

Franz Kafka: Englisch

FRANZ KAFKA: CHRONICLE 1924 (CHARLOTTE SPITZER)

BERLIN

Early January: Franz Kafka lives with Dora Diamant in Berlin-Steglitz, Grunewaldstraße.

It is a bitterly cold winter, plagued by inflation. When the spirit for the stove runs out, the two are forced to heat up their food on candle stubs. Kafka's health visibly deteriorates. He is mostly bedridden with fever.

End of January: Max Brod pays Kafka a visit. Kafka reads him his short story, "The Burrow".

1st February: Kafka and Dora Diamant move to Berlin-Zehlendorf, Heidestraße. Kafka is too weak to be able to assist her. He must be taken to the new apartment by car.

At the beginning of February, the reciter Ludwig Hardt, who included Kafka's texts in his programme, visits the invalid.

In mid-February, Kafka's family sends his uncle, Siegfried Löwy, to Berlin to check on Kafka's actual health status. Löwy insists that Kafka must be admitted to a sanatorium.

In early March, Kafka's illness degenerates to the point that Dora Diamant finds herself compelled to summon Dr. Nelken, a doctor she knew from the Jewish Hospital in Berlin. Alarmed at the sight of Kafka's condition, he simply prescribes a palliative treatment. Kafka gives him a book on Rembrandt in return for his help.

PRAGUE

On March 17th, Kafka travels back to Prague accompanied by Max Brod. Dora Diamant stays in Berlin. Kafka lives again with his parents in the Ooppelthaus on the Old Town Square. Deeply depressed about his new accommodation, he considers which sanatorium he should go to and writes "Josephine, the Singer or The Mouse Folk", which will be his last short story.

On March 20th, Kafka begins to have swallowing problems. The suspicion of laryngeal tuberculosis becomes increasingly plausible.

ORTMANN/PERNITZ

At the beginning of April, Kafka is admitted to the Wienerwald Sanatorium, a renowned clinic specializing in lung diseases.

Dora Diamant later arrives from Berlin and moves into a room in a neighboring farm. On a postcard to Max Brod, she writes: "His health condition is really, really critical."

The examinations confirm the suspicions of laryngeal tuberculosis. The doctors recommend a quick transfer to Vienna.

VIENNA

On April 10th, Kafka is transferred to Vienna in an open car amidst a storm. Dora tries to shelter him during the four-hour journey.

In the laryngological clinic of Dr. Markus Hajek at Vienna General Hospital, Kafka is given a shared room. His general condition is too precarious for a surgery – he now weighs less than 50kg with clothes.

In mid-April, Kafka receives a visit from his brother-in-law Karl Hermann and from Felix Weltsch. Franz Werfel sends roses and his new Verdi novel. However, the announced visit does not take place.

In Kafka's dormitory, patients die all the time. One of them is the master shoemaker Josef Schrammel from the Forest Quarter in Lower Austria who, like Kafka, was suffering from laryngeal tuberculosis. Appalled by this death, Kafka insists on leaving the clinic against the doctors' advice.

KIERLING

On April 19th, Kafka is given a room with balcony and garden view in Dr. Hoffmann's sanatorium in Kierling, near Klosterneuburg. Dora Diamant moves into a guest room and cooks for him.

After being prescribed a silent retreat, Kafka communicates mainly through small notes, the so-called *Gesprächsblätter* (literally: "conversation papers").

The morning edition of the "Prager Presse" publishes "Absend-minded Window-gazing".

On April 20th, Kafka goes on a drive for the last time. Two stories are published on the same day: "A Little Woman" in the "Prager Tagblatt" and "Josephine, the Singer or the Mouse Folk" in the Easter supplement of the "Prager Presse".

During this time, Kafka asks for Dora Diamant's hand and, upon her joyful acceptance, immediately writes a letter to her father asking for permission. (In May, Kafka receives and reluctantly accepts the negative answer. He shall never marry his partner).

In addition to the doctors of the sanatorium, Prof. Hajek and many other specialists, all from Vienna, are involved in Kafka's case. One of them is Norbert Glas, an anthroposophical doctor who gains Kafka's special trust.

According to the diagnosis given to Dora Diamant, Kafka's estimated life expectancy does not exceed three months.

Around May 6th, Robert Klopstock, a Hungarian medical student whom Kafka met in 1921 during a sanatorium stay in the High Tatras, comes to Kierling to tend to the patient and to relieve Dora Diamant of her work.

Ottla, Kafka's youngest sister, comes for a last visit followed by Kafka's brother-in-law, Karl Hermann, and his uncle, Siegfried Löwy, a few days later.

In mid-May, Max Brod also comes to Kierling. It is the last time the two friends see each other.

On May 20th, Kafka writes in his last postcard to Max Brod: "Thank you for everything!".

In his last letter on June 2nd, Kafka asks his parents not to visit him. Dora Diamant finishes writing the letter, as Kafka is too exhausted to continue.

On the same day, he carries on working on the corrections to the volume "A Hunger Artist".

On June 3rd, Kafka dies around noon. The corpse is transferred to Prague. Dora Diamant and Robert Klopstock travel on the same train.

Kafka's friends Max Brod, Oskar Baum, Felix Weltsch as well as Milena Jesenská, Anton Kuh and Edwin Rollet write obituaries in various newspapers. The prose pieces "The Sudden Walk", "Resolutions", "Bachelor's Ill Luck", "Before the Law" and "The Cares of a Family Man" are also published.

On June 11th, Kafka is buried in the New Jewish Cemetery in Prague.

On June 19th, a memorial service organized by Max Brod is held in the auditorium of the "Prager Bühne".

On July 17th, Max Brod publishes Kafka's will in the "Weltbühne"

At the end of August, Kafka's last book, "A Hunger Artist. Four stories", is published by "Die Schmiede" in Berlin.