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Dearest William,

Although it was only two days or so ~~xxx ago~~ that I wrote to you last (what can have happened to my usual impeccable typing?) I wanted to take advantage of the last few hours of calm and typewritten to indulge in a letter to you. This evening I am going back to New York to finish business and to start other matters. It's delightful up here, but it doesn't get us unlimited anywhere, although it did settle finally and completely the state of my mind. Now the difficult part begins, or rather another of the difficult phases does. My goodness, how my sensitive soul shrinks from this sort of thing! Much more so than I would ever have believed. However, come rain come weather, all good things are worth fighting for even to the unpugnacious, among whom I must sadly number myself. When in the old days I would have said that once one's mind was made up, it would be an easy thing to set about getting a divorce if not proudly, at least with no inhibitions. Now it seems much harder in practice than in theory; even though my mind is completely at rest in regard to the morality and essential rightness of doing so, it would be perhaps easier in the short run to let things slide. But just as nothing was farther from our heads than "sin" in the conventional sense of the word in Lisbon, so it would be impossible for me to entertain a momentary desire to take the easier course. It is so utterly right for me to want to marry you and love you honorably, that the difficulties, though they frighten me enormously, are as easily acceptable as getting up in the morning of a long-awaited day.

Off on a completely different track: Can you imagine how lovely it is at night up here, when you are just about to fall asleep, to feel all around you the calm of isolation, the hills, the little fields in the valley, the prim white house four-square and deceptively small looking, the comfortable farm buildings, and around in the pines and sugar maples the deer?

Yesterday being Vermont Thanksgiving, my aunt and I went to the home of a colored lady of almost terrifyingly respectable family, who serves an occasional delicious meal to the Elect whom she considers worthy. It was a very nice meal indeed, elegantly presented. My aunt remarked during the course of it that she wondered how my William was faring, a thought that is always present in my mind. My darling, if I only knew you were safe and enjoying the experience, life would be so much better! The most horrible thought in the world is that we might have found each other only to lose ourselves again- it's so frightful that it sort of fascinates me, but try as I may, I can't imagine thinking and acting and living without you as a reality* and as mine.

Along the same line, it is a constant source of comfort that your sister is here and is the way she is. As I said in Lisbon, I was afraid to go and see her even though I wanted to be near some one who knew you and was as fond of you as I am, or almost as fond (this is no slur upon her affection, but merely a recognition of the impossibility of the most well-intentioned person to love you as much as I do.) Now I am horribly afraid of imposing myself upon her, for kind people are so incompetent about shooing people away when they want to be alone. It's a good thing that I shall only be staying in New York for a couple of weeks at the most if things go as I plan, because thus she won't have to endure sitting and being stared at like a Ming vase in a museum.

Darling, may I ask you to do something for me? It occurred to me that after the rather riotous life of drinking and debauch we led in Lisbon, you might have become accustomed to drinking more than usual, and furthermore, that Lagos might be another such idle spot where the only pleasure and relaxation comes in bottle form. If such is the case, I am sure that you would not overdo it, but nonetheless as the Reforming Fathers said, the Awful Stuff is insidious. You know me, my boy, and know that nothing pleases me more than a fine feathered glass of wine or three practically always; so far be it from me to advocate the old lips that touch liquor Angle, but I do wish that you would bear in mind, as you sit in your armchair of a tropical evening, fanned by a beautiful black maiden, and holding in your hand a long, cool drink of the right sort, that too much has a regrettable tendency to be too much. And now the congregation will rise for the singing of hymn number 136. And I will excuse myself humbly for being such a ghastly little Uplifter, while still sticking to my point.

Please tell me all the funny and unfunny things that happen in Nigeria, with special attention to where and how you live, what they are wearing, how there aren't any ~~husseys~~ husseys that even approach my dazzling beauty and incredible efficiency, what you do in the office and out, and the thought and attention you are devoting to keeping yourself healthy.

Merry Christmas and happy New Year, my darling love.

Thilda

* For "a" reality, please read "the" reality.