

Bombay
6/6/45.

Hallo baby,

I haven't written to you for the last two days on account of one thing & another, & it's with eagerness & joy I now get cracking with more pen-work to my beloved. I had one short letter from you yesterday - short, but full of nice lovey-dovey stuff which gladdened me more than somewhat, & I'm looking forward to getting the promised long-ua today - if that comes I shall have more to write about.

I suppose you'll want to know about the maps. The "Rear of Camp" map was taken just outside our block of cabins looking towards the Commander's bungalow with the hills behind. On the right is another block of cabins. Notice the rough gully in the right foreground? They'll be needed very shortly to help clear away the rains - gullies & ditches are dug all over the place, all leading to the nearest low grounds - there's no sewers to take it away, & in any case all the water is needed on the land which at this season is brick hard. We had a sharp shower today, a forewarning of things to come & the air is as fresh as spring - I think I'm going to like the monsoon season.

"Down the road" is taken from the same spot in the opposite direction. The print is rather small to show detail but if it were enlarged you'd see the road winding down hill to the centre of the camp. I really need a filter on the lens to bring out the various tones - the road should show darker as it's red dirt, (old roof tiles), & the sky should also show up better - I'll improve with experience.

"Bungalow 35 + Block" refers to our cabin & the rest of 'em in the row. You can see, (not very plainly I'm afraid - the shot was under-exposed), Harold + Bob in the doorway of '35' & that's just where I used to sit

in the deck chair at night writing letters to you. I now have to use the writing desk just inside the door - I did have a shot at getting an interior snap of the desk, etc., but it was hopelessly under-exposed & they couldn't print it. There are 5 cabins in a row & perhaps you can get a fair idea of their size now.

"Deck of Bungalow 35" is a busy scene don't you think? There's George & Jim with the soap & water. The piece draped round the bush shows the trials of a washing day - unless clothes are secured on the lines they always land on the deck sooner or later. Our washhouse & showers are just a little ways away to the left & the trip from 35 to the shower during the rain is going to be a bit sticky - it's just plain earth now & it won't be long before it's just plain mud.

All four snaps were taken with the tail end of a spool in the camera lent to me by Anand. I went into Bombay yesterday evening after work to try and get another film (120) but with no luck. Films are a great problem out here because there are so many service folk after them - Bombay is a holiday centre & many are able to line up in the mornings for films & secure the quota - we poor chaps have to rely on charity, luck, or an occasional morning off to line up too. Don't forget to try your end, darling - 120 is the size for this camera ~~but~~ but a ⁶²⁰ ~~120~~ will be a help - I can always borrow another camera. I hope that Anand will get me a camera tonight the same model as his own - but it'll cost me Rs. 100 - still that's Rs. 40 less than I could buy it.

The Sir Agha ^{isra} Casteen was holding a weekly dance last night so I popped in to view. I stayed there for an hour watching the dancing & came away with

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very mixed feelings. The females of Bombay are invited to these dances as well as service women, & the types that gather are very varied. A number of Indian women seem to be regular customers & they are surprisingly good dancers - the worst dancers are the service men & women. The Europeans mixed mostly with Parsi, (or Parsee), girls - these girls, apart from Indian Christians, are the only females who wear European clothes & they look very smart too. Looking smart is part of their stock-in-trade because their one aim, whether married or not, is to have an affair with a white man with a view to procuring children - I'm told that if they can raise white - or light - children they (the kids), have a better chance of getting a Civil Service or other corporation job. Strange but true. Into this mixed dancing company also 'come', a little disdainfully maybe, the English ladies of Bombay - they're not a very good-looking lot & they're not popular with the lads. The most popular partners, altho' sadly, so very few, are the wives of the Service men in this theatre - they seem to throw themselves into the spirit of the dance & keep the smiles going - they realise what some of the lads have been through & it's very noticeable that they pick out the Burma front boys who rest in a camp nearby. Most, at least thank the Lord, are these women of the town whose nationality would be hard to fix by observation but whose trade is very easy to fix - remembering the severity of the Bombay public mensahibs I can't understand how they get in. I didn't dance because I had a parcel or two with me, but, in any case, the sight of all that sweat would have made me think twice.

I came out of the canteen & made tracks for an eating establishment. My favourite is in Hornby Rd.

§ 4.

Besides being a restaurant it's a grocer, (Bazaarist), jeweller, antique dealer & every other kind of store you could imagine. After eating I examined the stock & decided to send you a food parcel - 1 lb tea, raisins, dates and cigars - just put the cigars away somewhere, sweetly, & prepare a space for more to follow because they'll keep me going for a year or more when I get back. Let me know if you've any particular fancy in the way of food & I'll include what I'm able to in the next parcel - it's quite easy, you just select the goods, pay the money & the shop does the rest.

I had a thorough look round a bazaar type of shop in Hornby Rd which I "discovered" only last night. It really is the most marvellous place & when I get a few hundred Rs to spare I'm searching through that place for something in the silver-plate line. One has to be very careful in Bombay with plate - they have a brand "Bombay Silver" which is of less value than our own, weight for weight, & it's best to adjust one's ideas of silver value before buying. We are also warned against precious stones in view of the mass of artificial junk on the market - the real thing is most expensive & hard to find. Generally speaking, it seems best not to look for anything that is cheap, but to deal in the larger shops & chance paying a higher price than you thought to pay at first. The more I think of it & the more I see the more firmly I believe that it's paying me to waste my time - wait until I've got plenty of Rs put by, & until the prices drop.

No letter from you today, darling, but one from Vera. She tells of Husk & Bill meetings - good eh, eh? - & of Tom's pending arrival in the good old U.K. And one from Harry - he sounds more cheerful now. And a couple of

packets of papers - your Times & Mail, Apr. 14, & Doris' letters & Sunday papers. I'm a bit behind in receiving papers - these had been all over the place - why, I don't know. Still, it's grand to read 'em & find out how the German war's going on - we may be behind in the news, but at least we get the truth when it does arrive - if it hadn't have been for letters from home I'd've had difficulty in believing there was a VE Day if all I had to read were the Indian rays.

It's raining hard now & we begin to think of what changes we'll have to make in our daily life to combat the inconveniences that will pile up from now on. We can no longer arrange a week ahead to nip into Bombay, & there'll be no more open-air shows at night. I suppose it'll be writing & reading the leisure hours long from now on, which really suits me. I've more than enough correspondence to catch up on & the library is full of new books - different books anyway. There'll be "great argument" in the cabins at night & there'll be bitter complaints at leaky roofs & wet slibying - we've looked ahead & bought an electric iron to help dry the clothes. But best of all I shall have the time to lay back on my camp-bed & day-dream for hours, & you'll know of what I shall dream, won't you sweetheart? I shall keep my dreams within the bounds of possibility & still build up a scene that compares with the Arabian Nights at their boldest. With you, my angel, a drawing room becomes a palace for you are a princess of women.

Love you
 J.S.

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Received
11.6.45



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