

Feb. 22, 1940

Dear people,

Ça y est! They are going to take our luffly apartment away from us. And we will have to hunt us up a new one. The only consolation is that the new one may very well be nearer to the UP, so that I can see more of James. It had to happen eventually, the only question was when. Now I have to scurry around and hunt up a new one, not to mention moving, which is a horrid prospect.

Aw forget it. Tonight we had dinner at the Chops d'Opéra, where we go very often on a Sunday, with one of our friends from the dear dead days of Montparnasse. He is a professional aviator-sailor, who has exercised his métier in Spain, China, South America, and all the other places you can think of. A very nice fellow of about 35 or 40, he just came back from a professional visit to Finland, where he got a frozen foot from wearing only two pairs of wool socks, and a free visit to Holland; Belgium, Sweden, and other interesting spots. Says all the war correspondents live at the Hotel Kemp, in Helsinki; and don't leave the place more than once a week, to get some air. Just as here, all the news is rationed officially. Well anyway, they say, it's nice and warm in the hotel! They had 150 varieties of smorgasbord (?) in one hotel he stopped at in Sweden. When asked would he rather "work" in Syria or Finland, he said it was a toss-up, because Syria was very hot, dry and dull, while Finland was very cold, cold, cold, even though it was rather pretty. He had a contract with the Spanish Gov't during the war there, and also thought he had a bank account at Morgan's Bank in Paris. That was his mistake, because Morgan wouldn't have accounts with either the Spanish government or the Soviet. Strangely enough they used to have the account of the Soviet Embassy, but gave it up as soon as they discovered who it was that owned the account that started in the thousands and ended in the millions. It's a complicated world. And the more you ponder it the less sweet and lovely it appears. Anyway, Schmitt (that's his name) said that they get news from Germany in the Scandinavian part of the world, and all in all it is very calm. That place in the Austrian Alps that begins with Garm.....<sup>1</sup> figures very prominently, because winter sports are at their height, as does the news about the Belgian-German soccer games. In short, calm and quiet as far as can be seen. At this moment the question mark is pointing toward the near east; let's hope it stays there, sort of quiet-like.

Today was another beautiful spring job, so warm that I could wear my Harris tweed suit in comfort. People whose apartments are not heated are hoping that it will keep up. So are the people who sell hats all pediculous<sup>2</sup> with violets and cornflowers and other surprises.

Talking about Montoarnasse and its occupants, we wandered around there last Sunday morning to see how the old place looked. What a disappointment! All the fascinating people gone who knows where, the Dôme cluttered up with local bourgeoisie, and the Boulevard practically deserted by its former inhabitants. You can't imagine what a sad sight it was to me and even more so to James, who has seen it in its happiest days, when you practically had to wait in line from eight A.M. on to get a table at one of the popular cafés. Only one of the large group of long-flowing-haired non-descript characters is still wandering around with head in the clouds. Sic transit<sup>3</sup>... I imagine they will all appear once more as if by magic on the day of peace; but on the

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<sup>1</sup> Probably **Garmisch-Partenkirchen**. Actually located in Germany, the town is the administrative center of a district of the same name that borders Austria. Germany's highest mountain, the Zugspitze, forms part of the border and has ski runs going into both countries. Garmisch-Partenkirchen was the site of the 1936 Winter Olympics – the first at which Alpine skiing was featured.

<sup>2</sup> **Pediculous** – "lousy", i.e. completely covered with (flowers)

<sup>3</sup> **Sic transit**: Latin "Thus passes". The full phrase is *Sic transit gloria mundi*, "So passes worldly glory"; a quote familiar enough in Philinda's family to be recognizable in shortened form.

other hand I know that some of the local lights are in England, some in Australia, lots in the US, Belgium, the Congo, name-your-spot, so it may take some of them a few days.

That seems to be all there is in the way of conversation and news,

Love,

ME

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