

IN REPLY REFER TO

FILE NO. 47



AMERICAN CONSULAR SERVICE

DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Lagos, Nigeria; December 25, 1942

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Darling girl,

Here it is, a nice, hot Christmas, and the office is quiet except for a few people, who, like me, are typing private letters. We had a very nice party last night. The whole staff at present in Lagos, with the exception of the Army, had a lovely American turkey furnished by the Barber Line, sweet potatoes furnished by some missionaries up country, and all the usual trimmings, followed by plum pudding, courtesy of the Navy. It was a very pleasant evening, and about 11 o'clock we went over to the dance at the Club. Strangely enough, we were able to get a table and some chairs, and we had two ladies in the party, so I got to dance twice. It was a very moderate party, ended at four o'clock, and we came home. "We" in the last instance means John Burkeson, who is on his way home and has given up his car and house. He is staying in Mac's former room until he leaves. And I have no hangover today.

John was originally supposed to stay here until ~~we~~ you arrived, and then go up to Accra. However, he says that he has not been feeling well recently, and especially that his stomach was upset in the morning. I suggested he might be pregnant, but he thinks not. The doctor was unable to find anything wrong with him and thinks it is some sort of a nervous trouble. Before going out of town, the doctor said that if John didn't get over it in three weeks or so, he should go home, so John is resigning from the Foreign Service and leaving for the States by the next British Airways flying boat to Baltimore. He will probably call you up from New York, possibly before this letter arrives, and he will be able to give you the latest news about goings-on in the gay Nigerian capital.

Two gorgeous letters have arrived since last week. One was written November 24th and the other December 3rd. You were cold both times. Darling, as I have said before, once here, your days of worrying about the cold are over. Last night it was beautiful sitting on the terrace outside the club. The moon was just past full, and shed its soft light over the whole grounds. Lots of cottony white clouds were floating by, and inside there was music. I thought many times how much you would enjoy it, at least, during the short intervals when you weren't dancing. As usual, all the girls danced their legs off, as the place was full of lone wolves.

Your first letter told about your interv^{ew} with Mr. Erhardt, and I almost burst with pride when I read how you had

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taken him into camp. Of course, I wasn't at all surprised, because even a stone man would fall for the most attractive, beautiful and intelligent woman in the world. After all, look what you did to me! But it's always nice to have confirmation of your opinions from authoritative sources like Mr. Erhardt. I will think better of him from now on. The fact that he even made a favorable remark about me shows how completely you had won him. I'm sure he has never thought of me before, except as a name on a long list of lowly Vice Consuls, but as soon as he saw you, he thought I must have something on the ball to make you want to come to Lagos, the place everyone tries to stay away from.

As far as your work here is concerned, no one thinks you can do stenography, and I have been suitably reserved about typing. You will be in charge of the files and confidential cyphers, and you will have a colossal job trying to get our messed up files in order for binding. It probably won't be especially interesting; the only typing you might have to do would be if the boss wanted to write a super-confidential despatch which he could not entrust to the African clerks. Then he would type out a draft, and you would type it off the draft. However, this has only happened twice since Burleson arrived in September, so that won't occupy much of your time. I am pleased to death that they are going to pay you \$1800 annually. With our combined salaries we ought to go well and I hope even save up a few pennies. I asked Anita Price if she would feel hurt about your getting \$1800 whereas she only gets \$1200, and she said not at all, in fact she was pleased. Anita is very nice and I am sure you will get along very well. Only please come as soon as possible, so you can start the 1943 file yourself, and then we can be sure that they are correctly done and that you will be able to find things.

The story on Miss Johnston isn't quite so lurid as Perry said. Browne didn't want her in Accra; he knew her, said she wasn't a stenographer, and wasn't temperamentally suited to Accra, in his opinion. The telegram he sent to the Department regarding her assignment was so ~~harsh~~ utterly discouraging that it has been published in the Foreign Service Journal under the caption, "Welcome to Our City". Mr. Shantz thought Miss Johnston would like it here, but as she couldn't take dictation, and since it would be most difficult to find a place for her to live, he saw no reason why he couldn't do us a good turn and remove the housing problem at the same time. While Perry deserves great thanks for all he has done, don't forget that they had dropped the question of your appointment until the boss's telegram caused it to be revived. That's what Perry said himself.

I have had a nice letter from Perry ^(yester) dated December 3, enclosing a copy of his letter ~~you~~ to you of the same date. I fear you didn't feel quite so cheerful after that arrived. Although I still think that, had you gone to Lisbon, you would have had a better chance of getting to Fish Lake by air, I agree with Perry's implication in his letter to you, which he stated in stronger terms in his letter to me, that the best bet is to have Mrs. McMillen work on WSA to get you priority for passage by fast ship to Lagos or Takoradi. I incorporated this idea in a wire announcing Burleson's

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resignation which the boss was sending, and stressed the urgent need for your presence here which now exists. (Officially. There has always been an urgent personal need for you.) I recently went on board a ship here of the type mentioned in Perry's letter, and found the passenger accommodations really excellent. There were, I think, six cabins, each with private toilet and bath. Each cabin had two bunks, or cots, in it, and there was a table, plenty of closet space, and lots of room. Even with two persons in the cabin, you would have more comfortable quarters than I did on my last west-bound trip on the Washington, when three of us shared a smaller cabin. As you have probably already discovered, several of these ships may come to Lagos directly in the future, thus cutting out the awkward job of getting here by air from Takoradi. While of course neither these boats or any form of transportation is 100% safe in these days, they have had good luck with them so far. Unless your father objects, I think that is a best plan now. The ship the Price's traveled on will be coming out again in a few weeks, according to reports. The one I saw here had taken only two weeks from New York.

I'm glad you warned me that you were going to kiss me hard when you arrived, as I was planning to do the same thing, and there might have been some bruised lips. Oh, darling, I am going to hold you so tight and so long, and kiss you so tenderly and again so hard and so passionately that you will probably wish I hadn't. And then we will go to Mr. Shantz's house, where you will stay until we are married, and we can be alone at last, for about the second time in our lives. My love, I want you and need you so terribly much! I'm hoping another month to six weeks will see you here.

I'll bet you get tired of kissing before I do! Want to bet? You probably don't realize that you are marrying the most affectionate man in the world. Even as a little boy, my female relatives remarked that I was one of the few little boys who didn't object to being kissed, and I haven't ever had any strong objections. Remember how you almost knocked me off balance on my birthday in the elevator? You kissed just about twice as vigorously as I expected, because I thought you were very reluctant and were just doing it to please Mrs. Perry. And you know why I couldn't ~~give~~ couldn't let myself go in Lisbon. I was too deeply shocked with the idea of the hurt I was causing; in fact, neither of us ever felt really at ease, except that one day that you left. Dearest, dearest love, how much longer must we wait?

And now back to earth. Additional articles needed:

1 electric toaster, 230 volts; 1 black bow tie for evening wear, already tied. I can't seem to learn to tie one of those things to save my neck; 1 fountain pen costing not over \$1.25, for the steward, Tom; another pair of swimming trunks; Siegert's bitters, (1 doz) for cocktails; cocktail cherries. I'm glad you had a good talk with Mrs. Jester about what you need to bring. I'm sure her opinion is much better than Ahme Haig^Wood's. Don't hesitate to spend the money. Once here, we can think about economies when it is impossible to get anything else. I hope you like Camels; I have a large shipment on the way. I hope you like me too; I love you.

William