

Same as before.

25/7/42.

Clara belle, honey,

Altho' I promised only to send you a letter once a week I'm afraid that the urge to write to you is far too strong to resist and so every spare moment I sit with the old pen and paper and get stuck into it!

Your letters my sweet are getting a little mixed. I get one which talks about something or other referred to previously and it's a day or two before the previous one comes along - for instance your penultimate epistle spoke of something "dreadful" about Hux + Tom but it wasn't until I got your last letter that I ^{that} knew the dreadful something was their re-drafting. Oh well, it all helps to make life interesting.

Not that life is dull around here. One thing follows another especially vaccinations and inoculations - we had another today. I'm beginning to feel like a bloomin' pin cushion.

I got a big filler to

my ego yesterday when out of a class
of 50 I was the only man who
could box the compass chart in (for your
land-lubberly but nevertheless, soft and
sweet, ears), naming the 32 points of the
compass.

Have you started to root the
yachting books yet, darling? You better
y'know; all this 'sailing' is only
wetting my appetite for our own little
craft.

You keep on asking me whether
there is any beer in the canteen. Now
you may not believe this but cross
my heart, it's true - I have not drunk
more than two pints of beer in the
canteen here since I arrived and those
two pints will be my last 't' awful
stuff.

I've had a letter from Tomelose.
He told me all about the office, by
the way, thank Hulkes for his offer
but ask him not to send life to
me. There is too much to do here,
sweet, and it's as much as I can
do to read S.E.P. (which I have
sent back to you) but I don't want
to give that up.

The weather down here has been awful - it has rained every day. The big man is keeping the deck of the huts clean for the numerous inspections - they expect and get, miracle - I'm trying to figure a way of walking on the ceiling in an effort to keep off the floor.

I'll drive you mad with my tidy habits when we're married. At maybe a reaction will set in and I'll drive you mad with my untidiness. Think you can resist it dearest? I'll know how to wash clothes, anyway, and I'm a very good sweeper-upper. Cor! the things I have to do. I'm more in touch with the Wrens now and for a man of my class to be told by a flighty young thing with peroxide hair and orange lips to "go over there and wait your turn" is just a little bit galling. Their noses are permanently in the air and their treatment of each sailor is based on the idea that each man is a five year old child. I could cheerfully throttle some of them.

I don't mind really because I have spent fun innocently and apologetically picking up their many mistakes and then they go red and I get a bit of my own back.

Did I tell you that I went swimming in the sea? It's a lovely spot just 200 yards away from my hut - a little bay where the shingle & stone shelves ~~steeply~~ - hee - steeply and there are ferns and bracken bushes all around it's closed in by high ground which cuts off all winds except from the sea. Dee-lightful.

Still following my austerity programme, tomorrow, I shall leave night, ~~but~~ I and a pal or two are going for a walk to ~~the sea~~ ~~sea~~ - carelessly talk anyway we're going for a walk and then coming back for a swim. I shall be saving quids out of my naval pay - there's nothing to spend it on - not here anyway. That's why I have so much time for writing - I prefer to lay quietly and write or read - I shall put on pounds in ~~at~~ weight, I've developed a liking

for chocolate and ⁵sweets - you can get plenty here: if they don't introduce rationing, (which will mean only 2oz. a week), I'll send you some for yourself and Mother but you'll have to wait (a) for pay day (next Thursday) and (b) until I can find paper and string (like gold box).

I'm longing for a photo of you, honey, life here is so very masculine in character, language and action and I feel the need of something feminine and soft to balance my emotions.

It is essential, of course, that the need be satisfied by my beloved Claire who is my heart's delight and I turn to the little photo I have of you and to the letters that you send and then I lie and think about you.

I'm not a poet so I don't compose odes to you but in my thoughts I speak little speeches to you - you know the kind of things that come very easily to you when you've time to think about them and they sound so impressive - I wonder if they'd

sound so impressive if they were actually delivered. I don't think so - I thought of something to say when I spoke of marriage to you at Escobal Hall - remember, darling? - but somehow I couldn't mouth them and I stammered something or other - silly, because the conditions were ideal for the perfect proposal. But I think you got the general idea sweet, and you must remember that it's that was the first time I'd ever done it - the biggest thrill of my life.

Tell me if I fail in my duties as a fiancee - it's a long time between kisses, dearest, and our letters are our only contact. I remember seeing a film once where the man, in prison, met his lover every night in his dream which kept him alive. I feel the same way - when I get away from the crowd and into myself I can almost touch and smell you - it's a wonderful feeling, dearest, and how much more wonderful it will be when I actually do touch and smell you - only a month, darling, I can hardly wait.

I love you,
Pz



Miss Claire Pither
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