

IN REPLY REFER TO 3
FILE NO.



DEPARTMENT OF STATE

AMERICAN CONSULAR SERVICE

AMERICAN CONSULATE
Lagos, Nigeria
January 20, 1942

L-109
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My dearest darling:

British Overseas Airways Co.
I have been a very bad boy; this is the first letter I have written for exactly two weeks, and the third from Lagos. I have decided to number the letters so you will be able to tell when you have them all. I'm afraid the one I wrote two weeks ago hasn't arrived yet, because the plane I intended it to go on didn't stop, leaving a flock of mail and a lot of disgusted passengers stranded. A B.O.A.C. plane left yesterday evening, and I think my letter went with it. (If you are working in the censorship now, is this the kind of thing you are supposed to cut out?) There is rumored to be another plane next week, however, and I hope this one will make better time.

British Overseas Airways Corp.

Darling, I was terribly thrilled this morning. The messenger brought in two letters to me - both from you. They were the letters of January 9 and 17 - the latter only a week old. I could imagine it was still warm from the touch of your hand! I am so glad you have such a nice place in Coral Gables, and I am most impatient for you to come here and fix up our apartment. It is still just as bleak as when I wrote before, because I never seem to be able to get away from the office long enough to do any shopping. O well, perhaps it will be better to wait until you come, and then you can fix it up just as you like it. I'm afraid you will be a little disappointed from one aspect, however. There are no facilities for cooking. I think I mentioned in another letter that I eat (or feed, as the British say) at the British Airways mess, which is right back of my flat. The flat, alas, has no stove and not even a kitchen, although I have thought that it would be nice to have a hot plate there so that we could have breakfast at home - even in bed - when we want to. I am going also to get either a refrigerator or an ice box. Electric refrigerators are terribly expensive over here, and indeed hard to find at all. I have seen some ads for kerosene Electro-Luxes, but I have no idea how much they cost. It is likely to be an expensive proposition in any case. The only thing that bothers me about having to spend so much money now is that I had wanted to save it until we are living together, and then we could decide together what to spend it on. I figured out my income tax is going to be about \$225, so there is one chunk gone already. However, there are about \$3000 or so in the bank where I can get it, and I hope this will be enough to get us started and may be buy a savings bond too.

Of course I don't know what the situation will be when you arrive (and I am assuming that the Department of State will not ob-

L-109p2

ject), but I have an idea that you will probably keep right on being a working girl. There is scarcely a lady in Lagos who isn't working, mostly on a volunteer basis, on something connected with the war. A great many of them are in the censorship department, and we have urgent need of a good file clerk here at the office. The demand being so great, I have an idea you will get into it some how, although naturally only if you want to. There will be no compulsion. Did you know that you can't work for money after we are married? It's against the sacred Regulations! I would like to have you with me here at the office all day, so I could watch you moving gracefully around as I did in Lisbon. You are a creature of extraordinary grace, my dear. The way you carry yourself alone is enough to make any man fall for you, and added to your other charms, too numerous to mention, it makes you absolutely THE PRIZE PACKAGE of the world. I don't know when I will be able to relax and know you're really mine. Probably not until we have been married forty^{years} and have grown quietly old together. I don't think I can ever be absolutely sure of you. I will always feel that you are going to vanish into thin air - the creation of my super-heated imagination. But then again, my imagination, even super-heated, could never, by itself, have conceived the loveliness of you. I cannot rest easily until you are with me; I am obsessed by the idea that such a miracle could never happen to me, and that, in the end, some malignant fate will rob me of you and leave me with life without hope. Be very careful, dear, and don't love any one but me.

There is very little to report on about me. I still have the little Austin 10, and it threatens to come apart at any speed over 25. I think I could drive a car like that for years without having the slightest affection for it. Do you get attached to your personal possessions? I do. That's why I gave you the watch - because I was fond of it and it was a part of me. But this horrid little rattletrap of a car, never. However, I must admit that it is a mighty useful article. In view of the new restrictions on the manufacture, sale and exportation of cars in and from the U.S., we have written to the Department to ask their aid in getting an American car for me. It annoys me so much to think that, if I had been able to fly down here and thus avoid the long ocean voyage, I could have ordered one in plenty of time before everything shut up. Oh well, I can't have you and everything else in the world too, so I choose you, and we will thumb rides back and forth, if necessary. I'm sure you would have no trouble getting one, although maybe they wouldn't want to take me along.

What you write about Janie's going up to Vermont is all news to me; I haven't heard anything from her since the end of November. Her letter didn't arrive here until January 10th - the day I last wrote to you, and consequently I don't suppose she has received my reply which was written two days later. All details will be gratefully appreciated. And another thing - who is this Norman you say she almost married? When you wrote about meeting a soldier who was in love with her I thought you meant Dick Reinbold, from our home town. He and Janie have gone together for years, off and on, but she said they had decided to call it all off again. "Norman" is a new one on me. Maybe now that she knows all about my love life (meaning you), perhaps she will loosen up a bit and tell me about hers.

Sunday, January 25, 1942

L-109 p3

1/28/42 P.S. Your letter of November 28th from Grafton via Lisbon came yesterday. Clipper should leave here Thursday. Love, WK

I had to stop last night because of the shades of night; believe it or not, this office doesn't have any lights sufficient to work by at night. After running home, bathing and dressing, I came back here again and had dinner with Andy Anderson, who lives above the Consulate. Afterwards we went to see "Pinocchio", which has just arrived here. No discussion of Lagos would be complete without mention of the Saturday night "pictures". Every single Saturday evening, virtually every European in Lagos either has friends in to an early dinner or is invited out, and at nine all troop merrily off to the "Rex", which seems to have a monopoly on the European trade here. The films are first shown on Saturday night, and then circulated to the other theaters during the remainder of the week. You enter as to a regular house, and quickly pass through and out into a garden. The movable seats are set absolutely in the open - not even a half-roof, as at the Capitolio in Lisbon. It is rarely necessary to interrupt a performance because of rain, because even during the rainy season it rarely rains before midnight or after four p.m. The news reels are usually three or more months old, and the films themselves about two years. However, everybody goes just the same, even though they may have seen the show before "in civilization"; it is an easy way to entertain.

Tonight I am coming to Anderson's again for a poker game. It is my initiation into the poker circle, and I expect to lose my shirt, although I have been assured that the game is "small" and "friendly". I hope so. I used to enjoy poker very much the way we played at home and in Washington. There, we had a two dollar poverty limit: that is, no one could lose over \$2.00. I'm afraid this game won't be so gentle, and I can't say that I look forward to it very much.

While you have been busy legally dissolving the ties which bind you to your past, I, too, have been tearing up the roots. On January 4th I wrote to Beth Smith and told her about you and me. It was very hard, although really it shouldn't have been, because I had always told her that I had never succeeded in making myself believe that what I felt for her was a real, big love, the kind that lasts and endures for a lifetime. Perhaps affection was as near as you could come to it in English, although that, in turn, is perhaps too pale. I admired her, for she had many fine characteristics: she was unselfish and self-sacrificing, always ready to go out of her way to help someone. She is intelligent, though not flashy. And she is very loyal. But somehow she just never struck sparks with me; it took you to convince me that I was capable of love, in the true sense of the word. A few days ago I received a very simple, brief wire from Beth: "I'm glad Love". I guess from that that she has my letter and is being noble and unselfish as usual. These hooks of the past do tear into our flesh when we try to break away from them, don't they?

And now I am homesick for Lisbon. Since it is hot here, it is easy to forget that Lisbon is probably cold and damp now. I can see the Avenida late on Sunday afternoon, and you and I are walking up the hill. Jimmie and Flip are behind us; if we do not turn around and look back, we do not see them; we almost forget they are there. It is the time we talked about the kind of life we each wanted to have, and I explained my aversion to breaking off with the past and traveling to new places. Did you know then how lonely I was, and how much I wanted you to walk through life with me, giving me one fixed point to revolve around ~~it~~ all time? I rather think you did. Yours, now and always,

BILL

1/28/42 P.S. Your letter of November 28th from Grafton via Lisbon came yesterday. Clipper should leave here Thurs. next. Love, WK