

No. 5

Sunday 6.8.44
8.20 pm.



My Precious.
Little Wife.

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Remind me sometime to have
the phone removed - I might get a
letter from my best girl occasionally
then!

Of course I have to thank you
for one letter - No. 4, I think - but
I cannot answer it now as it is
in my locker in the locker room.
How it comes to be there when I am
down here sitting outside the billets
in the evening sun writing to you
is rather a long story but never-
theless I intend to inflict it on
you, old girl!

It certainly was nice to hear
your voice again last Thursday -
and I didn't reverse the charges
either! I decided that the call
counted as equal to a letter so I
would write on Saturday.

So yesterday morning about 10.20 am, being free for the moment, I got out my pad to start a letter to my darling. I had not had time to set pen to paper when a bloke came into the crew room and said ops were "on" and briefing was immediately! So away went pen and paper and I dashed round to the Flight Commander's office to see ~~X~~ Van and find out if we were on the Battle Order. He said, yes, ^{we} were and that there would not be time to take the guns, 'Chutes, harnesses, Mae Wests and other gear out to the kite as we usually do as soon as we know we are "on" and carry out the various tests and checks that are necessary.

He was waiting for a phone call to say when briefing was to be. Whilst we waited for this to come through I thought, "another day light without any dinner, just our luck!" But I was wrong. About five to eleven the message came - ops. meal at 11.00; briefing at 12.00. Pete had borrowed my bike (another long story!) so I was unable to go down to the billets for my vacuum flask - something I had cause to

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regret before the day was out.

The cookhouse did their best but of course it was not a proper dinner as their notice had been as short as our own.



So up we went to Briefing hunkering, well this will be another nice short daylight as otherwise Van would not be on. Imagine our surprise at finding that although it was certainly a jukka daylight it was of over eight hours duration!!! Nevertheless it was a target we wanted to do as it was something of a novelty for us so we were scared stiff that the M.O. would stop Van from going. We tried to prevent him from knowing that Van was going. He found out eventually but I think he turned a blind eye to it for we took off OK. First kite from our squadron to leave the deck.

We were to attack a target not very far from Bordeaux (that's not spelt right, I'm sure) which, as you know, is on the French coast in the Bay of Biscay. In order to do this we flew many miles out into the Atlantic before turning round and heading for our

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target. All this time, and in fact for the whole trip, we flew in boiling hot sunshine although sometimes the air outside was below freezing point. Van had to keep opening a window to let a breath of fresh air into our little oven. A surprising thing about this trip was that we crossed the coast eight times altogether.

Pete had the satisfaction of seeing our bombs all land in the targets which was only a very small one although important. We took off a few minutes before two o'clock and did not bomb until 7 pm! Five hours, and we still had to go home. Shortly after we had crossed the English coast on the way home Ben received a wireless message telling us to land at a drone near Newark - a ^{drone} sea fog has come in and made our down up for the night. It was turned 10 pm when we landed at our diversion - tired, hungry and feeling very dirty and sticky! But what a drone it was! We were jolly thankful we were not stranded there. We had a very poor meal after interrogation. There was $\frac{4}{5}$ = unbeschreibl

no one to tell us where the Sgt's Mess was - but we found it and soon had a pint ~~apiece~~ but they had only Woodbine cigarettes. This was just a few minutes before midnight so it was quite dark when we tried to find out where we were supposed to sleep. Of course there was no one who could tell us anything. Eventually we found a truck and got the driver to take us to one of the sites (RAT camps are often split up into several small sites of billets scattered about all over the place). Here we roused the picket who provided us with three blankets apiece and then found us some empty beds in one of the huts. Mind you, no one thought of providing us with either soap or towel. So I had to wash without soap and dry myself on my handbag. Believe me it did not take me long to get to sleep but Paul must have been off first

for the last thing I remembered was
Paul (who often talks in his sleep)
shouting, "Look out, Skipper, they're
coming in, live asteria!"

Believe it or not but Ben and I
were first up this morning about 8.30.
Of course, there was ^{Method} method in our
madness. We knew we stood a better
chance of flanneling an egg for breakfast
if we were first in the cookhouse!
Virtue had its due reward - we got our
egg alright. It was just a few
minutes to twelve this morning when
we took off to return to base. Both
Pete and Paul went without their
eggs or any breakfast - they just
would not get up till the Tannoy
message came telling us to report to
Flying Control at 10 am.

And that is why I haven't got
your letter with me at the moment,
darling. What? Do I hear you say
that it does not explain how it got in

Be locker? Well, ^{7.} that is a small detail. We are not allowed to take anything with us at all on ops. Any paper might give the enemy just the clue they need (I fancy they will need much more than clues right now!) so I always empty my pockets and leave everything in my locker. I could leave everything with the Intelligence Officer but my way is quicker. Anyway, when we finally landed here this afternoon we were in such a hurry to get down to the mess for dinner that I forgot the things I'd left in my locker.

Incidentally the Sports were held yesterday - without me! You are lucky - your husband will not return a physical wreck on his next leave. All being well that should be three weeks on Tuesday. And we have done 17 ops. now - good show.

(19) Don't forget, darling, that if you should ever feel like writing me another love letter I shall be more than pleased to receive it. You know without my telling you again that you are the only woman for me. You love me and thrill me as much as ever I could wish and much more than I deserve

|| Isn't the war news simply marvellous - it cannot last much longer at this rate.

|| It is 11 o'clock now and think this little boy was in bed - its too bad he cannot sleep with you, my darling. So, good night, my love God bless and keep you. I
adore you.

Your ever Bertha

P.S. These had better be a letter from you tomorrow - or else . . . !!!