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AIR MAIL

AMERICAN CONSULATE General  
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Dear darlings,

Things have come to a pretty pass. Here it is Thursday and no letter to you started, with the pouch going to-morrow! I take back all the harsh and bitter words I addressed to William when I was home, concerning not writing. One leads a very busy life here, or at least we two have been led a pretty merry whirl these last three weeks, and it hasn't started to calm down yet, sad to say. We have been forced, in order to get some sleep, to tell people we had previous engagements for to-night and to-morrow. I haven't read a line of anything except the two meager letters I have received (not from my loving parents, either of them), and consequently am very behind on my news-of-the-world. On the ship, of course, news was very scarce indeed, although we did occasionally turn on the radio in the Captain's cabin for a short while. ...

I am very fond of my daily life here. It opens at 7:15, when the radio (a small rented affair perpetually tuned to the same station, come what may) comes on with the BBC news for the Far East. In comes Thompson at 7:30 with my morning tea, and while I lool in bed for a few minutes contemplation, William gets up boldly (but unwillingly) and Thompson glides about laying out his clothes. Thompson hasn't as yet caught up with the mysteries of feminine garments, so I have to do my own laying out. William is even slower than I am at getting dressed, which is as far as I am concerned, simply lovely. We bathe (Little Willie the Small Boy brings in some petrol tins of hot water for same) and dress, and have our breakfast in state at table. ... At nine or thereabouts we descend the stairs to the office; I am considering having the railing greased so we can slide down and thus

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get to work on time. The morning is spent hard at work on the files. Bill's office door is usually open, so I can look up and see him: an edifying sight, needless to say. At twelve thirty or one we knock off, go up for lunch, eat same (all meals are served by Thompson, aided, in the pantry, by the redoubtable Willie). At one thrity we retire for our respective siestas. At two-thirty we arise and go again, and go to Innisfree. At five o'clock Anita leaves, and at six William and I stop work. Whereupon we often make small excursions on foot to the waterfront (two blocks away) or to Victoria Beach, coming back at seven to dress for dinner. Sometimes, on the other hand, we visit firends between six and seven, or are invited to cocktail parties. Dinner parties inevitably begin at eight. Usually one merely eats and carries on edifying conversations, although occasionally if the movies are good, we go to them. One wears long dresses, but the men only wear dress-up clothes to grand parties and on Saturday night, on which latter occasion we usually end up at the Ikoyi Club dance. Ladies being in the minority here, I have had my heart's desire of dancing. In fact, vulgarly put, my feet are usually ghastly tired after the dances. Sometime the RAF dance band plays for us. I have the feeling that the RAF boys make better aviators than dance bandsters. Most of the time an ancient sound system conveys the melodic strains of equally ancient fox-trots, but I always enjoy myself nonetheless. Between dances we sit in armchairs on the lawn in back of the ballroom, which is round and domed, entirely open to the breezes and the mosquitos.

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 One brings one's own bottles, glasses, and recently we have taken to bring camp chairs on crowded nights. But it is nice place, none the less. At the dinners which precede these festivities, not even brides are allowed to sit next to their husbands, and the share-the-wives policy is well established. The other night we went to the home of a Mr. Rooke, one of the magistrates for the Colony of Lagos. There were four men and four women, an unheard of thing here. As Mr. Rooke put it, just a fluke. One of the chief topics of conversation here as elsewhere, is the difficulties experienced with servants. Talk of this sort has been brought to the level of a fine art. It would appear that I am the only person in Lagos who is not at sword's point with his or her cook, and every one smugly replies when I tell them this, that it can't last.

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... Yesterday afternoon I went out to the Apapa Airfield with Mr. Shantz to see the place and greet a friend of his from his days in Hong Kong. Saw some pretty planes come in, and interesting people file out. Saw some ex-PAA boys who are stationed there, heard me some big talk, wandered into some places where I couldn't have gone, got thrown out of same by polite people who apparently hadn't seen a white woman in years and didn't know quite what to do about it. William and I had previously gone down to the seaplane base, which is in a spot on a verdant shore be-rimmed with palm trees and cooled by perfumed breezes to such an extent that the resemblance to Dinner Key was most striking, up to and including the hibiscus and bougainvillea. We even saw one of the same planes, which touched my sentimental heart. I dearly love an airplane.

We have entertained as well as been entertained. We usually have eight people, which is all our accommodations can handle. So far the parties have been successes, and no one has gone home hungry or thirsty. Next week we must go the whole hog and have Mr. and Mrs. Grantham (he is next to the Governor of the Colony, who is away at present), Captain Roberts of the Barber Line (and more or less the dean of American society in Lagos) and Mr. Shantz. The Granthams are nice people (he especially, since he is quite a tease) and Captain Roberts is well known to be above reproach and an old darling. Every Saturday noon since time began Captain Roberts has had a chop suey lunch, preceded by 1) old-fashions which he concocts himself and 2) tomato juice. These affairs are always very pleasant. Part of the social success of all Americans here is the old-fashion, which every one wants in preference to all else, so the competition is merely in the making of them. Mr. Shantz, more or less to prove his individuality, concentrates more on Martinis. Mr. Shantz's residence is perfectly lovely, with an enormous garden where our wedding reception was held, and a beautiful lawn in front and back. He has some incredibly beautiful expanses of bougainvillea, and mother will remember the purple hanging flower we saw in Mrs. Bliss' patio, of which he has a great deal- *Thurmbogia Grandiflora*.

We had a pleasant visit on a small British naval craft the other day, with the officer in command, a Canadian with whom William came down from England fourteen months ago. It seemed odd to hear his accent coming out of that uniform. It was middle-western. William likes this boy very much, and had Mac not come down from Accra, he would have been best man. He has a very ~~xxxx~~ small wardroom-cum-bedroom- cum-office, with two bunks in it, and believe it or

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not we were twelve in the little place. All the fans in Araby couldn't suffice to cool the place, not disipate the fumes of Player's and Camels working in close colaboration. But we had a lovely time.

This being on Govern-

ment time, it is best that I should stop, at least for the moment.

No longer on Govern-

ment time, I find myslef in a quandry: what SHALL begin with? There is such an enormous lot to be told.

I didn't beleive I'd

get here, not even towards the end of the voyage. The last night on board I din't beleive it. We were supposed to get into Lagos at about noon, and at one o'clock we came through the narrow entrance to the harbor. On my right was Tarqua Bay, although I didn't know it at the time. Pardon me, on my left! This country is as flat as Florida, with about the same trees, and about the same proportion of sandy, marshy ground. There are perhaps a trifle more clumps of palm-like trees, and perhaps a few more isolated spots which might qualify as jungle, but the same scrub palms flourish as well. So you can imagine that what ever impression other people get of Lagos at first, mine was a good one. Everyone says that the best view of Lagos is from the harbor as you enter from the sea, but when we came in Nigeria was in the midst of the Harmattan, a cool wind from the north that brings with it a great deal of fog, with the result that I could hardly see two hundred yards away. For some technical reasons the prot authorities wouldn't bring us into deak till the next day, and I was heart-broken to be in Lagos and not on shore. At four o'clock I was moping around the deck casting black looks at all and sundry. People had long since ceased to tease me about my eagerness to arrive, for the simple reason that I bit their heads off furiously when they so much as mentioned our arrival. I went into the "saloon" to meet the immigration authorities and drown my sorrows, when in came Mr. Pendleton the tall boy with glasses and said "Mrs. Collins says the pilot boat has Bill on it!" Well, deary me... I rushed out, took one look at William, rushed back in again to control my emotions, and incidentally, powder my nose. Then I went belowdecks to meet him. About fifteen minutes later the Captain came by and said we'd better break it up, we were blocking traffic. And then Your Honor, everything went blank. I vaguely remember climbing onto the pilot boat going back, and sitting triumphantly on a packing case placed on the bow, the world forgetting but not by the world forgot apparently, because I also vaguely remember throaty African titters of amusement. William's great big beautiful left drive Chrolet with the only white-walled tires in Lagos, was standing at the wharf. We climbed in, came to the consulate. ...

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... I think everyone in Lagos who is permanently established in reasonably decent houses, likes the place unless he is one of the unfortunates who really do suffer from the climate (and there are those who really do, while others really don't- most people). But the more I go about in Lagos society, the more I hear veiled remarks concerning the unwritten law which compels returning voyagers to describe West Africa in general as "the White Man's Grave". It keeps out the crowds, makes home leave more frequent, promotes the feeling in the breasts of those at home, that the Intrapid Colonist is nothing short of a Martyr for the Cause of Empire. Maybe I'll change my mind if I get malaria more than once, or dengue fever, or tumbo bugs, or catch me a tsetse\_fly. the frist mentioned is prevalent, the rest quite rare. But in general I think I can say that the life here is an awful lot better than Old Coasters are willing to admit except among themselves. Then again, Lagos is said to be the best town on the West Coast (although some people have been known to vote for Accra, which is less humid ~~at~~ but also less civilized). Be all that as it may, I am telling you and everyone else that I like this place fine.

They tell me this is the hot season. It doesn't seem very hot to me- at least not at all unbearably so. On Sundays, when we are walking over from Mr. Shantz's grass-thatched week-end house to the surf-bathing beach (about a mile away across sand dunes) I and everyone else find it quate, quate warm, and sometimes I even feel the necessity for putting something over my head. But that's all. I haven't got a sun-helmet and see no reason for getting one in the future. I have bought myslef a pair of lovely milk-white long mosquito boots (L2 S15 d0, at Kingsway Stores) but that has been my only concession to things in general-other, of course, than the inevitable quinine. I won't take Atabrin unless I can't help it, because it turns you a jaundice yellow. I hope I can equal Bill's record, and not have malaria at all.

We very much enjoy our Sunday routine. Up late, down to the wharf at 10:30 to catch to the little "Waaflar" to Tarqua. On the Waaflar we meet Mr. Shantz and whomever he has invited for the day. In a cool half an hour, we arrive at Tarqua and trudge across the dunes to the shack, recognizable by the two flags which are raised by Coffee (the watchman) whenever Mr. Shantz is in Residence. Immediately we don our bathing suits and go for our bathe in the roaring surf. In an hour or two we come back, hot, tired, exhausted, happy. Coffee washes our feet off by pouring water over them from the inevitable petrol tins, and even before we dress it is the inevitable and happy custom to sit down and sip a "small small" glass of South African Cherry Brandy, to take the salt water out of our mouths. Then a happy lunch with much uninhibited con-

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versation. After that, as inevitably as the setting of the sun, everyone falls to and sleeps like mad on the camp cots provided for the purpose...

We were wondering if it would be possible to obtain a toaster, alternating current, 220 volts, 50 cycles, to be sent to us through the Pouch? If such a thing could be gotten, it would frustrate all the efforts of the Cold Toast Division of His Majesty's Ministry of Supplies. Perhaps we could get a transformer if nothing but a standard toaster were available, but then again perhaps we couldn't. On another track, in addition to bitters some mayonnaise would come in handy. And some maraschino cherries. And, when summer comes, some plain white five-and-ten necklaces and earrings. A great need will soon be two more plain crepe evening skirts, size twelve, one in black and one in white. That's all I can think of for the present, my poor dears.

Great love,

LPK

P.S. The greatest need I have is for small side combs, preferably Grip-Tuth. They can be sent by pouch easily. Thanx!