IBCC Digital Archive

In England
(as you know)
April 12, 1945

Dearest Cathie:

I received your very nice, lengthy, explanatory epistle by special courier this afternoon & there is no comment I can make except that fate certainly doesn't want us to meet. I don't know what there is to do about it — I'm not going to plan anything else — ever; just take life in its stride. It doesn't pay! "When the things you plan need a helping hand." ☹ (sorrowful note) If anything I ever planned needed a helping hand, it is certainly now.

I called to you, Cathie dear, 5 times — no less — trying desperately to get in touch with you, but to no avail. Once I got though to the control tower & some b — hung up on me without even waiting for me to state what I wanted to tell you. I'd like to get his neck between my hands! Everything tragic that occured could have been averted had he had the decency to deliver the message to you. To Mother Riley I'm several times, and to your exchange the morning you left on your pass. The guy who was on the switchboard was very nice and promised to relay the message to you (unfortunately though, you had already gone —

I don't know about passes now — if we will be allowed to go long distances from the base now that the war in Europe seems to be drawing to a climax. And to add insult to injury — our good commander-in-chief — General-of-the Army (comp. to Field Marshal) Air Forces H. H. Arnold, back in Washington promises to demobilize not one airman after the hostilities cease in Europe. He promises us an extended visit to the South Seas, and eventually Tokyo.... sans furlough to the States ere we depart for that great & vast expanse. It seems brutal to make us spend

so many years detached completely from those we love. I haven't seen my Mother in so long that sometimes I think I should go crazy; become a raving, mad lunatic like the original "Heathcliff."

And we had such a nice program mapped out for our visit in London. One of the fellows in my barracks, who is engaged to a British girl, went in with me. Together (his girl & Marvin), You and I were to be a foursome and do a lot of things - among them seeing the new operetta "Gay Rosilanda." It was a great disappointment to me, so I didn't do much of anything that was worth remembering. You think you committed a crime by forging a pass, (I wish I had a dime for every one that I have made myself!) just wait until you hear what I did. I got a room (fortunately) at the aged and quaint old Imperial Hotel, Russell Square, and went to a movie the first night, to see Lana Turner in "Keep Your Powder Dry" - story of the WACs. It had a few cracks in it that were really smart.

At breakfast the next morning a young American sailor came up to my table, and invited himself to join me in dining. He was a swell joe - just 19 and on his first pass to London, although he had been in England (Southhampton) 18 months. I was so lonely and discouraged that at first I didn't want to talk to him, but he was so humorous that I found myself laughing, and very glad to have him for a companion.

After going down in the basement barber shop for a shoe shine, hair-cut & shave (Gee, but it's nice to have someone do your grooming for you after weeks of G.I. life) we went shopping for a belt, embracing the entirety of greater London.

IBCC Digital Archive

We did a lot of crazy, unpredictable things - went out to Selfridge's Dept. Store, pestering the clerks for buttons to put on strings to go round & round.

Outside vendors were selling yo-yos and fly-wheels, which we loaded ourselves with these accessories and went merrily down Oxford street having ourselves an insane time. We shocked a lot of the local citizens with our antics, and received as much attention as the King would have, had he suddenly stepped onto Oxford St.

Passing a studio, we decided to exchange clothes, and have our pictures made. We did. And not only did we have pictures made in each other's uniforms, we kept them on all day, going about London - he as a soldier, I as a sailor. We had each other's identification papers & togs, & knew the addresses of the other. It was a long shot to take, and if we'd been caught we'd probably have been "busted" to Pvt. and Apprentice Seaman, but it was exciting and hectic. I found myself having a pretty good time.

That night, back at the hotel, we bought - from the elevator (lift, you call it) boy 20 bottles of delicious ice-cold pale ale, carried it to his room, where we proceeded to grow very mellow, and melodious.

I left my clothes in his room, went to mine, and awakening the next morning had quite a row before I could get my outfit. The chamber-maid, unable to awaken him, told me he was unconscious or dead. I rushed down the hall, flung the door open, expecting to find a corpse on my hand; instead I found a very surprised sailor, rubbing his eyes, and asking what all the commotion was about, otherwise okay - except for his objections to being awakened.

So, it turned out to be quite a happy (if rather expensive) weekend, and I've found a new friend - of which you can't have too many. So thanks to one Bob Lutz I had a good time - not as good as I'd

IBCC Digital Archive

have had, if you were there, but saved from complete boredom. Please don't say anything about me being out of uniform, because I'd get in "Dutch".

Cathie, dearest, I haven't written to the little French babe in over a year – as I told you before my Mother expected me to marry her, and she expected me to marry her. I've known her since she was 13, and like her a lot, but love – no! I'm so young to consider getting married – I came into the service just as I attained adulthood, and never got to enjoy the things I would have, had I been able to have a few years of my own after maturing. Sometimes I wonder if I have matured --- maybe it's because my life in the service seems a complete blank; time wasted; my life shortened by those years.

I've nothing to go back home to – no security, except that of my parents, which I refuse to accept. The gov. will send us to college (4 years), and guarantee a few other things, but if the war lasts much longer – how can I afford to spend 4 years in a university? The gov. promises us all tuitions, & £12-10s a month ($50) for subsistance, but in America it's hard to live on that much. About the least would be £35 or £40 ($140-$160) a month – with everything so expensive.

Perhaps I'll join the navy for a 6 year hitch, & see the rest of the world, and try to lose the wanderlust that has engrossed me, or if I haven't lost it, keep on sailing. Settle down? I'm a little afraid to take a chance. Perhaps sometime I will. I just can't be sure. Everything in my life for the last 3 years has been so uncertain – – –

Cathie, if you can get a 48 – or 24 – please come down, but let me know in advance, because I don't want another disappointment. I don't think I could stand it.

Until I hear from you, please accept

all my love

Yours (always)

Ethelbert

(OVER)

IBCC Digital Archive

Congratulations on the promotion. Keep up the good work. You deserve every thing (+more) you have earned. I couldn't quite make out the address upper something - so I copied it almost like it was on the letter.

Goodnight, sweetheart, all my love

Mr. H.

IBCC Digital Archive