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The Flat,
Wednesday.

Sweetheart

I've just partaken of a very good dinner, & with a free evening ahead have settled down to devote my time to hubby.

It's still chilly here, so I've drawn an armchair up to the fire & have snuggled into dressing-gown & slippers. This being the first week of the rationing period, I have a bag of excellent toffees by my side - into which I propose to dip from time to time.

If you ask "Could life be sweet?" there'd be the answer I will give until you return home, and we can be together by our own fireside. Even the most luxuriant surroundings would be

empty and meaningless without you
by my side, beloved.

Well I must say I was thrilled
to get your airmail on Monday -
announcing your safe arrival - it seems
such an age since you went away.
And then last evening I had such
a budget! It put all my puny
efforts at letter-writing in the shade.
20 pages or more of tightly packed
news, laughs, wordpictures, and the
spirit of my key robbing graph the
lot, but more of that later. Honestly
it takes nearly half-an-hour to read,
if then I want to start all over again
to find out what I've missed.

Yours a darling!

But you know you must be wrong
about mail from your end. The first
air letter dated 21st arrived on 30th.

3.

The budget - no BUDGET, dated 23rd arrived on 1st May. So there's nothing to it honey, & it looks to me as though all mail comes by air.

Another air mail arrived tonight, (2nd) dated 24th April - so it seems to take exactly 8 days.

I was rather surprised that you had only so far received 5 letters from me, since I seem to have been writing ever since you left. However honey, now that you have arrived, I'll try to stick to the one-a-day technique.

I've gathered that Bombay is blooming hot - and dusty - and you have my sympathy darling. The imagination is pretty vivid, and it hardly needed that Rudyard Kipling autobiography to make me realise

what conditions will be like for
the next couple of months until the
rains come. My one consolation
is that you have always got out in
the sun at home, & that it does not
completely saturate you & ~~sap~~^{sap} all
your energy - I know that to compare
English sun with the Indian variety
is a mockery but all the same I
think your old love of it will stand
you in good stead now. It would

maybe have been easier for you had
you set out at Christmas & been
able to acclimatise. I'll just have
to try to bring a cool breath of
Spring air to you in my letters.

At the present moment a cool
breath of air is a simple matter -
I've only to poke my head out of
the window & it'll be bitten off
by the wind!

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That last sentence however was somewhat exaggerated, but it would not have been for the past few days. We have had gales, and snow & heavy frosts, and following on the month of brilliant heat, poor farmers have pretty nearly lost their livelihood this year. To all accounts the fruit crops have been badly hit, & I wonder how Peggy has survived, all alone.

Incidentally your accounts of the fruit salads etc. make my mouth water. Imagine eating tangerines!! I've almost forgotten their piquant flavour. I reckon it must be almost worthwhile swallowing a little of the country's dust - just to quench your thirst afterwards!

Your descriptions of the natives & their quarters are very vivid honey & I can quite clearly picture the scenes. I laughed about the trams, and your efforts to rid yourself of the beggar & the small boy on the railway platform. Can you imagine such a scene on Welling platform for example. Cor!

It must be unbelievable, every step you take brings a new experience. And the 15 mile drive from the quay to the transit camp must have been hair-raising at times! I bet some of the lads had wondered if they'd sailed all that way from home just to be done-in on the threshold of a new life by some madman who obviously never studied the Highway Code. Oh me! What a life!

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It was good to hear that you
& Tim are sticking together. He
seemed quite a lad to me, and
well-calculated to fall in with a
will at any 'do', and lively
enough to help keep up the spirits.
Altogether you seem to have a jolly
good crowd, & you should be able
to make life bearable between you
until the return trip.

I'm glad you did not stay long
in that transit camp. It sounded
a dreary hole. I much prefer the
description of the air bungalows,
which you can make as homely
as you wish. Of course, all that
may have changed since you
arrived in Bambaré - so I guess
a further description of your permanent

anakers will be forthcoming in
the next edition. Which reminds
me that your letters are going to
be preserved by me for posterity -
they are much too interesting and
wonderful ever to find their way into
a Salvage Can. Won't we have
him in a couple of years time reading
them through together & jogging your
memory?

That swimming pool sounds like
a jewel in the desert, and I can
bet you'll spend many of your off-
days there - providing of course that
it is still within easy reach - or
is the word "easy" misapplied?

I do hope you will be able
to go there often & relax. You'll
be in your element!

9. I've just reread tonight's air mail and realise that you are once more in a bungalow - which you call yours - is it all to yourself? The wooded hills rising in the background sound snuggly lovely - except for the noises. I hope there aren't any wild animals roaming around at night.

I guess you'll be starting work again soon, & life will begin to hum as you settle down to the old routine & get the feel of the Ciques back into your system. You'll probably soon get organized into work & entertainment, & evenings with the boys, and then letters home, so that life will spin by & the months of separation will be over before you can say 'Sebastian'.

You know of course by now that we did not ring the bell, and judging by the way my tummy has behaved during the past few weeks, its no wonder! But as you say, darling, there'll come a time - - - -

I heard from both Meriel & Eve ^{Gusins} yesterday. I was very sorry to hear Meriel's sad news about her miscarriage. It must have been heartbreaking for her, coming on top of Jim's departed. I suppose I can understand just a tiny bit how she felt, because I did hope that we might have had a baby while you were away. She is at the moment staying with her mother, and it is a blessing she had someone close to turn to in her trouble. ^{Wischer}

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Exc didn't have much news, as her baby takes up so much of her time she says. She was relieved to hear of the ship's safe arrival & said how worried she'd been. Well there she had me! I can't say I worried at all. In fact I wished you could have lingered a little on the journey. I missed you, yes, like hell! As I do now! But life aboard sounded fairly amicable & at times even seemed to reach the heights - and knowing what heat you were going into, & knowing that Mussor's lake is now virtually over, I thought it would be all to the good if the ship lingered a little on the way.

Both of the girls want me to

visit them soon. - so you see I
do not lack friends with whom
to spend my evenings.

I had dinner with Cully and
Harday. We met in the lounge
in Madras in Swallow Street, &
then made our way upstairs to
Keraswami's - there to partake of
Indian food. However, however, your
wife not being a spice-fiend, junked
the curry & stuck to Chicken
Casserole. We were both intrigued
by a kind of hors-d'oeuvres dish
on the table which contained (1) a
thin biscuit stuff like potato crisps,
(2) some mango chutney, and (3)
a pinkish substance resembling
coconut-ice, or maybe coloured
washed-potato. Know it?

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We had lots to talk about, as you can imagine - and I was sure I would arrive home to find news of your arrival - as indeed I did.

Cully doesn't change at all. Her job on the magazine is very interesting & she loves every moment of it.

She surprised me by saying that she is divorcing Cully just as soon as he procures evidence for her. She hates the idea, but can't imagine herself ever living with him again, and feels that it will be fairer to free him as soon as possible. Not especially as he has got a special friend in Egypt. Shame, but that's how life goes!

Thank God we love each other!

The news of the unconditional
surrender in Italy has just come
through & I am wondering how this
will affect Mike.

And now my dearest one, it
is time I had a bath & got
between the sheets.

Maybe I shall dream of you
tonight, maybe even creep in with
you under your mosquito net.
My mind is so full of loving
thoughts of you that anything
might happen,

always your own,

Clare



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HMS BRAGANZA.

COASTAL FORCES

BOMBAY.

INDIA

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