

□ □ 18/3/37

THE ENCLOSED LETTER JUST CAME IN, SO I'M SENDING IT TO YOU THIS WAY.

RICHARD, M'LAD:

EVERY TIME I LOOK AT THAT LAST BOOK OF YOURS ~~XXX~~ I THINK WHAT A SWELL GUY DICK IS AND HOWINELL AM I GOING TO DUPLICATE SUCH A LETTER? BEING PRETTY LONG-WINDED MYSELF, I'M GLAD TO FIND SOMEBODY WHO CAN WRITE MORE AND SAY MORE THAN I. THAT SEEMSTO BE A FAVORABLE BALANCE OF TRADE.

WE'RE JUST CATCHING UP ON OUR SLEEP AFTER AMELIA'S BATH. THERE PROBABLY WON'T BE ANOTHER STORY OUT OF HERE FOR ANOTHER YEAR, WHICH IS JUST AS WELL; FOR WE FILED OUT SO MUCH COPY THAT IT WILL TAKE US A GENERATION TO RETURN TO OUR ABSURDLY SMALL QUOTA.

THE STORY, OF COURSE, WAS A HUMMER, AND I THINK WE SUCCESSFULLY MATCHED THRUST FOR THRUST WITH THE UP THROUGHOUT, EXCEPT THAT WE DIDN'T GET SCREWY ENOUGH TO SAY THAT ANYONE HEARD MESSAGES FROM AMELIA. THAT WAS A BAD CASE OF ~~SCREW~~ OVERENTHUSIASTICISTS.

MY CYNICAL THEORY, AND THAT OF MANY OTHER LADS AROUND HERE, IS THAT NOONAN FOUND LAE A MUCH TOO INTERESTING TOWN FOR ANYONE'S GOOD. PRIVATELY, AND ONLY BETWEEN US, I KNOW FRED; KNOW THAT HE IS -- OR WAS -- ONE OF THE COUNTRY'S BEST AERIAL NAVIGATORS AND ONE OF ITS MOST ACCOMPLISHED SIX-BOTTLE MEN, HAVING CUT HIS TEETH ON THE FORESAIL STAYS OF AN OLD SQUARE-RIGGED SHIP. NURSING SUCH A DEVELOPED THIRST, HE PROBABLY WENT FOR BROKE IN LAE WHICH, AS YOU KNOW, IS AN OLD-FASHIONED PIONEER TOWN WITH AIRPLANES INSTEAD OF COVERED WAGONS TO CATER TO THE GOLD RUSH.

THEREFORE, IF THIS IS TRUE, THE CHANCES ARE THAT AMELIA HAD HIM POURED INTO THE PLANE AND DECIDED TO DO THE NAVIGATING HERSELF. WELL, SHE CAN'T -- COULDN'T -- NAVIGATE FOR SOUR APPLES. AND SHE PROBABLY STARTED OUT FOR HOWLAND VIA SOUTH AFRICA. ACTUALLY, THEN, NOBODY KNOWS WHERE SHE FELL IN THE SOUP. AND THE DUMB NINNY FOLLOWED HER USUAL ROUTINE BY REFUSING OR DECLINING TO GIVE POSITION REPORTS THROUGHOUT THE FLIGHT. HER ONLY ATTEMPT TO SAY WHERE SHE WAS CAME EARLY THE FATEFUL MORNING WHEN SHE OFFERED A "SUNLINE" POSITION -- BY DESIGNATING THE LINE ON A 360 CIRCLE ALONG WHICH SHE WAS FLYING. BUT SHE GAVE NO REFERENCE POINT, SO THAT ATTEMPT WAS WORTHLESS.

THE NAVY AND COAST GUARD DID A REMARKABLE ~~REX~~ PIECE OF WORK DURING THE SEARCH, BUT THE CARDS WERE STACKED AGAINST THEM BEFOREHAND. AND ONLY A FEW PEOPLE REALIZE HOW CLOSE WE CAME TO LOSING EIGHT MORE LIVES WHEN THAT NAVY FLYING BOAT WAXS NEARLY FORCED DOWN BY -- OF ALL THINGS -- THE FORMATION OF ICE AND SNOW ON THE WINGS WHICH MADE IT ALMOST TOO HEAVY TO MANAGE.

JANE HOWARD -- ROY'S BOUNCING CHERUB -- COVERED THE RETURN OF THE FLYING BOAT FOR THE ADVERTISER AND ALMOST GOT HERSELF ONE OF BRINES' BROGANS IN THE FACE BECAUSE OF HER FEMININE INSISTENCE UPON ASKING DUMB QUESTIONS DURING AN INTERVIEW FAR TOO SHORT FOR ALL THE BACKGROUND ON WHAT TURNED OUT TO BE THE BEST FEATURE OF THE WHOLE STORY.

(OVER)