

Tab 1

Salon No. 30: Season's End

Diary Entry: Christmas 1904

Reader: Beth Rigel Daugherty

New Forest Christmas 1904

Each blade of grass with a white line of frost on it.

The sunset makes all the air as though of melted amethyst; yellow flakes dissolve from the solid body of amethyst which is the west. Against this, standing as though in an ocean of fine air, the bare trees are deep black lines, as though drawn in Indian ink which has dried dull & indelible. The small branches & twigs make a fringe of infinitely delicate lines, each one distinctly cut against the sky. The highest tips of the branches are russet, & so is the top of the trunk, in the red sun light. The trees stand round in a circle, & in their midst is a kind of little stage of grass & heather-bog where it is greenest in which a pastoral play might be acted. Then the trees close together again, with pathways radiating at intervals to the open space—The trees have green velvet jackets of moss. This the brightest colour in the landscape. A peach bloom of silver & plum colour covers the trees at a little distance. Also a pale green lichen, seaweed like in its shape, covers the bark. The trees very often spread their branches into a symmetrical fan shape as though they had been clipped by a landscape gardener. A river in summer is as though made of plates of translucent glass, the top one of which slides. Mystery of sound reaching one through the trees; the distant music of hounds running. The note of the huntsmans horn, & far away voices of men shouting, all sound as in some distant romantic dream; as though falling through an ocean of waters.

The stone window frames at Kings are iridescent like a butterfly's wing when the sun shines through the stained glass. (PA 215)

Diary Entry: New Forest 1906

Reader: Shilo McGiff

The New Forest Christmas

Just now as I wrote these words & saw them dry in juxtaposition it struck me that perhaps their alliance was natural & not accidental; & that I had by chance laid my finger on a clue to an old puzzle. For why does the forest always disappoint me? & why does Christmas disappoint me too? Is it not that they both promise something glittering & ruddy & cheerful, & when you have it you find it not quite as good as you expected? The forest is too benign & complaisant; it gives you all that you can ask; but it hints at no more. There are the long green drives, & the tracery of the branches against the sky; there are wild open spaces when you are tired of symmetry, with their single elm & thorn trees, & their brambles & their bogs. "So wild—so free—so stately—so mediaeval:" Such is the praise that you must give, & give willingly, but there is no residue that remains unexpressed for lack of the fitting word. To be candid the forest is a little sleek & a little tame; it is Saxon without any Celtic mysticism; it is flaxen & florid, stately & ornamental. We have no use for forests now, & yet this one is preserved reverently, when the old spirit has died out of it. So it comes about that there is always something artificial about the place, & its lovers. You will not find the real country man or woman here, anymore than you will find arduous fields that are still turned assiduously. No; the country labourers are wont to pose as characters learned in forest lore; & it is a lore that is consciously picturesque. Much of this attitude is probably inevitable, for the forest is different from any other piece of England, & imposes different customs of necessity. It is easy, for example, or so I have found it, to feel yourself withdrawn from the outer world, &

enclosed in a thick girdle of trees. The rolling land is fenced off, & you are forced through narrow ways between trees where ever you turn. Then there is all the peculiar language of the place to be learnt if you stay, & exalted beyond all others. You hunt, the deer & the fox: there is the old colonel of course who never misses a meet & knows his way through the forest better than any of the tufters; such old gentlemen are not unusual, but in other countries surely they have fewer grooves in which to run so smoothly. The forest is an ideal place for the old & conservative; there are so many proprieties to be observed, & they are so decorous & easy of approach. So this is why Christmas is kept so appropriately here. You can almost fancy that the woods have been arranged for the festival, & hung with holly, & sprinkled with snow. Christmas day & the forest seemed to mix & melt indistinguishably; you left the dinner table & its turkey & its crackers, its cake with a jaunty sprig of holly in it—it—you stepped into a world where these emotions were continued unbrokenly. We walked along a crisp white road, & then beneath dark leaved ever greens. Here were berries glowing red; & all the twigs were iced with snow. Then it grew late & the jolly evening sky lit up—flame coloured, & clear & healthy—with the black trees sharp against it. But O for the dusky roll of some Northern moor, or the melancholy cliffs of Cornwall. There you hear the wind & the sea. (*PA* 363–64)

Diary Entry: Thursday 3 January 1918

Reader: Jeanne Dubino

. . . One of the coldest & finest of Christmases. Rather to our relief, we spent it alone, Ray falling ill, Ka coming for week end, & Nessa's children. There was the usual visit from Maynard & Clive; my usual failure to get to Charleston corresponding to Nessa's failure to get to Asheham. I spent a night there, & enjoyed [?] myself, through the rather obtuse barrier of poor Bunny, who took to his bed at one point, without sympathy from Nessa, who had often put him to bed, she said, for no perceivable cause. Duncan came back from London, with gossip for us; chiefly about Alix & a party at the play, who broke

the partition dropped cigarettes, & had to be asked to leave. But what I like most about Asheham is that I read books there; so divine it is, coming in from a walk to have tea by the fire & then read & read—say Othello—say anything. It doesn't seem to matter what. But one's faculties are so oddly clarified that the page detaches itself in its true meaning & lies as if illumined, before one's eyes; seen whole & truly not in jerks & spasms as so often in London. And then the trees, spare & leafless; the brown of the plough, & yesterday, downs mountainous through a mist, which isn't palpable, for only dead detail vanishes & the live grows larger & larger, & fires can be seen burning through. Solitary sportsmen beat up duck & snipe on the marshes. Windows were almost always frozen in the morning, & each blade rough with frost. Partridges would come & sit in the field, lifeless little lumps they looked, half stiff with cold perhaps.

The diary habit has come to life at Charleston. Bunny sat up late on the Old Year's night writing, & Duncan came back with a ledger, bought in Lambs Conduit Street. The sad thing is that we daren't trust each other to read our books; they lie, like vast consciences, in our most secret drawers. Clive, by the way, enlivened Christmas by a small book of verse—the prose fantastically foppish, the verse very pretty & light, to my mind (by wh. I mean not altogether to L.'s mind). He can do his little Owl very efficiently—Anyhow, I prefer it to the last Georgian effort—bound in blue this year, & housing that ridiculous Squire.

So we come to an end of the year, & any attempt to sum it up is beyond me, or even to cast a final glance at the evening paper, with news from Russia, which has just come in and drawn L. to remark

“A very interesting state of things—”

“And what's going to happen?”

“No human being can foretell that.”

The End (*D1* 94–95)

Letter 2115: To David Garnett

Reader: Serena Wong

10th Dec. [1929]

My dear Bunny,

I dont see any chance of coming now till after Christmas. We are engaged in a lawsuit. It is against the Imperial Hotel and their infernal band—so may be a nuisance, and begins on Friday.

But (to return to your letter) d’you mean to say your silken phrases are dug for and sweated out? I thought you dipped your brush and drew your stroke. And as for me, I write everything except Orlando 4 times over, and should write it 6 times; and after a morning of grunting and groaning have 200 words to show: and those as crazy as broken china.

These are sober facts; and then we, who live in the same age, and sometimes meet in the flesh, have these mistaken ideas about each other: What then is the worth of criticism?

I didn’t like Hemingway. I dont much care for Graves—
But here I must stop, hoping we shall meet this new year.

Yours

Virginia (*L4* 116–17)

Letter 2284: To Anon

Reader: Rita Viana

10th Dec. 1930

Dear Madam,

As one of the guilty parties I bow down to your strictures upon the printing of *On Being Ill*. I agree that the colour is uneven, the letters not always clear, the spacing inaccurate, and the word 'campion' should read 'companion'.

All I have to urge in excuse is that printing is a hobby carried on in the basement of a London house; that as amateurs all instruction in the art was denied us; that we have picked up what we know for ourselves; and that we practise printing in the intervals of lives that are otherwise engaged. In spite of all this, I believe that you can already sell your copy for more than the guinea you gave, as the edition is largely over subscribed, so that though we have not satisfied your taste, we hope that we have not robbed your purse.

Yours, with apologies,

Virginia Woolf (*L4* 260)

Letter 2286: To Ethel Sands

Reader: Marie Allegre

Sunday [14 December 1930?]

Dearest Ethel,

How can you divine my tastes so exactly—what's more, add to them your own exquisity? And, moreover, if you knew how I hate shopping, and for weeks have been saying I must buy a tie, and making shift with an old Julian handkerchief from sheer cowardice!—So I'm immensely grateful, could I daresay face a Chelsea lunch without blushing. Life is such a rush—but I hope in spite of that you'll include us in it—I don't know why—but I spend all my time seeing people, and never anyone I want.

Yours

V.W. (L4 261)

Letter 2291: To Vanessa Bell

Reader: Emily Hinnov

Xmas day [1930]

Dearest Dolphin

I rang you up on Tuesday, but you were out. It was only to say that we sent you a black coat; and that if you hate, it, or it doesn't fit, you can change it. I thought it might come in useful in the evening; anyhow keep you warm in the country.

I have had to retire to bed which is rather annoying. I got a bad throat and made it worse I suppose coming down and so had a temperature and spent yesterday in bed. However it is only a little over 99 today so I expect I shall be up and about tomorrow. I have just had my lunch off a fish (but we shall have turkey tomorrow) L. is lunching with the Keynes, to taste Mrs Harland, Lydia says, for the last time. I gather that there is a good deal of business about the future of The Nation to be discussed—of course in strict

confidence—as if anybody cared what happened to that dead dog except that it should be buried. I had a queer adventure by the way, the day I got your coat at Marshall and Snelgroves. I was given £6 to buy Xmas presents; I put my bag under my moleskin, and turned, for one moment, to try on your coat. Then I thought I ought not to leave the bag, so turned to get it—and behold—in that second a thief had snatched it! There was then a great hue and cry, and a detective appeared, and they said a woman in brown fur had been seen; but of course they could not catch her; so there I was, penniless, without key, spectacles, cigarette case or handkerchief. Marshall's refused to lend me a penny as they said I was not on their books; but the detective gave me 10/- of his own. Later that night the bag was found, thrown in a drain; and marvellously, though the £6 were gone, the thief had left my spectacles, keys, and one old earring. I had just bought two for a present. So didn't do as badly as I might.

Reader: Pat Laurence

I was sad to part with Rivett [Carnac], who is really very nice, and might be very good with training. She asked me to get her another job if I could among my friends; as she enjoys so much being with people like us. I rather dread Nelly—but this I have said before. It is very fine and spring like here, but I haven't yet had my nose out of doors. I am in bed in my top room with a fine log fire, and new bookcases—all very snug. Duncan's table is arriving on Saturday, and will be only just in time as the accumulation of parcels and papers is terrific. Two telegrams have already come from Dotty—but as I shant be able to go tomorrow, we have got out of our lunch till next week. Perhaps you will come with us.

Roger [Fry] dined with us, and Lord! how bitter he is! Now I laugh at my friends, but not with a black tongue. First he abused Vita; then Ethel Smyth; then Maynard; then of course complained of his poverty and the neglect of his art—but not as of old with tolerant grumps: bitterly, savagely, with morosity. We think his *mésalliance* is souring him and Helen [Anrep] to wit. Have you noticed it? I found myself in the unusual position of

standing up for Edith Sitwell, Maynard, Vita, Ethel and so on—and how do you psychologically speaking, account for his morbid desire to be thought poor? He told me I could quite well afford to lose—which is true; but that he was so bankrupt that to spend £30 on a new gramophone was impossible—and his mothers death had been a complete fiasco.

This is all my news and very doddery and dull I fear; but perhaps Christmas at Seend is even dodderier. When are you coming?

I want to discuss with you the propriety of my now making a small annual allowance to Angelica. I think she ought to have a little money to throw away on clothes etc. Dont you think I might? We were always too poor. Please consider this.

J. Lehmann is coming to see us. Do ask Julian what he thinks of him from a practical point of view.

B. (L4 263–64)

Letter 2292: To Ethel Smyth

Reader: Catherine Paul

Christmas day 1930

It was very nice getting your letter this morning Ethel dear.

But this is only a scrawl, because I'm in bed. That cold I had when you came has been burrowing about, and coming here made it worse—Hence a temperature; hence bed in my top room; where I lie, before a great log fire. And the temp. only rather over 99 this afternoon; and my alarum clock cough (like yours I imagine) whirrs only now and then.

And my throat is less red and raw. Still I'm blasted if I ever take special care of myself for 10 days with a view to finishing a book if this is what happens. There's the poor old Waves on the shelf; and I can't do a thing. And I'd just got the swing, I thought, of the end. Never mind; I'm quite happy in many ways; and hope for turkey and wine tomorrow. Any letters instead of sole and milk pudding will be gratefully received. But they take such an age coming, I shall be well by the time you get this. Yes, I wish I'd got your book; it would be the very thing. I dip into Q Victoria's letters; but mostly lie and look at the fire. L is as usual a perfect angel; he carried my bed up, wraps his own silk dressing gown round me, and cooks dinner and prunes his trees, and does every single thing just when I thought he would have a fortnight's holiday: what a curse I am to him, to be sure!

It's turned balmy and fine, and I can see the rooks in the Churchyard trees, and the downs all pink and yellow if I look over my head.

So no more at the moment. I am not in the least bad—only it's annoying—at the moment—worse though to be you correcting your drunken copyist.

Love V.

I will write properly again. (L4 264–65)

Letter 2293: To V. Sackville-West

Reader: Veronika Krajíčková

Saturday [27 December 1930]

It seems to be my usual influenza—cough practically gone, but this idiotic little temperature goes on. So I'm staying in bed.

Yes, do for Heavens sake drop in any time, and take your luck if there's any food—How nice to see you. I expect I shall be all right by Monday. (Possibly the Keynes's come on Monday—otherwise we're alone and shall be here till Tuesday week.)

I'm raging at not finishing *The Waves* here as I hoped—otherwise bed is not a bad place.

Sorry about your mother, at least about you, and going to Brighton, and Christmas and mud and decorations.

Let me know when you'll come—I don't suppose we shall get to Dotty

Love from Pot,

Who's rather

Hot. (L4 265–66)

Letter 2295: To Vanessa Bell

Reader: Elisa Kay Sparks

Monday [29 December 1930]

Dearest Dolphin

The necklace is exquisite—like the inside of white grapes—and as my consumption of necklaces is huge, will come in most useful as well as ornamental. Leonard is so enamoured of his caddy that he is making it into a tobacco tin for London. Also, I am finding Angelica's blotter of immediate use—for one thing, I never have any blotting paper, and as I am writing in bed it is essential to have a hard block. In fact all the

presents were entirely on the spot and much in contrast to the hideosities my poor old mother in law sent—for instance a vast sham brass fish slice.

I am hoping to get up today and receive the Keynes's. I have gone on having a slight temp: not over 100, but over 99, so I suppose it has been the same influenza I had last year. But I'm almost normal today and am going now to dress.

Nothing much therefore has happened—in fact nothing. The Keynes's go back tomorrow, so you will miss them. There is a lot of Nation gossip and Harland [Keynes's servants] gossip—they're leaving to better themselves with a rich prostitute in Mayfair. I shall hear it all again this afternoon.

Duncan's table has come and is so lovely in the drawing room I can't have it up here, and thus shall have to buy another. Jean [Campbell] writes about the furniture, which should come by sea [from Cassis], she says; and wont take the sheets without paying.

It pours and pours.

I must say the necklace is lovely—so much that I have it on the table to look at. I shall wear it this afternoon.

Any visits wd. be much appreciated; I expect we shall come anyhow on New Years day, but shall be here in solitude till 6th. so hope to see you soon

V.

I'm so furious—I had meant to finish your intolerable Moths [Waves] here, and of course havent been able to write a line—all your fault. (L4 267)

Letter 2297: To Saxon Sydney-Turner

Reader: Ben Hagen

30th Dec. 1930

My dear Saxon,

It is a long long time since I saw you—your birthday party was the last occasion. Here I am marooned in bed with what appears to be influenza. A country cottage is a chill place to come to late on a December night with a bad cold. So I took to my bed and have lain by the fire for 5 days, but I'm practically normal today, so shall put on a dressing gown and become a rational being again.

I suppose in these 5 days you would have read Plato through. What a pity it is that we cant pool our reading!—I mean, if I could attach a little sucker to the back of your neck and drink through it without any effort, all your knowledge, I should be able to die content. I dont suppose, as things are, I shall ever read Plato through, or Theocritus, or Thucydides: and then I suspect you of having spent Christmas reading some entirely obscure, rather late and imperfect, but absorbingly interesting and very indecent, satire by an Alexandrian—why not? But I shall never know.

I heard of you making the Baboons howl at the Zoo with Roger. How much does it cost to become what you are—I dont mean in spirit—I mean a Fellow of the Society, so that one can go on Sundays? I want to make Leonard a member. Now that we're all so old, I daresay one can afford it, and what a refuge for extreme old age, to sit with the baboons!

Maynard and Lydia came over in their Rolls Royce yesterday; Nessa and the children—but Julian is likely to become a fellow of King's they say—came to Charleston

yesterday. I am reading Defoe's *Tour of England*—the sort of book one can read all day, turning the pages as a sheep eats grass. I go on and on. In his day, a new house was a most creditable and welcome sight—that is what strikes me—whereas, whenever I go out here I find some horrid little red bug on the downs, and feel more rage than about almost anything.

As you can see, I've no news. Gerald Brenan seemed at one moment to be hovering over us with his wife [Gamel Woolsey], but we did not manage to meet. Have you met? Why do you think one comes to the country at Christmas? The gale is battering at the windows. Why do you think one makes up these romantic stories about owls and clear sunny days, when the owls are dead and the sun sunk? Please write a long long fascinating letter full of reflections upon life.

Leonard's love—
yr V.W. (L4 268–69)

Letter 2306: To Ethel Smyth

Reader: Marcia Day Childress

5th Jan 1931

I swear I will go through the article [*On Being III*] and find the bad grammar this evening; I daresay all my own inaccuracy. Well (as you would say) my letter writing faculty has dried up. This bloody temperature stays a little over 99, and I daresay when we come to London I shall see a doctor—no that's no use—I shall get a febrifuge. We come up on Wednesday, I expect the germ can't be ousted here, as, though I can keep one room hot, the others are like cold baths, whatever one does. No doubt a dry house and a large gas fire will do the trick. No: spittoon never needed. Meanwhile I feel vaguely ashiver, and vaguely dull, and vaguely hot, and then want to sleep, and try to write a sentence to keep

the Waves on the simmer, but cant get up the right pressure. However its an Italian day—there should be cypresses against the sky and lizards in the crannies, and Leonard is going to take me for a drive. So there's no great damage to cry over—except my fortnight wasted.

Whats the use of beginning to ask or answer questions? None. A bottle turned upside down represents my state of mind. Theres the Brewster letters—theres the Wreckers—theres the question of repeating compliments. As for this last, I've come to the conclusion, in my 99's, that no: theyre not good for me. I dont like them. I mean I do; but dont want them—they tingle and quiver and leave me displeased. So I'm going to be austere, and you shall never again repeat what people say (with certain exceptions) You, now, flourish on praise; its part of your strange psychology—I believe you need it: why it upsets me. I cant at this moment decide—Mrs Woodhouse on my nose for instance. And was HB. a man of wealth? Did he ever do anything, by way of profession? What did his father and mother do? Why did he live in Rome? I feel him, though so near in some ways, in a vacuum in these respects. I've finished the letters—awfully (to use my childish slang) intriguing, I must wait, for I'm going to catch the sun. It is so warm, so blue, one could fancy it was early on a June morning, the downs on the other side of the marsh have that soft burning, yet dim look of a very early summer morning.

Love

V. (L4 274–75)

Letter 2481: To Lytton Strachey

Reader: Rachel Kravetz

10 Dec [1931]

“I arise from dreams of thee”—that’s why I write. I have just woken from a dream in which I was at a play, in the pit and suddenly you, who were sitting across a gangway in a row in front, turned and looked at me, and we both went into fits of laughter. What the play was, what we laughed at, I’ve no notion, but we were both very young (no, for you had your beard) and at the age when we used to write to each other. Why are these dreams more vivid than real life?—Anyhow while it hangs about me, I can’t help writing to the bearded serpent, especially as Clive tells me you are off to Malaya for months and the chances are we shan’t meet till Gordon Sqre. is full of tulips and [Arthur] Waley is playing tennis with Alix [Strachey] in white flannels.

I’m recumbent, lazy, content, reading book after book. And what are you doing? Reading Shakespeare I hope and occasionally making a note very neatly in a very beautiful book. By the way I read As you like it the other day and was almost sending you a wire to ask what is the truth about Jacques—What is it? His last speech reads so very odd.

This is all my news, as I see no one, not Ottoline, not Charlie Chaplin—no one but Clive who runs in to see me between a lunch party that ends at 5 and a dinner party that begins at 8.30 and goes on till the sparrows are rising in flocks from the Embankment. Lord—how I’d like to lead his life.

Well this is only a dream letter and needs no answer, unless you can tell me what we laughed at; but when you’re in London with the tulips and Waley’s white flannels, please come and see your old and attached friend

Virginia (L4 412)

Letter 3203: To Janet Case

Reader: James Kearns

Christmas Eve 1936

My dear Janet,

I was very glad to get a letter from you, but very sorry to hear that you're lying on a sofa, ill. I'd not heard of it—following you in the Manchester Guardian I thought you were up and about. ...

Old Violet Dickinson, whom you may remember—the 6ft 2 woman, with a lot of chairs and dogs—suddenly sent me 2 huge volumes of my own old letters, from Hyde Park Gate mostly; and there your name so often occurred, and I could see you coming up to my room at the top of the house and saying You've not done any work! However, in spite of that, how very kind to me you were!

And what a bore I must have been, besieging you at Windmill Hill [Hampstead], and telling you about my proposals of marriage! I think the young now have easier lives than we had, but then I don't believe they have such affection as I had, and have, for Janet Case. Nessa's Angelica, aged 17, told me the other day that she thought we—Nessa and myself—had had much more interesting lives than she has, because she has always had everything she wanted: I wonder if its true. Anyhow she's a lovely sea-nymph, and going to be an actress. You see I'm wandering on, sitting over a log fire with Leonard reading history for his book [After the Deluge], and the black and white spaniel [Sally] in its basket beside him. I'm glad to hoick him away from his eternal meetings—Labour party; Fabian Research, Intellectual Liberty, Spanish Medical Aid—oh dear, how they poach on him—what hours he spends with dirty unkempt, ardent, ugly entirely unpractical but no doubt well meaning philanthropists at whom I should throw the coal scuttle after 10 minutes if I were in his place. Now we have three weeks off, and he prunes his trees, and I read Gibbon, because I'm going to write an essay on him, and ramble over the downs for hours and hours. How's Margaret, I wonder? We wanted to go there this summer, but I couldn't get about much. I liked her house, and in particular a tree outside where she

sits—a perfect place we thought, and both of them seemed settled in happily. Now I must stop and read a huge bundle of manuscripts. Every boy and girl who can buy a fountain pen and a ream of paper instantly writes a novel, ties it up and sends it to us. How I loathe novels! Why shouldn't you write, not a novel, but your reflections—on your life, or your great Aunts life—anything? Do. and then I shall be happy to read it. My love—both our love—for L joins in—to you and Emphie.

yr V W

Letter 3339: To Angelica Bell

Reader: Amy Smith

Christmas Day [1937]

Darling Pixy,

Since this is the very last hour of your birthday, I must send you Old Aunt's Best Wishes, though Old Aunt's handwriting may be illegible. And for God's sake answer as I'm as solitary as a single sealion bereft of its mate in a cold ocean cave without you. As for Mummy, as she's forgotten she ever had a sister, creep gingerly on tiptoe, plant a kiss on her parting and sing or rather sigh "A present from Rodmell!", on which she'll jump like a cow stung by an adder.

Which reminds me, foot and mouth is still very bad: a fresh case at Black Cap: so we cant walk.

The Keynes' came to lunch, and we put Maynard to bed on 2 chairs and talked and talked till he worked into such a fury about politics that Lydia called the car and off they

drove. Theyve got a new chauffeur; a great mechanical genius, with whom Lydias in love, called Frank, Auntie's nephew in law, and a great improvement on Edgar. I was as tactful as an eel and said nothing to recall unhappy memories. And then Lady Colefax came to tea—in London. And she was tactful about Helen's party, which, since she had been closeted with Duncan was, she said, all she could desire. Also HOW BEAUTIFUL HOW PERFECTLY LOVELY your niece is! she said. Beware. Beauty is only skin deep. It is sober worth that tells. And you'll be asked to North Street. Also she said Jane Clark bought a picture. Also she told us the whole inside story of David and Wally Simpson. It was thrilling. Wally is a perfect Lamb: David a man of genius—but as for the Duke of Kent—Sybil almost cuts him when she meets him. But thats all I've room for. So darling Pixy good night, and dream of witches.

VIRGINIA

Please kiss Miss Campbell and Colonel Teed on my behalf. (L6 193–94)

Letter 3340: To V. Sackville-West

Reader: Ben Leubner

[26? December 1937]

It's not due to you that I'm alive today: I've eaten the whole pie practically myself!

Heaven above us, what immortal geese must have gone to make it! It was fresh as a dockleaf, pink as mushrooms, pure as first love. (but first love conveys nothing to the hardened and battered—this I put in by way of an aside) It was so divine, I could forgive any treachery. My word what a pie! Tom Eliot was dining with us the night it came. Complete silence reigned. The poet ate; the novelist ate; Even Leonard, who had a chill

inside, ate. Nothing of the least importance was said. Where do they come from? Could one send a card and have one at will? It seems incredible. And then Potto's collar arrived. Out I trotted with Virginia blazoned on my neck. Many people accosted me; others took the view that there was something sacred like a text from the Bible—about a woman with a name on her: others—oh did I tell you I'd been offered an Order?—I forgot—they thought I'd come from Buckingham Palace. A kind of Order of Merit.

But Orlando, pink porpoise, isn't it against our Covenant to do this sort of thing? Don't you remember offering me Thackerays wine cooler or ash tray or something in the days of the fishmonger and how I said: Unhand me Sirrah?

I'm not sure I shant send you a present: take care next time a rather heavy, thick malodorous packed arrives; a little oozy at the corners. The worst of owning Sisst. is that you can only be given liver, calves heads,—things that dont add to the value of the estate. Ethels in ecstasies over her pate. 12,000 copies of Pepita sold.

I'm thinking of buying a fur coat

V. (L6 194–95)

Letter 3474: To V. Sackville-West

Reader: Elizabeth Crawford

Xmas Day 1938

Well that was a princely thought—the pate, and better than a thought, it practically saved our lives; pipes frozen; electric fires cut off; nothing to eat, or if there were, it couldnt be cooked; and then behold the parcel from Strasbourg! So we dined and then lunched and

then dined off that—I can eat it for ever—I could have been content to freeze almost, if I could eat such geese's liver for ever. But what an extravagant Prince you are! How tremendously in the vein of the pink, and the pearls and the fishmongers porpoise this pink cream with the black jewels imbedded is—or was. Oh yes! and then what about Love—to which you so tantalisingly refer? Suppose you write it down, and then I will go into the matter. I can't (you'll be glad to hear) now; just in, all snow scattered from walking—the downs rose red and bright blue in the snow: wild duck circling; and now off to Keynes' Christmas cake and Nessa for dinner.

And my poor old brother in law Jack Hills is dead: and Mitzi died in the night of Christmas Eve. It was very touching—her eyes shut and her face white like a very old woman's. Leonard had taken her to sleep in his room, and she climbed onto his foot last thing.

But enough—don't die—

Please,

Yr V.

Leonard says: Thank you for the pate, Merry Christmas. Have you heard from your solicitor about the letter? Love to Harold.

I'll write a proper letter soon about all sorts of things. (L6 307)

Diary Entry: Thursday 9 January 1941

Reader: Sherry Arendt

[...] A blank. All frost. Still frost. Burning white. Burning blue. The elms red. I did not mean to describe, once more, the downs in snow; but it came. And I can't help even now turning to look at Asheham down, red, purple, dove blue grey, with the cross so

melodramatically against it. What is the phrase I always remember—or forget. Look your last on all things lovely. [...] (*D5 351*)