

No. 6 Kleingemainergasse

by Sheila Luecht

After four years she was returning. In the interim time she had written him and he had done the same. In one letter, mid 1978, he had invited her to come back and be with him. It was a kind of invitation, but it did not say he would support her or marry her. It was just a longing he was expressing and it had no strings attached, but he wanted her to make the journey back to Salzburg. She had tangled herself up with someone else, a jealous and controlling person. When he found the letter, he destroyed it. She didn't have the chance to hold it in her hands any longer and imagine what it would have been like had she returned when he desired her to.

It took some time to shake that other man off. Now you would call it stalking and psychological abuse, but back then, it was just one more innocently made bad choice. Through all of the trauma of that experience, she learned a great deal about herself. She was alive to keep understanding it for a reason. She thought she would find the right one at some point. Suddenly, the circles of life seemed to make a pattern and she found herself in a loose position to return to Salzburg. She let him know with a brief note in the mail. He had sent her at one time the phone number of a friend in case she ever needed to get in touch with him. She had kept it. She decided a call might get there before the letter she had sent. She wasn't asking permission to visit, she was announcing it.

So there it was. She picked a good time to call and let his friend know that she would be coming to Salzburg. She gave the day she expected to be there and, he had said, in German, "Ah you are the Marie". She had laughed at that. This man that she was going to see was like a mirage at this point. But at another point, she had been the stars, moon and the sun to him. Really. He was tangled up with someone else he did not love when they met and his world exploded and hers did too. She had never been in real lust before, so it was all

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completely out of bounds and glorious. That is how they both remembered each other. There was also something else mixed in. It was in fact a kind of love. It went beyond the lust and headed into uncharted territory for both of them. She told him things he needed to hear, that he knew about himself in his deep inside, that she knew just by looking at him, getting to know him. She helped him unlock what he had shoved to the side in his life, what he had left but in reality was like trying to cut off his own arm. He was more full again and more himself than he had ever been in years with her to encourage him. She listened to him, she let him tell her things that he had never told anyone and she acknowledged him in a way that was familiar, that was like one old soul to another, one who remembered the other.

In the years between seeing each other he had once been very drunk in a pub with a young male exchange student, one of the people from the school he taught at. When that young man returned home to the states, he had given her a call on Christmas Eve. She was again in another relationship this time with a school friend who lived not too far away, they were different religions, but had a healthy interest in politics and loved to interact on that. He was fascinated with her and she him, but his parents did not appreciate her and the relationship was mostly doomed. He was at her home for the holiday though and was there when this student called her. The caller was a young man, who was being rather passionate in his description of her former lover in Salzburg. He was explaining to her how he had said he remembered her, how his life was up ended and how he missed her and needed her, etc. This was all kind of unexpected and a bit shocking as her former lover had not said any of that to her since she had gone. He did like to drink and spend his time in the pubs so he was probably just glamorizing the whole experience and how much he thought he needed her. That was her checking her ego, her own desire and her own wound from their seemingly long ago affair.

She was surprised and felt thrown a bit by the call. The young man had pleaded with her to let her know how sincere the experience had been and how important it was to let her know. You could feel his youth, his pleading, his sincerity and she was suddenly back again to the warmth, the love and most importantly the very real loss.

So now a few years more had passed and she was on her way to see him. She was freer than she had ever been and in a position to travel and see how things would play out. It was a rash, spur of the moment decision. Her sister was a travel agent and made the flight arrangements. It cost a great deal because of her spontaneity, it was years before being able to just look on line.

It was a memorable flight. She had met a man while waiting to board the plane who ended up sitting near her. He was an Israeli textile executive and he was of Hungarian descent like she was, and even had her last name among his family members. They talked almost the entire flight. He was a passionate man and if she had been willing, they would have spent time together. As it was, she was on a mission to get back and either close the chapter or re-open it on her former lover. Something was curiously drawing her to him. She was frank with the man on the plane. He understood. When they deplaned on the tarmac in a snowstorm in Brussels, he helped her arrange a local flight that was leaving sooner than the one she had originally scheduled. He wanted her to be safe and get to her destination, to find out what she needed to know. He gave her all his contact information just in case something did not go right for her. He was a kind and generous person and he told her he hoped everything would turn out as she wanted.

She made it to Salzburg at night, ended up staying at a pension. It was not really prepared for guests and the heat was a bit lacking, but she took the room anyway as it was too late to find her lover.

There was no cell phone, no way to call him. So her plan was to show up to one of his classes the next day.

She sat in the bier stube attached to the pension having a bit of brandy as she was freezing still and had a sore throat coming on. She noticed a group of young men, who obviously were students of the school. They looked at her and started to talk to her, upon finding out she had just flown in from the states, they were curious about her and why she was there. She told them she had gone to school where they were going just now and that she was hoping to catch up with someone there tomorrow. They asked who and she told them. So they chatted a bit more and they headed out and she went to retire. She thought no more of them.

It turns out that one of them told her lover that she was there. He had not heard from his friend who she had called, as his friend was in Vienna and did not have the chance to get him a message yet. She went to school and found his classroom and took a seat, then as everyone else filed in, she really just blended in.

In a few moments he arrived and their eyes locked. It had been some time, but there was a glistening there that was unmistakable. After a few moments he greeted her verbally in German. After class they hugged and he told her that he knew she was coming, that he felt it and that one of the boys from the night before had mentioned meeting her. She could feel the emotion and yet something was not the same.

Of course not, how could it ever be. You cannot go back in time, and you cannot go back to imagination, when reality is right in your face. You are in new territory. You are at once familiar and yet strangers. You divide reality into the good and bad, and yet hope for something that may not ever have been truly real.

They headed out to his place at No.6 Kleingemainergasse.

