It was six minutes to six by the clock over the *information booth*. The tall young soldier who had just come from the train lifted his face, and his eyes *narrowed* to see the exact time. His heart was pounding with a beat that shocked him because he could not control it. In six minutes, he would see the woman who had filled such a special place in his life for the past 13 months, the woman he had never seen, yet whose written words had been with him and *sustained* him.

*Lieutenant* Jones remembered *one night in particular*, the worst of the fighting, when his plane had been caught *in the midst* of the enemy. He had seen the *grinning* face of one of the enemy pilots. In one of his letters, he had *confessed* to her that he often felt fear, and only a few days before this battle, he had received her answer: "Of course you fear...all brave men do. Didn't King David know fear? That's why he wrote the 23rd Psalm. Next time you doubt yourself, I want you to hear my voice *reciting* to you: 'Yes, *though* I walk *through* the valley of the shadow of death, I shall fear no evil, for you are with me.'" And he had remembered; he had heard her imagined voice, and it had *renewed* his strength and skill.

Now he was going to hear her real voice. Four minutes to six. Under the *immense* roof, people were walking fast. A girl passed close to him. She was wearing a red flower in her suit, but it was a *crimson* sweet pea, not the little red rose they had agreed upon. Besides, this girl was too young, about 18, whereas Sarah had frankly told him she was 30. "Well, what of it?" he had answered. "I'm 32." He was 29.

His mind went back to that book - the book the Lord Himself must have put into his hands out of the hundreds of Army library books. In the book were notes in a woman's writing. He had never believed that a woman could see into a man's heart so tenderly, so understandingly. Her name was on the inside bookplate: Sarah Adams. He got hold of a telephone book and found her address. He had written, she had answered. Next day he had been *shipped out*, but they had gone on writing.

For 13 months, she had faithfully replied, and more than replied. When his letters did not arrive she wrote anyway, and now he believed he loved her, and she loved him. But she had refused all his *pleas* to send him her photograph. That seemed rather bad, of course. But she had explained: "If your feeling for me has any reality, any honest basis, what I look like won't matter.

Suppose I'm beautiful. I'd always be *haunted* by the feeling that you had been taking a chance on just that, and that kind of love would *disgust* me. Suppose I'm plain (and you must admit that this is more likely). Then I'd always fear that you were going on writing to me only because you were lonely and had no one else. No, don't ask for my picture. When you come to New York, you shall see me and then you shall make your decision. Remember, both of us are free to stop or to go on after that - whichever we choose..."

One minute to six - his heart leaped higher than his plane had ever done. A young woman was coming toward him. Her figure was long and slim; her blond hair lay back in curls from her *delicate* ears. Her eyes were blue as flowers, her lips and chin had a gentle firmness. In her *pale* green suit, she was like springtime come alive. He started toward her, entirely forgetting to notice that he was not wearing a rose, and as he moved, a small, *provocative* smile curved her lips. "*Going my way*, soldier?" she *murmured.* Uncontrollably, he made one step closer to her. Then he saw Sarah.

She was standing almost directly behind the girl, a woman well past 40, her graying hair tucked under a worn hat. She was more than *plump*; her thick-ankled feet were thrust into low- heeled shoes. But she wore a red rose in the *rumpled* lapel of her brown coat. The girl in the green suit was walking quickly away. He felt as though he were being split in two, so *keen* was his desire to follow the girl, yet so deep was his longing for the woman whose spirit had truly companioned and upheld his own; and there she stood. Her pale, plump face was gentle and sensible; he could see that now. Her gray eyes had a warm, kindly twinkle.

He did not hesitate. His fingers gripped the small worn, blue leather copy of the book which was to identify him to her. This would not be love, but it would be something *precious*, something perhaps even rarer than love - a friendship for which he had been and must ever be grateful. He squared his broad shoulders, saluted and held the book out toward the woman, although even while he spoke he felt hocked by the bitterness of his disappointment.

 "I'm Lieutenant John Smith, and you - you are Miss Adams. I'm so glad you could meet me. May...may I take you to dinner?" The woman's face broadened in a *tolerant* smile. "I don't know what this is all about, son," she answered. "That young lady in the green suit - the one who just went by - begged me to wear this rose on my coat. And she said that if you asked me to go out with you, I should tell you that she's waiting for you in that big restaurant across the street. She said it was some kind of a test. I've got two boys with *Uncle Sam* myself, so I didn't mind."