September 23, 1920

Dear Boy Blue,

You won’t be expecting a letter from me in London and I hope that you won’t feel cross with me for writing to an address you didn’t give me. I’m back at the Museum and I was working in the laboratory when someone telephoned to learn where you were. Mr. Granger answered the telephone and said that you expected to leave Africa at the end of September and reach London in early October. Then he gave your London address. Now I wouldn’t for the world have asked anyone concerning your whereabouts or movements, for I think it you want me to know where you are you’ll tell me; but this information just came of its own accord so I took it, thinking that maybe the good God had sent it on purpose to your lonely Marmo. There was a letter that had been accumulating this month and was just waiting to be sent – so I’m sending it, because I’d rather have you read on the other side of the ocean than on this side.

You needn’t be in any hurry to read the letter because there’s nothing important in it except the last installment. Just save it till some rainy night when you’re alone in your room with nothing special to do – if there ever is such a time – and then read it. ‘Tis only thoughts, thoughts, thoughts, reams of them. Pal dear, I feel that I have run a good thing into the ground in this matter of writing letters. If you asked any other woman to write to you she would pen a reasonable four-page note perhaps once or twice a month, but I can’t seem to do that. I simply indulge in delicious orgies of writing. Marjorie Daw has been starved for someone to whom she could speak her own particular thoughts and now that she has at last discovered just the right person the accumulated thoughts of many years keep on tumbling out. There doesn’t seem to be any way of keeping myself within bounds once I start writing to you – the only thing to do is not to write at all. Besides I don’t know what you like to hear about, for you won’t express a preference; I don’t know whether you prefer serious or mirthful letters, letters about the fairies or about my daily life, letters about my thoughts, my reading or my dreams.

Pal I have no way of knowing what interests a man unless you tell me, but even then I doubt if I could write to order. If my experience with men were greater I’d know better how to write, but I’ve known [some lines blacked out]. The Doctor has talked to many men on scientific matters and even written to them occasionally, but Marjorie Daw has never talked or written to anyone but you. So she lacks the requisite experience to provide just the proper correspondence for a most experienced man of the world. I’m going to give you a letter vacation. If I find that the desire to write to you becomes overwhelming I shall start in in a little blank book to which I shall give the title “Unset Letters to my Pal” and there I shall write to my heart’s content. I’ll get the good of writing while you won’t have to wade through such volumes as the enclosed.

It is so long since I heard from you – three months! Just a line, a post card, anything that would have let me know that you were safe and well would have meant so much to me. You were in a strange, dangerous country amidst so many dangers. Did you think that I wouldn’t worry? You are a strange man; I don’t fathom you at all. You may think that all men are open books to women; perhaps they are to most women but not to me.

I am forwarding by this same mail a letter from Washington. I’m pretty sure that it must be in reference to my Civil Service Exam. I had to give the names of five persons who knew something of my scientific work and I gave your name not thinking that the Government would take the trouble to write to the persons I mentioned. I suppose my appointment as Palaeontologist on the Survey won’t go through till all the forms are in, so if you have time and questions are such that you can truthfully answer them, will you be kind enough to fill them in? By that last remark I mean if the questions are confined to queries about my scientific ability; if [several lines blacked out].

(p.2) I am hard at work on your ammonites, doing the rough cleaning on all of them because I want to get it over with. It is heavy, dirty work and the flying chips cause me great discomfort. When I did the other nodules I vowed that I’d never do any more preparation work, but – if you asked me to push a millstone up a hill with the end of my nose I’d probably try to do it. The rough working out of the specimens will probably take a month; the final cleaning and preparation of sutures another month and the remainder of my allotted time for identifications and the writing of my report. Today I received the galley proof of my other paper. It will be only about 50 pages in print. My present report will be longer since it will cover the species from all the zones and localities. Some mighty interesting things are already coming out. The stratigraphy will be fascinating. This sounds like the Doctor’s report to the Curator.

Now Marjorie Daw will turn in her report to her Pal. This evening after supper I did some canning and putting up peaches and tomatoes this time. I am not putting up many preserves this year because sugar and fruit are so high but other years I have put up every fruit in the market. This summer I’ve confined myself to vegetables, mainly, putting up string beans, lima beans, corn, tomatoes, spinach and chard and peas. I never buy canned goods in the store because I don’t like them but it is nice to have one’s own things to fall back on in the winter and to lend variety when there are few fresh vegetables in the market. I’m planning such happy evenings for myself at home this winter devoted to sewing, reading and various domestic matters. Five months of security! *apres cela le deluge* (?)

I’m so well and happy. The cause for my great happiness you will find at the end of the enclosed letter. My present health is due to proper living conditions for the past two months. I am like a flower – I wilt right down when deprived of sunshine, fresh air and food; as soon as I have these I pick up wonderfully. My weight is increasing steadily and my usual pink cheeks have come back. When I’m in good health I have very high coloring, almost amounting to a perpetual blush; I sometimes think it must look as though I put it on as Edna put hers on. Pal, I’m so glad to be alive, so happy and at peace with the world. Did I not often complain that none of my wishes had come true? That was wrong. Many, many of my wishes have been fulfilled and I know that I have attained everything that was good for me, that I was fit for and worthy of. I have so much to be thankful for; I realize this when I find other women envying me my home or my health, my happy philosophy or my scientific attainments. [lines blacked out].

After all I would not exchange places with anyone I know; I would not care to assume anyone else’s burden. Indeed, do we ever know what secret burdens others carry? People picture me as care-free, happy-go-lucky, untouched by sorrow. Many of the women at the Museum think that I have a private income or a family to support me – that I work for fun and do not know what it is to think of bread and butter. Only the other day one of the women who has a very unhappy face and seems to feel that life has cheated her said to me: “I admire your strength in holding out till you got a research position. I’ve never had the courage to stand out for what I wanted in life because I had to think of my bread and butter.” She knew nothing of what I’d been through and I didn’t know her well enough to tell her. But it seemed to me that she stated in a nut-shell the reason why so many women go through life doing work they hate, feeling disgruntled and sore all the time – it’s because they never had the courage to make a stand for the things they wanted. They chose security and a piece of bread and butter instead of staking their last piece of bread on some (p. 3) longed-for opportunity. Who never takes a risk never wins any of the big things of life. You may run the risk of losing your last piece of bread but you stand a chance, on the other hand, of winning your heart’s desire. I could guarantee to show any woman the road to happiness if she would follow my advice, and first and foremost I would counsel her to fear nothing and to smile always. I am busy at present in searching out and eliminating all the weak points in my philosophy. I will be happy and I know that nothing can keep me from the attainment of my heart’s desires. These next few months I won’t be doing much but sawing wood – that is, paying off my debts. But after that! The world lies all before me and never again will I slump and say that life has cheated me. You can have anything in the world you want if you want it hard enough and make enough sacrifices for it. How I do love a magnificent game played for large stakes! Keep your eye on me Pal – also keep a tight hand on the reins or I’ll run away with myself and this glorious, new-found freedom.

The enclosed letter I send largely because it gives you the last pages of a great volume of my life. Even now I would not write so despairingly as I did in some of those pages. Day by day I am outgrowing despair and despondency. I feel a great new rush of life and power. But if you are interested in the evolution of Marjorie Daw, as I take it you are, you must read the enclosed.

Boy Blue you have been an altogether wonderful Pal because you have let me alone. You provided spiritual sunshine and faith – then you let me evolve. I can’t bear to be nagged and bullied and yanked around – it makes me mulish and stubborn. I want to grow not be forced into a straight jacket. Once or twice when you saw me going straight to the Devil you put out a strong, detaining hand. I liked that. It was as though you saw a kitten drowning – you reached out suddenly, grabbed me by the nape of the neck [figuratively speaking], shook me and set me down in the sun to dry. After that you let me alone. I can stand a lot of being let alone. That is because I believe that I have it within me to develop into something worthwhile if I have half a chance. All that I needed was some sunshine and occasional guidance. Dear Pal you’ve been so wise in your treatment of me. I’ve grown so strong in the sunshine and it was because of your faith in me that this summer I was able to make many decisions and make the right ones without your help. I’m standing very firmly on my own feet now.

And what, I wonder, have these five months brought to you? Many successes I hope, and more dreams come true. I have so longed to know that all was going well. Every night I have prayed for your safety, happiness, and success. You are getting to be very, very great and important, but my Little Boy Blue will be the same to me always I know. Now I must say good-bye. Good luck in London!

Always your faithful Pal

Marjorie Daw