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Bombay.

Sunday. 22.7.45.

Dearest,

Sunday afternoon in Cheetah II might not be everybody's idea of a lovely way to spend an afternoon - I know it ain't mine - but it's certainly restful, no one can deny that, & right at this moment it's rest I need more than anything else. 12 o'clock last night we got in & I'm giving away no secrets when I tell you I just flopped out on the bed - I was tired, darling - & I slept & I slept, but even an 8.30 awakening hadn't sufficed to give me any sort of a wide-awake feeling & so, 'lasternoon, I did another flop-out. Right now I don't feel so bad so I thought I'd tell you all about it. It was like this.

There was the usual Saturday noontide activities of shore-going sailors, & we showered, changed, chased the postman for our 50s tickets, decided this way 'n that on the rain-coat question - to take or not to take - it came on to rain for good & we took 'em. A short run through the wet sand to the lorry, a foot & away we go. After a week of steady downpours the land is really

Soaked + the roads ~~are~~ give out lorry the chance to cascade water over everything + everybody. The drivers are natives + they must love their fellow Indians - at every opportunity they will careful ~~manoeuvre~~ manoeuvre so that the unlucky cuss of a walker is covered from top to toe in mud. Every one is already soaked with rain - the mud is a backsheesh adornment given with the compliments of the Navy.

This journey, as I already tell you in back numbers, is to Crawford Market for to search for silks, satins, shoes, + the spices of the East. We get off at Victoria Terminus, ("V.T." to us old hands), + walk back, away from Hornby Rd, until we come to the Municipal Meat + Fish Market! I suppose there are worse smells than this place but I don't want to experience 'em - you can taste this lot, + what with the flies 'n all you less walk past than beat your way past. But we have to go down the side of this horror to get to C. M. + we walk down the street until we come to the big building with the clock tower - you have a map of it honey. E-ctually, in that building,

the stalls are mainly fruit, vegetables & flowers, but there are some general commodity stores in there & so we walked in.

It's an amazing sight - a sort of glorified Covent Garden - glorified because of the variety of fruit, etc., that may be bought. All the Europeans shop here & the vendors offer the most exotic stuff to grace the dinner tables of the plutocrats. Tucked away in a corner is our little general store & there I buy Indis cream, combs, hair grips, elastic for you & T.C.P. & Kibbs for me. (The combs are smallish, heavy, but I grabbed 'em in passing, as it were, & maybe you can make use of 'em).

Just then a little wart-hog of a fellow came up, introduced himself as a "top, No. 1, official market guide" & asked if he may be of service. He was a jolly little chap, so charming that Geo. & I decided we'd use him in our search for cloth - he could speak fair English & carry our parcels. So we told him to take us to the silk & cloth market, & he said "o.k., sahibs, I take you plenty shops, plenty silk, you no like, you no buy"

- to which Geo. & I replied, with meaning,
"My bloody oath". And away he toddled
with the two big white bosses striding
manfully behind, out of the building, across
the road, down a small alley, left into
an even smaller alley, left again through
a mean archway into a dark void -
I thought "this is it!" We twisted &
turned in a warehouse of a place with old
stalls, empty now, but with the ghost of their
owners still moaning & whispering, until,
suddenly, we came to a lighted passage.
It was so abrupt that I blinked &
stopped - it was as tho' Ali Baba, after
wandering through the caves, had come upon
the den of thieves with their treasures & spoils
laid out before & around them. We
went on passed stall after stall each a
bright gem in the gloom with its piles of
materials, & its dozen owners & helpers dressed
a la mode, & we began to wonder where we
were intended to shop. Obviously, the little
wast hog had a contract with one of the
stalls to bring along suckers & that what
was what we were making for. Eventually
we stopped - Wasty had a few Indian
words with the manager bloke who

immediately bowed before us, invited us into the parlour arrangement at the back of the stall, sat us down, & clasped his hands for an assistant - "what no dancing girls?"

We were shown reel after reel. It was all Kashmir silk, & the designs & colours made me sigh in despair - I knew what this was going to be. One length after another was dexterously thrown before us & the pile grew & grew. Like the carpet episode my eyes were dazzled so that I couldn't concentrate sufficiently long to decide whether I liked the stuff or not - I implored the bloke to ease up a little, (Lepo. was similarly confused), but either he was dense, or he wouldn't understand, or he was so wound up with the pending sale that he couldn't stop; anyway the performance went on until, violently, I raised my voice sufficiently to cause a halt. It was getting so bad we feared to be smothered under a mountain of silk. Now I had to decide. We had a little comic relief when the assistant draped the lengths around him in very female fashion.

+ showed us the made-up effect - he was about your size so that I could gauge things. Well, I did, eventually decide, but lemme tell ya, baby, I was still an in a sweat of indecision as to whether you'll like it. I had to tell myself that it was useless to worry, if wifey doesn't think it suitable for a dress she can make curtain covers or something. I bought 3 yards of brown brocade silk - I chose the colour because it matches your hair, (at least I think it does), & I chose brocade because I had a crazy idea that it'd make a swell dress - I dunno, darling, but anyway the stuff's on its way now, & maybe you'll think it's O.K. after all. Geo. bought some printed silk material with a flowered design - the sort of design I think I'll get you next time. And now shoes.

After deciding on the brown stuff, I thinks to myself, it'd be a good notion to buy some snooty court shoes to go with that high falutin' material & we asks Warty to lead us. It takes

ut to a few shops out in the streets, but
 in none of them did I find a good
 looking shoe of the type I wanted or
 imagined you'd want. Let me be
 truthful, sweet. I was really concerned
 with the amount of chips left in the
 kitty - you see Geo had asked me to
 stake him in this shopping expedition
 + silk ain't exactly cheap, and there
 was still the ceeegars to get and a meal
 at Chung Hui's, and there was another
 week to go before pay-day. So I
 washed out the shoes - maybe next
 month - huh?

That just about finished us for
 C.H. + we sent Wasty on his way rejoicing
 with a chip. It was getting late +
 we stepped smartly along towards Colabo
 where is the Eros + Hornby Rd. Of
 course, it had to rain all the way, I
 when one particularly heavy shower came
 down we sheltered in the doorway of a
 haberdashery. In a moment of inspiration,
 tempered with caution, I went in +
 bought you a couple of coloured hand-
 kerchiefs - your parcel, this time, looks
 more like a small stocking.

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I had an address that I'd seen in a periodical advertising ceezars, & to the Eagle Cigar Co. I did go. With visions of some large & important store we looked vaguely around us with no luck at all & we had to narrow our field. At last we spotted a name-plate in the wall of a building - it was an office on the 3rd. floor! We went up & knocked on the door & were invited in by a very fat & very jolly looking man, obviously not Indian but not English - we found out later he was Viennese. His office was a poky little place, but stacked all around, in boxes, cabinets, crates & barrels, were thousands of cigars. With my small order in mind I diffidently asked to be shown some. He was overwhelming. He sat us down & proceeded to show us all brands & types - when I asked about one particular brand he produced a sample & gave it to me to try. He gave us the history & much information about cigars in India, & in general, made us feel right at home - we began to enjoy ourselves. He told me he was a left-wing Publisher in Vienna & when Hitler had walked in he'd been thrown in

prison - we had an interesting chat about
 publishing - and Hitler. But our business
 was to buy cigars + time was getting
 short, so I bought 50 imported Havanas
 (a great find - Indians can't roll a cigar
 even tho the leaf is Havana), + 50 of a
 cheaper sort similar to the sample given
 to me. I'm sending the Havanas in the
 parcel + as they've come through the
 monsoon I'd be grateful, darling, if
 you'd put them in an extra warm place
 for a month or so to dry out - after
 that they can be kept in any normal
 dry storage place.

That finished our shopping for the day.
 It was 6 p.m., the show began at 6.30
 + we had to eat. Exasperatingly enough
 the service at Chung Hui's was foul +
 it was 6.30 before we came out in a
 panic. We grabbed a garry, (that's a
 sort of horse pulled rickshaw), told him
 "Eros - jaldi, jaldi" - quickly, quickly - +
 away we galloped - did the trip in 5
 minutes - rushed in not so very late after
 all. The picture was "Bring On The Girls"
 + to our jaded eyes it had much to be
 commended in the way of feminine

pulchritude - a feast for the tired Business man. Otherwise I wasn't impressed with the usual Hollywood version of things. Navy, & Eddie Bracken or Sonnie Tufts are not my favourite comedians. But, as I say, it had its points - Veronica Lake & Maggie Reynolds both have marvellous hands.

In lingering over a special hot Sundae in the adjoining Soda Fountain, we caused ourselves to miss the 10.00 transport back & had to wait an hour or so for the next. We were too tired to walk around viewing the night life of Bombay, so we twisted our weary bones into an empty truck & snoozed the hour away. We came back to a cabin in a chaotic state, the other three lads had spent the day whitewashing & painting, & you never saw such a mess. By the time I'd put my net back in place & cleared a way through the debris all I could do, as written here before, was flop out - which I did.

About the parcel - when you look at it, baby, you will be quite in order in imagining that instead of 3 there are 333 yards of silk in it. Taint so, in an endeavour to protect

the material from the elements & unfair wear & tear I made a thorough job of packing - we've got plenty of paper, string, etc., & it's free, so why not? It might not get to you in time to make a summer dress - if it's fit for dress making - but I had a notion that it might be heavy enough for Autumn. It doesn't appear that our parcels are getting home very quickly but I guess you'll get 'em eventually, sweet, & so I ain't worried.

I wonder if you'll be on holiday when you get this - I guess so - so I'll spend in the past tense & hope you all had a swell time. Did I tell you that Harold comes from Hastings? - that's where his wife & baby are living at the moment - you'll be able to pass on a little local colour to him. I hope too that Frank can manage to drive you all down. It's absolutely no fun at all carrying luggage about & a train trip in wartime is no joy ride - I speak with feeling having considerable knowledge of the subject. Don't forget to relax, honey, & drink in the ozone - Oh, of course you've been - well anyway I hope you did relax & drink 'tis of great benefit. But you'll be telling me all about

it, would you meety?

He, he - I did make a bloody row
 on the st' gittar 'n pianny, dia' I? 'S matter
 of fact, only last week I went to the Welfare
 office & asked him to try & get a few
 musical instruments from the Welfare people
 & he's promised to do his best. If he can
 get a gittar for me I think I get a tutor
 & try & recapture some of the knowledge I
 had of the thing years ago - only trouble
 is I also intend to take another corres-
 pondence course in English & Trig & I
 don't think I'll have all that spare time
 for everything. Then again, there are some
 awfully encouraging buzzes going around
 about denobbing - there's a lot going on
 behind the newspapers - & if only 10% are
 true, by the Autumn I should be looking
 forward to that piece of news that I've
 been waiting 3 years for, & in that case
 it'll be too late to worry about English
 & Trig.

Good night angel. I'm looking at you
 now - you're lovely - Good night, my dearest.

I love you,

Re.

Received
29.7.45

POST
OFFICE

MARITIME
MAIL

DR. ARNOLD SERVICE

Mrs. HEN WESTWAY

88 (A) BELLE GROVE RD

WELLING

KENT

ENGLAND

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