

61.

Bombay.

26.5.45.

Hallo, my sweet, A very wet morning this. We haven't any divisions or rounds today, which is extremely unusual + all the morning we've been renovating + reclaiming all the gear + trappings that've been put away + not looked at for the past five months. Rain + bug have done their worst + the havoc is frightful.

I got my No. 1 Blue out for its fortnightly airing +, due to regular attention it's not so bad. I'm having a Good Conduct badge sewed on today + thinking it might be needed, I tried on the coat for the first time in 4 months to see if any alterations could be effected. Cor! - I'm having the buttons put back to their original position (remember moving 'em about 3"!), + even then I'll have plenty of room for the three or four sweaters that I anticipated using for an English winter. That attack of belly ache I recently had knocked me back about 7 pounds + I now weigh 13st 5/6 lbs - that ducky little pound you used to love to bounce on had disappeared so I guess you'll

have to feel we real good if you want it back again.

Coming back to this morning's dead-out - I should explain the obsessions. Whilst the rains come down so consistently, & threaten even on a fine day, we can't get our beds & nets out to dry after de-worming & washing, so they haven't had the proper attention lately. However, for the last week or so we've had more than our quota of livestock for bed-waters - they've had an uninterrupted period of resting & breeding - & today we thought we could chance a dhobi. We might have guessed! - my bed & net are now draped out the back very nicely washed & we now being soaked again by a down-pour that'll last all day - ah well, hose' always the deck.

At 12.30 today we all troop down to the mess for a V.I. dinner. The Navy, being different to any other service, refused to allow extra victualling money for an extra spread to commemorate the occasion & so we've made our own arrangements. I believe there'll be chicken - at any rate there was enough skwawking around the galley yesterday to indicate such. The margin, altho' I shall drink my 15<sup>th</sup>

a eat my fill, + feel very much in need of an afternoon's crashing of weeds. the damn bed'll be wet + I shall have to doze in this chair - very uncomfortable.

I haven't been ashore at all this week end. No money. Yesterday we loafed about + read, + it was all very boring - I had enough for a show + I wish I'd gone even for that + the ride in. In the evening, to supplement a meagre supper, we went to the camp's Mafji canteen + ate plenty of steak, chips + tomatoes + feeling that the appetite might return in a couple of hours, I bought a tin of cheese, a tin of tongue + a packet of cream crackers. The appetite did return + we got stuck into the cheese + biscuits - I have every reason to believe that the tongue will go the same way tonight. (Reminded me - I've just got up to look at the remains of the cheese - ants smell out food in the most unlikely places + we have to make regular inspections + wipe 'em off).

Your No. 77 arrived yesterday, sweet, providing me with a week-end letter to re-read bi-hourly. I suppose when you were writing that you were bubbling all

over, eh baby? Quite right too. Whatever  
snags are due to fall on our victorious  
heads in the future, they still are a damn  
sight preferable to a state of war. My  
goodness, when you come to think of it, we  
are lucky to have gotten away with it  
with our lives, eh? There were times, both  
at home and on operations, when the outlook  
looked pretty grim & only inherent obstinacy  
stopped me feeling that it was the end. It's  
lucky, too, that our relations & friends have  
come through O.K. - except Mother - she was  
a grand old lady.

She said, haven't I, that the end  
of the war didn't make a great impression  
here. It's very queer, because it means a  
quicker return home for us & that's all we're  
worried about, but it can be easily  
explained. ~~The~~ Mass celebrations depend  
almost entirely on atmosphere - at home  
the air is charged with joy & relief &  
the feeling runs from person to person -  
gradually the mass work up to a passion  
which has its outlet in singing & dancing  
& drinking & everybody joins in. In  
Bombay, where the majority of the masses  
are Indian, there is no feeling of joy or  
relief - they're mostly merchants & business

men getting a lot of money out of the war  
& they're not happy about the exit of the  
Serving man. In fact I've read articles  
& letters in the Indian papers which condemn  
the state that the end of the war ~~brings~~  
meant to them. Relief? - Bombay has  
never felt the war - no black-out, no  
bombing, no shortage of food, plenty of  
trade & work for all. There were half-  
hearted attempts at illumination & some  
declared a holiday, but the most obvious  
effect is the release of goods from the  
black-marketeers who have been scared  
into getting rid of stock whilst the  
customers are still in town. So you  
can imagine that any feeling of joy was  
so weak that to us, 15 miles away  
from town, it was non-existent, &  
we had to rely on any atmosphere  
created by ourselves. Well, we might  
have worked up a yell or two if it  
hadn't been for the dampening effect of  
the dear old navy - but to be told that we  
weren't to get even an hour No, no beer,  
nobody to give us any official news just  
nothing out of the ordinary at all. !!!  
So there was no yelling, or dancing, or drinking  
- but in our own hearts we felt good. In,

I know I did, & I didn't really need a jamboree. I was quite content to lie back & think of its implications - yep, good-oh.

That Kodak you wrote off for such a honey, honey. Awkward, ain't it? I think what I'll do is just pipe down & leave it all to you. How's that? Buzz & rumours notwithstanding I really don't think I shall be away from India before December - if I am it'll be a slice of good luck that'll not be diminished by the thought of a camera in the post. In addition, I understand the Air Mail parcel post gets a little parcel over in a week. So what! Honestly, dearling, a camera would be a godsend - it'd take away 90% of the boredom. But I didn't want you to take all that trouble, find & send me a camera, only to have me homeward bound whilst the camera was India-bound. Awkward, ain't it?

Did you read about the "both ships" being for sale down at Poole? I'm afraid that anybody buying a 'D' boat & imagining they've got a luxury cruise will have a sad disappointment. They

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might make a static horizontal-out of the hull but even so all the accommodation is below decks & therefore airless & gloomy. If they want to make a mobile affair of it - imagine an 8 H.P. Austin Marine engine will shift it it's gonna break their hearts. I haven't heard of these yachts you write about, baby, but I haven't seen anything suitable for us in commission in the navy - I imagine they mean the big motor & steam yachts that've been used for patrols, etc.

I'm relieved to read you've got those two parcels - especially the one from the shop. That was a silly move, sending cigars in a non-duty free parcel - might have meant the confiscation of the whole lot. By the way, baby, altho I'm glad you think the canvas wrapping "beautiful", I fear I can't claim any credit - we take the paper-wrapped goods down to the wog tailor & he sews it in canvas - how that some cloth is rationed it's difficult to get & we accomplish some wonderful wangles requiring some. Still, the sealing-wax effect in my own work & that's lovely, ain't it? The next one you receive should contain the silk & elastic - I posted that on the 24th July. What brand of tea do you like best? - if any - whatever you prefer

I'll buy in future. Did I tell you we can  
bring home 25 lbs of foodstuffs with us?  
That may include 5 lbs of tea! Whether  
or not, we'll at least eat when I get back.

Speaking of food, we've just had the  
V.I. Dinner & it wasn't at all bad. Soup,  
fish, chicken, roast spud & peas, & ice cream.  
The change from normal meals was so  
startling that we were quite excited about  
it all - chattered away like a lot of kids  
at a Sunday School treat.

I must have a little talk about  
deserting - I'm afraid you'll have to  
put up with a lot of the sort of stuff from  
now on, sugar, but I believe you won't  
mind it at all. We're all up in our  
clouds again today because yesterday  
we discovered the official definition of  
"deserting" which makes all the difference  
in the world to the time when I shall  
see the White Cliffs. It means that  
when a man is deemed deserted he is  
out of the Service entirely and has had  
his leave. You see what that means -

if by reading the official reports of  
future releases I discover I'm due to be de-  
scribed in February that means I shall  
be away from India by November



because with my foreign service, I'm due for > months leave at least. It makes the outlook very much rosier, or so I'm thinking, when you read of releases with whether they say "declassified" or "out of the service" or a phrase with the same meaning OR "disposed" or "held for disposal" which means that the men are due for passage to England or, for if in England, are ready to go through the Deeds Center on their last round-up.

From various letters from home we've got the guff on what happens at & after going through the Centre. We shall have to give in two white suits & two blue suits & certain hammock gear - they need the suits for the people on the Continent otherwise we shouldn't have been asked for them because they're bought by us. If, like me, a bloke hasn't got a suit to give in they charge a percentage of the cost, but, for my part, they can go chase themselves for any money of mine. After we've been fitted up with civvy clothes we get a booklet containing all sorts of papers & forms & warrants that give us entry into Paradise. Incidentally in addition to the clothes outfit we'll

get 90 clothing coupons, altho they're not given until after the leave, & we apply at the usual office for 'em. After the leave, too, we get a P.O. Savings Bank book with Sparsity a credit entered in - that'll be about £70 in my case, enough for a few pints.

Have you thought about your position when I return, sweet? It'll be so / you being on leave without you being on leave so your first obvious move is to get special leave granted. But what will the C.S. say to that request? If we're in a flat - you might not think it a daft work keeping that in order & you may pine for action in the event of the C.S. saying that "your services are no longer required" (a horribly casual & pregnant phrase). I was wondering - if you did decide that whilst in our temporary home you'd enjoy some other occupation during the day. The relaxing of the Labour Regulations would allow you to find local employment without worrying about restrictions. But it's not a matter that I'd try to influence you in, darling, except that you most certainly must not worry about the

money aspect, neither must you jeopardise  
 your health in the hurly-burly of office &  
 house work. Of course, I'm not one of  
 those husbands who, (no damnit, I  
 won't be so smug) —. If you  
 were still at the, or a office, in the evenings  
 the chores would, of course, be divided  
 between us so it would be 50/50 all  
 the way. But I dunno how you feel  
 in the matter, sweetie — I guess you've  
 given it a little thought so maybe  
 you could let me know your ideas.  
 Let me reiterate, if there's any doubt or  
 question at all that ~~the~~ office plus  
 house work wouldn't plan out earlier  
 & harmoniously then we scrub it out  
 entirely, & I take up the age-old position  
 of money-earner for the family. There's  
 enough cash for two, and more, so there's  
 no worry there — your happiness is all  
 I aim for & I only mentioned the  
 matter because I had the notion that  
 you wouldn't be contented just keeping  
 up a two or three roomed flat — of course  
 a pukka house with all the trimmings  
 is a different matter.

Apart from anything else, I had  
 thought that I it'd be rather jolly working

at the same office <sup>as you</sup> - nipping up in the mornings  
& coming back at nights. It would be fun.  
It would be rather unique too wouldn't it?  
In the C.S. I mean. Edgar writes to me  
& speaks of his horror at returning to  
civilian life. Wonder how I shall feel?  
He said, haven't I, that the old office  
routine would be too boring for me, but  
I wonder whether I shall feel the benefit  
of a relaxed working life. I know one  
thing - I shall definitely feel strange. I  
shall feel out of sympathy with the rest  
of the staff who've been at the office  
throughout the war - not because they haven't  
been in the service, I'm not concerned about  
that, they might have been too old or busy -  
but their outlook will be so totally  
different to mine. As I remember it, people  
at the office got into the most frightful  
tantrums over the smallest things, (they  
seem small to me now), & I shall feel  
inclined to overdo the two Naval phrases  
"Take it off your back" & "you worry too much".  
I hope they'll be tolerant & understanding  
towards men like me - if not, life's going  
to be one shinding after another. I think  
the ex-service men of the last war will  
understand.

Have you seen any blokes returning

from the wars at Q. W. H. 20? How about your ex-boy friend Philmore? (yes, I know - but he did take you for a taxi ride, didn't he + I've been in the taxi with you, lucky - whoo-woo!).

How's your tennis game? You write of much dabbling about - is it of much avail? Beats me how you can hit a straight ball with that racket of yours - from what I remember of it a side view showed a decided corrugated effect. It occurs to me that a very cunning game could be played with that racket - a swipe in the direction of one corner of the court would send the ball in the other corner, to the consternation of all. But I'd like to be on the side-lines watching you play - besides you being you, I enjoy watching people being energetic; by a complicated mental process I can exercise myself by proxy & derive great benefit therefrom. Here in this camp & in this host, there has been a suggestion that a Physical Training Instructor should get us up at 06.30 hrs for his foul purpose. The only response from me, & I might add, many others, was a merry laugh. I can still swim with the best

+ that's all the exercise I want to indulge in out here. However, I do think I might join you in a few morning or pre-bed exercises, firstly to keep you company, + secondly to prove to you that your virile husband can take it or leave it + that his rippling muscles really do ripple. I don't want you saying that Mrs. Jones' husband is a fine figure of a man + he bends + stretches every morning, (I shall ask, in the first place, how you got to know that), in fact I shall force you, in equity, to tell Mrs. Jones what a fine figure of a man I am (+ to prove it she can peep in any morning).

I bet the Hastings Epic is ready now, eh sweet? Good - eh, is it? Don't be bashful now, tell ~~the~~ hubby-wubby all about it, + soon as it's ready slap on about four lbs in stamp + charter a special plane to get it out to me in the shortest possible time. Remember, I'm just hanging out my tongue for a peep at it - you can imagine the state I'm in for a peep at you in the flesh! Love is a wonderful thing - ain't that a fact, darling?

Just-wonderful!

R.

On Helix Service

MARITIME

POST OFFICE

MRS. ~~ESTER~~ MARY  
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WELLING

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ENGLAND

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Received  
3.9.45