

November 8, 1939

Dearest,

I know I owe you an explanation. I left Budapest to visit Evelyn in New York and then I disappeared. There is no excuse for this but I hope you will understand when you hear the formidable series of events that took place after you last heard from me.

I think you know that Evelyn works in the library of Vilhjalmur Stefansson, the great arctic explorer, and is very close to him (more about this another time). Through him she is involved in all matters of polar exploration and knows everyone who counts in this field. I told her about my obsession with the tiny creatures of the Southern Ocean, the sea angel and the sea butterfly, and she agreed to introduce me to some people involved in planning the US Antarctic Service Expedition led by Admiral Byrd. While it appears my chances were zero to join an adventure largely consisting of US military men, fate would have it that I was introduced to the right person at the right time. I was invited to a dinner party loosely associated with the Explorer's club (Stefansson presides over a lot of these parties at Romany Marie restaurant). There was a woman present by the name of Ruth Hampton who is one of the people representing the Department of the Interior on the Executive Committee of the United States Antarctic Service designated by President Franklin D. Roosevelt. (She was last in the news around the events following the disappearance of Amelia Earhart.) She listened politely to my exposition on the Clione Antarctica and the Limacina Helicina and my desire to go in search of them to Antarctica but that was the extent of it. However, in another twist of fate only a week later she contacted Evelyn and asked her if I could type. The Department of the Interior was in charge of hiring a few volunteers for the expedition for \$10 per month in addition to food and clothing. They had a man lined up, a photographer and a decent typist but he had fallen ill and departure for the expedition is fast approaching. Ruth Hampton had remembered that I am a photographer and now they were in a pinch for someone to record scientific data in images and words. Of course I said I could type although you know as well as I do ... well I am practicing right now. Fortunately she had no time to test me and trusted that as a woman I could type. At this time it is unclear how I will fit in with the rest of the crew. It appears that I may have to pass as a man to the outside world, which makes me nervous. They plan to bunk me separately in the instrument room claiming that I need to use the dark room and type until late at night. At the moment I am so excited I cannot worry about this (nor about developments in Poland, which is a topic for another letter). I have watched the Paramount film on Byrd's second expedition to prepare myself. Byrd is very nervous in front of the camera but he seems to be an interesting and complex man. I cannot believe I will be in his proximity. I am leaving on the USMS North Star in exactly a week. Wish me good luck and expect to hear from me (hopefully) from the end of the world.

With love as always

Anna