

October 13, 1958
Tiwaenu River

Dearest Marj and Marilou:

It's a rainy day and there's no one here except Dayuma, Rachel, Val, and one couple (Kimu and Dawa). Everyone else has gone to the original settlement to get food. I'm not sure whether you understand that when Dayuma returned in September the first time with M and N, she stayed here on the Tiwaenu (the ae is pronounced like a in cat, not father) and everyone came to her. She has now given "orders" that this is to be the settlement. It is where she grew up. Of course, there is no food here, so things are pretty difficult for them. The plane could drop us food, but I am anxious to "identify" as much as possible and hesitate especially to ask for food for them lest they become dependent on it.

Mankamu left this morning with all the women who came out to Arajuno. Says she'll return tomorrow.

I'm not at all sure Dayuma did a wise thing in thus trying to uproot the whole community. It may well be that some will simply refuse to move. That seems to be the case so far with Dabu (Mankamu's brother) and Nimunga. They have not showed up so far. But I have now met four of the seven men who killed our husbands. It is a very strange thing thus to find oneself between two very remote sides of a story. To us, it meant everything in life and continues to mean that. To these simple, laughing, carefree forest people, killing five men was little more than routine and they had probably nearly forgotten about it.

The story as I have managed to get it thus far, is that the men were all on the beach. The Aucas leaped suddenly out of the forest from behind the tree house and killed them immediately. I suppose they jumped back into the water (the fellows) hoping to evade the sudden shower of spears.

George and Delilah and company knew that the fellows were on the beach because some of the Auca men had seen them there a day or so earlier as they were out hunting. Dayuma knows nothing about the Aucas having responded to the calls and gestures from the plane. (M and N incidentally apparently came out simply to see the "outsiders" supposing that all, gringo and Quichua alike, were the same group. They did not come looking for the plane.)

I asked if they have any of Tremblay's belongings. A camera was thrown away, the gun and a knife taken by the men and the children pulled a ring from his rotting fingers. Ipa, whom you met, Marj, says she has the ring over at her house. I have asked her to bring it so we can send it to his mother. Then perhaps she will believe that he is dead.

Did I tell you that Dayuma cut all but two of the men's hair in butch style on her visit in? I could wring her little neck! It surely spoils the effect. And she is doing her level best to get everyone to discard their earplugs and put clothes on. However, many may be the blessings of her presence; there are certainly real problems which I had hoped to avoid in the initial stages of introducing what it means to be a follower of Christ. But for this too, I can trust and believe that the prayers of thousands are yet to be answered in the way God wants them to be.

Already Dayuma has arranged for Mariano, father of Cesar, to marry Ipa. Marilou, you know him, I believe. Others want Quichua men to come into the tribe. This will mean problems, too, but it may be their salvation--both materially and spiritually as the man shortage is acute. Besides, the generations of intermarriage may be responsible for some things we would like to see improved. Kimu told Dayuma today that he was disappointed when the six Arajuno Indians left. He had hoped at least

one would stay and keep him company!

I wish you could hear the singing at night! When the Quichua men were still here, we all sat on the logs under the stars and took turns--first Aucas, then Quichuas singing! The Auca men sit with solemn gaze, hands clasped in front of chest, and chant in three parts--a single minor chord, unvaried through literally hundreds of repetitions of a seven-beat phrase. The words may change every 40 times or so, but not the rhythm or the music. It is fantastically hypnotic. I made a tape recording of it. (This business of trying to record 1) in a diary, 2) in letters, 3) in photographs, and 4) on tape--besides trying to take down language data and keep Val amused, can get complicated. To say nothing of the 9 step cup of coffee!

October 17--Yesterday the plane came over bringing the meat, fish, cheese, candy, toasted avas, canned meats, etc. that I guess you two sent. Thanks so very much for all your thoughtfulness and for your letters and prayers and understanding. You see things rightly when you realize that the problems are not all solved with an apparently successful entrance into the tribe. The problems are new ones now, and the testings of a different nature, but the Tempter has the same object as has the Deliverer. That is, the former's is to make disciples for himself, as the latter's is to make us like Himself. New situations are only new arenas for faith to be proved. Pray that my faith rest firmly in the Pioneer and Perfecter.

I wish you could see this gang eat. Last night when the meat came in, Mankamu cooked it up and then called the men together (these included Kumi, her 17 year old (my guess) son, four or five other boys, Gikita (her muscle-bound, lithe, but rather aging husband) and Kimu, her younger brother.) She throws a pile of steamed yuca and plantains onto a leaf on the ground, opens the pot of boiled beef, and everybody grabs all he can. The sound effects (smacking, sucking, tearing, munching) are fantastic. It's all over in about three minutes. The men rise from their haunches, the women lick up whatever remains, and they scatter into the twilight. No one has said a word--"help yourself" or "thank you" or anything. Then the fires are fanned, showing up the ragged silhouettes of leaf huts, hammocks are strung and quiet settles in. The toads and frogs, crickets, and cicadas start in with the occasional horn-like call of a munditi (the black bird like they gave Ed and Mari-leu) or owl, and once according to Dayuma, the panting of a nearby puma.

October 18--Breakfast this morning besides certain civilized blessings sent by you two (I presume) was the forearm and a clenched fist (with drawn white skin and black nails) of a monkey. Not bad, except for the very penetrating flavor of burnt hair. Last night Gikita and two sons brought in 5 monkeys and two birds--caught with blowguns and poison darts. We all sat around while Mankamu thrust the hopeless animals one after another into the fire, till the thick fur burned itself into sizzling, popping balls, the limbs curled up in paroxysms (it seemed) of pain and the dead, human faces gaped in agony. Then into the pot they went while everyone sat and jabbered till chow time. Then they passed out the meat, along with yuca and plantains and we all sucked and tore away. (It is quite impossible to bite monkey flesh--you simply clamp your incisors on it and tear). It is a comfort to know that meat is easily digested even if not chewed!

Yesterday afternoon, watu gave me two of my favorite fish--a descendant, I understand of an armored prehistoric species. For the first time I discovered why Indians regard the head as choice. I found it delectable--especially the brain and eyes. The latter I had somehow mistakenly assumed were very bitter.

There is a hoard of kids around which keeps Val happy. She is, of course, in her element in an Indian environment--would rather drink their stringy, lumpy banana

drink than milk; seems to sleep every bit as soundly on bamboo as on a mattress. She plays in the river whenever anyone goes down to fish, bathe, or wash pots. She hacks away at trees with a machete, fans fires, strings beads, twists fibers, and generally makes an Auca of herself except for the language. At present she seems to know one word "apaenikandapa--he spoke." She used to know two or three.

There are now 10 houses--all of them tiny (about 6'x8') leaf shacks except for those which Gikita and Kimu are in process of building. Rachel sleeps under the roof Gikita put up. Val and I have our own "private" house. So far there hasn't been a real rain. We shall see how this roof takes it. There are of course no walls or floor--plenty of fresh air. Weather is ideal, not hot as I had expected and no mosquitoes. Plenty of gnats between 6 a.m. and 6 p.m.

October 25--Day before yesterday, Dabu arrived. He is the only one of the present group of men (except Munga, who is from downriver) who had no part in killing the five. He, you remember, cried when he heard about it. I can understand why Dayuma thought George was Dabu when she saw George's picture. Dabu is very much like him, but he smiles alot and I don't think there were any smiling pictures of George. Dabu is small, as George was next to the fellows, perhaps 5' 1" or 2" at most, but very muscular--a beautiful triangular body, broad shoulders, no hips. He is the only one besides Munga whose hair Dayuma did not cut. I learned too, that all the women had had hair down to their waists until Dayuma arrived with her devastating shears! What a shame!

Dabu explained to me when I inquired about them that he removed his earplugs in mourning for one of his earlier wives when she was speared by the downriver people. Gikita and Mankamu threw their plugs away when their little girl died. So at present, there are only two or three who wear them--the older women have had many losses through spearings and the younger generation hasn't got holes.

Dabu showed me, as soon as he arrived, the big scar on his knee from Muipa's spear. So many of them have scars and they always like to show them to you and tell the story about it.

Yesterday was Friday, the day our weekly drop flight was expected so Dabu waited all day long for it. He intended to go hunting afterwards, as there was nothing here to eat (and 25 women and children besides the two men). We thought the plane would bring meat, yuca and plantains, but due to several factors we learned about this morning on the radio, it didn't come--so everyone went to "bed" (hammock would be more accurate) with a few plantains (rice, in our case) in their stomachs. (Now don't start thinking we are suffering with hunger. That would be very far from the truth.) Dabu, however, was very disappointed not to see the parachutes. He had to leave this morning as he left his three wives and who knows how many kids at home and home is on the downriver trail, therefore a pretty dangerous spot.

On Thursday night, we were all sitting or swinging in hammocks by the fire in Gikita and Mankamu's house when the dogs began to bark. Of course, this could mean only two things: a tiger, or the downriver killers. So, supposing it to be the latter, Mankamu (who I now observe to be the matriarch of the tribe) went out and perched up on a log and sermonized for about half an hour. She told them we are all living well now, we don't kill, we'll be glad to receive them if they will come out without spears, etc. I guess they didn't like the terms--at least, no one appeared! (I took some of her declarations on tape, also Dabu singing.

After observing how very practical and comfortable a hammock can be in this environment, I sent for mine from Shandia. The plane dropped it last week and I have

been sleeping very comfortably, a fire practically underneath me, which keeps me warm. I can add wood without budging from my bed and in the day time, it makes a wonderful contour chair where I can read, write, cook, and sleep. Val goes to sleep in the hammock at night then when I come I put her on the bamboo below me--this is the way the house is arranged:

Yesterday afternoon it rained and blew hard. I saw again how sensibly these people have adapted to their environment (and we may as well face it, we will not be able to live comfortably unless we copy them, which I, except in the matter of dress, have tried to do.) Of course, the rain blows straight through the house. What does one do? One blows up the fire, hangs up one's few possessions in a carrying net under the ridge pole and stretches out in the hammock. You get wet, naturally. What does it matter? The fire keeps you warm and as soon as the wind dies, it dries out your hammock. The Indian still has the advantage over us--his possessions are: a blowgun and darts, a few clay pots, a fish spear, and net; a hammock, a basket or two. They do not include camera, radio, tape recorder, notebooks, and clothes, which must be kept dry. However, I find that baskets and nets are suitable storage closets when hung high.

October 26--Another mail and food drop yesterday. Word that they'll make a bucket drop on Tuesday or Wednesday so I'll wind up these pages soon and get them ready to send out.

I don't think I told you that the first day we arrived, Val just sat down on the log which Kimu was squatting on and stared and stared. Then she said "Mama, who IS that? Is that my daddy? He looks like a daddy." Somehow, in her child mind, she had associated Aucas and daddy--though I'd never told her till a few days ago that the Aucas had killed her daddy. I waited till she had met five of the men and then I told her that those men had killed daddy. She said, "Oh". She prays for them and for the others she knows by name.

Please pray especially now for the downriver group. I feel about them now as I once did about this group--"impossible to reach." But "it is God who will tread down our enemies" and bring them into subjection to Himself. These people, including Dayuma fear them exceedingly and expect a retaliation any day. (It is their turn now to kill someone up here). But there are several downriver people here in this group now--perhaps God will use them to bridge the gap.

Very much love,

Betty (Elliot)

October 28--P.S. On Sunday night the last of the men, Nimunga, arrived with his wife and baby. Now they have all been here (all 7 of them) at one time or another. Nimunga is a small, furtive-looking man, not openly friendly like the rest. Dayuma tells me he came very close to killing his own mother recently. She is the tribe's only witch and he thought she was responsible for the death of his child. His wife came over and sat on a log with me in the moonlight that night and I happened to be gnawing on a monkey leg at the time. I had my penknife with me. I don't remember putting it away and next morning a thorough search failed to turn it up. So I am forced to the conclusion that someone stole it--probably Nimunga's wife as she had asked me if I had anymore like it. They left silently yesterday noon, without a word to anyone.

Minkayi and wife are back now, and he is a delightful person. Laughs and plays with

The other night I was awakened twice during the night to receive monkey limbs to eat. Were I a proper Auca I would have risen, blown up my fire and cooked some manioc and made myself a meal. Being still a gringo at heart, I stuck them up in the thatch to eat for breakfast.

last night Dayuma was telling me more of the thrillers that are routine small-talk in this outfit. It seems that when Nimunga went to finish off George, he didn't do a very thorough job. George, knowing he wouldn't pull through, went to his own grave under his own locomotion, got in, demanded that his kids be strangled and thrown in with him (only one child was) and then asked them to go ahead and cover him up. His two wives (Delilah and Ipa) stood and watched while they fixed the split palm boards over the body (this makes quite an ample space, so the victim probably breathes and writhes for a good long time) and then they watched them tamp the earth "tight" so he won't come out" and listened to the faint groans from underground. These are the men and women with whom we live and eat.