Wine did not taste good. It stung the nose. Perfume store. Bought Marie Antoinette doll. Bought wine and baguettes for the hotel room. Wrote 9 postcards. Dogs run loose. Worries me. Looked at dance shops. Bought a ballet leotard. With skirt. I am having a good time. Mom too. I am so glad for that. -Nina

MAY 18

Louvre 10 AM. Ate at a wonderful restaurant. So nice. Saw the Mona Lisa. It has been stolen 3 times. Guarded now with

marble, glass, alarm and guard. People were sketching from the masters. People from art schools. The Venus de Milo. So beautiful. One sculpture without head. Wings. Didn't get to see Degas. But mom, sweet mom, bought me a little copy- La Classe de Danse. Mom also bought a little painting for herself. I bought a Mona Lisa card. Will sketch her. Trip on the Sens. Bought light blue dress. 109 francs. Got 9 francs off. The boat. Under 26 bridges. Bought a key chain. The guide spoke a weird combo of Swedish and English. Ate French Fries and baguettes in the room.

Mom and I at Hotel Migny in Paris.

The Old Lady: she is so cute. On May 17, she took the subway all by herself and had a great time. Everyone offered help. Meanwhile, the four of us walked hand in hand and didn't dare to do a thing. She is so energetic. She runs and skips and is interested in everything. I want to be like that when I grow old.

MAY 19

Versailles 9 AM. Drove through the Bois de Boulogne to Versailles Castle. Very large and many, many people. Lovely but each room is pretty much the same. Big garden. Several kilometers. Forgot to go up the Eiffel Tower but did visit there. Shopped for the rest of the day. Very tiring. Bought a wallet, necklace. Went on the subway. Easy to find your way around. Strange machines that suck up the tickets. Long tunnels underground. No drunk old men. Went to a bar and drank Pepsi. Paris' most famous café. Very hot. Ate baguettes and drank juice. I ordered wine on my own. - Nina

MAY 20

Started the morning with breakfast. Tired of baguettes. Traveled to Champagne wineries. Stopped at Mercier Champagne makers. Rode a train through the underground vaults. Got to taste. Not very good. Burns the stomach. Got an inflatable Champagne bottle. Traveled to Reims. Stopped and looked at France's largest cathedral. Bought post cards. Then traveled towards Belgium. The bus planned on making it to a gas station in Belgium where it is cheaper to buy gas. Didn't make it. Sat in the bus 8 HOURS! The pump was broken. People from the local town came and picked us up and drove us to Grand Hotel. No bath. Haven't had a bath in 5 days. - Nina

MAY 21

Went for a walk in the village. Cute small streets. The bus arrived at 10 AM. We thought it was leaving at 7 AM and we didn't get a wake up call. So we got ready in a hurry. Björn said we were going to try to make it to Helsingborg tonight. But everyone protested. Everyone was too tired. So he arranged for a hotel. Gorgeous. With bath, kitchen, sofa, balcony, all the fixings. And a view over the ocean. But we just had it for one night. Before that we traveled through Hamburg. I like Paris better. Hamburg is modern with lots of nightlife. All the men on the bus went into one of those clubs... you know the kind. A couple of men in the city started whistling and yelling after us. We hurried along. - Nina

MAY 22

Today I bought two small cat figures at a rail station in Hamburg. We woke up before wake up call this morning. A lot easier after having had a bath. Our beds folded down from the wall like a Barbie house. Ate breakfast. The bus didn't start! I thought we would be here one more night. But they worked on it and we made it to the ferry. Just in time. Bought Dutch licorice. One to Nilla, Tomme, Aija, Eva, Fredrik, Anders and me. Really good. But you get thirsty. Now we are traveling to Denmark. The trip is almost over. It will be nice to get home. Thought we'd never make it. But we got home at 11:30. So nice. Milton. Cute Milton was happier than ever. - Nina

What I bought on the Paris trip:

Marie Antoinette Doll

Belgian Doll

Two cats

Eiffel Tower

German mouse

Key chain

Pincushion

Painting

Mona Lisa post card

Postcards

Dress

Ballet leotard

French magazine

German magazine

Inflatable champagne bottle

MAY 23

Stayed home today. Sore throat and tired. Presents from Dad from his trip to Canada: Nadia sweatshirt. Rudolf Nureyev book. Canada sweater. Ludwig Coloring Book. Like a dream. The Nureyev book is as thick as a mountain. The Nadia sweatshirt is beautiful. If I had three wishes- they would be:

1. To be as good as Nadia in all events.
2. To be a ballerina.
3. [I forgot to write a third wish]

I feel sorry for Nadia. She lost and was also disqualified when she went out of bounds. Romania and Soviets always competing. The power ruins everything. Nadia, I wish I were a perfect ballerina.

MAY 27

I have sent Steven a card. He and I talk more often now. I actually sat with him on the bus on the way home. We talked a lot and I waited for him to get his bike and he rode slowly while I walked beside him. And he waved at me when Marianne, Catharina and I were walking home from town. And in PE he watched my belly as I did arm lifts. And he asks me all the time about America and schools and such. He says he may visit me because he is going to USA to play basketball and study. He is really nice. I have also started talking to Mikael Andersson and Per-Arne. And I can speak up in class without feeling stupid.

The whole class went camping. They will be biking and camping for 4 days. I wanted to but not. I don't dare even though I am not so scared anymore. Ballet prevents me from going, which I am very proud of. I think I am supposed to go to school but Mom says I may as well stay home. I am going to train. Ride to the lake with Milton. Ballet. Suntan. I hope the weather will be sunny. I have drawn a large poster for school, which I can paint during the week. I will write letters and choreograph.

We got to borrow room C at Balettakademien. Eva, Charlotte, Marie, Katarina, Anna, Maud, Anna-Carin and I are in the group. I have learned character dance. It is really fun. I got to borrow a pair of shoes from Eva. They are wonderful to dance in

though they do hurt a bit. We want to perform for the elderly and for grade 4/5's. That will be fun.

We got our Visa for Canada. Now we have to find a house we like. I have to write Mrs. Vanneck. I want to take her classes for a while when I get back. I want to find the best ballet school in Vancouver. And I want to audition for the National Ballet of Canada. Then maybe I could meet Rudolf.

There is only 2 weeks left of school. I have survived two years at Rosenborgsskolan. It was hell. Milton, ballet, Mom, Dad, Anders and Fredrik have helped me. I am lucky. Now that I have only 1 week left with my Grade 9 class, I dare to talk to them. Typical. But better late than never!

MAY 29

Now it is Sunday. And it is Mother's day. But it seems strange. There has been nothing about it in the papers. And just a little in the stores. Annika was the only one to give Siv a present. And we were rather mixed up here this morning. I didn't know whether I should give Mom the glasses I bought her. But I did. And Dad got Mom a brass planter that hangs from the ceiling. Mom and Dad seem mad at each other. But I suppose they have the right, as we all get mad from time to time. Mom visited Grandpa today and he was happy about that. He can sit up in his chair and he likes the physiotherapist. He seems to be getting better. I am so glad. Tomorrow there is a holiday. Mom and I are going to the castle. And we will tour the inside. I hope we visit Grandpa. Dad and Fredrik will go fishing.

I have written out a schedule for myself about *how* or *what* I should eat and *when* and *how* to train. For example, biking, dancing, jogging etc. I want to be in top form when the school class gets back from camping. I want to be suntanned and I want to stop biting my nails. I don't want them to come back bragging. I have made a whole binder of the Paris trip. I want to start taking photos with my camera. I want to go up the mountain with Maud and take pictures of us as angels. I want to start dancing more than classical ballet now. It is fun to discover new things. Shirley MacClaine is going back to corps (gypsy) dancing. She considers it the most fun. - Nina

JUNE 6

Today is Fredrik's birthday. I bought him a tackle and a large cardboard perch that he can hang from the ceiling. He says he has finally grown out of the pee and poo stage. He is going to have a masquerade party next Saturday. He wants to dress up as a drunk old man and he will borrow my inflatable champagne bottle. But only if I get to dress him up. At first he didn't want to invite any girls but then he sat down and had a "think." And he changed his mind. He is so nice. We always horse around but I suppose that is meant to be. He is obsessed with fishing. And he likes pop music and things like that. He likes the records that Anders plays. At first, I didn't, but now I do too. But not that kind of screechy electric guitar music. It pierces the ears and sounds like a dentist drill. I like Boney M. and Queen. But most of all, I like Swan Lake. I can sit for hours and hours and dream.

I have never wanted to be a ballerina as much as now. I have been to ballet during spring break- 3 to 5 hours a day. Last Friday- 6 hours. We are practicing our dances and were going to perform on Thursday and Maud said we could perform at Anlan in Huddinge. But that didn't work out. No, that did not work out. And she will absolutely not perform at her school. I would perform at Rosenborgsskolan but we have no stage. Maud is so silly because when we practice and someone comes in, she stops and says she can't continue. And when we dance for our friends she always has to talk and explain. Why not just stay silent and dance? Then the dance would be a lot better.

Now I have to stop because I have to color the poster for Hyllman. We have a professional day today. I had all last week off school. I wonder if someone has read you. I have read the book that Majlis wrote Anders. Hope he doesn't know that. -
Nina

JUNE 8

Yesterday I was totally surprised.

JUNE 10

About the other day. Catharina called me and asked if I wanted to come to her house. To eat sandwiches and drink tea. Gitte, Lena, and Marianne were there too. What a house she has! 3

levels. Ground floor: 3 rooms, and sauna. 2nd level: kitchen, living room, porch, and entrance. 3rd level: 3 bedrooms and a den. They live right by the forest. It's a townhouse. But it seems like a mansion. We had fun. Danced. Watched TV. I had my new vest and pants. Pink. I think it's a great outfit. But the new cloth leaks dye. But Mom cleaned them and they got better.

On Thursday, the teachers played soccer against the students. There was a penalty shot and Catharina got to do it. It went in! I really was happy. Gitte played too. And Steven. I was jealous when Gitte got to wear Steven's jacket to cover her red shirt.

We were invited home to our teacher. She has two kids and a husband with a beard. She is so nice to her kids. They have a lot of toys and she does all that psychology stuff you are supposed to do with little children. She has a large aquarium that is really clean. And beautiful. We played in her house, the whole class. I gave her the poster that everyone had signed. We got cake. She has 11 rooms in her house. She said we have to come and visit her during summer holidays.

Before I rode to her house on my bike with Gitte, Lena, Catharina and Marianne, I went to town with Catharina and Marianne to look at shoes. We looked around a little bit and I found some black ones I think are cute. We went home to Catharina and ate sandwiches and drank milk.

JUNE 10 GRADUATION CEREMONIES

In the morning, I got ready and walked to the kiosk. I met Steven and Thomas. They were on their way to Lars Bohlin (Bolle). They asked me if I wanted to come along. OK. Bolle lives in an ugly house. But. We went into the garden to take pictures. We looked so funny in our hats. I looked like a Carl Larsson painting. Bolle put his arm on my shoulders when we took pictures. Yuck. They smoked cigars.

We walked towards Östertälje and met some others from our class. It was great with all the hats. Everyone stared. We walked to the park to meet the rest of the class. Then we walked to the school. We were a big success. We were the only ones with hats. Ulla Hyllman got one too.

My homeroom teacher, Ulla Hyllman, Class 8:3 (75-76) and 9:3 (76-77), writes:

Grad ceremonies, Grade 9, Rosenborgsskolan. It has been really nice to get to know you, Katarina, during these past 2 years.

Good luck in your future endeavors. Ulla Hyllman

Catharina gave Affe a hug and a rose. That was funny. Everyone was dressed up. Peter had champagne along and sprayed it everywhere. We sang. Got our report cards. B average. I lost points in music. How maddening. Hugged the teacher and said goodbye to Rosenborgsskolan. I had a lump in my throat. I never thought I would have that. Tell you more tomorrow. Summer holidays! - Nina
(Fredrik is going to have a costume party tomorrow)

JUNE 12

The weather is like it was pre-ordered. Cold school weeks replaced with warm and sunny summer holidays. I am by the lake. I am finally getting a tan. Anyway, after school last Friday, 12 of us walked to town. We had on our hats and everyone stared and congratulated us on our graduation. We went to Pizzeria Milano and I ordered a 1/4 pizza and gave the rest to Per-Arne. He gave me a balloon. I have taken a bunch of photos. I have to take a break. We are heading home. I never have time to write in you.

Tomorrow, ballet. I will try to write on the train. But there are so many people. Good night! Let me be a ballerina! - Nina

JUNE 13

Now I will continue writing about Friday. We were in the local paper but I didn't get in the picture. News clipping from our Grade 9 grad. Steven is on the left.

JUNE 15

Today we find out if we are going to move or not. I want to move. I really want to meet a boy there that likes me. It would be ideal if he were a dancer. He would preferably be an athlete.

Now I have to concentrate. Back to last Friday: I had fun. 12 of us walked to town and everyone stared. We ate pizza. I

don't like pizza but I was almost forced, as it was grad time. But I already wrote about that. Anyways, after the pizzeria, we went into the department store, Domus, and bought a bunch of balloons. That's when Per-Arne gave me one. He wanted to pay for my pizza, but I told him he didn't have to.

Gunnar was having a party that night, but I did not want to go. Catharina couldn't go because she was competing, and there would just be a bunch of drunkards anyway. Marianne, Lena and Gitte told me I should go, and they aren't drinkers. But I didn't know. Gitte called me that evening and told me they had bought pop and we could all bike together. I gave in. We met at Lena's house. We got there early. So we hid in the forest in front of Gunnars' house. He drove by on a tractor to pick some people up. We laughed a lot.

We went into his house and hid the pop. We sat in the living room and laughed. We went up to Gunnars' room. Bolle was already there, piss drunk, and going on and on how nice I looked in my blue dress. "Why aren't you wearing it now?" I wonder what he would have done if I had been wearing it.

The party at Gunnar's.

Later, we were offered beer. I did not want any but the others accepted. I started to get anxious. After awhile, everyone was getting drunk, except for Gunnar, Christer Persson and Steven, and me, of course. It was so boring and awful. Everyone sitting around, drunk, and me in the middle of it all. Couldn't talk to anyone. Thomas Hedlund put his arm around Lena and she put her arm around him. Gross. I tried to find Gunnar to tell him I was going home. But I couldn't find him, so I just went home. But know what? Steven knocked on the window and waved goodbye. He must have understood my need to leave. He is leaving for the USA on Saturday.

Secret: I would like so much to say goodbye to him in person. But how? Just go there? I want so much to hug him goodbye. Now, no one... NO ONE is allowed to read this. I wish he would come here to say goodbye to me.

I have a new dance teacher. Her name is Ann Parson. I am taking a summer course with her. She speaks American English. She has so much feeling. She is not at all boring like Lillemor and she always does different things. She has such an

imagination. *Put away plates, tell stories, throw Frisbee, catch a football, blow with a straw into a coca-cola bottle.* Every step refers to something in reality. I will learn a lot from her. - Nina

JUNE 16

Tomorrow is the last day before Steven leaves. I have to get his address in USA. I will have to put a little letter in his mailbox.

We have decided on Vancouver! I have been longing and longing. Now that we finally made the decision, I feel strange. Like I've changed my mind. But we will get a better life, and Kathy and I can be friends again. I hope her dog, Sarge, and Milton will get along. I would preferably like to go to Balmoral.

I hope it goes well for Milton on the plane. Poor thing. I will never abandon him, like we did with Tippy. Poor Tippy. Today, I rode my bike with Milton. Kari rode by and rang his bell. Totally unexpected. I am so glad. Fredrik is alone at home in the morning. Poor thing.

- Nina

JUNE 17

Steven Dillman
Skimmelvägen 2
15157 Södertälje

Maud writes:

Today I am visiting you again. We left a little note for a certain someone. Hmmm... When we were heading into the city, a Mercedes full of Assyrian men honked at us. Help! We went home again. But now we are going to do pantomimes. Bye bye - Maud

I did it. I wrote a letter to Steven. I put it in his mailbox a few hours ago. But it wasn't as romantic as I would have liked it to be. If it had been, he probably would have thought I was nuts. Wonder if he has found it. What if his brother, Thomas, reads it first? Darn it. He can't do that. Steven maybe even won't get a chance to read it. He is leaving tomorrow. I told Maud about the letter. We rode to Skimmelvägen 2 and put it in his mailbox.

Maud and I were going to go to the craft store but didn't have time. Fredrik has a little hot rod bike. It's great. Tomorrow we are heading to the summerhouse.

I didn't get a hug from Steven after all. Pity. - Nina

JUNE 19 AT THE SUMMERHOUSE

Yes, we are going to move.

We have finally made the decision. Dad says we will give it all we've got when we make this move work. Dad is going to get a big car. Mom is getting a little car. Even Anders is getting a car. I hope Majlis comes with us to Canada. She is so nice. You feel good when you are with her.

I wonder if Steven had time to read the letter. I hope so. I hope he didn't leave on Saturday, but waited till Monday. I came up with the right time to hug him. It should have when he knocked on the window after the party. Why do I have to come up with that so late?

I dreamt about Steven last night. *The whole class was at the summerhouse. I was going to head home. It kind of looked like the actual summerhouse. When I was leaving, I stood on a chair to call Anders. Anders arrived and he and Steven shook hands. Then Steven pulled me into him. In front of everyone. He whispered in my ear. My throat swelled up with tears. What a dream. If only it were true.*

[Years later, in 1984, I ran into Steven in Stockholm. He HAD read the letter. He saw us put it in the mailbox, as he was right down the street at the time. He had run after me, and was going to give me a hug, but Maud and I were riding away so fast, probably in a cloud of dust and giggles- we didn't hear him calling after us! He was a UN peacekeeper in 1984 and much shorter than I remembered. And I was the bold one this time- hugging *him* and admitting all my follies and shyness]

The summerhouse is so nice. But it would be nice if it had electricity. Then it would be easier to stay here longer. It's hard coming here late at night and to have to find candles, light lanterns, and get water from the well. And the outhouse is so far away. But I love the summerhouse and now we have sold her. It's so sad to think that others will be living here. We have had her for so long. But now we must leave. The lake, the forest, the moose. Goodbye beautiful summerhouse. You have

given me so many beautiful memories. I hope to return one day.
Goodbye. - Nina

JUNE 20- SUMMER COURSE WITH ANN PARSONS

Today at ballet, Ann Parson helped me a lot and talked to me. She said "good girl" when she showed positioning. It is so fun to dance for her. She talks to us as equals- like we are real dancers. With steady jobs. *We dancers... When we stand on stage... We are artists... We make images of that we are not...* (e.g. To fly) In the studio she says- *downstage and upstage*. She is fantastic. She curtsies so beautifully at the end of the class. Pauleena, who tried in to the Opera Ballet at the same time as me, is also in the summer course. She was accepted on a 6-week trial at the Opera Ballet.

I want to buy the film of our ballet year-end but I don't really dare to ask Mom, as it is quite expensive. Fredrik borrowed 20 kronor from Charlie, his classmate, last year. Today Charlie wants it back. Poor Fredrik. He hadn't dared to tell Mom all year that he had borrowed the money. But he got the money from her now. Now it sounds like I have strict parents. Not in the least. They are the world's nicest.

I got a letter from the elderly lady on the Paris bus trip. She sent along a handmade tablecloth she had made. Wonderful! We have a lampshade that is similar. I will paint her a little painting.

JUNE 21

I got a long letter from Kathy. We are already best friends. Someone I can be with 100% of the time. Ann Parson said "good girl" the whole day today, and people asked if I am with the Opera Ballet.

I just called Mom. Grandpa (Morfar) died this morning. I can't believe that. Maybe it's for the best. He had terrible asthma and his bones are, I mean were (gulp), very stiff and painful. And since we are moving, he won't have to miss us. Goodbye Morfar. I hope you will be happy in heaven. I believe in heaven. I always have. - Nina

JUNE 23

Forgot to write yesterday. Just a second- I just have to put on my pajamas- there, now I am done. Sorry. I still haven't explained our issue with Assyrian young men (not women). Maud and I call them "Black Ands." First we called them bad spirits- "onda andar." Then we called them "black spirits." And we mixed it together to "black ands." We don't *hate* them, but they *creep us out* terribly. Yes, I sound racist. I can't judge everyone for the actions of a few. But every young Assyrian man we have met behaves that way. Stares, tags along after you, and acts creepy. Teases us, etc. They say Sweden should be kind to them, but what are they doing to us? Two of them followed Maud and Marie. They grabbed the girls and picked them up in the air. Blah!

I went to ballet today and rode the train with Majlis. Anders had written her a letter that I had to deliver. And she wrote a letter back that I had to give to him.

I was at Maud's today. Hard. It was hot. I was tired after ballet. Maud wanted to go to the city. I didn't dare to say that I was too tired. I got such a headache. It was so hot. She didn't find anything. Useless trip. She easily loses her temper. But I LOVE her. - Nina

JUNE 25

We celebrated Midsummer yesterday. The whole family went to Sivan (except Anders who was with Majlis). Milton stayed home because it was too hot. We ate dinner at Orwald's. Brolle wasn't there. They said he was out for a walk.

After dinner, we headed to a park but we were late as usual. They had already raised the May Pole. We went to Gamla Stan. We went to Stor Torget and the market. But the market was closed. So we did a lot of walking this Midsummer.

When we got home to the Orwald's, Brolle was home. He was acting strangely. He seemed drunk. Tomme told us that Brolle comes home late at night, drunk. I noticed Brolle was drunk. Poor Tomme, Sivan and Nilla. He walked around talking gibberish about flowers etc. Poor Mom and Sivan. It must be embarrassing. He doesn't seem to consider the family. I was scared. Dad held my hand and squeezed it, and told me not to be scared. I felt safe.

I feel ashamed and sad. My uncle has a drinking problem. Fredrik asked me privately later if Brolle was going with us to

Skärgården. I said no. I have never seen Fredrik so relieved. I think it is so terrible. I will try not to go to Orwald's place for a while. That sounds insane. They are my cousins after all. I don't dare face it. It has made such a big impact on me that I will never forget.

We were at Malmsjö Badet yesterday. That's when I found out that Fredrik also thinks that Assyrian men are creepy. I told him that Maud and I call them "black ands." He started using the term too.

Today Majlis was here for dinner. When I was supposed to get her and Anders to let them know dinner was ready, I heard kiss-kiss from behind closed doors. So I didn't dare to disturb. Tomorrow is ballet. - Nina

JUNE 28

Today I asked Ann Parson if she knows of any good dance schools in Vancouver. She is going to give me her address in New York. That way she can ask her friends in New York if they know. I also talked to Lillemor.

I feel like Anders did last year. That Mom and Dad think I am lazy. They say, "What are we supposed to do? Be home, so we can drive you somewhere?" I don't know how to explain it to them. I am tired. The weather is bad. It doesn't feel like summer holidays. Then they would sigh over me even more. I don't dare to tell them that I am tired of coming home and cleaning up after Fredrik, and nag him, clean his room, and pick up after Anders and Fredrik. Can't they do it themselves? I want to have more time to go for walks with Milton, and to paint. Even if the weather is bad. Then I would have more energy. I want to communicate this. When mom comes home, and I am lying down, relaxing after dance class and cleaning up after the boys, she says, "You seem so lazy. You should walk Milton while you are off school." Now that Anders isn't depressed anymore, I don't want to act all depressed. Fredrik is so darn lazy. He always has to be contrary. I have to put up with it. I want everyone to be happy. I don't want to be lazy. I want to work hard in school. Have high marks. Dance a lot. A lot of ballet. - Nina

JUNE 30

Now everything is good again! I told Mom that it is hard work to pick up after Fredrik and Anders and she had a talk with

them, and things are better. I was grumpy because I had PMS. It's ridiculous that you get grumpy just because of that. Oh well. Can't help it.

Today I took an extra class with Ann Parson- en pointe. Only adults are in the class. But I will attend anyway. I have to get faster and get better balance. I watched the advanced group. I fell in love with a girl in the class. She seems very shy. She has gorgeous long legs and beautiful arms. I think my legs are too short. And I am bow-legged. It drives me crazy. And I have a bad balance and I have to be able to hold an extension for longer. I have to train, train, and train. Now that ballet is ending, I have to jog. I want to maintain my fitness level.

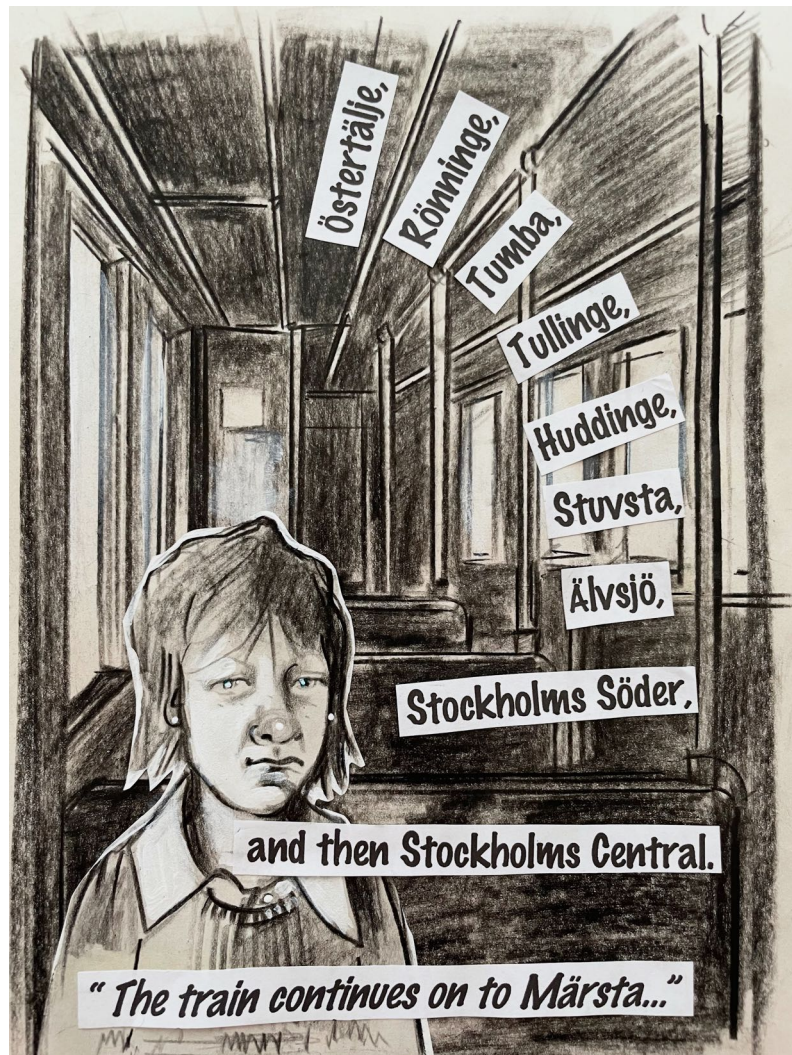
I have bought a UCLA sweater- yellow with blue letters. I am going to buy blue jeans and blue ADIDAS shoes. Very Swedish. I wonder what it will be like when we head to Canada? Exciting but scary. I want to be a ballerina so badly once I am over there. Let my legs be strong. I, I, I... want, want, want, so much. - Nina

July - September 1977

JULY 1

I have written a letter to the elderly lady, Elna Järnebrand. And I painted a little picture for her. I told you I save all pictures of ballet that I can find. I hope she sends me a picture. That sounds kind of selfish. Shame on me. I hope she likes the painting.

I am rather tired of the train. Rather? Much! The stations go by: Östertälje, Rönninge, Tumba, Tullinge, Huddinge, Stuvsta, Älvsjö, Stockholms Söder, and then Stockholms Central. The train continues on to Märsta. It's enough to drive you nuts. But it is a good system with the monthly card and all. But it gets rather tedious.



Another day has gone by. It doesn't seem like summer at all. It just rains and rains. And I get more and more pale and soon we'll be wearing hats and mittens again.

I want to gain strength in my legs so that I can extend them high. Today we were horses and that was fun.

I wonder if there is anyone out there that thinks I am cute and who feels the same way about me as I do about Steven. I wonder how all this will play out in Canada. - Nina

JULY 2

Björn Borg won Wimbledon today against Jim Connors. I wanted Björn to win the whole time. Yesterday was the semi-finals and Björn had a rough time. I put my hands together in prayer and whispered "Björn, win" and looked at him the whole time and then it went better and he won! I did the same thing today when he struggled and it went better and he won! Then I felt sorry for Jim Connors. I think he looks so good when he plays tennis. In the paper they did a caricature of him with a large nose. Silly. I wonder if I really helped Björn. It worked for Björn and it worked for Ingemar Stenmark. Next time Björn plays I will do the same thing. Also when Connors plays. But not if he is playing against Björn. I have gotten totally interested in tennis.

Mom, Dad and I were in town today shopping and a car full of guys pulled up. They were staring at me quite a bit. I wondered why. Then, darn it, I saw that Lars Bohlin was in the car. He laughed and waved at me and I smiled back. He stared at me the whole time as they drove away. I wonder if they thought I was cute. In a way, I hope so. Sounds silly. I called Catharina. She is going to Germany in 3 weeks. Tomorrow I will jog. I will! I have decided. I am too fat. I feel fat fat fat. - Nina

JULY 3

Tomorrow I am going to Morfar's funeral. He will be cremated. I wonder what it will be like. I will bring a flower. Nilla is going too. I would never have dared until Mom convinced me to go. Now I have to stop. Good Night!

PS. Peo Hallgren was my biggest love when we lived in Sweden when I was younger. I always fought with Anki about him. But I

don't dare to talk to him now about love. He is so funny. He is always up to mischief. I wonder if he likes me. He may like Ann-Christine more, because she is more outgoing. He and I used to be pen pals and ended our letters with kisses. I am going to send him a letter when we move and see if he sends anything back. I hope so. Oh, Peo. I love you. - Nina

JULY 4

We are leaving soon. How will it be?

Now I am back. It was strange, creepy and wonderful at the same time. The priest was female and she wore a cape. She mumbled some psalms in the beginning. Then she really got into it. We laid roses on the coffin. I placed a bouquet on it. We had to sing. Nilla and I couldn't keep from laughing. Terrible. Mom and Siv laughed too. It looked like we were crying. Brolle and Dad were serious. I admired them for that. Now Morfar will be cremated. We will take him up north later on for burial of the ashes. Rest in peace. - Nina

JULY 5

Today we had pointe class. It was really hard. I felt dumb. Not dumb. Bad. I am not talented enough to do deboullés and balance and all that. There is a girl I am enthralled with. Her name is Ewa Wallgren and she is in Eva and Lotta's class. She is very talented and sure of herself. She attends Ellen Rasch's school. She has such a presence. Ellen has arranged a job for her at Oscar's. I will not be jealous. She has danced a lot longer than me. This is my sixth year. Tomorrow I will try harder.

I never swear. In the last while, I have started saying "darn." I don't think that is so bad. I can say swear words to myself. They are only words. But still. Today I actually said that Fredrik was "pissed off" because I didn't make him an ice cream cone. I said that to Majlis. I am so ashamed. It just leaked out. But it isn't that bad. They are only words. Who cares? Me! Oh well. I think it will be quite a while before I swear in English. Those words are so gross. - Nina

JULY 6

I wonder how Linda, Dana and Kathy are doing? If they are grown up or young. I think Kathy and I will be good friends. I hope

so. I don't dare to go to a school dance, as I can't dance. How stupid I am! Of course I can dance! Easy as pie. But I can't relax. I wonder if a guy will like me. It seems like that is the only thing I think about. I want to try to get high marks at school. I will try hard. I wonder if I am gifted as a dancer. 6th year. Maud has danced for 12. I guess I am as good as her in that respect. It is just raining and raining. - Nina

JULY 7

Today Eva, Lotten, Maud and I went to the décor centre. They were actually closed but we got to in anyways. The wife was away and the husband was sick but he came anyway. He had had a heart attack and his leg was amputated. He is so nice. They have wonderful things there. We will borrow trees for our first show. Maud and I bought bouquets with roses for our pointe dance. Really cute. I hope there will be a show.

I didn't get to dance en pointe today. My knee was hurting me. The teacher will help me tomorrow. I hope. She told me you have to have your knee lined up with your toes, or else it will cause damage. It was a bad day: first the pointe guard fell off. Then my heel elastic broke. I put a rubber band around my foot and it snapped. Then the blister on my big toe broke. And then the knee hurt. No wonder I couldn't take part in the class! Before I left she said, "Hope your knee feels better tomorrow." I hope so. I want to be able to extend my leg high in développée. Good night. - Nina

JULY 10

We were at Skärgården today. Nåttarö Island. Orwald's have rented a cabin there. Fredrik will stay with them for 2 weeks. It is glorious there. Milton was along and I have never seen him run so much. And swim. Milton has had a rabies shot, so he wasn't allowed to interact with Funny. He is not allowed to interact with any other dogs until we move. I hope he will like it in Canada and be OK on the plane. Skärgården is wonderful. There are no cars there. The store is a little cottage. The water is clear. You get there by boat from Nynäshamn. It takes 35 minutes. Fredrik called tonight and he is having a good time. He misses us a little bit. I want to go there and visit him.

Gitte was in the local paper last Friday. Majlis will save the paper for me. Gitte was photographed with 2 newfie dogs. She is either buying a new one or mating her dog with it. I saw her in the car with them. The new one is brown. I wonder what its name is? I will not be jealous because Gitte is in the paper. Why would I? My beloved Milton is with me.

I am awaiting a letter from Dana, Lori and Steven. I hope he got the letter. It would be so great if he wrote to me. I should call his bother Thomas to get his address. Do I dare? I should dare, as I will never see him again. Fredrik teases me about Steven. I guess that is fair as I dream about Steven every night. Not dream.. think. And I don't have any defense against Fredrik's teasing. But there is Agnetha. Fredrik has a crush on her. Wanted to get a picture of her. So cute. I dream that I will meet Steven at a basketball tournament in Vancouver and we meet and click click and all that jazz. Oh well. Good night. - Nina

JULY 12

Didn't write yesterday as I had a headache and had to miss ballet class, even though it was supposed to be the last day. I have bought Ann Parson a troll candle and I made her a card. I hope she likes it. Today Maud and I were in Gamla Stan. We walked and walked and walked. I bought a little midsummer pole, a Holly Hobbie memo pad, and an address book. It looks like you, diary, but pink. I have to ask Parson for her address tomorrow. I am in the mood to dance. Yesterday, Maud was here and we walked all day in the forest with Milton. We sat on a cliff and had a picnic, while Milton ran around loose. It was wonderful. I have gotten quite

tanned. Maud gave me a lovely bracelet. Looks like an ID bracelet. It says "Katarina" on it, and has a pink rose on it. Maud has one too. It means friendship. I am so happy.

Every night, before I head to sleep, I think about Steven. Steven, Steven, the whole time. I am tragically in love? I look down his street when I walk by even though I know he is in the USA. I hope he got my letter. The day before we move, I will go to his brother and ask for his address. Milton is such a good friend and sibling. He and I understand one another. - Nina

JULY 13

The last day of ballet. I talked a little to Parson. She gave me her address. "Thank you for working so hard," she said before I left. I have gotten a Swedish dialect. Not when I talk to myself though. I suppose it's kind of cute. I am taking a summer course for two weeks with Joelle Mazett. She is French.

I have to write to Mrs. Vanneck. One can't just show up without having written. Will draw a ballerina and send a photo of myself with Milton. I'll have to apologize throughout the letter.

Tomorrow our house will be listed for sale in the local paper. We leave either the 23rd or 24th of August.

I will call Aija and ask her to apologize to everyone at school for my shyness.
- Nina

JULY 15

Late Thursday, Queen Silvia was taken to the hospital. It's a princess! I am so glad. The paper had predicted a boy. So there. I attended Silvia's wedding. She was so beautiful. I wonder what the princess will be called. They are already back at the castle. I thought you had to stay at the hospital at least a few days. There will be no public pictures of the princess for 10 days. Just found out her name- *Victoria Ingrid Alice Desiree*.

Last night I couldn't sleep. I was awake the whole night. I love to sketch, so I stayed up and sketched Archie. I have a headache every day. A little one always in the background. And

today I had a talk with myself. I am scared that the tumour is cancerous, but I don't think it is, as then it would be growing faster. It's probably a lymph gland.

Dad just got back from Scotland. He gave me a beautiful big doll, a Westie figure, and a cloth with a Scottie and a Westie on it. Wonderful! We are going to buy a Scottie! [Fredrik and I have a sleepover in my room!]

JULY 18 FREDRIK'S NAMES DAY

I have become photo crazy! I take a lot of photos and often they are unnecessary. I have arranged my photos in an album. I will start with ballet pictures.

Today Maud and I were in the city. We walked and walked and walked. I bought a necklace, velvet ribbon, and a watch. I have cut my bangs. Much better. 30 kronor! I bought a ballet poster. Really nice. It just cost 3 kronor. I have to have velvet ribbon to tie my hair up, because my hair is so worn out. Gunilla and Annika work in a jeans store. We visited them. They are so nice. I bought jeans there today. Tomorrow I will jog with Milton. - Nina

JULY 21

It's terrible. Horrible. I just saw an image on TV of a poor poor cat with something connected to its head and it looked terrified and didn't know what to do with itself. STOP ANIMAL RESEARCH NOW! The poor poor animals. They can't escape from the horrible humans. We have no right to take a living creature that can't make its own decisions and do what we want to them. The humans should experiment on themselves. If that doesn't work- tough luck! People are so idiotic and gross and the most terrible creatures ever created. People have no right to be on the planet. They only ruin things. The animals have the right. Stupid humans. I HATE THEM! They also decide how dogs should look. The dogs are bred so that their eyes pop out, get infections, can't breath etc. God, we are dumb.

I have to calm down now. Candy has to be kept away from me! It's driving me crazy! I am drowning in it! I am sitting and writing this right now with a candy in my mouth. I will throw it out now! But candy can be good now and then... ha ha.

I don't owe anyone any letters now. That feels good. I have told Lori and Dana about Steven. It's quite difficult.

It's just raining and raining again. I hope it gets a little better so that I can maintain my tan before we move to Canada.

Steven in a detail of poster for the Södertälje Basketball Club

JULY 26

All I do is wait for a letter from Steven. But he isn't thinking about me. I dreamt that Marianne from him so I thought I would get one the next day. I couldn't wait. I think a lot about him. Can't stop. I dream about him visiting Vancouver, contacting Linda about where I live and surprising me there. Oh wow! I am a little dumb. But hey, I have a right to feel. I don't think I am good looking. I am ugly, ugly. Sometimes I think I look alright, but my nose. It is so big. I don't like it.

I don't like Maud's dad. Never have. It's like Milton's feelings about certain people- a sixth sense. I don't know why I feel this way. He always has to show off and.. yes.. he is so silly. He always stares in that way, you know. And makes a scene. I hope Maud doesn't like her dad. My dad is so nice. And my mom. Maud's mom and my mom are actually quite similar. But our fathers are as different as can be. Her dad is very German. He is strict. And he always wants things clean and tidy. I think Maud may have some of his characteristics. She always has to boss her sisters around and easily loses her temper. I have never been to her house without her losing her temper. Either she is mad at her mom, or it's something similar. Oh well.

We have started pantomiming a lot. More than dancing. Soon the second summer course starts. And Maud and I are in the same class. I hope we will make it on time as the subway leaves at 8:10 AM in the morning. We'll see. I am sure it will be fine. I don't like the subway. Blah.

JULY 27

I wish I could earn some money. But it is too late now to get a summer job. I bought dog shampoo today. It reminds me of my work experience at the dog kennel last year. I want to write a book about ballet. I feel like doing research and things like

that. I will read my French magazine so that I can practice my French.

My aunt Nutte and my cousin, Nina, were here on the weekend and I got a really cute Norwegian doll. They will send me a Ludwig doll for Christmas. I got a really nice coat yesterday. I need to get jeans. I just buy and buy and buy. I have strong guilt feelings. - Nina

JULY 29

Today Maud and I went to see the Pink Panther Strikes Again. It was great. I am now a Pink Panther enthusiast. Maud was terrified that it would be gross and scary. But it wasn't. A little blood in one episode and people were killed in a funny way. In the beginning I laughed quietly to myself. Then I had to laugh out loud, it was that funny. Peter Sellers is so good at making up characters. He is a little fat, but it doesn't matter.

Yesterday we were in town shopping. All of a sudden, unexpectedly, someone said hi to me. It was Mikael Andersson. He has such a nice and kind face. I said hi back very naturally. It felt good for once to not be tense and for him to have said it first. I didn't notice him at first so he really meant it; otherwise they usually avoid me so that they don't have to say hi.

I have bought stovepipe pants with pockets on the side. They suit my new coat very much.

Boy, it is a sin to be as ugly as I am. When I look in the mirror, I practice what I should look like when I laugh, etc. without looking ugly. I hate it when I am natural and then see myself in the mirror and see the world's largest nose that would break the world record for the largest potato. - Nina

AUGUST 1

We have been in Säter. The Lindh's have a beautiful place but it's a little large. 4 kids. 1 dog. 1 cat. 2 horses. They are getting rabbits, chickens and goats. 100 meters to their cottage. They have extended the old house. They have a really nice old road on which we rode horse and buggy. They don't seem to be satisfied! And their youngest was the wildest, most rambunctious kid ever. He was always fighting. Never calmed

down. If I can be honest, he needs discipline! Their oldest boy, about a year younger than me, I liked. He was nice. Fredrik liked him too.

Maud called today and asked if I want to go with her family on a trip to Gränna, Småland. I want to see Gränna and I want to be with Maud as much as possible before we leave so I said yes. Mom thinks that would be fine, as the moving company comes on Friday. I have started to take down pictures off the wall. It is sad. I am starting to be worried about school over there. I mostly want to go to Balmoral because there I don't need to worry, as I know people. Anyway. I am a little worried about Maud's dad's driving. But they have managed all these years, so it should be OK. Maud and I will sleep in the attic room at the hotel by ourselves. That will be fun.

[I have no memory of this trip, so I suspect it never happened.]

I remember an incident. Affe Carlsson asked me in class if I was moving back to Canada and Steven answered for me. Wow! Does that mean anything? I hope so! I haven't gotten a letter from him yet so I will call his brother the day before we leave to ask him. I wonder if there is a mail strike in Canada. (We did get a letter from the Ericson's today, so maybe not.) I am waiting for letters from Linda, Lori, Kathy, Dana and Karin. My letters may not have gotten there yet! Hope they have. Otherwise it would be catastrophic.

AUGUST 7

Milton had a trim at 2 PM. It's a while since I wrote. It's Dad's birthday tomorrow. I bought him a clay picture with Slussbron on it. 40 kronor from both Fredrik and me. Mom bought him a necklace with an "R" pendant and Anders bought him the "Warning: Children" record. I think they are all very nice presents. Tomorrow the rest of the furniture will be packed up. The house is starting to feel rather empty. No curtains and we have to lie on the floor to watch TV. Tomorrow night I have to sleep on the floor. Milton is nervous and angry because they are taking his house. He doesn't understand what is happening. We bought his cage for the plane ride. I have been worried about how it will be for him. But the cage is large. We put him in it at night so that he can get used to it. In the beginning, he was all quiet. Then he started to whine. We let him out when he whines but we have to start making him sleep in

it all night so he gets into the habit of it. I am glad he won't be in quarantine. I think it is terrible there.

Today we were at Grönalund. Mamma, Pappa, Fredrik and me. We had lots of fun. But the money just pours out. I bought a poster with Swan Lake on it and it has my name on the roster as Prima Ballerina. It's really nice. 9:75 kronor. Fredrik bought a "Wanted- Dead or Alive" poster with his name on it. Maud said I should have bought her a poster. That was a little pushy. She was grumpy today. When I asked her if she would like to go to Cupido with me, she said, "Maybe we should meet there," like she was trying to avoid me. If she asks me if I want to go to Grönalund with her, I will have to say no. It is too expensive and a waste. It's enough to go once a year.

Tomorrow I am dancing again. That will be fun. I wonder how Joelle Mazett is as a teacher. I have to buy new ballet slippers and tights tomorrow. I will head in to town with Majlis and Anders. They are so nice. Majlis will be visiting next year. Maud says she will be coming too, but in a way I don't want her to. She is a lot of work and is allergic to everything and doesn't eat this or that or the other. Then I'd have to go the whole summer listening to her complain about earaches etc. She is nice, but still.

I hope we find a really nice house.

I have started to sketch ballerinas in a different way. With ink. And I sketch the whole face now. It's working out.

I am Queen Silvia crazy. I have bought a magazine about her. I draw her. It's fun, I think.

I write in such a boring way. I can't write about love, as there is nothing to write about. I have to get Thomas' phone number, so that I can get Steven's address. It can't be all that bad. I keep going on and on about this. Can't stop. -
Nina

AUGUST 14

I haven't written in a while. So much has happened. Dad had his birthday. I bought him a clay painting as you know. Sivan has also had a birthday. Nilla, Brolle, Mom and I were at Morfar's funeral.

I have met a bunch of relatives. The funeral was overwhelming. Morfar was in a little urn.

We had to walk along a plank to lay flowers beside the urn. When Nilla walked she almost fell. I was hysterical and started to laugh uncontrollably, but quietly. Nilla too. I didn't stumble, luckily.

I saw my great aunts. Helma has grown so old. Helga is so nice. And she is my favorite. She gave me a lovely rag rug in pink and light blue.

We might meet up with her next week.

[My great aunt Helga was a mother for my Mom. My grandmother died suddenly when I was only 2. I can only imagine the loss my Mom must have felt as she was very close to her mother. Helga became our maternal grandmother. She gave me great love, great advice and was an inspiration. She never married. She lived stubbornly, intelligently and independently. I light a candle for her and my grandmother, Stina, and my female ancestors every day.]

[My favorite photo of Helga and Mom at the summerhouse, August 1975.]

We have a week left in Sweden.

Anders has had his birthday. I gave him a wallet that he can attach to his belt. He also got 100 kronor bill, a gold necklace, a bone from Milton, a mirror and a gold pendant from Majlis. They had a party for him last Saturday night at Göran's. Anders got a great nightgown on which they had embroidered Anders Fan Club. Really nice. When Anders and Majlis were here today, they locked themselves in his room. I heard them fooling around in there when I was watching TV. Majlis just called and her voice was all hoarse. I wonder what's up. I hope nothing is wrong because she sounds like she had been crying. He is talking to her right now. I am wondering and wondering.

I have to brush my teeth and put on my PJ's. I hear Anders is laughing now. Whew! Anders is so nice. I was downtown with him and Majlis and I sat on his knee on the bus, as it was too crowded.

I feel so little and bloated and not 15. But in a way, it doesn't matter. I am going to be ambitious in Canada. Write good reports. Be interested. Not so shy. I can even get my driver's license next year. I will try. I want to start playing tennis and I want to dance every day. How fun it will be. I am really in the mood to work with something. And I want to perform and be discovered. To have many friends. I want to show Milton. I hope it all works out like I want it to. But now I have to sleep. I will finish writing tomorrow. Then I will have danced for Joelle Mazett. She is strict. Maud has gotten some reprimands. But it feels good to dance. I would like to do what Nils-Åke Häggbom does- dance 10 hours a day. How fabulous that would be. - Nina

AUGUST 15

It isn't nice to dance for Joelle because she doesn't see me. I can stand right under her nose without her noticing me. She doesn't correct me. Doesn't say "good girl." She has teacher's pets. I think that is irritating. She is strict and often gets mad at Maud. Ann Parson is the best teacher I have ever had. She doesn't just focus on the technical. Lillemor had cut her hair. It's shocking. And not exactly attractive. Friday will be my last day at Balettakademien. Weird.

When I saw Mikael that time, something inside me exploded. I wonder what it is, and I think about it a lot.

I get so much money from Mom and Dad, it's terrible. I bought a new coat. 98 kronor on sale (regularly 298). Tomorrow I am buying jeans.

I got a great letter from Kathy today. Many things. She is so nice. We are going to be good friends and she agrees with me on a lot of things including Steven.

I write rather dully don't I? But I don't know how I can make things sound more exciting.

I got a letter from Maud today. She sent along a photo of her at age 1.

Maud writes:

Since it is soon time to bid you farewell, we will have to savour each day that remains. It is a nightmare to know I will not see you for at least a year! How will I stand it? If you

*have a prescription for this malady, please call 08/774 26 91.
To my best friend from Maud*

*Handmade Card from Maud: Snart är det dags. Huddinge 12/8-1977
Eftersom det snart är dags för avfärd för dig, så fi väl ta vara
på dagarna så gått det går. Det är ju som en mardröm att inte få
träffa dig på ett helt ÅR!!! HUR SKALL JAG STÅ UT? Om du har
något recept för detta så ring gärna.*

*It's almost time. Huddinge, August 12, 1977
Since it's almost time for you to leave, let's make the most of
these days while we can. It's like a nightmare not to see you
for a whole YEAR!!! HOW AM I SUPPOSED TO STAND IT? If you have
any advice on how to handle this, please give me a call.*

AUGUST 16

*How can I forget something so important! Ellen Rasch observed
me in class yesterday! Firstly, Aeron observed. Then I saw a
woman in the door with him. I asked Maud who it was and she
said that it was Ellen Rasch! How wonderful! In Canada I will
try to get into the best dance school they have. I am writing
this on the train. Soon I am going to dance for Joelle. She is
like Lillemor. But Lillemor noticed me more. Joelle has
teacher's pets. The teachers I have had: Mrs. Vanneck,
Lillemor, Ann Parson, and Joelle Mazett. I have auditioned for
the Opera Ballet. I have met Gösta Svalberg and 19 other
dancers and teachers. I have met Anneli Alhanko and Per Arthur
Segerström.*

AUGUST 18

Maud writes:

*Dear Katarina,
Between us ballerinas, it feels quite depressing during these
last few days before you leave. Or what do you thank? I am
going to create a little bon voyage dance for you! To Romeo and
Juliet. We'll have to hope that I have time to show it to you.
I think the last day will be one big lake. As I am writing
this, the most sentimental and sad music is playing in the
background. It's hard not to cry. I wonder what kind of
dancers we will become? I think you will be a ballerina in
Toronto. And me? A stage janitor at the Opera Ballet. Or what
do you think? No matter, that is a question for the future. I
want you to say hi to your family for me. I don't think I will*

write anymore right now, because it feels quite hopeless. From your best friend, forever. Maud

[An envelope inside this letter is labeled "extra note- secret letter. Show no one." A smaller envelope lies inside labeled "very secret extra note. Show no one." But alas, that envelope is now empty and I cannot recall the contents.]

AUGUST 19

Maud writes:

Hey Katarina! Thank you so much for your letter. It wasn't boring at all. I have decided what we will do on Sunday- I think. When I start ballet again, I want to try to get into the advanced group. I hope Lillemor isn't teaching then. I have a tough time sleeping at night. Just because I am thinking about you moving. Imagine if you and I could dance together in Canada next summer.

Gisela thanks you very much for the nice letter she got. It is just two days till you leave... sniff... sniff...

On September 5 I will be auditioning at Ellen Rasch's. I better call on Monday to make sure it's not too late.

On Sunday, I was thinking that you, Gisela, Helen and I could be together in the morning and then you and I take the afternoon to ourselves as it will be the last hours we spend together for at least a year. I already can't wait for next summer, but it is a long ways away. And maybe by that time you may think I am dumb and I may think you are strange. Blah! It can't turn out that way! I guess I would have to bring a present, as you will have turned 16 by then. We'll have to send cassettes to each other, and presents etc. That might be really fun. But not as fun as seeing you in person at least 3 times a week as we have been doing. What day is your birthday? I actually forgot. Mine is August 28, but you probably know that already. You have a better memory than I do.

Yesterday, my dad didn't feel very well. So I guess it isn't just me that has been feeling bad. Lucky you who will be spared "Black Ands" when you move! I will probably be stalked by them my whole life! Who cares? I do! Goodbye, Love, Maud. PS. I will miss you too!

AUGUST 21

Oh, oh, oh. It's been a long time since I wrote. It's been very hectic, but I haven't had that much to do, so I don't have a good excuse.

Joelle got a lot better as a teacher. I got to stand in the front row and even became one of the teacher's pets. I had fun. And on the last day she hugged me. She is actually quite nice once you get to know her.

Milton was at the vet's and luckily he did not have tooth decay. He got sleeping medication for the plane ride. It works well. He sleeps well and seems so calm. I don't have to worry that he will be uncomfortable.

Milton met his brother, Oskar, who is owned by Sivan's brother. Catastrophe! @#%&@##* They didn't like each other at all. Oskar was nice but Milton was so angry! I took a bunch of photos because it may be the last time they see each other. Oskar had gotten a burn when their tent went up in flames at a camping trip, but he a recuperated well.

Yesterday, I said goodbye to Maud. The tears ran. It was very sad and overwhelming.

[Maud and I didn't see each other for 3 years, until I went to Sweden in 1980 and saw her for two days. The next short visit was in 1984 when I again visited Sweden- the last time I was there. We lost touch as we grew more into the women we have become. But Maud came to Canada in 1997 for two days and then for 10 days in 2004. Her friendship in 1977 was much more intense than my diary words reflect. Our relationship was more a love affair really- often compared to the one seen in the film "Heavenly Creatures." She would be Kate Winslet, of course. Maud got me through the roughest times in Sweden as she allowed herself to be innocent as well, in a land that tended to skip over that stage of development. Our private world was one of pink angels and magical powers. And her friendship remains one of my deepest and most challenging.]

AUGUST 23

It's late and we have to get up early. It is quite exciting. Poor Majlis and Anders. Anders is very sad right now. We are at the hotel. He is downstairs right now talking to Majlis on

the phone. He's been down there a long time. They will meet in a year. It will go fast. Goodnight then! - Nina

Majlis and Anders outside our house in Södertälje

AUGUST 24

We are actually sitting on CP AIR now. We have reached the halfway point. It seems like we have only been flying a half hour.

Last night I opened the presents I got from Maud. I already have an address book that looks like you, Diary. Now I have the cutest poetry book as well. I have always wanted to have a little poetry book.

Tom cried (trying not to show us) when we left yesterday. Poor thing.

We got up at 5 AM this morning. Milton was quite alert so I ran around with him for a while at the airport. We gave him the sleeping medication and he fell asleep right away. He slept all the way to Amsterdam. Mom and Dad took him out for a walk there. He didn't want to go back into the cage, but he got more medication. I don't know how he is doing now. I hope he is sleeping. Poor thing. He doesn't know what is happening. But it will soon be over. Now they are going to serve drinks and then dinner. I don't know if I want any but I will take it anyway.

[Fredrik at the airport in Amsterdam.]

There is the world's grumpiest stewardess on board. Poor Fredrik was ordering orange juice and just because he didn't say please, this woman gave him the dirtiest look, and didn't bring him a drink. Idiot, stupid woman. I'd like to wring her neck.

A few hours have passed. We were going to watch "The Eagle has Landed" on the plane, but typically, the movie projector isn't working.

I called Catharina and said goodbye from Arlanda.

Two to three hours left. A man told us that they moved Milton to the front half of the plane where it was warmer. I will write at the hotel. I will call Kathy.

Vancouver, here we come.

SEPTEMBER 6

We have lived at the hotel for 1 1/2 weeks. It has a room, kitchen, TV, and the world's warmest pool. I have a cold from the pool. Our car is really big. Station wagon. It has all the buttons and features. Power windows, seats, locks, back door and everything. It is beige and is a Buick. I like it but at times it's a little trouble. Milton is happy anyway. Yes, that's right. Milton survived the journey well. But, boy, it was tough. There was a mix up at the airport and we had to wait for several hours.

We found our house the day after we arrived. It is brand new and we can't move in until Friday. The furniture isn't here yet and the house isn't even finished. But we made it this far. We can make it a bit more. The house has 4 bedrooms, a rec room, 2 fireplaces, 5 entrances, big living room, 3 bathrooms, big kitchen, large balcony, 2 levels, and a double carport. It is a brown house with thick green carpets.

[We owned the house for 27 years. A lot of blood, sweat, tears and laughter in that wonderful old house]

I wrote a long letter to Peo. I hope he answers.

I asked Catharina for Steven's address.

I called Mrs. Vanneck. She said a teacher from England is teaching at the dance school now. She will test me next week to see what level I am. Then I will start dancing downtown which will be great. I talked to Kerry Vanneck and she says that she is tall now. She asked me if I wanted to go to the disco. I said no thanks right away. Yuck! I wonder how the dancers are at the school. I don't think there is any special dance I have to know- though I have always studied the Ceccetti style and Mrs. Vanneck uses the RAD syllabus. Mrs. Vanneck went to England today. I am supposed to call Kerry on Thursday to see what time I should be there. It will be exciting.

I saw Dana today. She is boy crazy. Her girlfriend, Pat Webber, was along. They only care about what they are wearing. And boys. They didn't talk to me. Just "do you remember this?" and "do you remember that?" Blah. But I have Kathy. Lucky. I have been in touch with her and we are friends. She will go

with me to school tomorrow. She will help me if there is trouble. I have bought school supplies. I forgot to get runners. But I don't think there will be PE on the first day. My stomach is churning. But it will be OK. Good luck, me!

Fredrik has started to play soccer. He is really good. I would love to play but where would I find the time? I can play with Fredrik.

I went to see Star Wars. It is the world's greatest film. It's impossible to explain. I am in love with it. I want to see it again and again and again.

Now I have to take a bath. Tomorrow school. I am a little nervous. But who cares!?

Maud hasn't answered my letter yet. Maybe it hasn't even arrived yet.

... I just got interrupted by the world's largest spider that came crawling by... anyway, good night. I will write tomorrow. -
Katarina (Nina)

SEPTEMBER 9

Yes, as I wrote, we went to see Star Wars. It is so well done. I am going to buy the record, poster and book. I almost think it is better than Bugsy Malone. It is so good, it's inexplicable. There are butterflies in my tummy when I think about it. I went a little crazy for Luke Skywalker. He was so nice. We also saw "The Spy Who Loved Me." Also really well done. The best James Bond film yet. But he always has a girl with him. It gets a little much.

Mom has sprained her ankle something awful. Her foot is all black and blue but is getting better. I feel sorry for Mom. She has to take care of all of us, the house, and now she has sprained her ankle on top of it all.

Milton has fallen in love with Kathy's dog, Sarge. She is so nice, and likes to lick you in the face and all that. Milton played with her full out. He got a little carried away. Kathy and I are best friends but in a way I wish we could talk more deeply like we did in letters. Maybe we are both too shy. I hope it is just like this in the beginning. I think Milton got fleas from Sarge. Today he was covered in them. We bought

shampoo and shampooed him thoroughly and then used a flea comb. Also bought the best fleas collar we could get.

I called Kerry to arrange a test class and she had forgotten to book a time. She tells me she goes to North Vancouver High School because all the boys there. How silly. Disgusting. She told me Sonja goes to Balmoral too. I will have to try to find her. Wonder what she looks like. I don't know what grade she is in. I have met the new Swedish girl Pia, and she is so cute. She has the world's longest hair. I would like to talk to her, but I don't dare. Now I have to say good night. Tomorrow I will write all about school. Not too bad. Good night. - Nina

Maud writes:

Dear Katarina,

Oh, how I have longed for a letter from you. It arrived yesterday. I am glad you liked the presents. I miss you very, very much. We all do here at home. I am glad that the trip went well. Too bad it was so long though.

Much has happened here. I started ballet on September 5. We have a bunch of new students. They are from the State School. Eva, who was in our summer course. And Karin. She is Lillemor's pet as well. She asked to be in level B5 but wasn't allowed. Too bad. You know what Lillemor has bought? The same kind of shoes as Ann Parson. I think the group is really dull now. And everything is too easy. I was too late calling Ellen Rasch. She said I can call back in December. Then I can audition for the advanced level, because I have danced for so long and I dance en Pointe. You are the world's luckiest to go to such a nice dance school! Oi!

I have forgotten to thank you for the presents. The ballerina was really nice. The maple leaf too. Thank you! Helen was very happy too. She took the book with her to the dentist and told them all about you. Now as I write this, I wonder if you think I am exaggerating but you are the world's best, cutest, nicest, most talented, most best FRIEND! I hope everyone in your family is doing well.

The "dancing girls" will continue even if it feels empty without you.

You have such a nice house. I bet Milton has his own room!

I have bought Vivaldi's 4 Seasons. It's quite good. But I haven't found the cassette that you had. You ask if I am coming next year? What a question! Of course I am coming. I think I will start packing soon because I can hardly wait.

I have to tell you something. I am not starting senior high school after Grade 9. No, not that. If you start reading on page 3, you will find out my general plans.

It's like this... If I travel to you next summer, then I would stay with you for 2-3 months for it to be worth the trip. Mom and Dad will of course send money for food etc. But if I like it there, then I may come home and wait till I am 17 and then move to Canada until I really start longing to be back home! You may be wondering how it will work out with high school. But you see- I am not going to go to high school as I am giving it all I have to concentrate on dancing in Canada with you, if I can. Do you think I should do this or what?

I send greetings from all 5 of us here in Huddinge to you 5 (6 with Milton) in Canada. Thank you for all the nice things we got. Love, Maud, Gisela, Helen, Mom, Dad and Pinocchio. Note: Gisela is writing her own letter. I miss you terribly. Write soon, please. PS. The film we made turned out really well. PPS. I will send you some photos.

Secret note. Show no one. To Katarina. Mini letter. I got really nice presents for my birthday. I got pink/white jewelry box, with pink satin and white pearls. Really nice. Money, cards, wishes, etc. and a porcelain ballerina (I think you've seen them. I am going to start collecting them). A white satin box, comb, brush, mirror, my month stone (Jade), sweater, pink socks, your ballerina etc. Uh... I have actually... eh... gone and fallen... oh, eh, hmm... Yes, anyway... in love. Unfortunately, so to speak. Who? Well, a boy in my school but how that will turn out, you'll have to find out in the next letter. I think. Who cares? I do! Maud. Sorry I had to fall in love. Sorry.

Helen writes:

Hi Katarina. I miss you a lot. Say hi to Milton, A big hug from Snoopy, and me Helen. PS. Thank you for the book.

Maud and I in her living room August 1977.

October - December 1977

OCTOBER 2

Oh, oh, oh. I have had so much to do. I haven't had any time to write in you. Now I have some time, so I will try to catch up. Sorry. So much has happened. Yes, it feels like we never spent 2 years in Sweden. I have a million letters to write, lots of homework, friends, I dance a lot. I almost don't have time to walk poor Milton. I have found a wonderful path behind our house to walk him on. What luck!

We live at 516 East Braemar in North Vancouver. The house is wonderful. Not finished yet (Anders room and the garden). Everyone has his or her own room, TV room, basement, living room, big kitchen, balcony, double carport, 3 bathrooms (with baths!), dishwasher, washer/dryer, cablevision. Carpeting wall to wall. The house is brown. I love it!

I told you I wrote Peo. I apologized to him for all sorts of things, like being shy and boring. I told him a lot and asked him how the USA trip was. All of a sudden I got a letter addressed to ME from PEO. He was so nice, and told me my letter was not at all boring and that he was also shy and he longs to get back to the USA and to visit Canada. He wants to visit and he ended the letter with "write soon." I have written back. I am so happy. I love you, Peo!

Oh, Star Wars. I LOVE that film. I have seen it twice now and it is just as exciting. I also watched a program on how they make the film. Wonderful! I would love to work in that field when I grow up.

Mrs. Vanneck doesn't give up. I have started dancing at Anna Wyman's, but Mrs. Vanneck wants me to start at her school. She told me that my teacher, Miss Miller, is good, but not the best. I got angry. But she wants me to take a lesson with her at least. I guess it couldn't hurt. Kerry seems nuts now. Then again, she was always a little nuts.

About Anna Wyman's: I was going to start at Vancouver Ballet School but it was too far to get there. Margareta suggested we look at Anna Wyman Dance Theatre and Studio of Dance Arts in West Vancouver. We called and I got a test lesson. They placed

me in the Intermediate-Advanced level. My schedule: 9 hours a week

Monday 8-9:30 Ballet

Wednesday 6:30-7:30 Pointe

Wednesday 7:30-9:00 Jazz

Thursday 5-6:30 Modern

Thursday 6:30-8 Ballet

Saturday 9-11 AM Ballet

I have four different teachers.

Jazz and Modern are really fun. Different and relaxed.

Everyone here is very talented and very flexible. I had a hard time at the beginning but I am catching up.

The Cecchetti technique is similar but faster.

High school is fun. Everyone knows everyone and they are not as serious as Swedes and not as fast paced. I have done almost all the academics already except for Socials Studies and English.

My locker number is 7. My combination is 51-14-59. Had a rough time at the start but it is going much better. (I have to take Milton out for a walk. Will write more later).

OCTOBER 6

Maud writes:

I think it too bad that the mail takes such a long time. I think it takes about 14 days. Anyway, here is my letter. Wow-what a house you have. You live in a castle, lucky duck. Thanks for the photos. Is your room big? It seems like fun in your high school. I am glad you think it is easy. And the ballet seems exceptionally good. What a schedule you have. Wow! "Anna Wyman Dance Theatre" seems like I good school I think. Just think if you and I can dance there together next summer. Is it fun to dance jazz and ballet? I wonder how much it costs for you to dance that much.

I have bought a new dance outfit. It looks just like the State School kind except with a belt and a little darker. Your old dance teacher seems a little... you know... hmmm. You know what I mean. If I were to maybe later start dancing there, do you think I could handle it? Does one have to audition? Just think how fun it would be if you and I had the same schedule. We would be (are) the world's best ballet buddies. You may think I am copying you, but it is more fun to be two. (And you are my best friend!)

You know Karin? She has moved up to level B5. Hurrah, hurrah, we thought. But in come 4 new teacher's pets. One from the Opera Ballet School: Pia; 3 from the State School: Eva-Lotten, Marie, Marina. But I don't bother with them. I stand at your place (by the wall, you know) and there I think of you always. We have started doing 4-in-a-row pirouettes now, with a landing in fifth between each pirouette- know what I mean?

I will not be starting at Ellen Rasch- it costs 1000 kronor for 1-3 times per week per term. That is too expensive. But I will at least do a test class and see what level I get into.

How terrible about the tumour! I don't think it will hurt to operate. You will probably get anesthetic. I hope it goes well. I wish we could talk to each other. It feels good sometimes. I have seen many "Black Ands" but none have stared. Puhh.

Thank you for the hair clips. They are great. I bought a new ballet book at Farsta Centrum. It's called "Ballerina" Part 1. There are 2 parts but I only had enough money to buy one part because they cost 36 kronor. It is really, really good. You have to read it. It's about a ballerina called "Katja Milenkaja." Have you noticed our letters are almost all about ballet? Just imagine when we are all grown up and we sit and read these letters. I wonder if we will be dancers then. What do you think? Here is a photo of me at "Mille's Garden." The statue is called "The Ice Princess"

Lillemor has started doing exercises that are more fun. Actually really good dances. At last. Enough about dance now. Puhh.

God, the "Pool Patio Party" sounds like so much fun! They seem to arrange so many good events in Canada. I guess you'll have to practice some pas de deux until then! I would really go if I were you! WOOOOOOOOOOOWWW! Wow! I love you!

Lice! Yes, lice! You may think I am crazy but there is a lice epidemic in most Swedish schools right now. Gross!!! They wrote in the paper that it is due to longhaired students who don't practice good hygiene. Gross! And everyone borrows each other's combs and wear each other's hats. Gross again! But our school doesn't have it luckily. On TV they said that you can get rid of them with some sort of ointment. Enough about that. PS. I do not have lice... no! And I will never get them either.

I was at "Indiana" and looked at pants. They have some really nice ones now. I met your cousin there. She says hi, and asks that you write her a letter if you have time. I didn't buy any pants because they didn't have my size. A girl bought a pink satin jacket. Guess if I was jealous! Anyway.

Gisela is going to write to you, but you know how it is with 11 year olds! They have SO much to do! But she has started a letter to you. Helen says hi to Milton with many hugs. To you too, of course. She misses you very much, as does Gisela. Write to me and tell me about the pool party. PS. Where you dance now, is it a lot harder? Love, Maud and all 4 here at home. You are my best friend. Write soon. I am longing. Maud.

Secret letter: Extra note. It's too bad Catharina didn't take you seriously. But I hope you get Steven's address. Of course I want you and I to tell each other everything. We can write these secret notes every time. Or what do you think? I agree with everything you wrote. About love and such. One is so influenced by TV, magazines etc. just like you write. You know about that stuff that I wrote about... hmm... it is so hard to make contact with the one you like. Have you ever thought about how easy it is to say to someone: I hate you! But one doesn't dare say... I love you. If you have any suggestions, please let me know. Now I don't know what else to write.

OCTOBER 8

Maud writes:

Would you be so kind as to tell me EVERYTHING about the dance school you go to? I am sorry if I am writing so little. The post office closes at 1 PM and it is now 12 Noon. Should we send ballet pictures to each other? If we find any? I can send dog pictures to you if you want. I will send you a cassette. As soon as I have time. Now I don't know what I should write about. Best I finish. Hey Love, Maud. Help!! The time is soon 12:30! Best get going. We'll see each other in the next letter, eh. Maud

[Maud and I used to avidly and obsessively collect ballet and dog pictures. We even blatantly crossed the line and ripped pages out of books at the public library. That activity stopped when we saw a poster on the wall from the librarian pleading for people to stop wrecking to books!]

OCTOBER 14

New dance schedule: 10 hours 45 minutes per week

Monday 8-9:45

Wednesday 5:30-9:00

Thursday 5:00-8:30

Saturday 9-11

NOVEMBER 14

Maud writes:

Oh, how I miss... you! Did you get my latest letter? Today I am doing work experience for the first time. Wow! I didn't get a position at the Drama Theatre or at Oscar's. But I did get primary school teacher for Grade 2. That was my second choice. Really fun!

How are you now? How did the operation go? Are you alive? How is Milton? What do you want for Christmas? I love you. I want ballet books. Are you longing for next summer? I do! I long for you too. I love you. About ballet: We just have 3 weeks left this term. I have to ask Lillemor about report cards. What do you call it? Evaluation? How did you ask? Give me some advice. But it is not necessary. But... I want to know how I am doing. How is ballet? Is it hard? Some girls and I from Level B4 will be performing at The Gallery. We will be dancing Spanish, Character, and Jazz etc. There will be 8 of us. Lillemor is performing tonight at Maxim's. So we have to dance with level B5!!! That will be pas de deux and repertoire. Wow!!! It will be really fun. I would love to see Lillemor perform but I am afraid I may fall asleep. Ha ha! Hmm...

Do you want me to come to you next summer? Who cares? I do!!! I want to see you so much. I miss you on the train to ballet. Even if I now travel with Marie and Lotten. Do you know what Marie and I saw last Friday? The Spy who Loved Me! It was so good. I hope you see it. Do you know what will be playing in Sweden soon? Fantasia! You know the one with the hippos en Pointe etc. I wish we could see it together. Love Maud. Write soon. I love you.

Secret letter: show no one. No one!

You know I liked a boy at my school before. Now it's over. At least it has cooled down a little. But another has taken his place! Honestly, I have never felt this way before. It feels

like butterflies in the tummy. He goes to Balettakademien in level B5. We got to dance with that class because Lillemor was performing at Maxim's. We got sit and watch B5 do pas de deux. Wow. I thought he was so cute. But I don't even know his name. Then when Marie and I were on the bus, he was on it too. He said hi, then we went our separate ways. Have you experienced anything so special? Your Maud. Love.

Helen writes:

Hi Katarina. Do you like your new house? How is Milton? My Snoopy is well. Say hi to everyone!

Gisela writes:

Hi Katarina. I miss you. I have to thank you for the Canadian Maple Leaf you sent. But now I have to tell you the fun news. I have started taking ballroom dance lessons! How is ballet? And how is school for Fredrik? The schools are probably much better in Canada than here.

NOVEMBER 21

Maud writes:

*Dear Katarina,
Thank you so much for your lovely letter. Your letter came today and I had just mailed you one. I understand that you have a lot to do.*

Well... ah... I have... cut my hair! Help me! Oh gosh! That is to say, I have cut a good length and permed the ends in stages. Everyone thinks it's so cute and nice and etc. Mom thinks I look like a different person. Just her style and taste.

[My Grade 10 School Photo, 1977. Note the "rape whistle" around my neck! It was a popular talisman in Sweden the summer of '77. That and V-necked UCLA sweaters.]

I think your student photo is really cute. You don't have a big nose!!! Maybe it just looks like that in certain angles? Be happy for that. Nothing helps me, no matter what angle I sit.

I am glad the operation went well! Lucky, lucky, lucky... Tumour. Yuck, yuck, yuck. Please don't... ah... please don't get another tumour because then I will lose my spirit. I have been so worried!

NOVEMBER 24

Maud writes:

Wow! What a nice dress you bought. The sweater seems really nice. Are clothes expensive in Canada? I hope your cousin sends you some pants so that you don't have to walk around in balloon pants. Are there nice ballet clothes in Canada? Are they expensive? I am so glad school is going well for you. I think Grade 9 is much harder than Grade 8. But it is not so bad. I can't wait till next summer! I am saving money full blast. Since dance classes are rather expensive... ah! But I think it will be tops, tops, tops next year! (I love you) Thank you for the nice dance pictures. And the very cute pillow. Wow... Thank you, thank you. Your new ballet suit seems scrumptious.

PS. We have bought a new color TV. I am so glad Fredrik got to be on TV. I would have liked to see that.

Secret letter. Extra note: I know what the boy's name is: Nils. On Mondays and Fridays, he dances in the room right before our class. When he leaves the room, one feels so strange. Like the heart explodes. How one feels can't be explained. But it feels good to write about it. You don't show anyone our secret letters do you? I don't either. You haven't met with that boy yet? When I was in Högdalen, I met Nils here. He was going on the same bus as me. Wow, gee, gosh, oh, oh, oh. But he got off at Kvarnbergsplan. But at least I know he lives somewhere nearby. Love Maud. PS. Do you like someone at ballet? Are there many boys there?

DECEMBER 4

Maud writes:

THE BALLET PAPER: WOOOOOOW... OOOH GOSH... WOOOWOOOW!?!?!? You have started dancing pas de deux?! Lucky! Honestly, I am really happy (an a little jealous). Sorry, sorry... things like that even happens to me. If I come to Canada (do you want me to come to Canada?) do you think I will be in the same group as you? I hope so, hope, hope hope!

Hmmm, eh, well... Guess what Lillemor said to me! Me... that is... me! I still don't understand it, that it can be true. When the others were putting on their Pointe shoes (I forgot to bring

mine), do you know what Lillemor said? I was practicing double pirouettes. Lillemor came up to me... hmm... eh... then I stopped doing pirouettes. But she said they were good and asked me to continue. Again, and again, you know how it is. Then she said... ah... hmm... well... that I could be really good with the proper training. Oh gosh! I stood there all red-blue-green in the face. I was really happy and a little shocked!? (Excuse me if I brag a bit) Stuff like that doesn't happen to me every day. Maud at Balettakademien!

How long do you dance pas de deux? Stretch excercies- is that fun? Is everyone super flexible in your group? Are they much, much better than us? Are they nice or snobby? I hope ballet continues to go well for you. Your Maud

DECEMBER 16

The end of my diary is near and I was supposed to write every day. But didn't have time. Christmas is soon here and school and ballet talk up most of my schedule.

Kathy and I are "boy crazy." It's quite terrible. One takes it too much to heart. I really wish something would happen. That some guy would approach me and ask me to be his friend. I don't want to be considered a square. Please, let something happen. Sometimes it borders on silly. It's taking over. One thinks about it all the time- LOVE. Oh, dear.

Peo and I never talked to each other when we saw each other in person in Sweden this past year. Oh, I regret it so. I wrote to him and told him everything. I wrote him from the hospital after they shaved my hair before the operation. I was crying and it felt good to write to him. To my surprise he has written back. He is for real. He is the boy I have always wanted. I can "speak" to him. He is funny. We send each other pictures and he sent me a great one from when he was younger. I have it on my mirror. He really wants to come to here this summer. If he does, I think a little flower might blossom. Please let it. I just want someone to care for. But why does it have to be a boyfriend? It's strange. It's like you need to prove something. That you are not boring and unlovable. But Peo and I are friends. Maybe a little more? - Nina

DECEMBER 24

Christmas Eve. My presents:

- Stereo
- Tennis socks
- Scarf
- Suede mittens
- Curling iron
- Soapstone
- Canvas
- Brushes
- A large tube of white oil paint
- Holly Hobbie stationary
- "Charlie" makeup, talcum powder and perfume
- "Kissing Potion" lip-gloss
- Stuffed animal dog
- Fozzie Bear stuffed animal
- Ludwig book
- Holly Hobbie calendar
- Copper watering can
- Watch
- Aries mug
- Ballet poster
- Ballerina novel part 1 and 2
- Golden pig
- Gnome doll
- Napkin ring

DECEMBER 26

Yesterday we were at the Ericson's and the Burchardt's were there. Three boys about my age. There was Johan- who was actually quite funny. It started with him sitting beside me at the dinner table. Since the seats weren't prearranged, I was quite happy! What luck! We didn't say anything to each other but I felt something inside me. He is in Grade 11.

Johan drove Anders home to Rick's place and when he came back, he sat down beside me to watch TV. Wow! Karin teased me about that, but I didn't mind.

At the dinner: Clockwise from Fredrik in the orange striped shirt → Peter behind Fredrik → Karin → me → Johan → Mom → Mr. Burchardt → Margareta → Dad and Magnus from view → Anders → Johan's brothers

Magnus, Fredrik Burchardt, Peter and Johan played ping-pong and Johan had never played before. He always sent a glance my way

through his cute long bangs and smiled with his small eyes.

[Eeew] I got all warm inside. Then he sat by the fireplace and talked to my Fredrik about movies. Fredrik asked Jonas if he had seen "It's Alive." And I said I had seen it. He turned to me and we started talking about the film.

I played ping-pong with Karin and he came up to me and said, "Hey, I'll be on your team." Wow! (Again) We played for a while and then we all went to Karin's room. Poor Karin. Fredrik B. took down all her gymnastics medals and put them on my Fredrik. Johan was in the middle of all the chaos talking etc. I was reading Archie and he tried to grab it from me, so I threw it behind the bed. But he grabbed my arm and tried to get the comic before I had a chance to throw it. It felt so strange when our hands met. Just like in the movies. When we were heading home, he stared at me as I put on my boots.

Before that my Fredrik and Johan had a Swedish swearword duel. He went to his car to head home. When I passed by the car to go to ours, I said to him in Swedish "damn kid" (sorry, it is terrible to swear). He didn't know the Swedish word or he had forgotten to use it in his duel, so he laughed. Then that was the end, as we went home. His phone number is 926-3696. So?! I mean, why do I feel this way? I hope he likes me. He drank what seemed like 10 beers at the dinner but he was nice anyway.

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