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AMERICAN CONSULATE
Lagos, Nigeria
March 8, 1942

Dear Folks:

Daddy's letter of February 6th arrived on March 2nd, and Sarah's letter of February 18th came on the 28th; that will give you a fair idea of how all the mail is operating at present. Some goes very rapidly, and the rest has a long wait somewhere along the line. I was awfully glad to hear from both of you and to know that you hadn't been too greatly bowled over by the news that I hope to get married in the near future. I especially appreciate Sarah's offer to have Philinda come to visit you; I hope it will be possible for her to do so before the fatal step is taken. Of course, for the present, she has to remain in Florida, but after that I know she would appreciate an invitation, although I'm not sure whether she would be in a position to accept. In any case, I shall tell her of your kind offer immediately.

I know that a few months acquaintance seems rather short for a person to fall in love in, but I do feel that I got to know Philinda very well in that time. During those months we were living in the same hotel, eating two meals a day together, going out or staying in together virtually every night, and working in the same office by day. As her husband was there and we were all going out together, I hadn't any thought of love in the actual sense; that is, I knew I loved her, but I never had any intention of doing anything about it until I found out that she was leaving her husband and that she was very much in love with me. It is very hard to explain, but I feel that, under the circumstances we had a better than usual chance of seeing each other under natural circumstances, not in the artificial circumstances of the usual courtship. We often had discussions lasting far into the night, and I therefore think I have a fair idea of her mental processes. In other words, long before I dreamed that she could be interested in me, I had come to the conclusion that she was exactly the type of girl I had always wanted; when the opportunity offered, I didn't have the strength to resist and tell her that she must stay ~~xxx~~ with her husband at all costs. I told her I knew I ought to say that, but couldn't, and she said that they were washed up in any case. I do not believe that they could have ever been happy again, even if we had made the sacrifice and tried to forget about our love. In any event, it has happened now, I am sure in my own mind, and I shall be married at the first opportunity, for better or worse. I believe, naturally, that we will be very happy, and more so than usual because we have had to fight a long, hard fight, both against ourselves and against external circumstances in order to win our happiness. We will always appreciate it more for that reason.

The work here has been increased enormously because of the war, and I am busier than I have been at any time in my career except

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during the winter of 1938-39 in Stuttgart, which still remains an all-time high. We have given up all pretense of having Saturday afternoon off now, and work the regular hours. I would like to point out that this is much more of a sacrifice in this enervating climate than it is in the Temperate Zone. Along about five in the evening, when the sweat has been running down your back for two or three hours, you begin to feel like quitting, but you have to go on until six or later. Compared to any office in which I have been previously, we have floods of telegrams, most of which have to be coded or decoded by yours truly. When I came here, I took over part of Mr. Jester's work and part of Anderson's. Now, Anderson has gone to Accra to open a new Consulate, and so I have inherited all the remainder of his work. Our other Vice Consul is still in the office, but is being delayed by the usual transportation difficulties. And so it goes. At any rate, I now have a nice office to work in with enough desks and tables to rejoice the heart of any bureaucrat.

Andy left for Accra about the 20th of February, thus leaving me without any very close friend here. We enjoyed passing the time together very much, and I have a great admiration for his keen mind and ruthless decisions. He is the type we need now. I am always too soft, and hate too much to put myself forward or step on anyone's toes. According to the latest instruction, Andy will relieve us of Sierra Leone and the Gambia as well as the Gold Coast; if the district is so divided, it should reduce our work considerably, although well over half our work is concerned directly with Nigeria. Mr. Jester was very annoyed at this idea, however, and is planning to fight it with the Department. He would like to see Lagos made a supervising consulate general, with a Consul General in charge. The C.G. would be relieved of all administrative duties, and would be free to travel up and down the Coast surveying anything of interest to the U.S. government. I think it hurts his pride a bit to have a former subordinate not only given an office entirely independent of Lagos (and Mr. Jester), but even the larger part of the district. Andy will certainly need a lot of help in Accra, and I expect that another officer will be appointed there soon. I am afraid that they might take away our new man; I hope not, for there is plenty for all of us here right now. In some ways, Accra is more important now than Lagos. The headquarters of Pan-American Airways-Africa is located there, and they have a fine field and about 500 men. Here they have only 15 or 20. On the other hand, this is the big office for the so-called "Atlantic Division" of Pan-Am, meaning the Clipper service to the U.S. Clippers rarely if ever go to Accra because the landing facilities are very bad. Accra is the headquarters of the Army Ferrying Command, again because of their superior landing field, but Lagos is the seat of the West African Governors' Conference, the only unifying link between the various colonies on the West Coast of Africa, and Nigeria is, of course, much larger than the Gold Coast. Again, the Gold Coast has more important mineral deposits - manganese and some tin - while we have only a small amount of tin. Summing it all up, under present circumstances, there will be enough for all of us to do, and there is no point in trying to have one office made superior to another. We can only do our best in the area in which we operate and according to our opportunities, and thus make our contribution to the War Effort.

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March 12, 1942

Now do you believe I'm busy? I've been trying for four days now to get this letter finished, but so far I haven't had much luck. One of the troubles is that in a small office like this, there is such a welter of details to be handled that you never have time to concentrate on anything. At the present time, I am handling the citizenship and passport work, visas, invoices, shipping, notarial and all the coding and decoding. Just when I get started on one thing, something else comes up. There are lots of new regulations and orders being issued, and I have never done any invoice work or shipping before, so I have to waste a lot of time looking up the regulations on doubtful points.

Daddy's good letter of March 4th arrived today, thus making the best time for any of your letters yet. One of Philinda's letters came in exactly a week, but it was mailed from Miami, and so had a considerable advantage. I wish we could count on such service regularly, but I'm afraid that is too much to hope for under present conditions. Thank you both very, very much indeed for having ~~me~~ gone to so much trouble to buy the articles I asked for. I notice the cost came to some \$71. instead of fifty, as I had thought, so I am enclosing an additional check for \$20 to cover the difference. I have just read in a recent issue of TIME the proposals of Mr. Morgenthau for this year's income tax; I think it is a good thing that I am buying what I need now, because by next year even ordinary living expenses will be too much to carry after deductions for taxes. I am all in favor of high taxes, however, as this is the only way to curb inflation. By the end of the war, there should be such a demand for consumer's goods that industry will be able to make the switch from war production to peace production without so much difficulty. I am also in favor of the idea of taking off a certain percentage of incomes in savings bonds, which cannot be cashed until some time after the war. This will store up purchasing power to be released during the slump which will come during the transition.

I'm sorry that you didn't think my account of the trip down was sufficiently detailed, but I was (and still am) afraid of what the censors might do to it. Apparently they didn't object to my having mentioned that the ship stopped at Gibraltar on the way, and I don't see why they should, since the Germans can see from Spanish territory every ship that enters or leaves Gib. We also put in at Freetown for three days. I went on shore to see our Consular Agent there. I didn't see much of the town, but was convinced that it was a terrible dump and was very glad to find Lagos much superior from the point of view of appearance and amenities. I hardly know where to start to tell you about the country. Nigeria is such a big place - $1\frac{1}{2}$ times the size of Texas - and I have seen nothing but Lagos. The coastal area in which Lagos and Port Harcourt, the principal ports, are located, is low, hot and humid. The average year-round day maximum temperature here is 85 degrees, the night minimum, 72. The humidity averages about 85%. Thus you see that it is really the humidity, not the heat, which is bad. Everything made of leather rots. My bill fold and key case smell like ripe garbage, and I have had to discard my leather wrist-watch strap for a white cloth one. The watch itself has been ~~in~~ to the repair shop twice, and I doubt whether it can be made to work properly here. One should have these special moisture-proof watches for this climate. Clothes have to be hung out in the sun at least once a week, and I keep the light burning in the closet all night to keep them dried out.

The chief export item from the lowlands is palm ~~nut~~ kernels

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Distances. I have already mentioned the tin in Northern Nigeria. This part of the country is very dry, bordering as it does on the desert to the north. They ship a lot of cattle and goat hides to the U.S. from the area around Kano, which you will find on any map. There is some rubber around here in the South, and you can be sure the strenuous, although belated, efforts are being made to increase the output, which at present is negligible as compared to American consumption. Besides these export products, they grow lots of citrus fruits. Oranges, lemons, grapefruit and limes are very plentiful and cheap. In season oranges are four for 1¢; they are mostly green or the outside and not pretty like ours, but the juice is sweet and good. We have a glass of pure orange juice served every morning in the Consulate at 10:30.

I have found most of the people I have met here to be cordial and pleasant. As anywhere else, a fair proportion are dull and rather limited in their outlook, but no more so than usual. I am asked out fairly frequently, and I can always go see the Pan American boys if I feel the need of young American company. Most of them are even younger than I am, so that will give you an idea of their youth. Besides going out to dinner, there are dances at the Ikoyi Club, of which I am now a member. So far I have only been there twice or so. On Saturday night, everyone goes to the movies, and there is a small group who meet occasionally for low-stake poker. The exact number of Europeans living here is not known, but there are generally supposed to be about 1800. Outside of Lagos, there are probably not more than a few hundred whites scattered around in various trading centers and at the mines.

The natives are the blackest fellows I have ever seen. You rarely see a negro at home as black as these here, which shows that there has been a considerable amount of white admixture from time to time. In Southern Nigeria, there are said to be 38 different languages spoken among the natives, most of which are mutually unintelligible, so English is generally used in a greatly simplified form. I have just got a sample of "pidgen" English which is broadcast daily over the local radio. The straight English reads: "The Germans have made another attack on American ships. This time a big American ship on its way with stores for Iceland was sent to the bottom of the Atlantic. This is the third attack this week on American ships. There will be a big palaver about this." The pidgen version is, "German man he don make an order war for America sitimar. Dis tem he be wan big America sitima way day take am cargo go for dem country America he don sidom now ah tell you him name he be "Iceland". He sen am go for bottom water. Dis be three tem for dis week way German man be don give America sitimar war. Big palaver he go come out for inside". In some ways it's worse spelled out than it is when you hear it, but I found it absolutely ununderstandable when I first arrived. Now I can catch the drift. Incidentally, the word "sitimar" bothered me for quite a while. In case you don't catch, it's "steamer". In the North, Hausa is the lingua franca, and most of the Europeans there learn to speak it.

I was most interested to hear about the dachel which you have acquired. The idea of her lying on Daddy's stomach while he takes his after dinner nap was especially amusing. I certainly do wish, now as always, that I could be with you and see you all again. The idea of Daddy's nap has awakened all sorts of nostalgic memories; I often wish I had found a less interesting but more settled form of life which would have enabled me to be at home with you more often. However, if I were home now, I would be in the Army, so maybe it's all for the best. With much love to all