

IN REPLY REFER TO

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DEPARTMENT OF STATE

AMERICAN CONSULAR SERVICE

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My sweet darling:

As usual, I have been reading over some of your letters and I am amazed to find that I love you as much as ever. I can't honestly say, "More than ever", because that would be impossible. I like to picture you coming home some evening and finding this in the letter box. Do you jam it into your hand bag and then rush into the apartment to read it? Or do you just hold it in your hand while you fumble with the key and probably wind up by dropping all of them in a heap on the floor just outside the door? I like to imagine that, once inside, you take off your hat, if any, and carefully sit down on a studio couch and tear open the envelop with hurrying fingers that tear the light paper into globs, and maybe your hands tremble a bit when you pull out the sheets inside. I hope you smile when you see again I love you. I always remind you right away at the first because (1) it's the first thing I think of when I think of you, and (2) I don't want to keep you in suspense. Darling, I am suffering the most excruciating agony when I think of you surrounded by handsome men who are dying to take my place in your heart. I am so far away I cannot defend myself, except by these little pieces of paper which will be ennobled as soon as your fingers have held them. How I envy them! I would gladly give anything I have to be with you. I can understand how why kings can give up their kingdoms for a loved woman; I never could before I met you. Now it seems quite natural - indeed, the only sensible thing to do. Life without you would mean nothing, and therefore nothing lost in gaining you would be a real loss, since its retention would have no value at all. In a word, you are ALL THERE IS THAT MATTERS. "The atom and the giant star", ~~with~~ the center of life and all it signifies, the Spring, and the vital processes creating new life. I do not think really that it is right for one person to love another as much as I love you. It becomes a form of idolatry. Looking at it from the human point of view, I see that it is too much to hope that you could wait for me so long as may be necessary, but the thought that you might not wait fills my soul with blackness and the ache of the eternal void. This small expression of how I feel about you is supposed to give you just a hint of what would happen if you changed your mind about US, Unltd. Please don't.

There really is very little for me to write about this time. Life has been very quiet and work very hard. I really envy you the opportunity to get out in the sun over the week-ends. I haven't been out in the sun or swimming since the end of December, when I spent several days at Tarkwa Bay, as I told you. In fact, I haven't been outside this building since Monday night. (Today is Saturday, in case you haven't a calendar handy.) Tonight, however, I am going to the

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movies, as usual. I have invited Major Geisendorf, the Air Control Officer, Captain Hulsey, a medical officer, and Ray Colcord, one of the PAA traffic men for dinner, and we will go to the movies afterwards. The picture is "Babes in Arms", a picture which I would never go to see under normal circumstances. Here, however, you buy your tickets first and find out what is going to be on afterwards. The only really good show which has been here recently was "The Mortal Storm", which I thought was really excellent - James Stewart and Margaret Sullivan. Last week was "Balalaika", of which I can only say that it wasn't as bad as I had expected. The last two nights here I have been working on telegrams until about 8:30. This is getting rather monotonous, and I certainly wish McSweeney would come as we badly need some assistance. Of course I will never give up, but it would not be good for me to keep up at this rate for an indefinite time. If he were here, I think the work would come out about right, and we would have time to go things like checking the inventory which haven't been done for years.

You asked in one of your letters what I have been reading lately. I'm afraid I haven't been reading any books at all. The Major gets an air mail edition of TIME which he kindly lets me read, and that occupies one or two evenings a week. My Foreign Affairs magazine for July, 1941 and January, 1942 have arrived, and they take quite a lot of reading. My beloved New Yorker has never shown up yet. I guess there hasn't been time yet for any boats to come over since they got my letter about the change of address. The Department's mail room wrote and said there were no magazines there waiting for me, and I have no idea what has happened to all the Times and New York which I was supposed to get during the summer. In other words, I haven't been reading anything worth mentioning. I did start on a History of South Africa, which I think I mentioned before, but it was very ponderous. I still hope to get through the Boer War, at last, as I have always had a very foggy idea about its origins and outcome.

Later on, I hope to read some books on this part of Africa. We have several weighty tomes in the Consulate's library, like Buell's "The Native Problem in Africa" (2 vols.) and the report of the Haley Commission, which, although made several years ago, is supposed to be the best thing in print on all the British possessions in Africa. I suppose one ought to be informed about the area in which one lives - or rather, exists. I won't start to live until you are here, my darling. I love you, and without you is nothing.

A Pan American traffic man named Dick Carlson came in the other day to register. His home is in Coral Gables and he left there just before you went to work for PAA. I told him you were there, which makes Coral Gables the center of the universe as far as I am concerned, and he suggested that I make you jealous by asking you to give my love to Marjorie Powers and Dorothy Love, both of whom are alleged to be in the traffic section in Miami. Since I don't have any love to spare, you having a monopoly on the total supply, I think it would be more to the point if you gave those girls Dick's love. He seemed to think they were quite the thing. They need help of all sorts here. Why don't you get PAA to send you to their Lagos office to put the files in order? The boys say they never can find anything. Of course the Company wouldn't do it, but there's no harm in asking. I honestly don't see how I can live apart from you any longer, but I will live, as long as there is hope for us.

Penciled note in right margin, WLK hand: "Slight non-sequitur. Hope you don't mind"

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Sunday

I can now report that my little party turned out to be quite a success, on the small scale on which it was planned. "Babes in Arms" turned out to be much better than I expected. It had no idea or plot worthy of the name, but it was light and amusing and quite good enough to pass a Saturday evening away with. Afterwards we came back here and had a glass of beer before going to bed. This morning I was lucky. The telephone didn't ring until 9:00 o'clock, so I had a good sleep. Even the arrival of three more telegrams, two of them in code, have not been sufficient to spoil my good humor. I believe today is Easter; maybe that has something to do with it. I am trying to get this letter finished now, as one of the clerks will come in about 3:30, and we will then decode the two telegrams. This is one of those times when I feel that if you were only here, life would be downright pleasant.

I am enclosing a copy of the news broadcast given here in pidgen English, together ~~which~~ with the English original. I thought you might find the comparison interesting. Of course, you can't get the full flavor of the thing until you have heard it pronounced. It sounds very funny indeed, and is quite difficult to understand unless you listen to it for some time. I can do better than I did at first, but I don't hear it often enough to have become really familiar with it. As I believe I mentioned before, there are so many languages and dialects in Southern Nigeria that a type of simplified English has become the standard lingua franca. The majority of the natives here speak Yoruba, and a smaller number Ebo, and the news is also given on alternate days in those languages. My house boys are all Ebos. One night a local native dignitary, the Honorable Herbert MacCauley, O.B.E. etc. etc. was making a talk (in regular English), and I asked Thompson if he wanted to hear it. He replied, "No, sah. Ah lak de wah news!" Every so often he gives me his opinion on when the war is going to end. He thinks it will be this year, because of the German set backs in Russia. This, of course, is a result of the over-optimistic news broadcasts to which he has listened. I don't try to discourage him, however; I just say I hope he is right. I was very flattered the other day. He asked if, when the new master came (meaning McSweeney), I would go away. I said No. He then asked whether I was senior to McSweeney, to which I answered Yes. That made him smile broadly. The bigger the "master", the more prestige attaches to working for him. An important man, like Mr. Jester, for instance, is always referred to as "the big master". A really important man, like the Governor or the Chief Secretary would be called a "grand master". After that, he asked me how long I would probably stay in Nigeria, and I said I didn't know. He said, "I be glad if you stay all de time", which I gather means that he likes me and likes to work for me. That pleased me enormously, because, contrary to the advice of all the old hands here, I have always treated him kindly and with the respect due, in my opinion, to any human being. I have been warned that they will interpret this as a sign of weakness and not do their work well, but I have found that Thompson's work has not slacked off; he is just as attentive as he was when I first had him, so I consider that, for the time being at least, my system is working well. I have found, on the whole, that the African servants here are pathetically anxious to please their masters. They simply do not have the brain power to think of all the things a well-trained European servant might think of, but they will do anything within reason that they are told to, and do it as well as they can. I am very pleased with my "boys", and if you were only here to show Josiah some new ways of cooking, everything would be grand. There are lots of other things that need your attention, too; me, for instance. That's all for now. I love you every day and every hour of the day. Don't forget to remember me and love me, always.

Bill