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Shandia, Dec. 13, 1955

Dearest Mother: For some reason we got no mail again last week, so if it has been two weeks – nearly three, since we heard from you. I do hope some will come tomorrow. I'm just writing this to you, since some of what it contains is not to go beyond you, and the rest is not of interest to others. I told you some time ago about our interest in the Aucas, and that it is not to be told to anyone. Well, I made a trip over to Ila on Saturday, the place where Rachel was, working useful phrases, but not very much, so I went over, leaving Valerie to Jim's and Eugenia's mercies, and spending Saturday afternoon, and Sunday, with Dayuma. It would be nice if Racehl's material were available to us, but due to the fact that none of us feel that we can let Wycliffe or any missionaries know what we are doing, we cannot act too interested in what Rachel has without causing suspicion. Beside, her material was gained monolingually, and of course we can speak to Dayuma in Quichua, thereby getting much more accurate information. I took three girls with me, we left Sat. morning around 8:30, arriving around 2, having been delayed by losing the trail in a section where a lot of trees had been cut down. The people of the hacienda (that same gang that came over with Rachel and Cathie, the men drunk, etc. that I told you about) were most cordial, and lent me Dayuma all afternoon. It was a lovely site, the hacienda, and I was impressed to observe how it is run – just about like a huge plantation, with slaves. All the Indians are owned by the patron, and of course are at his beck and call. I was served me meals all alone on a huge upstairs porch, by a small Indian boy. Very good food all from the hacienda of course, pork, eggs, chicken, delicious coffee roasted in an earthen pot over an open fire, fruits, etc. All day Sunday I could hear the wailing of a woman whom the patrons had locked up in a bodega in order to turn her over to the authorities when they came the next day. The woman, not married, had given birth to a son the day before, and immediately killed it. Sevilla told me it was not the first time. Poor people. For all I know, it was his son, as the Indians say he and his two sons live with any all of the hacienda Indians. I could see numbers of 'Indian' children around, who certainly had a good sprinkling of white blood in them. Incidentally that hacienda is the one where we dropped the letter when you came in with me, Mother – you remember no doubt. It is surely a nice place, right on the Ansuc River. We swam in the river Sat. afternoon. After getting a good lot of material on Sunday, we set out for home on Monday morning at 7:45, and arrived here at noon. Everything was fine, thanks to my dear husband, and a capable girl. It is nice to be able to leave things with Eugenia and know she will do fairly well. On the way over to Ila I nearly stepped on a coral snake, the only snake for which there is no remedy and whose bite is said that one can be dead in 29 minutes. I neither saw nor heard it, but the girls behind me said it went right between my feet. We found it under some leaves, and killed it. It just proves to me often we must encounter them without every knowing about it. I had asked the Lord for protection from snakes and we started out, and it was not half an hour later that this happened.

Valerie still wakes up a night every now and then, and just howls for no reason. It is not a hungry cry, nor a pain. She is just plain mad when she is put down again after being changed, and screams and yells. It is hard to know what to do, for sometimes I just let her cry without going in, and found out in the morning that she had had a bowel movement. Then if I do go in, she of course has had no b.m., but because she has been changed, she is more awake and wants to be played with, and cries all the more. I often give her a bottle of milk, but when that's gone, she howls again. I am sure she is not hungry. I discovered this morning, however, to my great dismay, a small white worm in her stool, so I fear perhaps that is what has been bothering her. They cause itching at night, according to the books. Well, tomorrow for sure we will administer crystoids, the best and by far the simplest treatment for children. I feel badly that she has gotten them, but it seems inevitable, especially at the crawling stage, when she is so filthy from the floor, that all the Indians have walked on, and she puts all sorts of stuff in her mouth. I have found her lustily gobbling up two cockroaches so far. Dr. Fuller's baby was rubbing his bottle in the rug at their house once when I was visiting there, and sucking on it. Doc laughed nonchalantly and said, "Oh yes, he'll have to be dewormed soon." So I guess it is routine here in the tropics, but there is nothing more...

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...horribly repugnant and disgusting to me than the thought of worms. As I recall Dave had them when he was a little boy, too, didn't he?

Our big drake has killed two of the sweet little baby ducks that hatched recently. It makes me mad. He is such an ill-tempered old lummo, chases the poor roosters and hens till they are crazy, and never gives his "wife" a minutes peace, on top of her ten or twelve times a day, all the time, but he is so huge, we want to keep him so that his tribe will increase, as the one we ate was delicious and fat. We are taking another of his sons over to Arajuno to eat for Christmas. Jim goes to Puyupungu tomorrow. I had the dates wrong. The fiesta is from the 15 to 18. He will be back Monday, I guess.

This is peanut season again so we can have our own peanut butter, which I like very much. It is not much trouble to make, as long as there is a gang of Indians around to hull them. I grind them three times with salt, and add a little vegetable oil, and it come out very nicely.

Must stop now – Jim is likely to come in and want to read this, and I haven't told him that I've told you about my working on the Auca, so you had better not mention it or my trip to Ila in any return letters. It really would be disastrous if this got out to anyone. McCullys, Saints, Pete, and one fellow from the GMU who is planning to go on a reconnoitering trip with the others, are the only one who know, and I haven't even told anyone but Jim that I've gotten information from Dayuma. I don't think it will be too long before I can tell the family of the plans and all the

details, but till then, suffice it that you know we are interested in reaching, and praying for God's guidance. That is the most important thing – it would be folly to attempt anything with a tribe like the Aucas, without clear guidance.

Much love,  
Betty