

January 4th 1863
Port Tampa, Florida

My Dear Son,

I wish to inform you of a delay in my return home. I am almost flummoxed to find a buyer for our citrus, but the Federal Navy has Tampa Bay and the entire Gulf Coast bottled up tight. I hope to find an outbound blockade runner who will transport our crop to the rail-road at Cedar Key, but most Captains are unwilling to attempt to run out too heavily laden. Every day I lower my asking price and if, God willing, a deal is struck, I can return home. I plan to wait no more than 10 days before our produce will be left to rot.

There are Yankee sympathizers here who tried to honeyfuggle me out of our lemons and oranges, but I know our crop will go straight to the Yankee Army. I would sooner starve, but I worry about Mother and your Sister. We must do our best to provide for them in these difficult times. If you can spare an afternoon away from the farm, would you and your bubs go duck hunting on Old Tampa Bay? When I crossed last week, there were lots of ducks in the shallows, and Mother would be grateful for a brace of mallards.

There has been no news of the war here since Christmas. I know that Captain Kearney will be calling us again soon to report to the 2nd Florida with the rest of our messmates. If that message arrives, waste not a minute to send word to me here at Port Tampa. I have my kit and can be ready to meet you on the road north of here. Unless I tell you otherwise, we'll meet at the same spot we camped at near the caves last year. Others will be joining us, so don't be surprised if you arrive before me. They are tenderfoot comrades who will have grub and help us get on our way to the next battle.

I must close quickly as the messenger who will carry this letter grows impatient with me.

Please take care of Mother and your sister. The Good Lord willing, I will successfully conclude my business here and return home this week. I'll do my best to send word ahead of my arrival. Take care to stay out of the way of any Federal Navy shore patrols. If you have to, light out for the swamps for a couple of days. Try to send word to the church to have someone go collect Mother and your sister.

I sincerely hope that this unpleasant time passes for us soon.

Father

