

40

Bombay,
India.

Sat. 7/7/45.

Sweetheart,

oo-oo-oo!!! Yesterday dance chief,
big man - today, very small man. Don't feel
so good - could only eat two dinners. Sifter
of bottle of rum & bottle of brandy on table
makes me feel ill. Lemme tell ya
all about it, with suitable intervals for
quiet meditation, & to allow the cabin
to settle down.

Last night was a very big ^{one} for
H.M.S. Cheetah II & of Bombay only knew it, it
was a very big night for them too, for it
is an undoubted fact that an all-time
record for liquor consumption was established,
& the drunk rate made this great city of
the Empire look like Pompey high & on pay
day. It was an orgy with ~~beach~~ as
the Commanding Officer. Of all the bottles
captured were to be lined end to end along
Hornby Rd you'd have a helluva lot of people
tripping over 'em. Dance? - oh yes, there
were some women - but I'm getting ahead
of the story. The enclosed ticket will
give you the set-up & with that in your
hand bag you can come along with me to the

Sis Cow — etc Hall for to make whoopee
with your ever-loving, but now-suffering,
hubby-wubby.

The weather was, of course, foul. I
had to go in to Bombay early, with George
& Jim, because we were to be general handy
men & because, being old sailors we knew
that to get into the racket you've got to
be on the spot early & before anybody else.
I had shorts & black shoes on me, & I carried
the compulsory long white & white shoes in
my hold-all intending to change in the Hall
we eventually arrived — I write it that way
because the journey was more of a sea trip
than a lorry ride & a lorry's not a boat-
changed our rig & started to make the
arrangements about our duties & much
more important, about our remuneration
for said duties. They'd stocked a small
room & set it up as a bar — "Stocked", >
should have written "Stacked", because
outside of a wholesale wine & spirit merchants
shop I've never seen so much liquor at one
time. By careful planning it was
decided that a bottle of whiskey apiece would
not be missed from the pile & would
serve as a stimulant & warming agent
for us poor P.O.s who would have to

he constantly on the lookout for gate cracker trying to get ~~in~~ & insulted imagine trying to get out. That was our job, we were ticket collectors & policemen.

By the time we'd changed, been detailed off, had a lil' junky or two, helped the Chief E.A. to put up his illuminated V sign, cunningly mechanical so that the red, white & blue bulbs flashed on & off, alternatively - sometimes, & blocked all other entrances than the front ~~hallway~~ foyer. It was time to expect the arrival of the revellers. At 7.30 a little Parsee girl came & presented her ticket, flashed a betel nut smile at us, asked for an escort to the lady's cloakroom & generally gave the impression that if the Navy was fair to her she'd be more than fair to them. We thought "O-oh!", if this is a sample of the invited females Jack's gonna have a high old time in the old town tonight - actually, he was an exception, for the following dames, recruited from the Services, etc. were of the "sin slumming" type & it was that attitude & the dearth of dancing partners, that started the debacle ("sudden & destructive flood") that followed. The boys turned up in strength, sampled the

drink, remembered their manners as hosts & sampled the gals, forgot their manners & came back to the bar. The older and/or sober-minded chaps, & those with an eye to the future, stayed in the hall to dance. That was the set-up at 9 p.m. when things could reasonably have said to be set-going.

On the dove I was having fun. We'd had an urgent request from the Jimmy to get more gals of a suitable type & I was out there, in the street, accosting every presentable woman who came along - black or white - & persuasive as I am, I did manage to get a few. These additions persuaded an equal number of blokes to leave the bar temporarily, to give them time to get sufficiently acquainted so that they could drag the gal back again with 'em. By this time, too, the word had got round that this skin-dig was on & the other services were rolling up - but it was a ticket-only dance & we couldn't let 'em in. Naturally some of these boys resented it - I would have done if I'd been in the state some of 'em were & I was - & they tried the old Army game of rush & shove. But they didn't succeed because I'd called up reinforcements &

after a while had calmed 'em down & were the best of pals.

Inside, the Demon Rum was taking effect. Men who'd known each other for years on the friendliest of terms were slapping each other down. Chiefs whose policies in working hours leave much to be desired by the working men were having to hide in corners to dodge the avenging mob. Squeals from the alcoves indicated that the virgins were having their never-ending struggle against adversity. The bar-keepers were sewing theory as rum & nobody knew the difference. The natives, tired of fighting the bar mob for drinks & unable to persuade the ladies that they were efficient & desirable partners, were partnesing each other with deadly seriousness. By 10.30 the passage-way to the heads was lined two thick with non-comporting gentlemen in all stages. At 10.35 two wharfs came galloping out, hatless, wild yells in hot pursuit. Caufing coarsely. Me? - I have to confess I was well away. I attribute my downfall to the quality of woe liquor, & I will swear to the end that it was quality not quantity that did for me.

The band - an R.A.F. outfit - was playing hot in poor fashion - that they could play at all surprised me. I had one dance all night, with a very nice matronly lady in swage, or evening gown who told me that the crowd was the nicest she'd seen! After that, what with door duties & drinking, & general Buzk-about-fun, I didn't get the chance to have another dance & really it was just as well because I should have only blotted my copybook as soon as I opened my big mouth & let forth the fumes of alcohol.

At 10.45 approx. two things happened which, actually, have no relation to each other except that the first was the last thing I remember before the second happened. The sign fused & went up in flames, & I fused & went out cold. Snap! just like that - one minute I was jokingly treading on the recumbent form of a snake & the next minute I was there beside him ready for other people to tread on me. From then on I remember nothing until I woke to a painful world this morning, & I filled in the gap of information by asking Jim who, I'm told, rescued me & brought me back to camp.

It seems that when I went out, I fell into a rather awkward - very

7

inconveniently - & lay there defying all attempts
by the boys to get me back on my feet.
So they let me lay there, thoughtfully
pocketing my wallet for safety, until "God
save the King" when the difficult part would
start. You see George, Jim & Harold were
all well & truly merry but George & Harold
had staggered off someplace leaving poor
old Jim with a heavy responsibility of getting
me home - that stretched him up a little, but
he must have had a helluva job. After
getting my gear from the cloakroom he
deigned me out to a waiting lorry that
had been specially chartered for the last-
sheep such as I - it must have looked like
a mortuary - Jim said they took the arms
& legs of the blacks & just slung 'em in,
altho' in my case I acted like a gentleman
& went up, partly, under my own steam. I
learned today that they loaded up one of the
lorries with so many drunks that the
tailboard was forced to fall & let four
of the 'bodies' drop to the road - one of 'em
then woke up & expressed mild surprise,
& said that he was sure he'd been put
in a lorry & "Where on earth was it?"

hurkily for me & Jim too, Bob

8

hadn't gone to the dance & so he was there in the cabin ready to lend a steady hand. I was undressed & put to bed & I slept til 8 this morning. When I'd fully aroused myself I was able to see the result of the night's work - one ~~pair~~ pair white trousers covered from top to bottom with all the muck of India, raincoat similar, white shoes ditto, holdall same. I groaned, turned over, went to sleep again, woke up again, went to the mess & sunk a gallon of tea, came back, turned in & slept til 11.30. When, on waking up, I discovered that the world was a little bit better place to live in, & thought that, maybe, in a month's time I should have recovered. Right now I don't feel so bad, but my watchword from now on, til the next time, will be "Never again"!

Really, darling, it was your letter I got today ^(50%) that cheered me. I'm disturbed to see that my mails getting a bit empty - I know the feeling when you have to wait for letters & it's grim. No. 34 is the first in my little correspondence book which gives me details of the contents of my letters as well as despatching dates & numbers - I find it very useful, thus, if you find a letter of mine

missing I can refer back or if it was one wherein I asked for something, or told you something terribly important, I could repeat it. See? All very systematic & maybe some would consider it a waste of time, but out here I find time goes much more pleasantly, and quickly, if I can occupy myself usefully.

I'm quite willing to get Doin her carpet - it's no trouble at all. But the money question is difficult because I definitely haven't any to spare out of my naval pay. Maybe Loyds can arrange to send money & if so, you can get it off Doin & send it along, but don't do anything yet. As you observe, the rains make it a chancy business, & I'd prefer to wait a month or two before I go buying again in a big way. I'll tell Doin all this in my next letter to her. When you get our package, honey, & after you've examined them & found all the angles from your end, or if you've decided, ~~or otherwise~~ that the deal is worthwhile, will you tell me what size & type of carpet you ~~who~~ want me to buy next? Maybe you want the big one or maybe the small ones - if it's the big one I shall need £300 - about \$22.10 -

along with your order, but if it's the small ones I can manage without a remittance - I think. I don't think I want to give Joyce & Tom carpets as a present because of the exorbitance of the price of a 2x1 1/2 parcel - I don't believe we can afford £8-£10 for a wedding present or a single ~~parcel~~ carpet sent by post is unecronical because the postage & packing rate charged by the shop is the same as here - £10. Maybe we can wait until I send another parcel of small rug home & I'll include one as a present. ~~I~~ Hope I don't sound rigorously sweet, but we are running the financial side of our love match on a business basis, ain't we, & 'money a mickle makes a mickle'.

Seeing as 'ow we're on the subject of money I might as well devote (?) the next few lines to Income Tax, etc. So I owe £40 eh? Well it's the Navy's fault for not letting me know the position a year ago & I ain't going to chase them anymore. I've written to S.F.4 (is that right?) & asked them to agree to pay my total tax out-of B.C. & if they do agree I shall storm the Pay Office & ask them to quit worrying me. I thought

that writing myself would be the best way to keep things on an official basis - I also mentioned that you were on tap for further information if required. As for the £20, I aint saying nuffin about that 'til somebody else does. Have we received our credit certificates for last year yet?

Jim was very pleased to hear that you'd visited Muriel. I've explained to both Jim + George that you've very little time to spare for visiting so they mustn't expect to you to pop over to their wives all the time. They appreciate that. I think old Jim's been bringing a fast one on his wife - he hasn't had dysentery - he did have a bad stomachache but that's all - better not tell Muriel that because he might have been fishing for a little sympathy.

And my poor little baby had tummy trouble eh? Your words didn't Cack any joy - de - viose, honey, but I guess when a body feels poorly it's no use trying to battle against it + try + bubble over with high spirits when all the time you rely want to get your head down. As I understand it you were going to write again on the morrow + a bloke can't write for anything

12

better than that, can he? Bob's had to go to the Welfare Office to try and get news of his wife - we believe the Navy have an arrangement whereby on receipt of a signal from the Admiralty somebody is sent to the address & enquiries made. He didn't get much satisfaction because nobody really knows much about anything appertaining to the wellbeing of the troops in this part of the world but tomorrow he sees the Captain of the Base & maybe he'll be able to do something. I'm perfectly certain that his trouble has arisen through mis-guided words & misunderstandings in previous letters, coupled with a certain unlikeliness in delay of mail, but he poor chap, thinks the worst by this time & he's in a helluva state. Added to that he's now got stomach trouble & is rolling on his bunk in agony!

Ending on a more cheerful note, she as fit as a fiddle - in spite of last night - & I can't get over the fact of having an adorable darling like you to love me.

I adore you, sweetheart, I adore you.

Ps.

H.M.S. CHEETAH
SHIP'S DANCE
 ON
FRIDAY, 6th JULY, 8 P.M. TO 12 P.M.
 AT THE
SIR COWASJI JEHANGIR PUBLIC HALL,
 Opp. REGAL CINEMA.
BAR: 8 P.M. TO 11 P.M. LIGHT REFRESHMENTS.
 ADMISSION BY TICKET ONLY.

(40)
 needed by
 14.7.45

On Air Mail Service

Mrs. Belle Grove Rd
 85m)

Wellington
 5/3 sh. do
 6 x 400 do

28 x 11 = 297

380
 14/250
 18

25/2
 10/1
 301

33.
 33.
 33.

POST OFFICE
 MARITIME