



Tuesday, 18th of April 1959

Dear Helena Eleanor Woodcomb,

My name is John Hoppkins, I'm seventeen and I come from Liverpool, England. You may wonder why I'm writing you a letter, but first of all you have to know that we don't know each other and I have never heard of you. The only thing I know about you is that you live somewhere in the United States and that is exactly the reason you are holding this letter in your hands. My friends and I are fascinated about the US, we dream about that country everyday, in fact we want to start our career as musicians there. We heard that bands have much more opportunities there than in England, is that true? As you live there, I also would like to ask, if you know maybe someone who works in the musical industry and who could help us getting famous. I'm really interested in your tastes in music and how life in America is, we heard that the age of youth is starting and real change is about to take place...anyhow you are extremely lucky that you can live there. I would be delighted if you would respond to my letter.

PS : We looked up in an American phonebook and I chose you because we recently wrote a song named "Eleanor", just like your middle name.

Cheers, John

Wednesday, 26th of April 1959

Dear John Hoppkins,

I was indeed very surprised as I received your letter, but I'm glad you wrote to me because I had never been in touch with someone from England. I always dreamt of England probably as you dream of the US, those novels from Jane Austen and Virginia Woolf simply take my breath away, is this British atmosphere as amazing as it seems to be?...But maybe before I go on with this letter and answer your questions, I should tell you a few things about me. First of all, I am (a little) older than you, to be precise I'm thirty four and the second thing is: I am deaf. I was born like that and there is no chance that someday I could hear. Don't feel sorry, that you asked me what kind of music I like, because, clearly, you couldn't know.. But I would really like to know: what exactly is music? What do you feel when



Do you hear it? Nobody could ever give me a proper definition and I am genuinely interested! Oh and I almost forgot to tell you, that life in America is wonderful, even as a a deaf person. I like colors, lights and shapes, they brighten up my life and make me feel happy and human, on the other hand I don't like the poverty and violence nowadays here.

Yes, I also read about that “age of youth”, I guess the newspapers are right since 70 million children from the post-war baby boom are becoming teenagers and young adults. Anyhow I am curious what the future lays in store for us. Also, I'm very sorry to tell you that I don't know anybody who works for music but I guess that bands in the US are quite important because I'm always noticing posters of concerts. Even if I'm not quite helpful at this point, I would really enjoy if you would reply!

PS : What is the song “Eleanor” about?

Sunday, 7th of May 1959

Dear Helena Eleanor Woodcomb,

Wow, I have to say that I didn't think that you would answer so quickly, I thought you wouldn't answer at all..but I'm glad you did! I couldn't tell if the British atmosphere is the same as it is depicted in those books you read, because I didn't read any of them, in fact I don't really enjoy reading... Even though you told me I shouldn't feel sorry about the fact that you're deaf, I really deeply am. Because I feel so tactless, I try to explain you the term of music as good as I can. People around me often say that music's the medicine of mind or against a broken heart, but I think it's more than just that. It's more like the smell of rain with the sound of freedom mixed with the taste of a green apple. For me, music is like a sort of excuse to be human and I need that excuse when I hear those beats to live and go out and put my arms in the air and sing my heart out, like an outburst of my soul. That's also why I love playing in a band, and I'm proud to tell that next week we are attending an audition at the Liverpool Empire Theater to enter the Star Search Competition! I'm really excited, I think we will succeed. And if we really do, I guess and hope that sooner or later I'll get successful with my music and maybe someday make the world a happier place with it.



PS : The song Eleanor seems to be quite a depressing one, talks about lonely people and where they come from. Still I'm very proud about it because it's sad but beautiful at the same time. And right now our band is called Johnny and the Moondogs, but we are often changing the name because we never agree on something for a long time, do you maybe have an idea?

Greetings, John

Monday, 16th May 1959

Dearest John,

First of all I would thank you so much for your beautiful portrayal of music, nobody ever could explain it to me in such a lovely and vivid way. I like the word “beats” you used in your description, it sounds funny in my head and makes me think about beetles, because it's written almost the same way. I was during my whole life fascinated about beetles and I really wanted to study coleopterology (the scientific study of beetles) but my parents wouldn't let me. They couldn't figure out how a deaf person could possibly study. Even if I had a little hope first, they managed to destroy this tiny bit of optimism... Don't make the same mistake I did and do whatever YOU think and feel is right. I don't want to bore you with my stories from the past any longer but oh well if you could mix the words beats and beetles for your band name, I believe it would make a very nice pun! Also, I wish you good luck for the Star Searching Competition, I hope that someday I'll hear about you in the US! I think a young boy like you would love the States. And although you said the song Eleanor is a sad one, I would be very happy if you could send me the lyrics in your next letter.

I wish you the best with your goals and with your band. You should know that I'll be one of the first who will buy your first album... Not for myself, because, well I couldn't hear it, but for my daughter, I want her to grow up with sound of freedom.

With Love,

Helena



Nina Litman, classe de 1ere ES

17 ans, Lycée Français de Vienne

Liechtensteinstrasse 37a

1090, Vienne, Autriche

Enseignante: Valérie Héné