

8 May `44

Dear Milton,

It was with a joyous heart that I received your letter dated May the fourth! Of course I still remember you, dear boy. The way your youthful eyes shone as I narrated my adventures on the seas, I must confess I believed myself partially responsible when I heard you took to her bosom yourself! I have also kept current with your literary career, and have read and re-read your books about your grand island adventures. I daresay your father would be most proud, and I know I speak for my brother when I say you have many adoring fans among your father's old friends and companions.

Regarding your most recent adventure, and the questions you posed in your letter. Yes, I am indeed quite settled in Kingsport, and while it cannot compete with the charms of New York City or Boston, what it lacks in sophistication it rewards in beauty. You must see the famous Kingsport Head for yourself, like some titanic ship's prow jutting through a sea of fog! It will surely inflame your writer's imagination. Oscar remains occupied in Santiago, but I have converted his old warehouse into my own modest Scudder Museum. While I cannot hope to compete with P.I. Barnum, I am quite content, and do a reasonably brisk trade along the Mishatonic Valley. (Although dear boy, these salty New Englanders are somewhat harder to hoodwink than Broadway tourists and Delmonico sophisticates!)

While I am no expert on the subject of your inquiry, I feel confident I may not only satisfy your question, but entice you to select Kingsport as your port of departure. While Kingsport's whaling industry may lack the magisterial sweep of New Bedford's sultans or the storied history of Nantucket's pioneers, it is by all accounts a most profitable concern, and along with our trade in Canton and the East Indies, helped Kingsport recover from the ill-advised and disastrous war with England. You politely put me to task, and I have happily complied, and the results of my research have been tabulated. You will be happy to hear that the ships outfitted by the firm of Sleet, Baker & Blood are considered the most

"fishy" in Kingsport, consistently returning with a marvelous bounty of "sparm
ile." (God save us from this New England dialect!)

And dear boy, if I may presume that my family's business connexion with
your late father grants me license to speak somewhat indelicately, I may inform
you that Sleet, Baker & Blood are reputed to offer the best lays in all New
England. As an able seaman, it is my understanding you stand to collect
perhaps \$100-150 more for a Kingsport voyage than a comparable expedition
launched from those celebrated shores previously mentioned. And with Kingsport's
ships returning monthly to the thunderous applause of rolling barrels, a thrilling
voyage appears guaranteed, one certain to vouchsafe new wonders for your
prospective literary endeavor!

I therefore entreat you, Milton; do indeed place Kingsport above all other ports!
I have enclosed the most recent issue of the Essex County Compass, a somewhat
arcane periodical I'm told announces whaling expeditions. I will post you
updates as they become available, or until you ask me to desist.

Please let me know your plans, and I shall meet you upon your arrival. I hope
to share a switchele at the Knotted Iron, a tavern famous for hosting whalers,
and almost as blessed with nautical artifacts as my own humble institution.
And naturally, I shall give you the grand tour of Professor Riddle's Cabinet of
Curiosities — and if you assure me of your confidence, I may drop hints as to
which exhibits are the genuine articles. (The public answer is, of course —all of
them!) I shall even share my new project, a revival of the phantasmagoria
devoted to ghost ships, sea monsters, and skeletal pirates. I am working on a
script even now, one that would surely benefit from the helpful suggestions of a
celebrated writer!

I eagerly anticipate your next letter,

—Oliver Moneypenny.

18 July '44

Dearest Milton,

I am overjoyed to hear that you have decided on Kingsport! I do not think I flatter myself when I suggest that my letters have had their intended effect?

I beg your forgiveness that I have not written sooner. I have been lately troubled by a peculiar insomnia, and have found it has impacted my usual good cheer and placed me in a somewhat enervated condition. I mention this only to supply the reason for my silence, not to engage your undue concern. I am seeing an excellent physician, a Dr. Isaac Coffin — yes, "Dr. Coffin!" — an inauspicious surname not uncommon to these parts — who assures me that such insomnia is best addressed by a change in diet and physical activity. I have taken steps to soothe my mind and soul as well as my restless body. (I find that a good glass of port is an excellent physic!) And having said that, what would be a better balm for my soul than to see the son of my old friend?

Forgive the brevity of this letter; even now I feel the strain upon my temples, and the budding flower of dizziness unfolds its swooning petals. Indeed, I pen this from an apothecary, where the painted eyes of lovely Calypso gaze down upon me, calling to mind the fair nymphs of your fabulous Nuka Kiva! I have every intention of posting this before the Arkham coach arrives this morning, after which I shall treat myself to breakfast at the Hotel Poseidon. An extravagance, I know, but their "famous" poached eggs may be just the thing to cure this bout of malaise.

Warmly yours,

—Oliver Money Penny.

13 September '44

Dearest Milton,

I believe that I recently posted a letter to you, but I am afraid I cannot recall its contents. No matter! I am writing down this letter. I am writing to myself, this letter was written and posted! Not now, of course, now I only write that I shall write.

Milton — words! How do you tame this gift so? My own script — Professor Riddle's *Tales of the Deep* — all nonsense now — now that I've understood the German's phantasmagoria.

I believe I may have referenced a certain insomnia in an earlier letter? I believe I may have cursed it, as well, perjuring it as malady and malaise. Foolish Oliver! Milton, these last sleepless weeks have changed me. I am now working on something new for my museum — something quite astonishing! Something that will grab that parvenu Barnum by the stones and give them a squeezing he won't soon forget! To think — I have been spending the last two lustrums of my existence peddling wonders for nickels and dimes? I now look upon that epoch as a profligate waste of time — dear God! What I have now will put Phineas out of business, would knock old John Scudder back on his ham-hocks.

Milton, dare I hope — that you also understand? Dare I confide in you, that perchance — this is why you wrote to me in the first place? Maybe your wish to go to sea again is because — you see it, hear it, feel it too? I am enclosing this page torn from the Bible, as one prisoner might rap a coded message to another. Something tells me that you will understand completely. The Tattooed Man tells me he understands, but he is uneducated, nor does he grasp the import of the slides. He has heard the sixth angel — yet remains deaf to the four horns!

Dear boy, you must call upon me when you arrive in Kingsport. I'll be at the museum, any time of day or night.

—O.