

Bombay.

27.11.45.

Darling,

What is my One + Ah, thinking of tonight?
me? Maybe you have got a thousand and some other things
to think about, but for a while, right now in fact,
you can drop 'em + concentrate on Ol' Faithful here,
sweating his guts out + blowing flies in all directions.
To help you visualise me I'll describe what I'm wearing -
on the top half, nothing but a wrist-watch - on
the bottom half a pair of natty khaki trousers with
open work crotch + flies, (definitely for men only), whilst
my feet are shod with good ol' Navy boots now
covered in the red dust of India. My face is oiled
but unshaven - my body brown + shiny - I have
a slight cold in the head + sniff at intervals. Got
it? - right - want it? - ah ha, another matter, eh.
Later on I shall retire to shower + dress in night
clothing when the scene will take on a more formal
aspect, with clean + well-pressed gear housing a
frame that is shaven, scented, + powdered fit to
kill. I can be a dandy when I like.

No 123, what you think is 125, came this
afternoon, but 124, which, I gather, contains a
welcome couple of smackers didn't come much to my
disgust. I ain't that I only look for greenbacks
in your letters, Angel, but what with a make -

and-mend coming off tomorrow of me with only ten chips to my name. I could have used that stuff to advantage. Ah well, what's money - well, come on, what is it? - so you won't talk, eh? - I know just how you feel, baby, & I agree - taint every thing but it helps just a little.

You might not believe this but my birthday came as no surprise to me. I'd felt it'd bound to happen for a long time, & do you know what I said to myself that day? - I said, (quite aptly, I thought) "How time flies" - & when you come to think about it, it does too. No wasn't that I felt older - I haven't felt older for years - but it seemed to me that the Moving Finger was writing a hellish sight faster these days than ~~it~~ did in the past, & bringing my thoughts to a more personal note. I began to get worried in case the damn Finger wrote me off as a vital force in Westaway Inc. before I could get back to convince the junior partner otherwise. Trouble is I get no practice at being a husband out here, ("I should think not", says you, & quite rightly says I), & it's no fun wondering if the hand has lost its cunning. Still, I can dream - can't I? - & in those dreams I'm not quite the sluggard & the system appears to work perfectly - huh! let the Finger write - it's only a poem anyway.

I wish - oh, how I wish! - that I could impart a little more information about coming

home, but the last two days have been steady of
 buzzes. As you can easily guess, I didn't go
 for my medical today + that just goes to show you
 that a buzz is nothing more than a buzz - no substance
 at all. One is still in the waiting + hoping stage,
 with ears pinned back to receive the smallest piece
~~parcel~~ of news but the telephone does not ring, neither
 do the despatch riders ride - after a period of activity
 when men departed on a Passage to England + we
 remainder convinced themselves that, after all, the
 Barra Sahibs hadn't forgotten them + it wouldn't
 be long now, after all that the rot sets in + queries
 are quoted querulously quawking quhopes to the quground
 -hm. But it's only days that pass - they're nothing to
 Old Father Time in the Naval Drafting Office - "Certainly
 you'll be going - for Pete's sake be patient" - I can
 hear 'em now, cackling their fat over a chota peg
 in the Mess, telling each other how many 'bodies'
 they drafted today, + how many tomorrow, ("And I'm
 not going to tell the silly-billies til the last moment; after
 all --- what?") - as everybody knows, you
 can't speak lightly of a woman's name in the Mess
 so what the hell are you to talk about? I'm
 not so much going crackers as going nuts - there is a
 difference - when you go crackers they cast you off
 to the Sick Bay, give you a sedative + a life of Ghandi,
 + leave you without food or water for five days, (it's
 a well known cure) - but if you go nuts you don't

have anything like that, in fact nothing really happens to you at all - the officers look a little scared, but who wouldn't if some body jumped on you & scratched your eyes out? - I mean --. Thank goodness I've more dignity & pride to do a thing like that, but I do let out a scream sometimes - it helps.

I have now showered, powdered & supped, & in consequence, feel much more civilised. Let's get on with the letters.

This is a fine time to announce that weight of parcels may go up to 11 lbs! Good Lord - to think of all the headaches & repacking I've suffered to keep up to, & no more, the stingy 5 lb limit, & now that I've practically given up the game they tell us this! It was a strange coincidence that your letter tallied with the putting up of the notice in the mess - 6 weeks late!!! I really & truly appreciate your forewarnings regarding rationed clothing, my sweet, but I don't think I'll buy much more for myself - if anything. I've sent home shirts, underclothes & socks, & the 100 or so coupons I collect at The End of the line (cute?), with ^{keep} me in et ceteras & you in black-lace undies for a while to come. Don't forget, too, that I get a complete outfit from the House at the End of the line (cute & cute), which includes 2 shirts, two pairs of socks, & a pair of shoes - all very handy. One thing I cannot bank on - those crafty Naval people know pretty nicely that every bloke leaving the service is going to try & stock himself with Pusser's gear, &

they've countered that move by denuding the Clothing Stores of anything useful. It's rough on the fellows who genuinely need clothes, but they can't even buy a pair of socks, or shoes, even if they had to go barefoot! So we've forced to buy woody stuff in town & it's awful much - as the Indians are only just beginning to wear footwear, generally speaking, (the sports papers were recently debating whether the top line football players should move with the times & wear boots on the field!), they haven't the least idea how to make a pair of shoes with leather that will last. Nope, except for odd items that might take my fancy & are priced within the limits of my pocket, I shall buy nothing more for myself - my cap is full & so's me suitcase.

Now lookie here young lady — Oh, how can I scold such a wonderful wife, you great little hunk of treasure you - but I don't like to hear of you getting some hands & you've got to stop getting 'em - alright? Who the hell's going to do the scrubbing? I dunno - can't you get a char in? Fine time to tell you that - yes, I know - makes it awkward, don't it. You've every right to doze off in the arm-chair, honey, & I want to hear of you doing that more often. Feet on the mantelshelf & body completely relaxed - those dreamy, lovely eyes should be closed & you should be peering into the bright future thinking lovely thoughts about me. You can look

yourself up to plenty of cold cream or dose dear liddle kandy-pandies, because Father Xmas here is bringing you home a jar or two - he knows what makes the feminine works tick.

That large room aint a bad size, is it? I should be able to move my hulk in there without disturbing the furniture. The carpet should fit in comfortably, leaving some space for side boards, sewing machines, book cases, radio-grams & cocktail cabinets - Oh yes, & forgot, a piano. I've been having another look at my diary & I discover that there was a long interval between buying the carpet & hearing that it was dispatched. I remember going to the shop about two weeks later & the bloke explained the shipping agent difficulty - I don't believe it went off before the first week in Sept., so even if everything went smoothly it wouldn't arrive til Dec - & after all, the stocks gummed things up a bit didn't it? Plenty of youngsters about the place eh - I hope they're broadminded enough to let us make all the noise & keep ~~quite~~ quiet themselves - I hate noisy neighbours, don't you? I hope, too, the ladies don't mind a semi-nude male dashing about the joint - after this country I'll never get used to covering up when occupied in bed or bathroom.

I await with interest your remarks on the office side of the street. The news-sheet is quite an innovation but should, I think, be a deal more

liberal in its scope - a place as large as G.W.H. deserves a full-scale journal. You may tell Mr. Hall that I shall almost certainly grace his club nights with my presence - I like to encourage these affairs & may even consent to take the first plunge each night. Who invited "H.H.W." to write about India? Why didn't they invite me? Y'know I have a feeling there's a conspiracy afoot to keep me under - they know damn well that a contribution of mine would positively sizzle & they fear the reaction of the reactionaries - I know. I wonder what Hall told you. If he's really nice about it I might accept an A.D.C. - come to think of it, even if he were downright insulting I might still accept it.

I have to confess that progress on the story has stopped. As I feared, it was the sheer grind of writing that got me - I'm artistic, I must have a typewriter. Then again, I think up smashing scenes & sentences that are scintillating, but by the time I've got the first few words in the inspiration has gone & I find myself perming combinations of words that have no life, & meaning. I'd try again sometime. If it weren't for the fact that I'm way behind hundreds of others, including "H.H.W.", I'd have a shot at my verdict on India - the big snag there is that, at the moment, I have no verdict & I think that anybody who has, including, too, dear ol' Bev., is a self-opinionated fool. I've just finished reading E.M. Forster's "Passage to India"

& it gives you another angle to the external question on India, Should or Should Not - the British Quit India? And what is India? And what is an Indian? If you're a sensitive person - sensitive to atmospheres, & currents of feelings, I mean - & I believe I am, it isn't long after you arrive here that you begin to find trouble & complexity. To try & understand India brings on a headache. Why do the Indians hate or distrust the British? I've spoken to dozens of Indians from a rich, well-educated Sikh to an Untouchable, & I've never met one who declared he hated the British. Maybe they're being polite, but need politeness to the extent of a hearty & genuine invitation to the Sikh's home in the Punjab, or the giving of a gift of bananas by the Untouchable whose wage is 10¢ a day? When people declare that the Indians hate the British don't they mean they hate the British Govt. in India? A different thing, because the Central Govt. is composed mainly of the Viceroy plus a few thousand Anglo-Indians whose job depends on the retention of the present regime. Even the Bombay Sentinel, an "anti-British" paper declares that relationships Indian relations with Britain must at all times be cordial - of course they must. I know this, that in this little district with its dozen military camps the coolie population have never had such a prosperous time, & they've experienced the unique situation - for them - where Barren Sahibs, (in other words Big Bosses, for that's how we match up to their 'grade' in life), speak reasonably kindly to them, treat them as human beings, never run back & take a bath if they touch us, give

them basketh & clothes, + even visit them in their very humble homes. I know this, too, that the ordinary service man, representing the average Englishman, has properly messed it up for the pukka sahibs left in India after the general clear-out, + the coolie + servant will feel his status has raised just a little - little enough to realise that the legend of the pukka sahib is a lot of hokey, + what's about a few more ruppas a month then? Good luck to them.

But that's a very small part of the Indian problem + takes no account of the Indian's own worries. Do read "Passage to India" for an insight into the Indian mind.

Do I bore you with all this, darling? By now you're saying, "heaven, how he does go on!" I was carried away.

A final word, Pet - or, rather, three words.

I love you.

Les

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