

On Board H.M.S. Rajah
New Year Eve.

Dadine,
East of Suez! But only just. We lie at anchorage off Port Tewfik awaiting the morning to go thru the Canal. On the flight deck there a ship's concert in progress which means that the mess is nice & quiet, ideal for letter-writing - you know how I hate amateur concerts. I have great hopes of getting this letter off at Port Said at the other end of the Canal - if so, & unless the postal authorities are even worse than in India, it should reach you before I do.

The trip from Aden up the Red Sea was quite a stormy one - it's delayed us about a day & the revised schedule runs thus: - At Suez 3 1/2 Pm
Dpt. 1/1 Am. : At Pt. Said 1/1 Pm - Dpt. 2/1 Pm
At Gib 7/1 Pm. - Dpt 8/1 Pm. : At Sheerness 13/1.

The programme says "It is almost certain that we shall proceed to Chatham Dockyard A.M. on the 13th or A.M. on the 14th, but this has not yet been confirmed". So there you are, ma honey, bang up to date with the latest in news from the Rajah front.

By Golly it's been cold for the last two days!

We ran from tropical heat, out of Aden, right into a belt of low depression that could be seen & felt. So frightening was the outlook that on the flight deck - where the afternoon sports were in progress - the sight of the tunnel of stormy darkness ahead sent everybody better-sheltered for the lower decks - we included! It blew real hard & I tightened the belt, & spent as much time as I could on my back to relieve the heaving tummy - I came out unscathed but many didn't. Tonight it's perfectly calm, but the slight breeze is very cool & we've changed into blues - no more sweating, no more tropical sun, no more prickly heat, no more pimples - a good riddance to the lot!

Gradually I'm beginning to realise the import of all this journeying West - relative in the big way, I mean. I said, didn't I, that I'd felt all along, that such bliss as demoralisation wouldn't happen to me - it was all a wonderful dream - & I really did feel that way. I'm being truthful when I state that the excitement of the past two weeks hasn't had a real outlet in me at all - I've tried to get in the mood but - the atmosphere of Naval life cuts in everywhere & England + H. & B. were so far away. But slowly that tight feeling of coming events is

creeping into me & this voyage is becoming a trip to the Promised Land instead of just another draft. I do believe that weather has a lot to do with it - the stupefying effect of tropical heat doesn't allow a man to get het up about anything, but as the wind gets cooler & cooler the blood is forced to race around faster & faster & the brain is sharper - one has perception again instead of the procrastinating effects of the hot-as-leaves - East is certainly East, & they may have it for my money.

"One thing at a time" - "Don't want your chicken before they're hatched" - "Don't cross bridges til you come to them" - et cetera. Those mottoes were all very well before the ship sailed, & had some bearing after it sailed, but we've been under way a week now & I think I'm entitled to consider matters ahead now. In two weeks I shall be an English tail - the Rajah will dock not so very far from you, my Sweet, wherever you are. I shall be on my toes from then on, scheming & conniving for one purpose, to get the preliminaries over & gain time & opportunity to contact my beloved. First the telephone call - a hurried search for a call-box, a review of charges & a frenzied cry for copper &

small silver to prolong the call. "Vic 3811-Ext 215"
 have I remembered right, darling? Maybe the
 extension's wrong but I'll get to you just the same.
 "Is that Mrs. Westway?" - I'd like to get down
 to a greeting right from the heart, but the phone's
 a tricky thing, & maybe a strange female in ~~the~~
 your office would be more than startled if I
 yelled "remember me, darling, your lover?" Won't
 it be a damned nuisance if I arrive too late to phone
 you - ten to one I shan't be able to get night leave
 to come up the line & surprise you at No. 12, (can't
 you picture the scene, sweetheart, as I knock at the
 door with an armful of rabbits & a heart too full
 for words?), & a 'gram might miss you anyway.
 That'll mean all night & part of the next day
 before you'll know I've arrived - impatience will
 nearly kill me!

All this messing about at Pheerness
 and/or Chatham makes it awkward to arrange
 a meeting at a specified time, & I guess we'll
 have to work something out on the spot in
 a hurry - just be ready to do anything, honey,
 clear the decks for action. As you read these
 lines I shall be steaming towards the channel
 chafing at every delay & praying for fair

weather to smooth the ~~own~~ home run. Days & nights will be the milestones to total victory, the victory of love over parting.

In looking ahead I retain a practical side. Your sailor-boy will arrive within your orbit much be-bagged - two suitcases, (one weighing at least a ton), + a small kit-bag - + alcho', as you well know, he's as tough & as strong as they come, it will be quite impossible for him to make the journey from either Newisham or Blackheath to No. 12 without vehicular assistance from station to door - if you add a large kitbag + a hammock to that pile you'll have some ~~other~~ idea of my problems of travel & movement when I disembark! Will you, my one & only, find out what taxis or hired cars are available at either station for immediate call - you will? -
 XXX-smack!!! It becomes quite evident, Baby, that if ~~to~~ we meet during the day, a nice, quiet, restful little tea is about all we can manage in town, for I don't relish the prospect of lugging my traps about at night in the dark - heh! in any case I was going to suggest that we got back to the flat as quickly as possible on account

of some unfinished business we've got to attend to -
human?

This is positively the last letter I shall
ever write to you in the Navy, & when you come
to think of it it's quite an occasion, eh Sweet?
The first was written somewhere about July 14th
1942 & since then I've laid myself bare in a
series of writings that have done as much for
my morale as they possibly have done for you.
You must know, darling, that I've never written
anything to you that I didn't mean, or that
wasn't the truth, & I'll still stand by any line
you may pick out at random. Maybe I've
changed my views in some instances - damn it
all - the circumstances ~~that~~ ^{made} mental somersaults
~~was~~ the order of the day! - but you're up-to-
date with any such changes - that's what the
letters were for, to keep me by your side all
the time so that no part of me was hidden from
you. And your letters, dearest - - - !! Gosh
they've kept me alive, & have given me courage
through years of terror & misery & parting. For
the rest of my life I shall remember the
intense feeling of joy that every one of your letters
gave me - I've got every one & I'll never
part with them. I forget how I finished up my
first letter, darling, but I bet the theme was -
I'll always be in love with you!
Les.

Mr. Peter Lewis

POST

MARITIME

Mrs. ~~Elizabeth~~ Mary

12 Blessington Rd.

Lee

London S.E.

England

31/12/75

116