

AMERICAN CONSULATE
Lagos, Nigeria
March 7, 1942

L-125 p1

My darling Philinda:

This is to introduce to you Mr. Marshall Cook, an old Lagosian, who ought to be able to tell you all about me and how one lives in Lagos. I think that, the other evening when he was here, I even took him in and showed him all the new bed-room furniture, of which more later. I hope you will have a good talk with Cookie, if it isn't inconvenient, give him one of your famous meals. In case he gets back to Lagos before you do, he can tell me whether all the practice in cooking you have been telling me about has been doing any good.

Seriously, though, you know I really don't care whether you can boil water or not. I love you so horribly, terribly and completely, that anything you cooked would seem good to me. Your presence would leaven the flattest bread, and although I don't care much for eating in restaurants, having done so much of it in the last ten years, I would eat in a dog wagon the rest of my life if you were perched on a stool beside me.

MARCH 4TH was a capital-letter day for me. Four of your gorgeous letters came in all at once, together with two from Janie and one from Leon Cowles, a pal of mine who is now in charge of the Consulate at Vigo, Spain. I took them all up stairs and tried to drag out the pleasure by reading the others first, but I had to give up and read yours instead. In some ways I think the short one you wrote in the middle of the night is the one that touched me most. I could almost imagine you sitting there, all alone in the quiet of the morning's early hours, tapping at the typewriter, with that drawn look about your eyes that people have who can't get to sleep at night. And then when I read the little prose-poem which you wrote me, so utterly sincere, I know that you love me, and I also know that I love you, and somehow our love will span the distance that is between us. One awakes often at night here, because the bed gets so hot you have to move over, and when I wake so, I think of you. It is only a fleeting thought, not connected with anything in particular, not even with a mental picture of you. I think it is just my sub-conscious mind, rising in that half-waking moment to the surface, and the thought of you is there.

Sometimes I have more definite impressions. One of my favorite day-light dreams is to imagine that I land suddenly in Miami from the plane. It is hot, and I am carrying my little over-night bag. I walk over the hot streets to find 222 Phoenetia Ave., and when I come to the apartment, you are always there. I don't think in the dream that I have warned you that I was on the way, and you

L-125 p2

are less surprised than I would have expected, but equally as pleased. I think we have dinner together alone, and ~~the~~ we will be alone all evening, and maybe all night. I wish a courier would fall sick here so I could fly over - but they don't usually have couriers, since PAA is supposed to be absolutely reliable. My dream doesn't seem very lovely on paper, but in my mind it is a beautiful ^{thing}. Once with you all outside influences stop affecting me; there is only you and I. Oh well - maybe, some day

And now for a moment let me drag myself out of this wishful thinking and give you some of the news. As you know, I moved into the apartment over the Consulate when Anderson went to Accra. Besides the kitchen, the main point is that we have just unpacked a whole beautiful set of bed-room furniture. There are twin beds, two chests of drawers, a lady's dressing table with mirror and stool, a straight chair, and two bed-side tables. The beds have Simmons springs and mattresses. All the pieces are metal, as appropriate to this climate, and are painted a light, cheerful, but not sickly shade of green, to watch the walls, with buff ~~trimming~~. I think it is most attractive, and when I first saw it, it ~~could~~ I could do to keep from sending you a wire to come immediately. ~~as~~ you would like it.

One thing that is not so good is that it looks as if I would not be able to keep the place to myself very long. When Vice Consul McSweeney comes, Mr. Jester is planning to have him move in to the apartment also. The dining room will be made into a bed-room for him, ~~and~~ as there is an extra bath-room off it, and the back of the large sitting room will have to be used for a dining room. This arrangement is absolutely necessary, since living accommodations are simply not to be found in Lagos at present. The apartment I formerly had in Ikoyi is not being used by the U.S. Army. We now have some Air Control Officers of the Ferrying Command here to look out for their branch of the Service, and it was necessary, at least for the present, to give up the idea of having McSweeney move in out there. However, it is quite possible that the situation will have changed entirely by the time you are able to come over, so we won't worry about it until then. The quarters are habitable as they are, and as long as we are together, I don't care too much where we are.

In one of your letters (every word of all of which I love) you asked about the weather. The main impression that you get at first is that it isn't as hot as you would expect. The heat is quite different from what we have at home. After a while, though, you begin to feel it more and more. The statistics, with one exception, are not impressive: Rainfall, about 70" annually, all in the period from April to November. The mean day maximum is 85 degrees, the mean night minimum, 72. Humidity averages 85%. From this you will guess that it is the latter that "gets" you. You are always wet with sweat, and it evaporates very slowly because of the humidity. Therefore you feel hot - hotter than you really are. Everyone bathes at least twice a day, and I put on a clean shirt every evening as well as clean underwear. I have been looking all over town for a lady over fifty to see what kind of clothes she was wearing, but I haven't had much luck yet, in locating one, since most of the ladies here are somewhat ^{older} younger. Judging by the two we have in the office, whose dresses I might ~~make~~ an effort to notice after receiving your letter, they wear light printed materials, apparently cotton. They never wear

L-125 p3

stocking, because of perspiration and the war. Last night I went to dinner at the home of the manager of the Shell Company here, and the three ladies present wore silk tea gowns (I think that's what they're called) - long dresses with short sleeves. Frequently short silk dresses are worn in the evening, and only rarely would you need a formal evening dress, as there are very few formal parties. For instance, last night although the ladies were beautifully dressed, none of the husbands wore their coats. I kept mine on. This is probably making me unpopular, but I don't feel right without it when there are ladies present and in some one else's home. Besides that, I always wear suspenders instead of a belt, and that doesn't look very good either. For some reason or other, belts always cut me in two, and I am never comfortable with one on. I think this is probably due to the fact that I am slightly sway-backed. Your future husband is no fine physical specimen, and I hope you won't be too disappointed.

I see that in discussing the household, I forgot to mention the "staff". Strangely enough, you mentioned getting an old faithful Uncle Tom to look after me, and it so happens that my boy's name is Tom. He isn't terribly old, but I think he is faithful enough. He is a tall fellow with a rather protruding jaw and a rich, black skin. He speaks English pretty well. His brother, Josiah, is the cook. He was asked for Andy when he was here, and I have taken him over intact. Thompson insisted that we had to have a "small boy" - i.e., a second steward, and selected one of his other relatives for the job. Since Thompson is responsible for all my clothing and the dishes and tableware, he insists on having a relative for small boy, and I agreed, although this particular small boy doesn't speak more than a couple of words of English. I asked what his name was, but gave up after two efforts. Thompson grinned and said, "He no have English name", so I have decided to call him Willy, for no particular reason except that it seems appropriate to small boys in general. I always hated it when I was a little boy. Thompson gets £2-5-0 a month, Josiah £2, and Willy has been temporarily fixed at 10 shillings until I see whether he is any good. The pound is worth just over \$4.00, so you can see the rate of pay is not exorbitant.

For that sum you get a lot of service. Thompson (I can't call him Tom; that would be beneath his dignity) draws the bath twice a day and lays out the clothes. With the assistance of the small boy, he keeps the house more or less clean, waits on the table, buys the food (with Josiah's assistance on occasion) does all the errands, pays small bills, prepares orange juice for the staff of the Consulate every morning, and is expected to be on hand in case I ask people in for a drink at any hour of the night, although advance notice is desirable. That's a lot of work for \$9.00 a month. The laundry is done twice a week by a washman; Thompson must make out a list and see that nothing is missing. If anything is missing and broken, I am supposed to fine him; so far this contingency hasn't arisen, and I should find it hard to charge him very much, if anything. I think you would like it here; with some good instruction, Josiah could be a passing fair cook. His greatest fault is lack of variety.

Well, my pet, Cookie should be along at any minute now to say good-bye and take this letter. I wish I could convince you how much I really love you. You're the center piece of my universe, and life would be a barren void without you. I can't possibly say how much I love you;