

Sunday, November 23, 1941

William my pet,

Rec'd Jan. 9 '42

L-90 p1r

Yesterday we went into a small town to buy groceries and to post my letter to you. The latter proved to be quite a problem, since neither the post master nor I knew anything about mail to Central Africa, and in fact the postmaster had not heard that there was still an air-mail service to Lisbon! He had a large book full of so-called information, which announced that there was no such business to Nigeria, so I decided to address an envelope and a note to the young ladies in the file room at the Consulate General at Lisbon, asking them to forward the inclosed as best they could, and giving my love, there being no other way of paying for the stamps to Lagos, the town was too small to worry about International reply paid coupons. I am going to send this by regular mail, and still a third letter to the State Department, which institution will, I hope, have the goodness to take care of it. This I will post to-morrow, and I wish that you would tell us (Janie would be very interested also) which method is the quickest. In case you don't get the first, ask me to repeat the news on the Jimmie front, as well as that on the Poppa, divorce, Janie, and love fronts. I shall be most willing to tell you about the last named subject, which I am full of. Absolutely overflowing with, in fact.

Yesterday it was cold and clear, but during the night it snowed, so that it was a lovely surprise in the morning to wake up and find the hills and trees and the barn roofs covered with white. I thought of your nice little simile concerning the way one "falls" in love, imperceptibly, then wakes up to find everything changed and beautiful. It is going to be a long, comfortable winter for me, and the snow will never melt. I wish that we will have a calm, contented life full of pleasant surprises like that one, with a warm home to escape to, yet all the variety and change and adventure we need, also. Some people do manage to lead lives such as that, and if we are good maybe we can too.

The complete calm of Vermont is very good for me, and so is my aunt's kindness and philosophy. She makes the long waiting period seem almost desirable, insofar as it prepares the way for us, and makes the prospect of life with you all the more delightful. Perhaps it is a nice thing in the end to have to struggle for what we want, and try to be patient, but how terrible it would be if you changed your mind or the world situation prevented our coming together within the year! As far as I am concerned, the law of gravity is no more insistent upon pulling things down than I am upon being with you and loving you. That will go on, no matter what ceases.

Slight pause to stir the snoup.

We are reading aloud an amusing thing, Grandma Called It Carnal, and getting an enormous amount of pleasure out of it. It occurred to me that there are a great many books that can only be enjoyed to the full extent "entre deux", such as Ogden Nash, Alice in Wonderland, heavy tomes, that require discussion and elaboration. I hate to read lyric poetry aloud because if it is good and beautiful it is much too intimate to be laid bare in an undignified way. But I hope that we can one day sit down comfortably and like things together and through each other, because it is worth the efforts entailed in reading aloud. I have a thousand books in mind, that would be just grand for that sort of thing and because we think alike in so many ways I am sure that you would enjoy them as much as I do.

What a change in atmosphere between New York and Vermont! New York surprised me by being an amazingly beautiful city in a variety of ways. The best parts are along the Hudson river from the seventies on, and down in Greenwich village around Washington Square, where things move in a slower way than elsewhere. But Vermont is an entirely different world, very good-hearted and civilized-in-the-midst-of-the-wilderness, properly appreciative of its own merits of course, properly smug, but interested in the rest of the world at the same time. And I do so love hills! I hope we will live in hilly country most of the time, the more mountains the merrier. Off on another track, for some reason I love America, and think the best life is here, and adore the conveniences and gadgets and comforts of home, but I am dying to leave them behind and see some place else. I don't know why, when I am convinced that America is the best place to live in. Mystery to me, but I don't think I should be able to stay here more than half a year without becoming even sillier than I am. I wish you felt the same way, so that you could be more contented with a continuously uprooted life. But as you always said, you want to feel that you can leave the Foreign Service at a moments notice and try something else, so if at any point in the future you want to make good the idea and come home more or less for good, remember that my heart is always with you, and could easily adjust itself to any life that you wanted. I love you so very much that I should be unhappy if you were discontented.

As I said in my first letter, your sister was even better than I had hoped. No wonder you were so sure she would be nice to me. When I get back to New York I shall have Helen in-

vite her to dinner at Pop's house, so that he can see that anyone so completely nice must have a very wonderful brother, as is indeed the case. I am afraid that a lesser person than Janie would have been disgusted with me, for the evening I saw her I was in an awful state after a conference with Jimmie, during which I tried vainly to calm him down and give him the facts in regard to the permanency of my attitude towards you. I had told him that I wanted to see him after seeing Janie and my reactions to her, because in all fairness I thought that perhaps I had been in a queer mental state in Lisbon and that seeing you again through your sister might dissipate the vapors. What nonsense, these aren't vapors, they are as solid as uranium! But anyway, I wanted to give it a try, for Jimmie's sake. When I came into Janie's room she was still in the process of dressing, and just stuck her head out of the bathroom door to say hello. Deary me, how can I express to you how her face affected me! I knew in an instant that all my halfhearted efforts in the course of duty were ridiculous and wrong and that the only right thing was to marry you and make an honest woman of myself. Well, that sudden knowledge, and the emotional crisis I had passed through during the afternoon, hardly made for good presentation. All I could do when she finally appeared was look silly and say stupid things, and all the time I kept wanting to kiss her for being so much like you. I've never had to hold myself back so much in all my life. What's more, all through the evening I kept starting to weep at the wrong moments, and just managing (I hope) to look natural while talking about you. As I say, anyone but your sister would have screamed in horror. When Jimmie appeared and started that ghastly scene, it was a pleasure to be able to bawl unhampered, and an extra-special pleasure to have her comfort me with caresses. I think she thought that perhaps the love was entirely on my side, and so was even kinder than ordinary, but it didn't occur to me till later that such might be her idea. Being so proud of the truth, I want to tell her. She will probably think you have gone mildly mad over there in the fires of Europe. When you write to her try to convince her that I am not always as much of a charity case as I was that evening, and indeed have sometimes been known to be somewhat passable in tolerant gatherings.

Jones just called again from New York. That sets me back enormously, because I always feel like the tender-hearted banker who listened for half an hour to the tragic tale of a bankrupt with an ailing wife and ten small children, then rang for his secretary and cried out "take this man away from me, he's breaking my heart!". I don't know what to do for him other than keep away and let him forget me. My wise aunt says that is the only course, and offers to take me back to South Bend with her so that I won't have to creep around New York avoiding him. I can't stop liking him and feeling sorry about it all, but I am not going to go back with him even if you decide I'm a bad bet, because I love you and can't see anyone else whomsoever.

It is evening now, and the most achingly lovely mist is moving up from the valley, drifting over the mountains and fading into the snow. This is the time when we should be together, my dear. I can hear a nasty chorus of the Older and Wiser chanting something stupid like "all in good time" or "Patience, my children, your time will come." Boo, a resounding boo, to all that!

I want to hear all about Lagos. God, how I pray that you get there safely! I said this in my other letter, but: don't neglect to tell me all you can as soon as possible in regard to ways of your coming home or my going there as soon as possible, so that I may make plans des maintenant.

The most fun I have is planning. I've got it all figured out whereby I shall be a marvel of efficiency and a fatal beauty by the time such qualities are needed, and whether or not I succeed, I hope you will not be too disappointed when you find out the real me, the me who has a regrettable tendency to be vague over the telephone, to forget to call up about the refrigerator repairs, to neglect to send out the laundry, to read a book rather than sweep the floor except where it shows, in fact everything except love you night and day. Console yourself with the thought that I don't like the place to be too dreadfully messy and that I do like to cook, and food is so important! I have also decided to gratify the whim of many years standing, and indulge in amazing black silk underwear like I always imagined the "poules de luxe" wore. All sorts of plans have been revolved in my mind till it is in a sort of omelette state. The chaos of events has begun to form, however, and the excitement has died down. I know where I stand, and I know that we were not wrong in Lisbon when we came to the conclusion that there was only one reality and one way. How could we be wrong? I love you, you love me, we want to be honorable, and the only way is to be Us. Thank goodness we are all three young and adaptable and no lives are ruined, for I am sure that Jones will come through in the end.

My darling, you are everything to me, so be careful of yourself.

Good night, William my love.

Philinda

L-90 p1v

POSTSCRIPT

L-90 p 2r

Dearest Mr. William Lawrence Krieg,

A fourth letter, sent via the Export line, arrived. My very dear, how awfully lovely of you to love me when I am absolutely gone, absolutely crazy about you! And how particularly discerning of you to know exactly how I feel, and echo the sentiments!! You must know how I long for words and assurances, and how I brood like a puppy over a bone, over your not-so-good picture, and your nice old watch, and that note you gave me in the file room to "take care of". I am afraid I haven't done as you asked, for the poor old thing is awfully frayed around the edges as well as being slightly bespattered with t--rs. Now there is a fine new crop of bones to bury and dig up again, so the strain on the note will be relieved. I still can't spell, and am still unrepentant. But my darling I think how I used not to look at you for fear of betraying the well-known feelings, and I weep because just one short look would do me such a lot of good right now. My aunt is very considerate, and merely says ~~xxxx~~ go on and cry, it'll do you good. It's not because I am not completely sure that we will be together and happy soon, it's just that I am so very joyful and so very impatient. Now I can't wait to get back and see Janie and be able to look at her and be completely silly about you with her. Haha! The girl will not have another moment's peace! Not another sane moment!

Remember how you used to say that it's not so much a heartach but a tummy ache? Well, I've developed a new symptom: My heart leaps up, as Wordsworth put it, when I think of you, and takes a flying leap that always threatens to land it on my lap, so that I have to hold my hand over my mouth and swallow hard in order to preserve that vital organ in its more or less rightful position. Of course the real place where it is at home is in the middle of the palm of your hand, my dear darling, and I suppose that is the trouble with it now, it's always trying to get there. I love you deeply and sincerely.

(Or was it Wordsworth who said that? I'm not sure on second thought.)

When I write to you through the State Department I am going to be very vague and cautious, so don't think it's because my love has waxed cold. If you don't think a great deal of caution is necessary, tell me so if that is a good way to reach you. I'd hate to have Cordell Hull read my love letters, though I suppose he'd be nice about it.

Thank you for loving me and consoling me. Te quiero como quiere la flor la luz del sol.

Me again