

79.

Bombay.

4.10.45.

Dearest,

I really haven't got a lot of time tonight because I'm going to the cinema, but I would like to fill in the hours writing to you.

But GY came today to cheer me up. Oh jolly glad quite jolly glad. Those parcels are coming in crazy like, aint they? That one you've got was sent with another (D.F.) & anyway it's ahead of the silk parcel sent at the end of July! Huh!

Of course you've read the M. of L. Statement on demobilising. Now what exactly does that mean? A following statement said that 31's would be out by Xmas - which is the 4th - by but by June 45's will be out - which aint so hot because that means that from Xmas to June only 14 groups will be demobbed

Whereas in the equivalent period in 1975  
31 Group were doubled. The question  
is, where do I come in - before they  
start tailing off, with the doubling  
or after? Further, it's obvious  
that "out" does not mean doubled  
with leave this time, because the  
31s couldn't possibly be in U.K. in  
time to have 2 month's leave before  
Xmas. It sounds as tho' there  
been an improvement somewhere, but  
where? Oh I know it won't be long  
in any case, honey, but I've gotten  
round to worrying about a week's  
delay these days.

What I can't understand about  
your fuse-blowing episode is, how  
do the power plugs affect the lights?  
Something wrong, these.

Like progress with Blenheim.  
A fortnight should see the completion  
of baby? The whole scheme sounds  
to be good. What are you  
going to do about the carpets  
& rug you've already got? I

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suggested that the large red carpet go in the bedroom permanently, so that when the <sup>new</sup> large carpet arrives there won't be so much fussing about to be done. How about that?

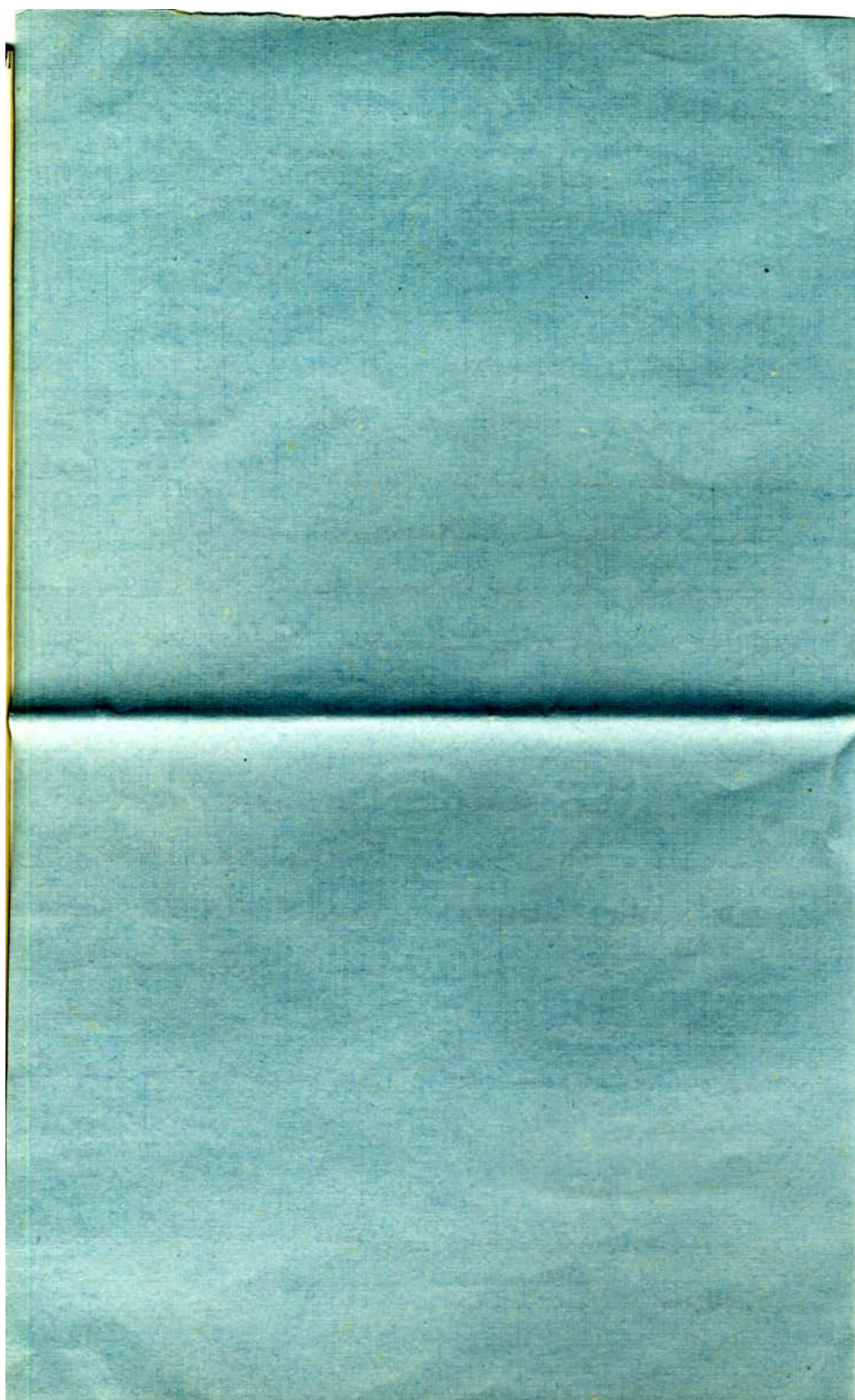
I got to thinking about cutlery yesterday, sweet. They sell canteens for six in Bombay for Rs 20-280 but the metal is inferior to English.

What's the position in England?

If the Army & Navy still have a stock of canteens we might splash out - huh?

Yes indeed we were lucky to get the flat, baby, & it'll certainly keep us quiet all the while we're travelling round the countryside looking for our ideal. But, after all, it's only righteous compensation for losing the flat in the first place.

Yesterday we all went into Bombay for a swim & a flick. Bought Candy, of course, & it was



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glorious. Being in the week the  
numbers were reasonable & so had a  
good long swim to get my muscles  
back into trim. The sky was  
a deep blue all the time & we lay  
on the lawn & looked various  
shades of red. We haven't had a  
chance to get brown through the  
sunbath - in fact most of us had  
come back to a very pale skin &  
now that the sun is out we're  
starting all over again.

I had  
the camera & took a couple of  
shots. We drank iced orange &  
ate cream cakes. The girls were  
duly oiled - a duty expected of  
the Navy altho' the results hardly  
warrant the expenditure of oiling.  
Besides only the service girls come  
to this part & they're a funny lot  
- honestly, baby, they're the pick  
of the bunch! And there ain't no  
many of 'em either - have a look at  
the map if you doubt that girls

could keep away from the Navy.

We ate at Chang Huan's. It's probably be the last time, too. The pork chops were slightly off, & Jim had a leg of chicken that was too tough to eat! He refused to pay for it & the ensuing quarrel with the manager was edifying if only to see the latter's act of ~~An~~ Outraged Chinese Gentleman. We didn't pay.

The show was the 9.30 house & there was lots of time to play with. We strolled around in the dusk, & later the night showed the lights of Bombay to us. We, or rather they - the others - bought little things from queer people. We were entertained by a little black boy, no higher than my knee, singing 'Pistol Packing Mama' followed by a dance - I annal for his pain - a mistake, he followed us for miles! It was at this time that I inspected the canteens

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of cutlery & very, very ready bought me. I was stopped only by the thought that it might be too heavy for a D.F. parcel, & landing it in the U.K. might cost me a packet.

As night falls the more roving type of vendor shows signs of weariness after a full day, & we old stages know that this is the time to get a bargain. Wallets are a favourite sell - they have a handful to show. They start at R4 & in the day time they wouldn't budge from ~~R2.50~~ R2.50. But Bob bargained me at 8 o'clock until he gave in at R1.50.

There was a slight risk when, Bob's back being turned for a second, the <sup>vendor</sup> changed the change by putting a smaller wallet in the box containing that chosen, but we have an axiom based on the well-known fact that all vendors are slysters & it enabled us to see through the swap dead,

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He was lucky to get any money at all for his wallet!

We were weary by 8.30. The big Services Canteen in Hounley Rd supplied us with a bottle of cider (?) & a bit down. At 9.15 we went to the Regal & shivered in an over-conditioned atmosphere to see that utterly ridiculous film "Sudan". I'm afraid there wasn't sufficient glamour or humour to compensate for the childishness of the story.

But at 11.30 - the lorry left at 12.30. It was a balmy night & very few people about - there's a lull in account of the riots which are still popping up here & there, altho' the sight of a few British troops with rifles has rather damped ~~their~~ the rioters' enthusiasm. No cafes open, but a stall sold us a bunch of 16 bananas for a rappee & together with oranges

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We managed to stave thirst & hunger to some degree.

A ride through Bombay after midnight is an education. In doorways, under awnings, on window ledges, on the islands in the road, on the pavements, anywhere, are hordes of homeless men, women & children sleeping out. Heaven knows where they slept in the rainy season, but there they are now covered, sometimes, with any old rag, & flopped down wherever they stopped walking. I read somewhere that the Bombay City Council have "expressed concern" at this practice!

We ran through the riot area with nothing worse than a brick thrown our way - there was nobody to be seen. Bombayites aren't very inclined to privacy - their flat windows are large & open to the streets - they never pull

curtains or blinds. I haven't a very high opinion of the furnishings of Bombay flats - very sparse & tiny - bitsy. The women are very careful about their undressing, more so than the men, & the most accident-keeping Tom wouldn't get much of a thrill, & it seems funny that they should take so much trouble to remain "decent" when a blind would be such a help - however, it's their business I guess. You see all this in the lobby as it boards along. We once saw a man giving his wife a terrific beating, & further along they were embalming a dead body with musical effects. Funny city! Last night, about half-way home, we passed about 50 schoolchildren walking in file, with master, in the middle of the road - they their age couldn't have topped 12 & it was 1 o'clock in the morning!

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Yes honey, she's gone way past  
the hour - she decided not to go to  
the pictures after all.

Telling me about the black coat  
brought back remin. I got that  
cloth from the Attache before I got  
my first draft. I had the feeling  
that you thought the stuff was as  
poor as haddock-water, & I wouldn't  
have said anything if you had  
because anything with a tinge of  
knavery gives me the willies. But I  
guess it takes time to make things  
like that. Harold had a letter from  
his wife, wherein she reported the receipt  
of some green hills material he'd sent  
& she said it was unsuitable for a  
dress. That set me to thinking  
that the gold stuff I sent you,  
which should have reached you  
by now, will also be unsuitable.  
But maybe it makes good table-  
runners & cushion covers - huh?

I'm also very dubious about this  
latter material I've sent you. It  
looked & felt a bit tough. Still,  
if you think it's unsuitable for a  
costume for you, sweetie, consider  
it from the suit - for - me angle &  
give me your opinion.

And now I've got 3 parcels  
to address, label & seal - with a job  
& two of them will go off tomorrow  
- your material & the tablecloth, &  
Fucker's cigars & tea. So it's Bye-bye  
baby for a while, my precious.  
May I end with a poem?

My candle burns at both ends,  
it will not last the night.

But ah, my foes, & oh, my friends  
it gives a lovely light!

Doesn't apply to me, darling, but  
it's cute, huh?

I love you so.

Les

In Active Service

POST

MARITIME

Mrs. ~~VERICE~~ ~~W~~ ~~A~~ ~~1~~ ~~1~~

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