

La Fête

Frederick the Great, Voltaire

Frederick would attend the gathering, bringing a special gift for Voltaire.

What follows is an excerpt from a correspondence between Friedrich II, also known as Frederick the Great, and Voltaire, who were, it seems, well-versed in word puzzles called [flats](https://enigma.puzzlers.org/guide) (<https://enigma.puzzlers.org/guide>).

1. [HEART TRANSPLANT](#) (8, 4, 5, 7)

My dear Voltaire, I find myself engrossed.
This "VIER"—potatoes, gravy, cheese? Surreal!
In twenty decades, twenty-five at most—
The world shall *then* be ready for this meal.

"Oh, how shall I repay my cherished friend?"
My wisest legislators heard my cry.
One DREI proposed an EINS: that I should send
A dish to *you*! A cake, a torte, a pie!

My royal chefs prepared for you this morn
Some most delicious goods, by my decree.
Among them, some unleavened bread of corn;
They call it "ZWEI". Enjoy! *Bon appétit*!
=FRIEDRICH II, Potsdam

2. [FOURTH-LETTER CHANGE](#) (7)

Mon Dieu! Your chefs can bake! *Superbe! Merci beaucoup!*
I humbly must request some recipes from you.
My chefs have cooking UN; their skill is not in doubt.
Regardless, send the DEUX (the method) written out!
=VOLTAIRE, Paris

Frederick the Great and Voltaire, both prominent figures of the Enlightenment, forged an unlikely (and at times contentious) friendship. Though their relationship was puzzling on paper—one a reigning King of Prussia, the other a vocal critic of the monarchy—the two bonded over a shared love of the arts and intellectual pursuits. Despite several fallings-out (they couldn't stand each other in person), they exchanged letters for over four decades, sharing correspondence (including [a famous rebus](#)!) until the end of their days.

3. [BEHEADMENT](#) (5)

Your kitchen shall receive two dozen books!
And if I may: ZWEI time to dress the plates.
Put care and effort into how it looks
To EINS your claim as culinary greats.
=FRIEDRICH II, Potsdam

4. [TERMINAL DELETION](#) (7)

So *this* is what we lacked! Well-platedness—it's clear!
I'm hosting, soon, a DEUX, the UN I've done this year.
Your wisdom and advice I thoroughly adore—
This party shall surpass the six that came before!
=VOLTAIRE, Paris

5. [HEAD-TO-TAIL SHIFT](#) (5)

Your ZWEI—I must admit, they stop my heart.
Ein Fest? Without a seat reserved for me?
I'd wield an EINS to fight for you; I'd start
A war on your behalf! But now I see...
=FRIEDRICH II, Potsdam

6. [PADLOCK](#) (4, 5, *5)

I'd UN a mountain 'cross the ocean for your sake!
Of *course* a seat is yours; there must be some mistake.
I'm sorry, *je m'excuse*, my deep apologies.
I write this DEUX aghast; forgive my error, please!
With dashes and with dots, I'll send once more, I vow.
(TROIS code, the world will learn... a century from now.)
=VOLTAIRE, Paris

7. [BIGRAM CURTAILMENT](#) (6)

I ask: put your apologies ZWEI speech.
How pleasing it will be when you EINS each!
=FRIEDRICH II, Potsdam

8. [TRANS-CROSS](#) (5, 5, 5, 5)

Be all the more assured: your absence cannot stand!
Your ears must hear my pleas for mercy from your hand.
My hope: a kind response, less DEUX than was your last;
Your brevity a QUATRE, a chapter in the past.

I cannot change that past or TROIS our circumstance.
But you must know I would, if given but one chance!
My wish: to give by hand my ask to be my guest;
Deliver every UN, omega, and the rest.
=VOLTAIRE, Paris

9. [PHONETIC CURTAILMENT](#) (4 1'6, 5)

Voltaire, you mustn't worry! Do not fear!
I haven't put the blame on you quite yet;
The post is unreliable, I hear.
I'll hear your case in total at the fête.

For now, however, pressing matters pend.
I hope to place a ZWEI, if you'll permit:
Each EINS—each appetizer—must, my friend,
Be heavenly and luscious—every bit!
=FRIEDRICH II, Potsdam

10. [SWITCHBACK](#) (6)

If that is what you UN, arranged your wish shall be!
My chefs will have it all—*viande, fromage, fruits!*
The freshest cuts of meat, some cheese to shame the Swiss.
And fruits of DEUX (deep red) will bring the grandest bliss!
=VOLTAIRE, Paris

11. [CHARADE](#) (8)

Precisely what I EINS! A lovely treat.
I asked ZWEI once and got my wish—sublime!
Be kind, Voltaire, when hunting for the meat.
Humanely, friend, not ALLES. Take your time.
=FRIEDRICH II, Potsdam

12. [TRANSPOSAL](#) (7)

With grace, like holy men—like Ezra, say, or John—
Shall I conduct my hunt. All mercilessness gone!
Our correspondence brings such joy to me. *Et vous?*
I cherish all these UN, *mon Frédéric*, I do.
The soother of my stress, the calmer of my soul.
The DEUX of my disputes, the one who keeps me whole.
=VOLTAIRE, Paris

13. [LETTER BANK](#) (7, 10)

Your compliments—they make me feel quite warm!
A bird EINS in a fountain in the dawn.
Your poetry, a refuge from the storm
Of loneliness, repelling every yawn.
I do affirm: our writings bring to me
Enormous joy and tie my heart in knots.
And if the gods of fortune shall agree,
Your notes will still, years on, be ZWEI my thoughts.
=FRIEDRICH II, Potsdam

14. [FIRST-SOUND CHANGE](#) (6, 8)

I dreamt I was alone, an isolated boor.
And from the shadows you emerged and cast your lure.
You DEUX, and I obeyed, ran into your embrace,
And in an UN I knew this was my proper place.
=VOLTAIRE, Paris

15. [REVERSED DELETION](#) (6)

Each night, I will myself to sleep with hopes
Of dreams where I'm in EINS with you, too, there.
For sanity, I thank your envelopes—
Without them, from my ZWEI, I'd pull my hair!
=FRIEDRICH II, Potsdam

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