

IN REPLY REFER TO

FILE NO. 45

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AMERICAN CONSULAR SERVICE

DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Lagos, Nigeria; December 3, 1942

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original

Hello, darling.

To get right down to business, without any preliminaries, (copy)
I love you tremendously, so much I hardly know what to do. If I loved you any more intensely, I would die of suffocation; I would be torn to pieces and destroyed. I do hope things are progressing well, for waiting is getting harder and harder. Somehow it seemed easier to wait when there appeared to be little chance of your coming for a long time; now that things are under way, the tension is almost unbearable. So do come quickly, dearest love. I am waiting for you eagerly.

Day before yesterday we got a strange telegram from the Department which gave all the signs of having been drafted by Perry Jester. It announced your appointment as a clerk at this office, and said that you were to proceed at your own expense. It didn't mention the salary you are to receive, but said they were trying to arrange air transportation. I don't know whether Perry had received my telegram or not at the time it was drafted, for there is often a long delay between the time when a telegram is drafted in the Department and the time when it has been approved for transmission by all the necessary authorities. So I still have no idea whether you are coming via Lisbon or are going to wait in the States until air transportation direct is arranged. Since you were planning to sail in November and since I have received no cable I gather that you are still in the States, and will wait.

The rest of this telegram was considerably less pleasant. It stated that the Department had decided to open a Consulate at Freetown and that a Vice Consul from Lagos who had had experience on the West Coast should be selected to open it. This will, it said, prevent you from providing for the permanent relieve of Vice Consul Anderson in Accra, but another man will be sent out as soon as one is available. That threw everything into an uproar. It seems to imply that, instead of going to Accra, McSweeney should go to Freetown, or I should, and the Accra vacancy should wait until some one else arrives in Lagos. This was, however, contradicted by another part of the cable, which said that the person assigned to Freetown should proceed when a relief arrived in Lagos. It was all very confusing, and Mac has postponed plans to leave for Accra for the time being. Mr. Shantz is still on his trip up North, and of course nothing can be done until he returns. I am anxious to see what his reaction will be. My guess is that he will be annoyed.

Another inexplicable portion of the wire is why they should assign you to Lagos if they plan to ship me off somewhere. Perhaps the whole thing is regarded as just a dodge to secure your transport-

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ation over here. On the other hand, it was stated that the assignment of Miss Johnston had been cancelled, so if you leave, the office will be short of help. All in all, it is quite a mess, and I imagine the boss will request a clarification when he returns. He is supposed to come back tomorrow, but I haven't heard yet whether he will or not.

Although living conditions in Freetown are pretty bad, due principally to a shortage of food, I would not object to going there, if you came too, as of course you would. I think it would be rather fun for the two of us to open our own office, and work out all the problems together. Then, too, you would be the wife of the principal officer, instead of the small boy, which I will be as soon as the new Consul arrives. I hope that, if I have to leave Lagos, we might be able to go to Duala, where your excellent knowledge of French would be very useful. I have heard that Duala is a rather pleasant place - for Africa, bien entendu. Freetown is an awful dump.

I will probably have my choice between Freetown and Accra, at least if the boss follows his usual method. It is a rather difficult decision to make. Accra is pleasanter to live in, and has the best climate on the coast. It is the big center of all activity, the headquarters of everything, both military and political. If I went there, I would be second man in the office. At Freetown I would be in charge. It is the old struggle between being a big frog in a small puddle or vice versa. I have already written to the Consular agent in Freetown to investigate the housing situation, to see whether it would be possible to obtain suitable accommodations for a married officer. I don't expect any reply for a long time, as communications between Freetown and practically anywhere else are terrible, except by cable. In the meantime, I would like to hear your views on the subject.

Our good friend Jesse Boynton is leaving tomorrow for the States on much-needed leave. I say "our", because Jesse has always been very interested in your coming here and has done everything he could to help. I have given him your address, and I hope you will find it possible to go over to New York and have a talk with him. He can give you the latest low-down on the transportation situation, especially since he will just have made the trip himself. I have asked him to advise our friends in Fish Lake and Natal to be on the lookout for you and to give you all possible assistance on the way. The friends are: Ray Colcord - Natal; Bob Dowley and Art Nobbs, Fish Lake. Be sure to look them up when you pass through. They are grand fellows. I hear that Ray's wife has gone down to join him.

No letter from you since I last wrote. It looks as if they were coming through in batches. I love you mightily, dearest love. You have the solace of action; I can only sit and wait, impatiently. If you go to Washington again, you should arrange through Jester to study the Foreign Service Accounting system. That is the great bug-

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bear of all consular offices, and if we go to Freetown, it would be a great help to have you know a little something about them. I don't know a thing myself, but I am going to have to learn when Mac goes, as he has been supervising the accounts here since Jester left. When I was in the Foreign Service School, a Mr. Mitchell gave us a course in accounts, about which I wish I remembered more. If he had time to teach you something it would be a great thing.

Friday, December 4th.

I have thought of one or two more things that you might ~~not~~ bring along in your baggage if you haven't already shipped it off. We badly need a gallon thermos jug, with a wide mouth suitable either for water or ice cubes. Thermos jugs here are scarce and fantastically expensive. It would, as a matter of fact, be better to bring two, as Mac and I recently broke a jug belonging to Mr. Shantz, and I would like to replace it. They make wonderful gifts. A cheap picnic set would be very useful - you know, celluloid plates etc. That would be for beach parties. It is just our luck to have to buy a lot of things at a time when prices are the highest. I hope we will be able to wait until after the war for household furnishings.

This morning Mr. Shantz arrived back from the North. He has visited Bukuru and Jos, Maiduguri and Kano. You should know where the last two are from your Pan American training. He hasn't really had time to digest the telegram about opening an office at Freetown. When I told him about it in the car coming back from the airport, he just said, "My God!" in a disgusted tone of voice. He is also going to take steps to counter Jester's ambitious suggestions to open Consulates in every worm hole along the West Coast. To tell the honest truth, we are not at all busy now, and could easily have ~~an~~ one less officer than we now have. Browne at Accra is alleged to be complaining about lack of work also, and it is sheer folly to expand further our representation in areas already thoroughly covered by the Army, the Navy and various other organizations. He has not indicated yet just what he is going to do, and his (Shantz') first reaction to the telegram was that it meant that Mac should not go to Accra but should proceed to Freetown when another Vice Consul arrives here. As I said yesterday, it is very confusing, and the only sure thing is that I love you.

I have ~~after~~ just been called in to see the boss, and he has decided that Mac should go to Accra for the time being, and that when they can send out another Vice Consul, he should take Mac's place at Accra and Mac should go on to Freetown. Then, if we open an office at Duala, I may be in line to go there with you on account of your good knowledge of French. I told him, however, that if there were a place for you to live in Freetown, I would have no objection to going there in case he changes his mind later on.

So that's the story for now. The main thing, now as before, is for you to get here as soon as possible, and then we can plan on from there. Please give my best to your double set of parents. I would like to write to them all often, but I can't even seem to write to my own. All my thoughts are of you, my own darling.