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Erika Mann
c/o W. Colston Leigh
521 Fifth Avenue
New York City
N.Y.
January 15th, 1945

Bien aimé,-

I know it, I know it and it is rather an inexplicable disgrace. But the conclusion you draw from it - " you don't seem to have much use for me right now.." - is perfectly preposterous! How can you! If there were anything to what you say, ~~hhhhhhhhhh~~ motherdear, Friederfriend, Kuziold and the rest would be entitled to the same suspicion and - in short, nobody on earth could feel that I had any use for him at all. Why I never write to anyone, God only knows. It's a nasty habit, but one difficult to get rid of, or so it seems. I makes me quite unhappy to think that you are hurt - believe me, dearest face, I am thinking of you a great and tender deal and there is nothing ~~hhh~~ I want to do less than grieve you. See?

I came back on a troopship, fell sick almost instantly, had to cancel numerous appearances which would have been fine, had I only been able to talk at all. As it went, I spent a week with our dear ones, unable to tell them anything. And there was so much I might have said. It had all been mighty interesting - in Aachen, Maastricht, Antwerp, Strasburg and wherenot. Driving around in my ^etempramental little car (not the Ford any longer, but a Citroen and a gift of my Maquisfriend Pierre, who, alas (very much alas) got himself killed near Metz) all alone, most of the time, was a phantastic experience. Nor was it un-phantastic to get back to Hunland - under the circumstances. All the less so, since I made friends with a leading personality in AMG and saw and learned more ^{than} anyone else. Most of this extra-insight is off the record, - but still. I worked a lot, too, - about one big husky piece a week for Toronto and a few (too few) concoctions for Liberty. The Germans,

as you know, are hopeless. In their hearts, self-deception and dishonesty, arrogance and docility, shrewdness and stupidity are repulsively mingled and combined and even the Archbishop (he especially!) turned out to be a loathsome crook (forgive me, censor, - there are better ~~Archbishops~~, - the one in Munich, for instance is quite admirable a pious father, but this one is a loathsome crook!) It was moving to see dear old Holland again - tapp-vergunning and all - and to embrace aunt Emmeke, who had been expecting me ever since liberation day - without knowing that I was with the army, without knowing anything, - just because she thought I was somehow bound to turn up. Quite flattering, in a way. Had it not been for this confounded lecture tour I would have stayed - simply because it is all so very interesting; ~~h~~h that it is also bewildering, depressing and disquieting one had better not deny. The continent, my dear, is in poor shape, morally as well as physically. One ^{won't} ~~be~~ be able to live anywhere, except, perhaps in the U.S.R., where, however, one's ignorance of the language might be a fatal handicap. Not ^{that} ~~is~~ I had intended to leave Uncle Sam under any circumstances. But the certainty, that I couldn't, even if I wanted ^{to}, is a bitter pill to swallow. My ~~XXXXXX~~ Tomsy has come along - hadn't been here for 6 years - and is now sitting in New York, waiting to meet me in the Midwest. A strange acquisition - infinitely uesis, quite endangered, rather worrying and - once again - not precisely what the doctor ordered. People are always getting so frighteningly serious as soon as they are with your sis. But then, one ought to be grateful * and I am after a fashion - for so much wholeheartedness and were it not for the complications ~~h~~h - Le monstre and all that - which are bound to arise, I should be ~~h~~h happy enough. The tour is the worst ever and ^hscheduled to go on till the end of April. I am struggling with my better self which is apt to win. This means that I shan't return to the front ~~h~~h before Dad has lived to be seventy. He is sad enough on account of your

and Bébé's absence and I had better stay and celebrate him a little.

This hurried thing is being written at home. I've just arrived from Fresno and shall have to go to Ontario (California) in a minute or so. My voice is still feeble and rough, but willpower ~~phhh~~ and myke are doing their bits and I manage to make myself understood.

A man who came from Italy - a Major, I think, - had seen you and read some of your reports which he described as perfectly brilliant. In fact he had tried to get them released for some purpose or other - unsuccessfully, it seems. I came across him on one of my last evenings in Paris - a few weeks ago, it seems so odd - and was happy to talk to someone who'd been with you so recently. Do say something, please! Say, above all, that my silence won't dismay you any longer. There is no connection - none whatever - between it and my feelings for you! Actually, since you may not be able to see my point, I may write a little more frequently from now on - NOT "out of a sense of duty" - but out of sheer, unmitigated and faithful

LOVE!
E.

P.S. But, dear me, - I wouldn't trust H.K. from here to the door! ^{don't} And ~~then~~ you give her any regards whatever. If I were there, I'd look after her alright. You are much too kindhearted and unsuspecting a kid and she ought to be.. well....