

AMERICAN CONSULATE
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My dearest darling:

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Two more of your precious letters have arrived to cheer me up in these difficult days. Your air mail of December 18th came January 6th, and your really beautiful letter from Vermont, dated Sunday, November 23rd, came yesterday. That makes three letters I have, altogether, so while you may think that you've beaten me as a letter writer, I haven't got the proof of it yet. I haven't your letter about the first meeting with Janie, although I got one from her which described it fairly well, nor do I have the letter you said you were going to send via Lisbon nor the one via the Department. And darling, you were so extravagant, sending only one thin little sheet by air mail for 50¢! Remember that our mail goes by the half ounce, not by five grams, and you can send three or maybe even four sheets for the same price. All of which means that I can never hear enough from you, about you, and about what you are thinking. And if you think of me once in a while, why then, I'm so much the happier! Since the correspondence seems to be going so badly, I will add just for your information that I wrote you a grand four pager dated December 24th telling all about the trip. It was to be carried personally by someone who was travelling by air, and you should have had it a couple of days ago. The plane on which it was to go didn't leave here until about the fifth, due to engine trouble.

Your letters bring up so many things I hardly know where to start. May I begin by saying that I love you, I miss you horribly, and I want you to come as soon as you can? Now that that point is cleared up, I will tell you something about Lagos. Lagos is entirely different from what you would expect, regardless of what that is. I really don't know how to describe it. It generally is composed of rather small buildings, mostly open to the air. Some of the houses are large and strongly built, but most are bungalows, built off the ground and open all around. They tell me there is very little privacy in places like that. I have now moved into an apartment near the Country Club, called the Ikoyi club. The building is absolutely rectangular, without any pretense of ornamentation. The apartment is composed of two fair sized rooms with bare cement floors and bare plaster (or something) walls. It is supposed to be furnished, which means that it has three easy chairs and a small table in the sitting, a bed and chifffonier and two straight chairs in the bedroom, and a chest of drawers in a sort of pantry between the bedroom and the bathroom. There are closets to hang clothes in. When I sit there and try to imagine your reaction when you first saw it, I can only shudder with horror. I hope before you come I will have it fixed up a little. I will get some native mats for

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the floors, some curtains for the windows and some shades for the lamps. Even so, I fear it will still look inhospitable, and your first exercise of housewifely functions (or almost the first) will be to make the place livable. I suppose the Public Works Department, which operates the place, might be induced to furnish another bed and perhaps some other furniture, but I don't know. I hope very much that I will be able to get a house before then, but all living accommodations are at a premium now due to the numbers of soldiers here and other extraordinary activities. The Consulate is a small sandstone bungalow with two stories. The office is on the first ground floor, and the living quarters of one Vice Consul are on the second. The place has been moderately well furnished by the government, and I should greatly prefer it to my present quarters. However, Mr. Jester wants McSweeney to have it when Anderson, the present occupant, goes. I rather have the feeling that I am coming out the small end of the horn, although Mr. Jester appears to think my present quarters are more satisfactory. For one thing, they are located in the restricted European residential section and are therefore supposed to be more healthy. The Consulate has native houses on either side, and there is always a lot of noise. As a matter of fact, Mr. Jester himself lived here for a while and moved out because he and his wife didn't like it at all. And that is the housing situation.

Another difficulty is that one has to have a car here. There are no bus lines (for white people, and none at all to Ikoyi) and few taxis. The taxis are not reliable, and would cost much more than a car. Therefore, I am doing my best to buy a car in the States and have it sent out. Mr. Jester has a car on order with a right-hand drive, and he will turn that over to me if he can get one with an American drive, to use after he returns to the States. I don't know how he will make out, but if he doesn't get one, I will be up the creek. Right at the moment I am renting an Austin 10 which belongs to a man who has gone on leave for the very moderate price of \$5 a month, but that man will be coming back soon, and what will I do then? Life is so complicated! Me, I like a quiet simple life, with just you and me with nothing to worry about. But perhaps that really isn't life, that's death, so we struggle.

My darling, you have had a terrible time, and I shouldn't even mention my petty troubles, except that I suppose you want to know what I'm doing and thinking about (besides you). Taking your letter and Janie's together, I gather that that night that you two met must have been pretty terrific. I guess Janie was rather embarrassed when Jimmie came in, and I suppose he was put out too. An all-around unpleasant situation. I am eagerly awaiting your letter to clear up some more details. I can't understand why it hasn't arrived. I am glad, on the other hand, to hear from your more recent letters that Jimmie has found a good job. What irony, that of all the people in the world, we should have to hurt him! I still feel a little guilty now and then, although not as I did at first in Lisbon, when I had his pallid face before me as eloquent evidence of how he was suffering. The last time I saw him was in the Tivoli bar the night after you left. He turned his head so as not to look at me, and I felt like crawling under the table. Everywhere he went

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he ran into me - especially in the Consulate, where he was always ducking out of rooms to avoid me. Did you know that he left some money in an envelope for Herve to give me to straighten out some small debt left from our last party? We used a part of it to settle a postage bill that you left, and I told Herve to give the rest to charity or something. I certainly hope he will like his new job and that, in time, he will come to be less bitter about it. I think he is the only friend I have ever lost.

Nevertheless, I still think that we - or perhaps I should say you, - have made the proper decision. We cannot help the fact that we met, that we came to love each other. It wasn't as if we had tried to, or intended to. That was Fate, or Providence, whichever term you want to use. Once that had happened, it was only left for you to decide whether you could be happy with Jimmie again in the future. I insist that I don't count. I cannot be happy without you, but that shouldn't have made any difference in ~~my~~ your decision. But if you had stayed on with Jimmie, still loving me, that fact alone, even if hidden from him, would in the end have made him unhappy too. Certainly he couldn't have been happy while you were unhappy. So the choice lay between making two people very happy and one unhappy and making three people miserable. Under these circumstances, I think we are doing the only thing possible. I wonder where you are now, darling. You said in your too short air mail letter that you intended to go to Florida after Christmas to "get it over with", so you may be there now.

In spite of the bad housing, I think it would be best for you to begin to think about coming over here, as there appears to be no chance of my getting away from here this summer. After a few months, Mr. Jester will probably leave, and unless his successor has already arrived, I will be in charge of the office. Even if his successor is here, he will be new and I doubt whether he would consent to my leaving. So it looks as if we would have to start our life together by making an all-out financial effort to get you over here. It is the general feeling that this climate is not bad for women if they don't stay much over a year; longer than that is dangerous, and Mrs. Jester, to cite an example, got into a bad physical condition after a year and a half. August and September are supposed to be the best months of the year, and if you came then, we could pretty well count on going home after a year or only a little more. I will be due for home leave at government expense after February, 1943, and I ought to be able to get it within a reasonable time thereafter. I have no idea how long it will take you to get straightened out at home; the next time you write, you might give me some idea of that so I can plan accordingly. The big thing is that we get together; may I quote my favorite author on this point? "De quoi puis-je avoir envie, si tu n'es plus pres de moi?" I love you so much, my dear. I am absolutely certain of it. I hope we can have just the kind of a life you described: domestic serenity, with enough travel to lend a little variety, and lots of evenings together, reading out loud. Come soon, my darling. I need you.

With all my love,