

761 Scotland Road
Orange, New Jersey.
October 27, 1942

Dearest William,

NOV 18 REC'D

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How nice! I was just waiting for a letter from you which was to have come down from Vermont, where it had been forwarded on the very day I left there, when ooomps, letter number 38 arrived to cheer my exile! And the first arrival hasn't come home to roost yet, either. Byx this time the poor letter must be very confused from so much forwarding and reforwarding, and special-delivering hither and yon. Never mind, I'll treat it gently and give it a good home when it finally does come.

Being a very wise and observant man, you may have deduced from the above that I have been in Vermont recently. Right! Mother had never seen her twin sister's farm up there (I saw it a year ago this time, of tender memory) and so was most anxious to go up. We had planned to go sooner, but things were so confused and difficult in regard to my getting to Africa that I wanted to stay until the matter was in the gelling stage. Between James Elwell and Co. and me, a plan of attacking the Portuguese Government was found, and armed with the advise of the helpful representative of the shipping agent I went boldly up to the Portuguese Consulate and asked for a visa. The difficulties in obtaining one are legion, and you can imagine what they are in general. They want to be sure you can live in sheltered ease all the time you are in Portugal and its colonies, and get out in style. I couldn't buy transportation via PAA from Bolama to Lagos here, PAA said no, you need priority. So apparently you will have to do the buying there in Lagos, or else I shall have to have enough money to buy it when I get to Bolama. Eventually I had better send a cable to you about that, and perhaps it had better be soon. Also about the extra money which I am how sadly afraid I shall need. Well, to get back to my fascinating narrative, I went up and asked for a visa, and this time the glum young lady in the Consulate (where, apropos of nothing, there is a sign in Portuguese and in English requesting everyone to take off his hat like a gentleman while inside the Consulate of the Republic of Portugal!) took down my request for a visa and went so far as to say that it could be speeded if I knew anyone in Lisbon who could intercede for the cause with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. So I immediately left (not putting on my hat, for the simple reason that I had never taken it off) and went down to the Western Union office in the basement of the particular Rockefeller Center Building where the Consulate is located, and sent off a cable to Carroll Casimir Parry, who I hope and pray is still in the Consulate General. I asked him to do what he could. Thereupon the only thing I could do was wait the allotted one to four weeks for the Portuguese visa. So, mother and I packed a suitcase and dashed off to Vermont the very next day.

It was lovely. The leaves were still turning color, and the whole place was most unpuritanically scarlet. The hills were the same delights they had been the year before, and the old house itself was even nicer and more complete than it had been last year. The only change was a pleasant one- the pig, whom I baptized Nigeria, had be-

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come a mother only three weeks before! Nigeria already has a daughter who is by now almost as big as she is (which is definitely saying something, for Nigeria is HUGE) but she is very fond of all twelve little pigs who now cluster around her. Their tails are all naturally curly, and they have lovely pink and white bodies under their pure white bristles. A delightful little family, and how nice to have all twelve at once! Sad to say, there were fourteen in the beginning, but the fond mother, not realizing her own strength, tossed in her sleep one night and crushed beneath the weight of her maternal body two of the little angels. The rest seem to have realized the necessity for moving fast when mother tosses in her sleep. I didn't see my old enemy Comfort the Cow, nor her daughter Submit, nor her unbaptized grand-daughter, for they were all three away in the hills with the other cows, but I sat several times by the window where Comfort and I used to glare at each other last winter. She first took a dislike to me when I was wantonly flouting a red sweater, and after a while she became really afraid of me, although I don't know what I did that would have scared her. As a matter of fact, I was rather scared of her. We didn't do anything at all at the farm, other than eat and sleep. I read James' Turn of the Screw, which is all very horrible and mysterious, but you must have to have a direly dirty mind to understand it. Also, happily, I read Mrs. Rawlings luffly dissertation on life in the backwoods of North Florida, Cross Creek. Now we're talking. That's a good book, and how fine it is to read about a place where it's too hot! Little by little I'm getting slightly used to cold weather, but fundamentally I think it's awful. I hereby pray that when we are married we don't have to spend too much of our lives in Sweden, Russia, or Northern Canada. Or Southern Patagonia, for that matter. I had enough cold in Paris in the winter of 1940 to last me the rest of my life, and now that I've proved I could live through it I'd just as soon never see a frozen water pipe again. I'm sorry to keep referring to such an unpleasant subject, but the fact is that it haunts me. Brrr!

I'm in the mood to ramble, darling. You should hear the new song that is on every juke box in America all of a sudden, called Praise the Lord and Pass the Ammunition. Overnight there aren't enough records of it to satisfy the gluttonous public, who keep wanting more. It's a good song, but not extra so. It's a war song, but not a propaganda one like too many, and my little friends in the Air Corps tell me it was written by "one of the boys" on Wake Island. Which may or may not be true, but it's simple enough to have been. A ballad concerning a chaplain who manned a gun when both the gunners were shot down, and every time they play it on the radio I demand a moment of silence so I can get all the words and the tune. I like it, and when I get to Lagos I shall consider it a favor to you if I sing it to you in my fine, operatic soprano. Another fling in the same general direction will take you to See here, Private Hargrove, an uproariously funny book of advice about life in the army by, of all people, Private Hargrove himself, who claims to have made all the errors and thus to be in a position to instruct young recruits. The book describes the errors he made, the punishments meted out, and why Private Hargrove is still a private. Unfortunately he has since been made a sergeant, which in a way is sad, because he was such a charming private. I wish I could send you a record of the song, and a copy of the book. But perhaps civilization does reach Nigeria, and you have or will have a chance to get at them.

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My but I've gone a long way without saying anything of ~~any~~ importance! Still, does it matter? As far as I can see, the only thing of importance is getting to you, till then my mind and my life is a blank. Till that stupid Portuguese visa comes, I don't even want to play around with happy little day dreams, because just like you, I won't believe I'm coming to you till I get to Lagos itself. I stifle any tendencies I have in the direction of sentimentality, or rather in the direction of imagination (since it is enormously difficult to forget what one has been longing for during a winter, a summer, and an autumn) and try to exist with only one short goal in view- a visa, or a way of getting there. Needless to say, man can live with bread alone, for a time at least. Which is not saying how he lives, or whether the life is one he would choose. I wonder actually how long a man might live by bread alone, with no ambition, no hope, no love. I begin to feel sympathy for the "heretic" of the middle ages, who suddenly found himself cut off from hope by excommunication. How horrible to live on peaceably eating and sleeping and saying good morning and good evening with no hope for the future! Yet apparently they found a way. Perhaps they put their trust in some other heaven which would not reject them. Or else, like me, they thought of and hoped for little things like documents and ways and means, and reversals of decisions.

I love you. Last Saturday night I went to a dance in Newark, given by the man who owns the concession for feeding that part of the Air Corps which is stationed in Newark, New Jersey. It was a great big affair, enormously attended, with free ginger ale and 7-Up and ice, to which I regret to state that The Boys brought perhaps a sight too much of their own whiskey. Where they get the money I don't know. Anyway, it was a good party except for the Carstairs and Old Grandad with a meager sprinkling of Haig and Haig (I'm probably just jealous, because I hate whiskey) but the great part of the evening came before, while I was walking down Broad Street, the Times Square of Newark, N.J. A small boy ran out in front of a car, and was about to be run over, when one of the Air Corps Boys dashed out just in time and pushed him out of the way of the car, getting ~~himself~~ himself injured in the process. The Air Corps ~~by~~ had his name in the paper because of it, and is now recuperating ~~with~~ with the very good wishes of everyone for his unthinking heroism. A Jewish boy, named Morris Irving. But, as I said, it was a great party, and I never did hear so much general singing of that song Nothing Can Stop the Army Air Corps. There's nothing much I like better than to hear a whole lot of young people happily engaged in singing to raise the dead.

I am momentarily expecting my mother and step-father back from Vermont. And with them, of course, I am expecting the letter which was sent up there and which hasn't as yet arrived. Sweet, if I wait so very eagerly for a letter from you, think how much more eagerly I wait for you to be with me in person! We are going to be happily married some day not so long away, and when I say "happily", I mean it.

Lovingly,

Phyllida

P.S. Letter 37 received & contents noted with usual care. Such a nice letter! You are my darling.