

his world was shattered, he had, strongly, anticipated it.

—
Hello Again, Dearest Cathie —

There's a hollow, gnawing, aching inside my stomach — there's an infernal ringing in my head — my brain seems dead, useless — The situation is (to me) unfathomable. Maybe tomorrow, maybe next week maybe in ten years I'll get it through my head that I am not witnessing some far-fetched drama being depicted by a couple of amateur thespians — but **NE!** **NE!** I've got to get it through my head — this is **ME!**

You can afford to be compassionate — you've found your happiness — and I'm glad — in this way only one gets hurt — the one that should get hurt — the one who should pay the penalty. I dashed to the telephone the minute I received your letter today — I dashed with a fury and hope, then the \int — connection — of all times — had to be disturbed — and I yelled into an endless tube that brought back a garbled echo, a strange, faint, aching echo which, added to the pounding of my heart, blotted all sanity from my mind.

Why? Why? To me it seems only yesterday that the B-34 winged its way over Scotland, to Iceland, and to Connecticut. I couldn't take a ship and linger in England a few hours longer. I had to take the fastest mode of transportation known to man — I had to fly — fly — **FLY!**

Then supposed rehabilitation — well, you're looking at one that couldn't be rehabilitated — he didn't have what it takes — you know the kind that goes through life trying to escape reality, shunning that which was tangible.

no foundation - wanting no roots. He
22 years old when he was returned to
family. 22 - what a wonderful, innocent,
- - compared to the nest 40,000. 22 -
ready to conquer the world with his brain,
in infernal form. Glad, but I wish I had
never learned to write my own name - I'd
be satisfied to be a detail-digger, a gar-
bage collector, a truck driver, a farmer -

Now - he's supposed to be a writer - a writer
without inspiration. He had to edit a newspaper -
after receiving a letter - a letter he knew one
day must come - so like an automaton he wrote
news, edited news, made appointments for photo-
graphers, wrote captions, made layout sheets,
advised the printer - It's a little later now and
the shock has diminished and replacing it has
been a dull painless pain - a pain that no
physician could place a finger on,....

Letter No. 3 -

Maybe this man that I knew could have straight-
ened this life out but he built himself an enormous
bubble - a great vacuum containing only those ideals,
those dreams he wanted to remember I somehow
anything, anything in the future had no place within
that bubble - He pushed it to the outside world
and shut the door against any intruders. He
selected a small, well-picked circle of friends -
idealists most of them, and was set to go
through life allowing the present - the actuality -
not to touch him -

This sphere - this dream - began in 1941
and continued ever so many incidents. It began
just before Pearl Harbor - I think the boy
was 18 or 19 at the time - he had lived a
rather christened life, and then the ominous
war cloud rolled, enveloping most of the small
figurines of the world. He did not escape. He

④
saw in war the release from Teddies, a boring
existence, an avenue of excitement - how he prayed
that he would be accepted for service, even pictured
a ten-age dream of a glorious death as a hero-
(what boy hasn't) Oh yes, this "mighty warrior"
was anxious to sacrifice his life for his country,
for the cause of democracy.

Har, he found, offered a certain excitement, a
change of pace, but still it was monotonous - this
boy found that heroism or a chance to display
it wasn't the opportunity of every American service-
man - heroes, he discovered, were made because of
propensity + god, fate -

By early 1944 this bubble our "hero" had
constructed for himself was patched and repaired -
once between 1941 and 1944 the great ball almost
completely collapsed. That, the "author" cannot delve
into without more time and writing papers.

Not the least of the figures in this ideal
was a girl he met quite by chance on foreign
grounds - a tiny wisp of a girl with hair blow-
ing in her face and her eyes crinkling. He
actually never discovered the color of her eyes -
he never looked closely at anything. He could
see the general panorama, but minute details
foud him. Also in his dream was a great,
obese "lady" who used to run her fingers
through his hair and the fingers on her
other hand through his wallet. There isn't
much laughter in the man's world - his
world of remembering - but incidents such
as this often provided him with a chuckle
when he turned the pages back.

Somehow - only God knows - this man
& I know - met that diminutive, crinkly-eyed creature -
He told himself laughingly that she was the
girl he was going to marry. He told himself
this so often that was convincing himself -
Still in America he had a fiancee - a real,
"hot-blooded New Orleans French girl, and she wanted

to hear him say "I do" -

(5)

This story sounds like the eternal triangle, but this guy I know was too smart for any such complications. He would tell neither the hot blond flame caught of the other love, nor would he tell the new-found sunshine of that which was awaiting him on his glorious return. But fate has her little tricks... the here wasn't immune to fate - kismet - He was enjoying this new satisfaction, this new albino. From hundreds of "dashing" American airmen she chose this one - still Hoff can only answer why - and often he betrayed the truth she had in him - that the writer will ignore for the present - moments, rare moments of being together for fleeting moments - between shifts - slipping away from the base on bicycles when the American commander had strictly forbidden his troops to spit themselves of that base's confines - How do I know all this? This man - I shall call him Joe - so many Americans earned that name during the war - told me only yesterday. And this story was tragically true -

Joe said that he and the foreign girl, on their one day off each week, would cycle away - across the fertile lands of this little country - sometimes they would go into the city for dinner, and he was so homesick for anything American he would sit through long, dopeful - feature pictures - stolen from America. They'd often get confused because there were numerous tiny lanes and

roads in this country. (6) Joe told me that on a 11-mile bike hike to a city over, they, knowing no better, took a 17-mile route! They found a short-cut on the return trip, however, a path winding through glen and over hills, and along darkly shaded lanes with flowers abundant on the wayside. Joe said they discerned all the plants including one he could not pronounce, not to speak of spelling - rhododendron, but they were softly purple in the twilight and Joe was fond of that color because his mother - born in February - loved laundries - her birthstone was amethyst -

There were more of these rendezvous - she used to sing a line from a song he'd heard his "dad aunt" sing when he was a child of six, although they said she was bad, he loved her more than any of the others, because she showered all her devotion and sweets on him - The line was: "When the things you please need a helping hand - I will understand - always" - they didn't talk about it, but somehow this song became theirs - theirs alone - and years later whenever Joe heard it, he never failed to remember the tiny figure beside him, valiantly pushing the pedals of her bicycle, ~~up~~ sending the wheels up hills that taxed Joe's strength. He had never ridden a bicycle before he went to this foreign land, and he learned - the hard way, by falling into a ditch on his head, but he picked himself up and started all over again.

They - Joe and - I shall call her Jane - Jane

would run away to an inn ⁽⁹⁾ near the airrome where
both were stationed after the day had ended -
Joe told me he remembered one instance when
he said something unkind to Jane's friend, and Jane
was crying - which hurt Joe - He gave her a
black tie which was no longer allowed in the
USAF - and he saw the happiness in her eyes -
and he thought of the French girl, but his
conscience lashed him...

She went away. Yet on her iron stool she
pedaled back and they'd share another stolen
moment; stolen from the cruel hand of fate.
Then he transferred - to another American base -
yet luck was with Joe then. He was sent
back to his old base for school and chanced
to meet her.

Then the war was over -

Home - disappointment - out of love
with the French girl, a nostalgic home for
what he'd left behind in the foreign land -
Separation from service -

How long would the chameleon public remem-
ber these kids who had died and suffered,
who had would live the rest of their lives in
nightmares, remembering the buddy they couldn't
extricate from the burning wreckage, watching
him rot until his remains were swallowed in
the blue flames?

Joe went to work for a newspaper in N. Y.
state - a place he hated, a job he hated, a
staff he hated - because Joe actually ~~had~~
was dead! Joe died in August 1945. His
world ended when the Japanese armistice

was signed. War - from 1942 to 1945 - was the
greatest thing he had ever known, it came at
the age when he was most impressionable -
in his late teens and early 20s. The sirens
and whistles screaming, blowing, the horns
shrieking the end of hostilities, also were
announcing Joe's death -

Because that's when he drew the cur-
tain around him, he quit living - instead of
going forward he turned his back backward -
allowing it to go as far as 1941

Joe never told this to anyone except me,
because Joe was and is a very good friend
to me. He had no one to confide in. Although
he loved his mother dearly he knew that he
could not remain there forever. He had
grown to know a world almost totally alien
to his family's - He couldn't talk to just any-
one - This Joe - he'd appear insane, trying to
explain that his world had died - That
he was refusing to accept or live the present -
and dreaded the future.

All mixed up in this confused pattern were
the girl on the bicycle, the hillsides, the tiny
farms, the inn they had visited. If he had
only had her, perhaps there could have been
hope, perhaps he could have talked to
her. Maybe she would have understood, hel-
ped him snap out of ~~the~~ his dream world.
He wanted her more than life. His widowed
sister, his invalid brother-in-law, his
mother, his nieces who adored him, all

abetted ~~to~~ in the trick which led her to him. He would save enough money to send for her, then he would remember his scales with the crippled husband - her three kids - and perhaps they needed food, clothes. No, he didn't spend all the money for these purposes. Money had a way of slipping through his fingers even before he was aware of the fact!

Joe had another reason for hesitating. He had never asked Jane her age, although he was aware she was a few years his senior - he didn't want to know her age - I think Joe was a little afraid. He still doesn't want to know, nor does he care, because love has no age, Joe found out 'too late' - -

But before he realized this, he was determined that the best thing for Jane was for her to forget him. He remembered Jane telling him that she was terribly hurt once. He knew his faults - he wasn't stable, he was impetuous, and that was no foundation for a home to be built on. For a solid year he forgot her - whenever she appeared on his mind, he hurriedly brushed her away - he had that faculty - to forget what he wanted - to remember what he wished. At the end of that year he found it was no use - he couldn't blot that image from his memory... no matter how hard he attempted, it kept recurring -

Joe had lived with his dream, in his bubble about as long as he could. Perhaps - if he returned to that enchanted land - just - maybe -
He broke the silence, wrote Jane of his intentions - waited - waited -

Joe said you were familiar ⁽¹⁶⁾ with the rest... a letter
someone else... a story as old as time itself -
a telephone call, embarrassing, but pride had no
part of his makeup now - static, interruptions -
bad connections - he heard a cold, sweet voice,
sweet, yes, but nevertheless cold, calculating. Per-
haps it was the voice that brought the stars crumb-
ling to his feet -

He remembered in one moment - that they had
planned to meet in London, under Nelson's statue
in Trafalgar Square - what a hell of a dream -
silly, foolish, Crazy dream!

Joe still will return to London, to Norwich,
to Ipswich, to Framlingham, to Dutton, to
Algham. He'll visit Cheltenham, and that
last base where he was stationed, and from
where he flew home - ironically Joe can't even
recall the name of that station...

He'll rent a bicycle in the village, and, alone,
recapture or kill a dream that has been haunting
him for four years. He'll go back again, to
see Mrs in the Queen's Head in London, he'll
go to the Buckinghamshire (what a name) Arms...
he'll return again to the little pub in the little
town where he first spoke to her, where they
had a fantastic conversation about a couple of
imbecilic characters in one of their favorite
books - and he acquired a name that has
remained with him until this day. He'll go
to Norwich and have dinner at a hotel where
they once ate & paid a fabulous price for
brussels sprouts and a bottle of wine, and
he'll think how he used to tell her that
her countrymen were the worst cooks in the

world. Yes, Joe will go back ^(P) to all these places. He'll start under the one-eyed admiral, feed crumbs to the pigeons and wonder what would have happened, how their lives would have been shaped if he had met her there. Of course he'll scan all the figures and his heart will beat faster when he sees someone who reminds him of her. She'll pass - maybe speak - and his heartbeat will return to normal. He'll go there at 4:30 - the time he was supposed to have met her four years ago - every day that he is in London. Joe always loved London. He said it had the biggest heart of any city in the world, so doubtless he'll make that city his headquarters. He'll hear the Cockney bells ringing, after dark, he'll close his eyes and picture half a million young Americans swarming over the streets, in the pubs (mostly) in the cafes, a bunch of guys who didn't want war, but were in an English speaking country now and wanted friendship, wanted to be friendly with a retiring people. He'll imagine he hears the drone overhead of a lone German plane, or the swoosh of a buzz bomb.

He'll go back to Dulton and spend several days there - not only did he meet her there, but "Big Noise" and Robin and "Mr. Moto" (how did Joe ever remember that name, which he hasn't thought of in years?) He'll remember the first night he came to that base - it was raining - as usual - there was only a handful of Americans at Dulton then. He'll walk down by the Americans, radio building, along side the road to town, and he'll remember how he used to stop her & her girl friend

the girl friend whom he ^{met} first. He'll laugh at
the tactics he used - a pretense of speaking to the
girl friend when all along he wanted to see her,
to dare ask her if she would - if she might - he
just wanted to see & talk with her.

~~He~~ Joe expects this bubble to burst. He
hoped it will - he hopes he hates the country
and everything connected with it. He'll probably
be hard to get along with - look at waiters -
and everything that will irritate the people toward
him. He said he'd like to see Joe, to
see if he is running a nostalgic longing which
is tied up with that country, but Joe said in
her letter she didn't want to see him. Frankly
Joe needs help, he needs guidance. But from where?
From whom?

Yes, he had the moon, this guy I know -
he had the moon in his possession, but he wanted
the stars.... this guy I know