DEAR ALLEN...

William Burroughs, whose modern classic, Naked Lunch, created literary shock waves less than 20 years ago, and whose first novel, Junky, is being made into a film starring Dennis Hopper, is probably himself the world’s best-known ex-junkie. Though he is associated with the “beat” writers of the early 50s, Burroughs transcends such classifications, and the exile-as-addict in Mexico and North Africa produced a powerful, fragmented style which is his unique contribution to modern literature.

Reproduced here for the first time are letters written from Tangier during his long exile, to his friend and mentor Allen Ginsberg, who was at one time Burroughs’ “secret literary agent.” William Burroughs now lives in New York, where he is completing his eleventh book, Cities of the Red Night.


LOVE, BILL
Oct. 23, 1966 (Benchimal Hospital, Tangier)

Dear Allen,

Kiki just brought me your letter — no date on it — I don't want to give you the impression I'm like on my way to Frisco, because it ain't necessarily so like a lot of things you're liable to read in my letters. To begin with I got no loot. I wrote you from the withdrawal doldrums. Actually Tangier is looking up — what I mean to say is I don't know what the fuck I will do when I get out of here and that is a fact. I mean a fact. There's a war here I want to dig, also Pergamum har-mala which is same thing as Yage used by Berbers, also Barrio Chino of Barcelona that Genet writes about and the rest of Spain for which I feel an affinity, may make overland trip to Persia with Charles, may visit Ansen in Venice, would like to dig Yugoslavia and the queer monasteries of Greece. Also figure to start at one end of Interzone and screw my way through to the other. I am tired of monogamy with Kiki ... Dryden speaks of the Golden Age: "Ere one to one was cursedly confined." Let's get on back to that Golden Age ... like the song say, "A boy's will is the wind's will." Besides which my mind is seething with ideas to make a $ (some of them not exactly legit). The Nice Night Nurse just gave me a bang and it is hitting me right in the gut, a soft, sweet blow ... I call her "The Nice Night Nurse" to distinguish her from the bitch who gave me a shit of plain water a few nights back. I suspect her to be a schmecker but it's hard to tell with
women and Chinamen. Anyhow I don't want her ministering to me no more. (Just went to the head again. Still locked. Looked for six solid hours. I think they are using it as an operating room.) I am getting sexy, come three times last night. The Italian school is just opposite, and I stand for hours watching the boys with my 8-power field glasses. Curious feeling of projecting myself like I was standing over there with the boys, invisible earthbound ghost, torn with disembodied lust. They wear shorts, and I can see the goose pimples on their legs in the chill of the morning, count the hairs — Did I ever tell you about the time Mary and I paid two Arab kids sixty cents to watch them screw each other — we demanded semen too, no half-assed screwing — So I asked Mary: "Do you think they will do it?"
and he says: "I think so. They are hungry." They did it. Made me feel sorta like a dirty old man...

Yesterday I took a walk on the outskirts of town. Environs of the Zone are wildly beautiful. Low hills with great variety of trees, flowing vines and shrubs, great red sandstone cliffs topped with curiously stylized, Japanese-looking pine trees, fall to the sea. What a place to live. I lack material to write about. Mother of God!

I used to complain I lacked material. I could write 50 pages on that walk, which was a mystical vision comparable to your East Harlem Revelations — That letter where I come on sorta whiny like: "Anger
has nothing for me and it's all your fault I'm here anyhoo. "Well, Al, tain't necessarily so. Beginning to dig Arab kicks. It takes time. You must let them seep into you ... Wel like I say I could write a book on that walk. Instead I will select one moment:

I went in an Arab cafè for a glass of mint tea. One room 15 by 15, a few tables and chairs, a raised platform covered with mats stretched across one end of the room where the Arabs sit with their shoes off playing cards and smoking kif, the inevitable picture of Ben Yusef, the Deposed Sultan — you see his undistinguished pan everywhere like those pictures of my fran Roosevelt — pictures of Mecca done in the hideous light pinks and blues of religious objects, profoundly vulgar like the final, decadent phase of Aztec mosaics — Pawing through this appalling mass of notes and letters, looking for something, I run across one of your old letters, Al, and the following jumps out at me: "Don't be depressed. There's too much to do." And that is a fact. So much I am flipping.

I draw some dirty looks from a table of Arabs and stare at them till they drop their eyes and fumble with kif pipes. If they insist to make something of it, I'd as soon die now as anytime. It is as Allah wills. Here on the red tile floor of this cafè, with a knife in my kidney, you dig one of them slipped around me. I always carry a knife myself, and I would get the best price I could in the blood and flesh of my opponents. I'm not one to turn the other    (Continued on page 66)
DEAR ALLEN...LOVE BILL (Continued from page 65)

Dear Allen,

I forgot to include description of the boys screwing. I will call them Boy 1 and Boy 2. Boy 1. is a beautiful kid, thin, small, with delicate features of S.E. Asiatic cast. Looks like one type Mexican Indian. Copper colored skin, fine straight black hair. Boy 2. is beautiful but has a stupid, peasant look to him — he is in fact from the Hills. His features are not sharply distinguished. He could be American, German, anything.

We took the two boys back to Dave's room and told them what we wanted. After some coy giggling they agreed, and took off their ragged clothes. Both of them had slender, beautiful bodies. Dave was M.C. He pointed to Boy 2. and said: "All right you screw him first" pointing to Boy 1. Boy 1. lay down on his stomach on the bed. Boy 2. rubbed spit on his prick and began screwing him. Dave said: "Leche we want leche." Leche means milk. Spanish for jissum — the boy contracted convulsively and his breath whistled through his teeth. He lay still for a moment on top of the other boy then shoved himself off with both hands. He showed us the jissum on his prick and asked for a towel. Dave threw him one and he carefully wiped his prick. Then he lay down on his stomach and Boy 1. took over. He was more pass-

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Dear Allen,

... New character for Interzone: This international bore who comes on with “Of course the only writing worth considering is in scientific and technical journals” and reads interminable articles to his guests. Of course he concocts them himself and they mean absolutely nothing ... Well, after a while he burns a town down and tours the world in search of victims ... prowling through ocean liners and hotel lobbies with his briefcase on periodicals and journals and reports from nonexistent conferences ... I had to have one of those father-son talks with my boy this morning, you know: “Now sit down son I want to talk to you ... Now I’ve had a lot of expenses lately ... Of course I’ve always tried to give you every advantage ... but it’s time you took a little responsibility ... After all I’m not made of money ...” So he hangs his head and says: “¿Tú estás tan enfadado conmigo?” — “You are so angry with me?”

Group of old queens telling each other the cute things their boy said ... “So my boy said he could become an American because he has blonde hair.” “So when I tried to fuck him he said ‘Morocco for the Moroccans!’”

Love, Bill

Oct. 29, 1956 (Tanger)