

JILL TO AL DECEMBER 1, 1943 V-MAIL

Darling --

Wednesday

Your letter of November 28th came today and what I want to say to it in reply cannot be said, first, because I never could hope to match your fine expression of our love, and second, because this particular form of international correspondence makes everything seem strangely public. But V-mail it must be tonight, because the news is good and I want you to get it quickly. It's [*several words unreadable*] much pressure as a doctor ever manifests over clinical details. The baby's head is down (and his feet too big, it should go), which, if you are familiar with obstetrics (and I suspect you are, more so than I) means that practically all of the hazards of birth for child and mother are eliminated. And he said, "Well, you're not going to have any giant, either." So there goes my intuition about having a big child, which would have been nice for the show, but hard on me. And so goes all reason for your needing therapeutic ministrations from the Red Cross, because I shall have a perfectly easy and normal birth (which of course I never doubted, but which you might have had, because of the nature of the beast and the distance that separates us). If the Red Cross gets in touch with me, I'll give them the message. In any case, I shall send a straight cable via Western Union, so you can hear from all sources at once. I hope you won't worry, darling. Except for the fact that the baby might come a little early or a little late, absolutely nothing can happen from here on in. Except for one more visit to the doctor, I won't even be climbing up and down station platforms, which is the only hazard I can think of in the outside environment. And, as you gather, the inside one is very good.

Greenhill, no quack he, of course won't predict the sex of the child, but you can be sure that, despite my positive references to the male sex, it won't exactly be a rejected child. If it's a girl, there's all the more reason for my wanting it to look like you, because you have at least two features, no, three (and more if I'd take the trouble to think) that have always [*been*] driving me

wild with envy -- hair, eyes and ankles. I won't describe them, because it would only embarrass you and if somebody is reading over my shoulder, in a manner of speaking, you would sound like a sissy ... Aside from the doctor today, I laundered, did some more painting, and got a bottle of perfume for Ann. If you ever do find any source of good perfume, remember her as well as me, as she likes it very much. Her favorites are Lucien Lelong's Opening Night and Germaine Monteil's Laughters. I'm not sure the latter isn't just American. Anyway, anybody likes Chanel No. 5. The stores are terribly crowded now, and I hate every minute of being downtown. I got a nice letter from Mir today, who apparently has no more strength of character than I, and opened the presents I sent her and Joe. Do you know Buss is getting a navy commission maybe, and also may be overseas by the first of the year? It's still tentative, but it's either that or the Army, as a draftee. I hope it's the former. I wouldn't wish a dog to have the allotment of an enlisted man.

More tomorrow, my sweetheart --Love,

Jill

JILL TO AL DECEMBER 2, 1943

Darling -

Thursday

I have tucked away in a corner of the blotter six of your letters, received since Monday. I shan't put them in their intermediary resting place, the desk drawer, until I have given them another going over. Mortimer Adler, in his enjoinders on reading, had nothing on me. First I read them for the highlights, then for the details, then for a pleasurable repetition of the emotions of the first reading, then for historical configuration, then for an examination of your handwriting to see if you are a good credit risk. After the desk gets full, I look through the whole batch again, and then relegate them to a perfumed box.

In re the next to the last sentence, you'd better be. I mean, a good credit risk. I have spent the afternoon going over our bank

statements of the past three months, which were also moldering in the desk waiting for the scholar to make a historical analysis of them. I have also compiled, in a neat little book purchased from the dime store, such items as cost of running the apartment, my market stubs for the past month, expenditures for Christmas presents, money spent for furniture, paints and other household items, etc., etc. My conclusions are as follows:

- (1) It is hard to add.
- (2) It is even harder to subtract.*
- (3) Corrections in the bankbook look better in ink than in pencil but I cannot find my pen.
- (4) The bank is never wrong. (I knew this before, but unless I check the statements and canceled checks, my balance is never correct.)
- (5) Food costs a lot, particularly anchovies.
- (6) I spend money.
- (7) We have money, if it holds out.

*It is even hard to spell it.

I won't tell you how much money we have, because you wouldn't understand, and it would only fatigue you to listen to my explanations of where the money went when it went.

If a man can't even play gin rummy with his wife without going down in humiliating defeat, how does he expect to make time at an alien game, the name of which he can't even spell? Win or lose, I don't care, so long as you have your health. I don't like losing money myself, mostly because I've never gambled much and therefore don't have the Spirit, but I sure don't care if you do, particularly since you are not such a one as to be gripped by Vice of any kind. All right, I will tell you how much money we have. We have about 600 dollars in the checking account, and on my person (800 when your check comes in the next few days), 100 in a savings account over here at the corner, and about 500 in bonds. I'm not sure about the latter because Mom

still has the bonds - she is bringing them down tomorrow so I can get them in a safe deposit vault and thereby avoid a lot of abuse from you this spring, when I presume you will be coming home just to see if I carried out that particular commission, which you gave me two years ago to do. We also have, clear, about 13,000 bananas scattered about in various banks in New York, which I get my claws upon this February.

Yippee, we're rich.

Dotty, who is the reason why I had time to fuss around with the shekels today because there's not much I can do when she's spreading herself about the apartment, is here today. I'm going to have her every week instead of every other week from now on. Incompetent as she is, she does save me some work, and I'd like to have a little leisure from now on, since I certainly won't after the baby comes. Although, the first month, I probably won't have to lift a finger except to brush my teeth, with the huge assortment of personnel I have assembled to aid and abet me. First, the infant nurse, if she shows up - you never can tell - then Mom, then Dotty, not to mention at least one altruistic and competent (the latter trait is fully as important as the former) Bernice Neugarten. I discovered the full meaning of that parenthetical thought Sunday, when Gerson volunteered to help me paint. She wasn't much good, and I spent all Monday going over her mistakes.

Anyway, I still have more fussing about to do before the place suits my delicate sensibilities, and I'd truly get panic-stricken if I had to do the housework besides - I mean, the heavy housework.

Anyway, Dotty is a pleasant peasant. She has a son in North Africa and one just drafted out of high school here.

Jerry Ross wrote me a letter, care of Daisy, in which he said something also about your joint expeditions into the Casbah, with, of course, nothing but praise for you. It was very nice to hear from him, particularly since he talked about you. Why, I sent Herz a fruit cake on the strength of his sending me news &

dulcet words of you and your accomplishments.

You know, when I went out last night to mail my letter to you, there was another letter in the mailbox, the second one I'd gotten from you that day. I had just not noticed it when I came home from downtown. It was a sort of dialectic between you and a very nosy, albeit, imaginary fellow. I read it over an ice cream cone at Walgreen's, with the result that I didn't taste the ice cream, a sad state of affairs when one's eating forbidden fruit. Then I got into a pleasant daydream, or nightdream, about you, and suddenly discovered I was staring at the grinning puss of Alan Ladd on the cover of a Walgreen-purveyed movie magazine. The general public must have thought me infatuated with Ladd. It is my belief that I'm psychopathically infatuated with you, a new piece of evidence being that I can look at him and think of you, and furthermore, prefer your puss to his.

Who just paid me a visit last night but Julie Harrison, accompanied by Andy Briggs. She told me that she and Dorothy are sponsoring A Sunday afternoon jam session, i.e., they're putting up a little of the money and some guys from around here - she mentioned Dick Baker, whom you might know, as one - are doing the rest, over at Club De Lisa. She wanted me to come over this Sunday, but I demurred, because I don't like venturing that far abroad these days. Actually, what goes is that Dorothy is the girl of a very good tan cornetist named J. C. Higgenbottom. I don't know if you know him. He's playing at one of those Randolph St. swing spots like Capitol Cocktail, only that isn't it. What outré people I know. They're both coming over next week to visit me. Julie asked for you, of course. Andy threw popcorn all over the floor, and I discovered a hopeful sign in myself, that I didn't mind a bit because he is just the cutest little guy imaginable. So maybe I won't be a compulsive house-cleaner after all.

Cooney's Xmas present came today. It is a tag saying "My name is Cooney. I belong to A. J. De Grazia (that's you, I presume) 5436 etc., with phone number." I figured it would be useful, since after the baby comes, he can damn well take

himself out. Do you really dislike him, darling? You know, you'll always come first in my affections.

I'm sleepy, though it's still the shank of the afternoon. I took a sleeping pill last night, and then didn't get a chance to stay in bed long enough, with Dotty coming at 8, to let its delicious and mystic powers work their full force on me. I was just starting on a dream about you when she came.

I don't know if I'll get a chance to write you tomorrow, because Mom is coming around noon. I don't know exactly what we'll do. Maybe count the baby's clothes again, like misers. Anyway, I'm taking her to a flick when night falls, and she'll spend the night.

Many, many kisses for you darling. And none at all for Cooney. So there!

All my love,

Jill

(Where is my fountain pen?)

I love you. It doesn't look polite in pencil, but sort of sincere & homespun, like Abe Lincoln.

AL TO JILL DECEMBER 2, 1943

Dearest darling,

With big news in the offing, we poor soldiers haven't got a chance. It seems that when FDR travels, the U.S. mails, which generally are stopped by no force on earth, relapse into paralysis and nothing gets through to us. However, now that the news of his travels has been announced, we may expect mail momentarily. It has been hellishly long since I've received a letter from you. I'm most anxious to hear about your triumphs and pains, your expectations and frustrations, but really just anything saying "I love you" will do even if the rest of the letter describes hideous little girls, heart-sickening political stupidities, or icicle-bound gasps from the Chicago winter. I myself am as

cold in Sicily as I used to be anywhere else. Result of no internal heating except on the exercise of considerable patience and labor, plus no attempt to dress in a couple of layers of clothing as I ought to. So I go about with a mild shudder all during the day, too lazy to do anything about it, and whipped into a frenzy of creative and dissipative activity by it. Around 5:30 I hasten to the Villa where there is a comforting fire and assorted wines and there for an hour I salve myself before going to dinner. We tell stories and talk shop very comfortably there. PWB has a great collection of pleasure-lovers, real epicures who are determined to make the best of a bad thing like war. There have been a lot of new people coming in during the past months but *[words missing at bottom of first page]* through are welcome and *[words missing at top of second page]* in the Mediterranean. They bring news of all our friends whether at the front or at the several outposts scattered throughout the theater of operations.

I myself am leaving. My orders came in yesterday. It looks like a mud-bound Christmas for me, but I am glad, as I always am, to be on the move. The job is even more interesting than this one; it is with the Fifth Army. So I must spend a very busy couple of days renouncing my jobs and leaving some sort of instructions for whomever shall follow.

You know, darling, I feel at home on all of these moves because they invariably mean meeting old friends, taking up old, familiar threads, pursuing new ideas in an atmosphere of rapport. For me to go to Bari or Catania or Algiers or Tunis or Naples, or to the 8th or 5th Army fronts is like going from Weiboldt to the Social Science Libraries at the University of Chicago. Whatever hardships or problems are encountered are entered in a frame of friends and familiarity, like the problems of the mind are easier to take because they are all bound between two stiff covers of a book invariably. Perhaps it's the sign of an old trooper. The Army with its many folds and crevices is my home. I think the nature of my new assignment indicates that others think the same of me. It's not that I'm not a very frank agitator for any new, speeded-up action to get Al DeGrazia home to his

wife. I am that, but I perhaps have [*words missing at bottom of second page*] agitation seem to stem from very human and unprejudiced notions rather than the foamings of unbalance and eccentricity. I have, while I've been here, painfully accumulated a box of cigars which I shall carry with me for the fateful day when our baby's birth becomes news to me. You may picture a number of glum mud-caked people in Italy, puffing solemnly on five-cent cigars on that great day, if you prefer. Or else you can spend your time trying to imagine in what respects the child resembles the father. I shall be hanging on a description of its multi-colored characteristics with great impatience. I'm sure when it comes it will be the greatest Christmas present I could possibly receive and all memories of chewing gum will be banished, as in fact, they are even now. The punishment of the guilty is a bad conscience, and now many days after my mild dismay at receiving chewing gum is passed, I squirm mentally at the indecency with which I stuck out my tongue at your patient efforts to please me. I really have no right to expect any attention at all now that all attention there is focused on the birth of a baby.

I started clearing ideas from my head this morning in preparation for departure, and started at breakfast with Hubert Howard. He speaks Italian very well and is a very serious person, a trait I like very much. I gave him what ideas and information I had in mind on the Maffia, which is a term much bandied about these days in Sicily.

Much else to do, now, darling. I wish I had nothing to do save make love to you and mind the baby while you're taking a bath, which means a good part of the day. All love, dearest one.

Al

JILL TO AL DECEMBER 4, 1943 V-MAIL

My sweetheart --

Saturday, late afternoon

As I threatened, I wasn't able to write to you yesterday because of Mom's visit. She came in the early afternoon, and we chatted, drank tea and visited the local supermarts. Then we had a good dinner here and went to the movies. We saw an opus called *Hangmen Also Die*, about the shooting of Heydrich. We got in a little late, and since it was at the Hyde Park, was the last feature, so I'm not qualified to pass judgement on it, except to say it was very exciting and full of impossible coincidences.

Mom helped me re-organize our belongings, which I am doing constantly anyway, taking things out of one box or closet and putting them into another. She also helped me chop up a vast amount of fruit for the fruit cake. What a job. You have to buy all this candied stuff, you know. At the big stores they sell it cut up already, but it is harder for me to fight my way to a counter at Stop and Shop than cut it up myself.

This morning we fooled around, taking inventory of the baby's clothes. It has plenty of the necessities, and since I object strongly to fancy dress on infants, I probably won't get any more stuff, for the most part. I am discouraging Mom from encouraging her friends to buy the baby lacy frocks and bonnets. In the first place, I think there should be some more virile form of headcovering for a baby than a bonnet. Why not earmuffs, I ask myself and anyone else who will listen to me. Even a little girl, if she's at all like her mother, would resent a bonnet, I should think.

Darling, my sentiments about Christening are that anyway you want it, it's OK with me -- which are, to confuse matters, your precise feelings too. However, if you thought enough of the idea to mention it in a letter, I guess you'd like it, and I can't see any reason against Christening, and at least one reason for it - if anybody ever asks the baby if he is christened, he can say "yes" -- if he can talk. Mom is going to do some research on the technicalities of christening in the Catholic church. If I don't have to give a pint of blood, or be sworn in as a member myself,

we can have it in that church. Otherwise, I'd just as soon have some innocuous Protestant, like a Congregationalist or a Methodist, do it. Depends on how pretty the church is from the outside. If it's a boy, I presume you have no strong feelings about circumcision, which I have always been led to believe is the healthiest thing for most males. I like the spelling of Kathryn because it doesn't have that foolish and unnecessary third syllable that Catherine does, and also looks better as Kay or Kathy. Again, if you have any strong feelings on the subject, you know what.

Mom left about noon, and I've spent the rest of the day mixing the fruit cake, which turned out to be a gigantic mess of porridge, so large that it could only be mixed in the pail. The first batch of tins is in the oven now. I have to do it in relays because the amount of small tins I have is sorely limited. You can be sure that there will be one tin especially well-filled and especially supercharged with sherry, that will be put away in the closet until you come home. They improve with age anyway, and I just want to counteract the effects of my maiden, and hapless, venture into the field by presenting you with this the minute you leave ship.

Cooney really loves Mom, even more than he does me, I sometimes think. He was so happy when she was here. When she came yesterday, he had been away for a couple of hours -- as a matter of fact, she had seen him hightailing south on Cottage Grove Avenue from the street car, proving that he gets around more than I do. When we went out to shop, we met him coming home, and he got absolutely hysterical over Mom, and didn't even look at me. I'm not jealous, in fact, somewhat relieved that he is not completely obsessed with my apparently canine charms. It will be easier to wean him away when the baby -- and you -- come.

All the stuff about the Roosevelt-Churchill-Stalin talks, and the break in the German line in Italy is very encouraging, and I am getting infected with your optimism about spring and homecoming. Does it seem odd to you that you haven't kissed

anybody for more than seven months? It does to me -- I had a dream last night about kissing a man -- a stranger at that -- I should stay away from movies -- and it was the most peculiar sensation. I'm beginning to feel the way I did when I was 13, and yet untouched by the beards of man (no post-office player, she) -- kind of sitting around in an innocent reverie on the subject of what it would be like to be kissed.

Darling, I simply have to get out and mail this. It's so hot in here, with all the windows open too, that I can't stand it another minute. Poor Mom froze all the time she was here -- and I was hot!

All my love to you, dearest.

Jill (Still no fountain pen)

JILL TO AL DECEMBER 5, 1943

Darling --

Sunday

Having just been exposed to fifteen minutes of Walter Winchell, due to a constitutional inability to turn radios on and off, I am in pretty poor shape for writing you. He affects me the way a snake must a rabbit. To all purposes I am paralyzed, yet little waves of horror keep flickering up and down my spine. It must be the feeling you have with Walter, having not been immunized by years of having him in the family. I suppose Winchell is a well-intentioned slob, ideologically speaking, but he certainly has a large and repellent ego.

As you might guess, it's Sunday night, and I have just spent a long and useless day. I threw the last batch of fruit cakes in the oven this morning and then took a long walk on the Midway, to get away from the smell. It was really a lovely day, mild and sunny, very unlike the last Pearl Harbor Sunday we spent together, when we froze our feet off walking down to Jay Hall's apartment to discuss the hour-old war, as it was then. I can't think of any suitable expressions of anger, regret or optimism to make on this anniversary, mostly because the real war was on a

long time before, and my particular part in it started somewhat after this date -- namely, when you went in the Army.

Anyway, I had dinner at the Kerners, which took about three hours this afternoon. Diana is a pretty good cook, but gives me indigestion with her neuroses, which are as freely mixed in with her cooking as salt. Her mother was there too. I finally broke away and then, no sooner did I get home to what I thought was peace and quiet, than Bernice asked me up. I don't know why I went, but I finally got away from there too.

Last night I played bridge with the Neugartens and another girl, a friend of theirs, whose husband is in the Army too. It must be rather lonely for the remaining civilian males. Some are probably grateful for their civilian status, but there are probably a lot of them that would rather be in.

Christ, I was in such a good mood this morning, I should have written you then. I don't know what soured this little dish -- probably the company she keeps -- but it makes me mad to think that it intrudes into my communications with you. Maybe it's the radio. Deodorant commercials. For Christ's sake. You must be wondering what I think about with the baby so close, that is, when I'm not being irritated to the point of madness by all the insensate chatter about me. Well, I still think more about you than anything else. Or rather, I miss you very consciously in almost everything I do. And about the baby -- well, mostly I think about it's being of a goodly age for us to get some companionship and amusement out of it. I would be fibbing if I denied all traces of apprehensiveness over the actual birth process or the weeks and months when the baby is very small. I'm not exactly scared of anything in particular. It's just the feeling one gets when one knows one is going to have an experience sharply different from anything one's had before, like getting married or losing one's virginity.

But strange to relate, I don't want you around any more at that time than I do all the time. Maybe my everyday longing for you is so great that everything else pales by comparison. I feel quite capable of getting up and going to the hospital myself, if

necessary. I would infinitely prefer to have you around to share the fun of living than its mild discomforts. Anyway, its physical discomforts. I still need you to cope with unpleasant social problems, like janitors who will not serve, butchers who are rude, friends who are intrusive and real estate agencies which supply defective window shades and got-you-by-the-short-hair leases.

Perhaps you wonder how I look, too. Well, my stomach juts out like a shelf, but from other angles I look normal. I wouldn't say I was the type "who never showed it till the day it was born", but on the other hand, I don't think I'm astonishingly large, awkward or cumbersome. I can still play rough games with Cooney, bend, climb and run upstairs. Some sailors whistled at me today, while my coat was buttoned. Oh yes, I don't lean backwards when I walk, ergo the illusion. I'll probably be quite normally shaped a little while after the baby comes. As a result, when we have the next one, you'll be quite horrified that I lose my figure at all, on the presumption that I had one without showing it (at least, not to you).

Darling, take good care of yourself and remember that you have all my love.

Jill

AL TO JILL DECEMBER 5, 1943 V-MAIL

Dearest Love,

I'm moved to a new place now, and staying a night or two in a city en route. My room is a big, beautiful one, looking down on one of the world's most beautiful sights. It's even better than Palermo seen from Mount Pellegrino. Not that I haven't seen it before, but this is one of the best angles. I was furious yesterday that about twenty of your letters, all the letters I have not been receiving for the last month, were sent down to Palermo. Now that I am in this area, I must wait several more days. I'm wilting away pining for your letters. If they don't keep

coming in I shall never have strength to pull myself out of the mud. I hope you're doing better than I am.

I still do stupid things. A moment ago (it's before breakfast and things aren't very clear) I was walking along the hall to turn into my corridor, thinking of you the while. Without apparent reason, I turned too soon and almost knocked myself out on the wall. My eyebrow ridge is considerably widened now but at least I am wide awake.

I should see Herz today where I'm going. He had jaundice recently. So has had everyone else, apparently. Habe is very ill with pneumonia and jaundice. I am very well, save that I'm mad as hell for not being with you.

All Love, though.

JILL TO AL DECEMBER 6, 1943

Darling --

I am becoming the typical slatternly housewife. Three letters come from you in the morning mail, and poof go my noble intentions to dust, sweep and paint. Instead, I am embarked upon a whole new train of actions, beginning with my wandering over to the bookstore and stealing a little box in which to send your second wallet. I just wrapped it as only I can wrap a package, namely, sloppy, and am now re-reading your letters with one eye and answering them with the other. They're dated November 9, 11 and 21. I'm glad that my campaign of writing, or trying to write you every day has some effect on your end, namely that you hear from me, in however disorganized a fashion. The same thing holds true here. I've received letters before and since the letters I got today, and, as you say, the delinquent ones come as sort of a dividend, or a bonus for meritorious service behind the typewriter.

I just wrote Mir telling her, among other things, not to worry about sending our stuff out, since she must have a lot on her mind now, with the prospects of Buzz entering the service. I'm

amused at your suggestion that I purchase the linguaphone set in Russian. Jeepers, I couldn't even learn Gregg shorthand. If you want to get it just so you can make love to me in the Russian fashion, well hell, make love to me. Just don't talk. We can still surround our passion with such interesting accessories as vodka and caviar, and you can even grow a beard, which would incidentally reduce your ability to talk anyway, for the occasion. And for a man whose wife spends her days plotting how she will weave a web of domesticity and paternity about him, your fears that you'll be left out of things sound pretty hollow indeed. In the first place, I am stocking the shelves with goodies for you to gnaw on -- there's even caviar -- and have practically made up the menu and baked the dessert for your first dinner home. The past day or two I've spent fondling the half dozen fruit cakes (which look authentic, anyway), in an effort to select the biggest and most beautiful for your consumption. I finally did choose the best one, and carefully hid it away, for our consumption and indigestion next spring. I'm ashamed to say that I was shamefully expedient in choosing the recipients of the other five. The next nicest one goes to the janitor's wife, on the theory that this may be one way of getting the service I now lack. The littlest ones go to Mom and the Neugartens, on the theory that they love me anyway. At any rate, you'll find me as slavishly dependent and moist-eyed as a Cooney when you come home, and you'll never need resort to such attention-getting mechanisms as pulling all the dishes off the table, in the manner of Vic, or limping, in the manner of Cooney.

And although I'm not exactly faced with the same deprivations of food and drink that you are, I too spend a lot of time thinking about where we'll go to eat together, to play together and to get drunk together. We used to have such fun at that second-class French restaurant opposite the Wardman Park, with the three martinis apiece and hors d'oeuvres. That's why I want to meet you in New York when you come back -- it presents such a fine free field for gourmets and lovers. And I expect that as soon as the baby is born, I can stop this silly conflict between my super-ego and id in re food. You understand, I haven't actually dieted

these past months -- I've just worried about it enough so that for all practical purposes I was on a diet.

I'm glad that business with your eyes is all cleared up. Didn't they give you a local anaesthetic to open up the thing? I guess I told you I had one of those things about five years ago, but the doctor gave me something, which hurt anyway.

My Christmas package sounds divine, handkerchiefs, drawings and even funny-colored stockings. (They can't be as bad as all that. In the eight months you've been away, American stockings have gotten progressively more horrible. In fact, one might say American women's legs have sunk to a new low.) Your description of the nude you'd like sounds like the Matisse we have already -- it's something I like very much and could do with more of.

Oh, this is fresh news. Ivy, Uncle Joe's wife just called to say goodbye. They're leaving for Houston tonight for good. I guess footloose Joe got bored with Chicago. Anyway, Ivy wanted to know if I'd like to buy a gun of hers -- an automatic 38 with a break mechanism -- for \$15, so I said sure. I probably won't ever get around to getting ammunition for it, but I know it's a bargain you wouldn't want to pass up, and I'm not sure how many sidearms you have, or will be bringing home with you.

An interesting bit of local gossip. McKeough is quitting his job as regional OPA chief, which of course was patronage, to work as one of Sidney Hillman's regional assistants in the new CIO political committee, formed so that labor won't take the dusting in '44 that it got last year. I was never quite convinced that Mac was other than a Kelly stooge, though I knew he is a good well-intentioned man. But this latest move speaks well for the old boy's sincerity as a progressive and mounting independence of spirit. I got a drippy letter from Scott Lucas's office this morning, addressing me as Dear Friend, the very nerve. After being flagellated by the Sun and my own conscience for some time, I finally got around to writing him and Brooks about the Senate vote on subsidies, soon to come up. Both those crappers will probably vote to kill subsidies, even as the House did, but I

figure if one doesn't write, one is just as liable to accusations of guilt as they are. Anyway, I do have a personal stake in this, because food prices will really jump if they remove subsidies.

I've had occasion to think some about this problem of the individual's guilt when his government is bad, because I've had a few arguments with people like MacEldowney and Mom, both of whom are social conservatives, at their own levels of education. I am very mad at the Germans and think they should get everything coming to them, and deplore this premature peace-table humanity, which already speaks of subsidizing German war relief. Mac even shudders when Berlin is virtually razed to the ground, on the thesis that they're human beings, aren't they? Well, hell, they may be human beings, but they're damned guilty ones, all of them. Some people say well, what would you do if some nasty Gestapo man was around always to make you toe the line. Of course, I don't know what I would do, but I think there were always alternatives present to the Germans, to those Germans who would be presumed guiltless because they didn't vote the Nazis in. (The others deserve all they get anyway.) Many of the people of occupied countries saw those alternatives -- namely, to give in or to die. The Germans had ten years to make that choice. If they refused it, it is no more than right that they should die by Allied bombs where they refused to die under German "justice". Sure it's a harsh way of looking at it, but if people aren't responsible for their governments, who is? The poor God that Mom's friends are always invoking, i.e., why did God bring this upon our heads? Roosevelt? -- another party held responsible for the conflagration, according to Mom's report on public opinion in her circles. (Not that Mom thinks this way or that particularly -- she is quite Italian in her impartiality -- but she was just telling me one day what her friends think.) Mac and Jane Barry, with whom I was arguing out this point one day, can't understand how I, a political liberal, can be so inhumanitarian. I'm not so sure of the natural alliance between liberalism and softness of moral spirit. It seems to me that tolerance on a political level is more of a Tory virtue, these days anyway. In any case, it is always a trait that plays one into the hands of the reactionaries-

with-guns.

And, bringing the matter closer to home, I'm not so sure I feel like an innocent angel when a crapper like Brooks wins an election, even though in that particular case I did work against him. After all, there are all the years of political apathy and ignorance that one must pay for, even if one makes an eventual (and usually short-lived) spurt in the direction of right political behavior.

Am I getting Aristotelian about ethics? If I knew more about it, I could answer that question myself, I suppose.

And now I wish you were home for another reason, the millionth to date -- so that you could help me when my mind gets fuzzed up with questions like these.

For a change, I'd like to tell you how much I love you in pen and ink. I bought this for one rock at the dime store today (they keep them under the counter so I couldn't gyp it, in retaliation to the person who apparently broke into this household for the sole purpose of taking mine). It has a nice point but blots at odd intervals. Anyway, I do love you tremendously and am getting impatient about your coming home. Baby - schmaby, house - schmouse, I want you!

Always yours, Jill

JILL TO AL DECEMBER 7, 1943 V-MAIL

My darling --

Tuesday

No sooner had I read of your Thanksgiving orgy and the postmangiare (is there such a word) triste than I was smitten with a sympathetic stomach ache. At least, I attribute the present feeling of a fox gnawing at my vitals to the deep bond between us, rather than to the coke I had this afternoon or to the cookie the janitor's wife pressed upon me when I brought her up a fruit cake this afternoon. Anyway, now I know why the janitor is such an old turd, although he claims his wife is a good

cook.

The oddest thing happened. The Red Cross, unable to find my name in the book (why they omitted to ask information is beyond me and also a tribute to the fact that the organization works as well as it does, despite the apparent lot of dullards that work for it) called a neighbor, who in turn called me. Apparently the phone company will give out that sort of information to them. Anyway, they said you wanted to know if I had the baby yet. I hope you really aren't concerned at the present time, but were just testing their efficacy, because the baby isn't due for at least another three weeks, and it may be more, and I'd hate to have you on pins and needles for all that time. They asked me the name and address of my doctor, and I told them I would call them as soon as the baby came. However, I'll also send a straight cable, if it's possible. Oliver keeps telling me how inefficient they (the Red Cross) are, or anyway, that they don't always consider the birth of a child important enough news to rush to a soldier. Maybe he's just full of beans. He usually is. I went with him to get the bricks for the bookcase today. I got the big insulating variety -- 12 by 12 by 4 -- and in the tentative arrangement I now have -- I still have to cut and paint the boards -- they look very well. My neighbors are all closing in on me at once. First that one whom the Red Cross phoned -- a nosy old Jewish grandmother, her middle-aged daughter, and her granddaughter, a girl about my age who looks very sour, unmarried no doubt. This gruesome trio is always trying to wolf maids out of their fellow neighbors. If they can get mine they can have her, gosh knows she's no bargain. But I suspect they're very mean and thoughtless to their hired girls, and will relay this suspicion to Dotty, before she gets trapped. Anyway, another neighbor, one of these frightfully mannish females (Mills College, class of 26) snagged me in the dime store this morning and had me up to visit her. She has two girls of about 5 and 8, and a German husband who is a designer and has a lot of machinery in the basement, which brings me back to the bookcases, because I'd sure like to exploit him or borrow his shop equipment. I don't know why all these women find me so irresistible. The janitor's wife is always asking me up too, but

usually, in fact always, I demur. Maybe it's because I'm pregnant. I wouldn't even say it's because they feel sorry for me because you're away, because they usually don't find that out for a while. Anyway, I don't like to spend time with people unless I know them very well, though I'm perfectly willing to greet them cordially in the hall. The awful part about that even is that I usually meet that garrulous old grandmother just as I'm snagging your letter from the box, and then she engages me in conversation while I'm practically wetting my pants to get inside and see what you have to say. I guess I'll just have to learn self-control and not go to the mailbox the minute the mailman rings the bell.

All these women say I am very small to be having a baby so soon, the one contribution they will ever make to our joint pleasure and edification.

I still feel fine, though a little tired because though I don't do much during the day, I spend so much time at night tearing back and forth between John and bed that I guess I sleep a lot less than I think I do. The baby is resting square on my bladder, it seems, and probably using it as a rattle or a stuffed dog. I started to varnish the coffee tables today, but the light got bad and it is a waste of time doing that sort of thing in the semi-gloom of these 60-watt bulbs.

I wish I could send you some of the heat that swirls around this apartment, in return for a good wintry Mediterranean blast. It's always so hot in here, even with the window wide open.

When I write you two V-mails this same day, do you get them then together? I never can keep down my remarks to one page.

Well, I ought to mail these now, and then eat dinner. Perhaps that will assuage my sympathetic pangs. A kind of reverse *couvade*.

I love you infinitely, darling, and am sure the subject of the Roosevelt-Churchill-Stalin talks was how to get Al and Jill together in the shortest possible time.

Always --

Jill

ON December 6, having dallied in Naples for three days, he is cheerily hello-ing Buck Weaver, Martin Herz, and the others under the palm trees of the Royal Gardens at Caserta.



Al at Caserta



Al in the gardens of the Royal Palace at Caserta (Fifth Army headquarters and Fifteenth Army Group Headquarters).

The Royal Palace of Caserta contains both Fifth Army Headquarters and Fifteenth Army Group Headquarters. It could have swallowed the Algiers AFHQ for the Mediterranean Theater as well. It is a monstrous encampment, worthy of the enormous military bureaucracy and its equipage. Lt. Alfred de Grazia, AUS, CAC-MI will never get to the end of it, whether by foot or car. The Bourbon Kings of The Two Sicilies built it of a rich tan stone in the Eighteenth Century with the grand and marvelous flourish of a Versailles. Its large gardens and exotic trees shade noble walks along which military officers might amble while deciding how to wrest Italy from the

Germans.

To him the set-up is dismaying. It appears to be a summer resort of the Pentagon. It would appear that the Army is taking on a long-term lease therefor. Luckily for his morale, the weather is turning bad, the mud is beginning to climb to the tops of his boots and lick at his leggings, and the combat propaganda detachment is bivouacked on the fringe of the palace; it occupies a couple of olive-drab pyramidal tents.



Above the Volturno River



Funicular in the Volturno River Valley.

He is out on the job every day contacting the units of the line, which is at the Volturno River when he first starts up; the line then is forced in a score of bloody engagements to the outskirts of Cassino, where it gets stuck.

AL TO JILL DECEMBER 7, 1943

Dearest Darling,

I drove up to the front today, officially part of 5th Army Headquarters. My vehicle was an emasculated jeep, i.e., minus the exhaust, which sounds like a P-40 but which functions very well indeed. I am happy to be here, back to dirt, cold, hot

stoves, tents, open air and rough clothing. I'd much rather deal with soldiers, too, than civilians. This assignment, I think, will stretch well into the future. We have a very well organized team. Herz is here and Martin and I have already had a long enjoyable conversation. Lt. Col. Buck Weaver is in charge and he is, as you may recall, a very optimistic, cheery sort of guy, very good when the campaign is long and the weather bad. He is proud of his ability to take it and I was highly amused today by his reporting that he now has a case of trench mouth. He was much crestfallen by it, a blemish on his record in a way. Habe, whose book "Catherine" I understand is Book-of-the-Month, was let out of the hospital today & is off to a rest camp in Sorrento.

I have been trying fruitlessly to start a fire with some damp wood, and Martin has abandoned the tent for the warmth of the next one. He has no faith in the future of the fire, but I, doggedly persistent, as always, am keeping right at it.

We had a very good and hearty meal at the mess tonight, canned chicken and rice, bread, jam, canned peas & corn, doughnuts, coffee, canned pear and cigarettes. Now I have nothing in particular to do save to tend the fire and write you. The latter is a pleasure even now when I have had no news from you in ages. The day all the letters arrive will be my real Christmas. Martin was telling me tonight how scientifically and faithfully his mother clipped the newspapers for him, a real classification system it is. Darling, I just had a good idea. Why not get Ed to do the job. I'm sure he wouldn't mind and if someone else can do it, that means you can spend more time writing just sweet nothings. I'll write him right away.

I just heard the fire cracking which is a happy sign denoting that the wood is beginning to burn well. That is about the only sound right now, save fierce shouts of "Halt" every few minutes where the sentries are being kept busy. They don't whisper it, either. It rings out very loud and clear.

I had a treat today, my first chocolate bar in a couple of months, my first American chocolate bar in half a year; unfortunately I was riding with a guy and lost half the bar to him. I decided then

and there that one of my orgies will consist of buying a 5-pound box of chocolate-covered nut clusters and eating them in an evening. Then I'll smear your face with chocolate-covered kisses. Lt. Hartley got in not so long ago. We exchanged greetings and he described a beautiful observation post he had been to where he could see the Germans running around to avoid artillery bursts. One little guy ran out of a house under fire, then ran in another door, then out, then in another door, a very peculiar behavior which Hartley spent much time in trying to figure out.

Well, one more letter along the thorny path of our separation. Many kisses to you, darling. You are my love, and I shall never change you. And you won't change me, either, will you? And we're pals, aren't we?

Your

Al

AL TO JILL DECEMBER 8, 1943

Dearest Darling,

I have secured myself some paper, a typewriter, and some time in which to write you a long letter, God and the demands of the Army willing. True, the typewriter is a signal corps affair which has no lower case, but after all the things I want to say to you should be in caps anyway. I want most of all to hear from you, and it seems as if that great pleasure of my life is being postponed until the time I must break down completely with joy when it does come. It has been an annoying number of weeks already. One thing is proven by it all, though I shouldn't say it for fear of the consequences, and that is that my love does not seem to be predicated on the receipt of mail. Nor does my letter-writing, as you probably know if you aren't very unlucky.

Not all the pleasures of the island city have interfered with a very smooth relapse into field life. Perhaps it is that the weather has improved somewhat on the Fifth Army front. Perhaps it is

that the team is well organized and the food plentiful. Perhaps I did get a certain amount of rest in Africa and Sicily despite my work there. Didn't some psychologist prove that rest is a matter of changing jobs, though at the rate that has been happening with me, I should return home with enough rest to last me a lifetime.

We haven't gone too far, as you back home probably realize just as painfully as we do. I covered some of this area a long time back. Now the whole army is spread over it. Long lines of transport roll along roads which were deserted then. I remember how ghostly Foggia was then, when I drove through in a jeep, row after row of burned and bombed houses with scarcely anyone around. It was night, and the rain was driving down. If you stopped to listen, you could hear the cascades of water pouring through the holes in the roofs, but that was all. There were small British reconnaissance detachments holed up in dead and empty buildings. It was about eight o'clock and we hadn't eaten yet, so I stopped by one of the places where I saw a light and got some tea already prepared. Then we opened up some cans of meat and ate what was left over from the bread we had bought near Benevento. It rained all that night. We slept in a field and I awoke very early half-soaked. Laudando's puppy didn't like it at all; he cried continuously even when we gave him some C-ration, the latter action only convincing us of the superior intelligence of dogs. I don't know how the place looks now. Well, here we are, driving our tent pegs into the graves of two thousand years of civilization, cursing because they slip out, berating all the slimy conditions of history that brought us here, and not at all convinced that the meeting of three men in Teheran will cast our efforts into permanent bronze. Men are so stupidly skillful in destroying with one hand what they are creating with the other. The solutions to the problems are not difficult. I am conceited enough to believe that. That is, not difficult for a schooled mind and heart; but who is to school the millions of minds to their inconsistencies? As our armies move along, shearing the heads of social problems, almost immediately their children spring up, sneering, ugly phoenixes with the dried blood of their forebears in their complexions and

the jutting, purple veins of past respiration. How weak and ineffectual we are, and yet how competent we are, to deal with them. Meanwhile, while the mind is alternating between hope and disbelief, and every day brings one the realization that there is always an element of both in the human act, little imaginations of other kinds are in the air. I was wondering this morning, absurdly enough, what letter of mine you would receive on the day the child is born and whether you would take time to read it or would be too preoccupied with being a mother. I thought to myself that that would be a likely candidate for the rare occasion when a love letter from me to you would be defeated in the competition for attention. For my part, I can never recall anything sufficiently important to divert me from tearing open an envelope of yours. Infrequently, I have waited a short while for some confusion to die down so that I could sneak off and read in peace.

Yesterday and today I read and finished a novel called *Rainbow*, by Wanda Wassilewska, which won the Stalin Prize for 1943. It is a powerful, gory story of an occupied Ukranian village and its liberation, suggesting an obvious comparison with Steinbeck's book, but beyond comparison in its brutality, feeling and realism. Its polish alone is more spotty than his, though in parts it is even more lyric. It is recommended reading, after you are out of the throes of child-bearing.

I am beginning to study a little German, now that my actions are beginning to lie in that direction; who knows, some day I may want to become a Ph.D., depending on whether you come to love me more for my body or mind. I warn you that you can't expect any cooperation from me in changing from the former to the latter. I fall sometimes into a positive anguish of desire for your body. To think that once upon a time we discussed foolishly that old business about once a week, twice a week, etc. I say foolishly, because even then the problem was actually quite academic. It usually developed into a matter of how often I was alone in a room with you or on a private green or beach. What variations there are to come can only be felt rather than defined.

My new address is PWB, Headquarters, 5th Army, APO 464, c/o Postmaster, New York, and this time you can use it. I think we will get our mail with great rapidity this way; so the other men here tell me, including Herz who is an expert on method and detail. A V-mail letter may get to me in a week this way. I understand there is a machine for reproduction in Naples. Please try it.

Remember always that I love you very much, darling. Don't spoil the baby, otherwise I'll frighten him too much by contrast when I get home. Say hello to the family, and especially Mom if she is staying with you.

Your husband and lover,

Al

JILL TO AL DECEMBER 9, 1943

Darling -

Thursday afternoon

I found my fountain pen in the jacket of your old enlisted-man's fatigues. You fiend -- even at 3000 miles you are instrumental in depriving me of my writing tools. I fully expect a blast of Sicilian sirocco to dust up my typewriter beyond repair, any day now.

Dotty is here today, affording me some leisure &, at the same time, rooting me out of bed so early that I'm too tired to enjoy that leisure. Last night I made a spaghetti dinner -- proving I'm in an advanced stage of pregnancy since in early phases I was either too squeamish-in-the-stomach or too concerned over my avoirdupois to bear the sight of the stuff. I invited Julie Harrison Holder, Dorothy Briggs & then the Kerners (on the theory that if you're going to cook spaghetti, you might as well cook a lot of it - though I still don't like the Kerners). Dorothy couldn't come at the last minute, which was just as well, as the spaghetti disappeared rapidly, particularly down Oliver's yawning maw.

Now that I've shown off my Spencerian hand, may I proceed on

the typewriter.

Julie really is a very sweet girl and all pepped up over the idea of maternity. Later I went up with her to see her baby, who was up at the ungodly hour of midnight. He is five months old and simply enormous, and not very handsome. She says he looks like her husband. I wish somebody would give Julie a lot of money so that she could live in more attractive surroundings. She doesn't like her husband very well, so I guess he's not the one to do it. But she is a very affectionate mother and the kid will probably turn out OK anyway. Rosable is coming in town at the end of next week, and I wrote suggesting she stay with me if she had no other place, which invitation she accepted. This will be very nice for me, as it will mean company during those last days, my only worry over which is whether I'll be able to get a cab to take me up to the hospital. The cabbies are very snotty now, and often don't show up when you call them. However, I'm sure a spectacular creature like Rosable will easily lure one into our den. Bernice and Fritz are going to New York over the holidays, and they are the only people in the building I'd care to agitate, although all sorts of flora and fauna have volunteered aid. Actually, I'm not at all concerned over the whole thing, since first babies take a good long time to arrive, and aside from the taxi business, I can't see anything else to worry over.

However, I'm being very fore-handed about everything, and have already addressed Christmas cards and am just now about to pack off Christmas boxes to Paul and Ann and Day and Walter. Do you want to hear what I'm sending them from us? Paul, Ann and little Paul get, in the order named: that new book of Goya etchings that I'm just going over to the bookstore to look at now (I'll get one for us, too); a bottle of the perfume Ann wanted last year when we were in El Paso, but wrote about too late; a little sweater; a fruit cake. Walter gets a little leather box for studs, very cute and non-essential, but what else can you give a Man Who Has Everything. Day gets a slip (I could use one too). They both get a fruit cake. As for the family here -- I got Mom her Christmas present in the fall -- a really good pair of shoes from Florsheims or one of those places, Dad a shirt

and the boys a fin each.

The chief discomfort of pregnancy, I long ago decided, was the way people bent your ear with silly stories and superstitions. Such as, don't reach -- it will wind the cord around the baby's neck. I almost fell for that one, until the doctor discredited it. Another one that Mom and one of the ladies in the building gave me was that painting is bad for you if you're with child. The doctor laughed that one off too, and by then got a little annoyed at the amount of misinformation I was picking up. Now people assure that I am going to have a boy because my stomach is pointed (sic!). If you have a girl, you get big all the way round. I convinced Mom of the fallaciousness of this theory by pointing out to her that the way you look in pregnancy depends on your original build and internal capacity, but got tired after six more people told me the same thing. If anybody tells me that the baby will be born with a black birthmark because of my close association with Cooney, I'll bust.

I am sending you in another envelope the Key Reporter. It will probably send you into a frenzy, but I'm sick of seeing it on my desk, and haven't the heart to throw out anything addressed to you.

Gosh I miss you, all the more vividly today because I was in the middle of a nice, albeit unremembered dream, about you this morning when Dotty rang the bell. It's amazing, the amount of people, places, institutions and events that conspire to render us twain. Do you think we'll ever be apart a minute when you come back? On the one hand, I hope not. On the other, I remember how much fun it was to wait for your whistled rendition of that trumpet lick on Thursday nights, when you used to go out to Indiana to teach. And it would be fun again to meet you at a train, if I knew the train was coming in on time and if I were sure you'd taken the train, and not some alternative like truck or jeep -- and if you hadn't been away more than two days anyway. Too many ifs -- I guess you'd better stay home.

I remember all the nice meetings we ever had -- and the rather scary ones, when you'd march in 24 hours late, usually routing

me out of a sound sleep and scaring the hell out of me, both by the start and by the way you looked, which was grim and over-tired. The nicest one, and one strangely that I can't remember the attending circumstances, was meeting you at the 63rd St. platform (IC, not Englewood), when you stepped off a very fancy orange and black train. It was about ten at night. Now I remember, you were an enlisted man at Tyson and we weren't married then, because I remember you coming home with me to the apartment at 54th St. and not seeing your family until the next day, to their puzzlement, to put it mildly. Why should that stand out as our nicest meeting? The color of the train? Or was it because it was our first reunion after you had gone into the Army -- in Chicago, I mean. My revivifying memory reminds me that I went to see you after you were in about a month.

If you guys live on memories of dinners, you can understand the stuff that sustains such as I, back home.

I'm glad we knew each other a relatively long time before you went over, because it gives me that much more to think about, and, in turn, to anticipate.

All my love to my sweetheart --

Jill

JILL TO AL DECEMBER 10, 1943

Al dearest --

Friday

A man just called up and asked if this was the service station, in a surprised tone of voice. In order to answer the phone, I had to hurry up quickly, pour the coffee, which at the moment I was just leisurely contemplating, [*put*] sugar and cream it, which necessitated prying open the top of a new milk bottle with a knife, since they don't have those little wire tabs any more, and run gingerly across the apartment with cup and saucer in my hand. It is little incidents like those that put a nice neat top to the pyramid of annoyances and frustrations with which man is daily confronted.

Not that my life is so full of annoyances. It's just that every once in a while, now that you are gone, I get a kind of psychic fatigue from relying too much on myself. It's not that I have any really big decisions to make, particularly at the present moment. But when one has gotten used to sharing, either consciously or unconsciously, all of, and I quote, life's little joys and sorrows with another person, sometimes just solving the problem of what one will eat for dinner becomes more of a burden than one can bear. Me and my moods. That is what you get for being so nice to me for four years. If you'd been a proper sort of cad, I probably could have gotten along very nicely without you.

But I still think it's an insult to our relationship for me to say I want you any more now, or when the baby starts coming, than I ever do at any time. Right now, I honestly don't feel that way. I think I got as mad at our being separated last summer, when I used to see soldiers and their girls frolicking on the rocks, as I'll ever get. I still feel fine and keep busy, though I seem to have less and less to do (except on wash days, when I have more and more, as everything I got new, like curtains, is now getting dirty. Furthermore, I washed out the baby's new shirts and diapers, because somebody suggested that they might have gotten dirty in the store. They looked very cute and funny, hanging up on the line. I'm sure it's a sight that will soon pall. Today I wrapped Christmas presents and fixed your (now it's your) damn desk chair. This is by count the ninth time I've put it together, but this time I think it will hold, because in complete defiance of the finish and with wood splitting like shrapnel all around me, I nailed the damn thing together. I should have done it the first time, and not listened to that stupid janitor, with his extravagant claims for this glue that is alleged to hold Flying Fortresses together.

I bought us that Goya book, and it is truly magnificent. The reproductions of his etchings are swell, and of course, his etchings are so good and so terrifying that one's flesh creeps. The only thing wrong is that the book contains his commentaries, or translations of same, on his etchings, and they remind me of a parody I once read by Robert Benchley on

the librettos of Spanish operas.

I also helped out another gal I know in the building by taking out her nine-months baby. She had a cold. He is a very cute kid, on the physical order of Jo-jo, and very euphoric. It was interesting to watch Cooney's reaction to all this. He definitely displayed attention-getting mechanisms -- stealing my glove, tugging at my trousers leg, barking wildly at me, the carriage and finally chasing after an unconcerned horse and wagon. He is going to have a hard time adjusting to the new baby, but perhaps by the time the child gets to crawling stage (about nine months) he may like it or even develop a protective attitude towards it. Right now, he hates small children, and growls if they come near him. His dislike is compounded of jealousy (that held for Jo-jo anyway) and the fear that they will poke out his eyes or pull at his after equipment, which they usually do. You needn't fear -- if he gets unpleasant, I'll definitely send him back home. Then when you come back, you can make us a present of a police pup. I know they're reliable around children.

The war news is pretty good all the time now, but of course, I won't settle for anything less than unconditional surrender of Al to me.

I'm sending you a clipping from tonight's paper, telling of the newest addition to the U. of C. faculty. You have heard about McMahon's forced resignation from Notre-Dame. Anyway, the story tells it as well as I could. I was thinking the other day that I'd like to take a course there in the spring, maybe in literary criticism if they're running it then. If I could find one that only was once a week, I could take it and have the maid come in on that day. Anyway, it's a nice fantasy.

I haven't heard from you since Tuesday and while that isn't a very long stretch, suspect you're off again to greener, and I hope, warmer pastures.

Loads of love to you, sweetheart --

Jill

JILL TO AL DECEMBER 11, 1943

Darling,

Your Christmas package came today, and I'm sure it's the best present I ever got. The stockings are lovely, and I'm not even sure it's just scarcity that gives them charm, because they are very sheer. You couldn't have tried them on and still made such disparaging remarks about their color. I did try them on, all of them, just now, and the color is swell, particularly for winter clothes, very sexy and Vogue-y looking. And even if I don't like the color, which, I repeat, I truly do, it would have been a simple matter for me to remove the color and dye them another shade. You might have remembered the big Ritting and dyeing projects I always had a-foot (no pun intended) last winter, when you accused me of wearing cadaver-colored stockings.

This is the first pair of sheer silk stockings I've had on my legs for nearly two years, and it's been the only indication I've had that my legs have not grown bigger, either through an accumulation of fat or fluid (the latter being the bete noire of pregnancy) since I started having the baby. It was a very gratifying sight, since certainly the high socks, ribbed cotton stockings and droopy rayon dressy hose have not given me, nor anyone else, any indication that I have a fairly decent, albeit not world-shaking, pair of pins. My only complaint about them is that the foot size is rather small. However, they stretch when they're on, and the only practical significance a too-small size has is that the stockings will wear out sooner than they ordinarily would. However, I don't expect to wear them much anyway -- I'll probably save them for Der Tag, or for special occasions in which I and my legs act as your diplomatic representatives, such as family parties or gatherings which contain family members (I don't know why I would be attending the latter, come to think of it).

The cigarette case is very cute, just right for me, because it's flat and doesn't require many cigarettes to fill it up. I started smoking again, but still don't smoke more than five or six a day, and sometimes not that much. I read a couple of poems too

(with characteristic unrestraint, I sample all the pleasures of your gifts at once). The French is very easy, but I don't read it very well, tending to translate into English as I go along. If I read more French, I'd probably get out of that habit. I liked the one in which the lover has a bad case of nerves. It reminded me of you on a particularly bad day, like when you were sweating it out over some piece of Gosnell foolishness.

And back to stockings, you still see quite a few nylon-ed legs around, particularly in the good stores downtown, but not on the legs of the respectable and/or short-sighted poor, like me. A lot of women bought them up when the shortage started -- I didn't out of laziness and a dislike for stocking up (again, no pun) on anything. Others have been getting them since the shortage, by paying increasingly high prices, at first to the stores (because there were no ceilings then) and then to black marketeers. Now they cost as much as ten or twelve dollars a pair, maybe more. I'm sure I don't know. I heard Tom Marsala speaking of buying a lot for 7.50 a pair, and I presume he intended to sell them for quite a bit more. Personally, I wouldn't pay more than 1.95 for them, which is what I was paying the summer of 1941, the last time these moist and anxious little hands bartered some of their hard-earned silver for a mess of pretty legs.

I don't know why I tell you all this, since it must discourage you even more about the possibilities of instilling or maintaining a reasonably high level of public morality in our time. And I'm sure you're not interested in these facts from any other point of view.

Today was very cold and crisp, but quite tolerable around noon. Bernice and I spent a good part of it eating (the weather gives one such an appetite, I kept saying; actually, the two of us are great pigs) and buzzing in and out of the various marts of trade on 55th and 53rd streets. It seems that every other day I go to a supermarket, and come home with more bundles than I can possibly carry, yet where does all the food go? Surely Cooney and I can't eat that much. I think a lot of it is toilet paper and soap, although I can't be that clean, either inside or out. Search me.

I had dinner with the Neugartens, but left them shortly afterwards, as they were going out and I wasn't feeling any too spry, anyway. Every once in a while now I tend to get cramps, spasms or nervous twitches, I don't know which, around my legs from the pressure of the baby. It isn't very comfortable but it doesn't last long, from either an immediate or long-run point of view. It's only about two and a half weeks now, and I only feel justified in mentioning these minor ailments at all because I know they'll be gone by the time you get this letter, and because I've enjoyed such abundant health generally that I figure I can jeep a little if I want to.

We got a Christmas card from the Singletons today. Wasn't that nice of them? We also got the light bill, which I was relieved to note was a good deal lower than last time. The first month I was here, I tended to leave on all the lights because I was rather scared, I guess. Now I'm not, however. Anyway, I figure it only costs 50 rocks for rent, utilities and phone here, which is quite low, considering our income and also considering what other people have to pay. That leaves me a lot to squander on food and books and gadgets. I won't include clothes, because unless I get an awful yen to the contrary between now and then, I'd rather wait till you get home and get a really fancy set of rags under your supervision. Actually, I have a lot of nice clothes now, and it's about time I tried wearing things out a little, instead of giving them to Rose every year. Besides, I've noticed I really don't get a chance to wear good clothes. Around the house it's much more comfortable and practical to wear cotton dresses, since they're cool (that old hot body of mine again) and wash out -- and I sure get dirty, between kitchen, Cooney, cleaning and, eventually, kinder. And when I go shopping or walking in the neighborhood, slacks are definitely the only thing to wear since they are warm and look neat -- on me, anyway.

Anyway, clothes are a silly waste of money, for the most part, since they're expensive now, and the reason I note that most of my friends get a lot is because they're not married and are working, and have to compete with a lot of other girls for a) jobs b) men. Only they're all wrong about a fur coat getting a man -- I

never knew any who discriminate against me for a) not having a fur coat b) not wearing hats -- another big item of expense in the female wardrobe.

I hope you don't forget to write and ask for the New Yorker again. I have a small pile already -- about four of them -- and would like to send them to you as soon as you ask.

If I wait much later in the evening to mail this (it's about 10:30 now) I'll probably freeze in my tracks outside. So -- all my love to you, darling. If I had any film, I'd take a picture of one beststocked leg and send it to you.

Love and kisses (000XXX) Jill

AL TO JILL DECEMBER 11, 1943

Dearest Darling,

A great big package came in from you yesterday, third of the series and by all odds the best. It was the one with the wonderful fruit cake and the fine selection of books. Really, a first-class gift, every bit of which will be consumed and appreciated with many thoughts of how wonderful a wife you are. I am authorized to say on behalf of Jim Clark and Martin Herz that the gifts reflect character of the highest sort, from the fruity fruit cake which had the tang of the home oven about it to the books which are as good a selection and variety as anyone could make, including myself for myself. The fruit cake could only amaze one with a superficial knowledge of your abilities. It is delicious, in the opinion not only of myself but of the others who had a slice. Last night before I went to sleep I had another piece, this time with a winter drink I concocted. First you heat some water on the hot top of the little pot-bellied tent stove. Then you add some orange juice from a fresh orange purchased locally. To this you add sugar to taste and a couple of jiggers of cognac. Drink it piping hot, preferably with a piece of fruitcake which Jill made. Then let the wind blow and the rain fall. Thanks to you, darling. I hope you like one or two of my

presents as well.

Today I got another present from you, the candy-coated nuts, very good indeed and wholly novel. I don't think I've ever had any before. But Begod and Byjesus, what has happened to the mail. That package of twenty letters hasn't caught up with me yet, not to mention all the ones that must have followed them. I'd rather have a letter than anything else, no matter what, save you in person.

Speaking of drinks, the rage in the army here is what is called a "tin-hat". Pour a liberal amount of local Vermouth into a helmet, follow with a liberal amount of cognac of the paese, and squirt in the juice of a fresh lemon. Stir, drink, and tackle the next German patrol with a pen-knife. I spent about an hour this morning scraping off mud from clothing and shoes. There has been a slight improvement in the weather but that mud is still around, sticky clay, cement-colored goo that ties your feet to the ground and is whipped about by the wheels of trucks. Even the cement highway becomes covered by a thin layer from all the vehicles which go off into the bush and come back onto the road, and driving is a slow, slippery job. This is wooded charming country even in the dead of winter. It loses its attractions of course in the face of all the nuisances of war, but there are still a variety of colors, of browns, greens, and grays to meet the eye that wants to meet them. Maybe I try harder to see them. I always look for things to make the war more interesting, less of the bore that it really is. The soldiers are everywhere; you see them coming out of every cave and hut, trying to keep warm, to keep their feet dry, to not get their machines stuck in the mud, to get a warm meal, to find some edible object to change their diet, in short, trying to fight the war. They aren't optimistic about their section of the line; they get mail one day out of seven except for the lucky ones. When they are called on to fight, they fight well, with initiative and daring. The longer they are away from home, the stranger, and more stupid the home magazines with their war stories and advertisements seem.

I have a fine, little automatic which I'm going to present to you

someday. It's very tiny but shoots eight respectable 22-calibre cartridges without reloading. On the other hand, knowing how you chase me about the place in fits of rage, perhaps I ought not to extend greater advantages to you than you already possess by being the female of the species.

I think I had better list for you now, as best as I can recall, the packages I have sent home in the past couple of months: a small box containing four pairs of silk stockings, a small book of French poetry, & a cigarette case - a box of ten or twelve pairs of stockings, two books, embroidered handkerchiefs and an endtable cover. - Three boxes of books which may or may not interest you - two pipes which I bought in Bari for the boys - those etchings which came with a box I have already mentioned (rather, ink drawings) and another one of two olive trees which I sent separately. If there is anything else that comes, fine. I'm so happy to get off a package, that I generally forget it immediately and all the travail that went with it. Also you should get a couple of things from Chanel, a box of candy from a New York shop, and a sweater from Peck & Peck. Mom should also get a box of candy, and I'm not sure whether I finally did send a purchase order for a couple of shirts for Dad. I remember debating it at length in my mind. I'm sorry I can't be more accurate and orderly like you are, but the main idea in mind was to always keep trying to send and someday something might get to you. I believe you did get a trinket ring I sent from Africa a long time ago. Would you do the same for me, darling. So far I have received three boxes of equal size and a fourth of nuts. That's plenty but if there are any other packages en route, let me know (I got the New Yorkers for the first part of September and August, thank you).

Sorry to bore you with details, dear Jill, when you are concerned with epoch-making events. But at least for one day I will stop my tongue from saying that I love you beyond belief and think of you more than ever

Al

JILL TO AL DECEMBER 12, 1943 V-MAIL

Darling --

It's been a lovely Sunday, as winter Sundays go, just the kind we could enjoy so well together. It was grey and then it snowed, and now, at twilight, it's cold and clear, so that the little snow on the ground is preserved in its pristine inviting form. Around noon I took a walk with Cooney over to the Blensenthals (that's Maxine), who live at 52nd and Ellis. Cooney whoopsed on their living room rug. Since they don't like dogs and since Cooney, to my knowledge, has never whoopsed indoors before, I can only conclude that the tensions in the air were communicated to him, to that unpleasant end.

I came home soon, because of that and also because I've been baking beans all day (to get it out of my system before you come home -- I know you don't like them). Fritz sawed the boards for the bookcases, and what was left over we made into a little cabinet to keep soap flakes and stuff on in the hall closet. It came out rather well, considering the boards were warped and we were amateurs at furniture design. The bookcases look swell, and will look even better after they are painted a nice gleaming ivory.

Fritz just left. They are all coming back in an hour to have dinner here, including a friend of B's, one Bill Henry from her department. Then B and I are going to see *Watch on the Rhine* which is over at the Pic. The men have to work. That is, we'll do all this if I don't fall asleep meanwhile. I got up rather early and have been busy ever since. Last night I just fooled around, writing you and messing around the house until about one.

Everybody is very envious of my stockings. But you may be assured that even if you never gave me anything again, I would still love you with all my heart. I hope this is the last winter we must spend apart. I can't figure out which season I like best to be with you in -- summer, when we can horse around at some convenient waterfront or grassy glade, or winter, when we can lounge around in the heat of indoors, darting out just long enough to get chilled so that we can retreat to home and bed to

warm each other up.

I have to go out now, to buy milk, mail this before seven and look for Cooney, who darted out in the middle of the sawing. But alas, I shall only get chilled to stay chilled, not to be re-warmed by you. All my love and many kisses to you,

Jill

AL TO JILL DECEMBER 12, 1943

Dearest Jill,

It's been a quiet day, notable chiefly for three very full meals, some good cigarettes, a successful fire in the tent stove, and a full moon which beams through the pines in a great romantic taunt. A somewhat lame letter from Victor managed to sneak through the gremlins which have my worst interest at heart, but my latest from you still is that of October 24th. No matter, though; I still think you are the finest girl in the world and am full of good intentions towards you. My only real need is to know that you are well and I'm fairly confident of that. I also need to know that you love me, even more than you probably need me once you have my child as a substitute. After all, I have nothing save a wool blanket and a fire, plus various comrades-in-arms. I am a little worried that you may overindulge the infant when it arrives for lack of another object on which to lavish affection. And what will poor Cooney do, providing that he lives through the hospitalization period without you.

I paid out my remaining Lire for a mess bill today and am now completely broke. It feels fine. I have to wait a while before getting paid but I can't think of anything I need money for in the near future. I bought just about as many things as I wanted and then lost the rest in that card game. Now I can start all over again.

I've just been watching another fellow open a package from home. I laughed twice as sardonically as everyone else when he exhibited the toothpaste, life-savers and stale peanuts. It

really is funny. The PX anywhere in the theater carries a very limited assortment of things. The staple sales, PX rations are life-savers, chewing gum, Chuckles, cigarettes, soap, shaving cream and tooth paste. No one is without any of these ever except for cigarettes which are consumed quickly and sometimes don't get through with perfect regularity. Also, odd brands crop up. Old Golds and Chelseas are great ration favorites. Yet some saboteur at home is advising people to mail gifts of gum, life-savers, soap and tinned meat.

Vic's letter was full of a lot of nonsense about jazz. Is he as hopelessly one-sided as all of that? And apparently Uncle Joe has moved back into the family. His night club seems to attract it anyway. As always, he and his good works are probably good things to stay away from. The wrong people are always curious about his whereabouts and activities. Anyhow, Vic's band will never make a success with those hordes of musicians which seem to have found their way into it. I used to find a five-piece ensemble the most entertaining, instructive, and lucrative. Incidentally, do you have my horn around the house? You may want to learn the second five bars of "America" some day, and I wouldn't miss the opportunity for the world, especially if I can avoid washing dishes by playing "in the summer time".

Would you be a sweet girl and have a nice picture taken when you have a few minutes on your hands? On the assumption that you are a sweet girl and will be, I shall take a roll of films on Christmas Day to send you. I assure you that any picture of you, even a silhouette, will be cherished because I love you.

Al

P.S. Don't forget to use my new address APO 464

JILL TO AL DECEMBER 13, 1943 V-MAIL

My only sweetheart --

Monday

Gosh, I'm bushed. I spent the day with Julie Hess, who would make a whirling dervish dizzy. She came down here for lunch,

and then we visited some friends of hers who live in a frame house across the street, some mad people of the George Price genre -- all the people who live in houses on Ridgewood Court are that way -- then we drove downtown, saw the doctor, though for different reasons, then home to her place, dinner and back South again immediately because they were going to some choral performance on the South Side, which I didn't particularly want to attend. Julie's baby is about seven weeks old now. I can't speak for his beauty, but I guess they're all that way at that age. This kid looks like Carl, which is not particularly becoming in a baby. The place is full of nurses and servants -- anyway, one of each -- which would not be to my liking unless I had a huge house. Anyway, I picked up some very useful information on the dressing of a baby -- Mom is of the old-fashioned school which does it up too warmly and too fancily -- and also a new neighbor, Mrs. Steele, the lady across the street in the frame house. As a matter of fact, her husband and I had already had several interesting conversations on Cooney's love life. This really is a very neighborly block, quite unlike the usual city community. Even the people in the apartment buildings, this being the main one -- know each other and everybody else on the block. That is because the street is heavily weighted with poor-but-honest professional people, in this building because of the low rents and the janitor's -- he always selected the tenants -- social status aspirations.

Last night was spent pleasantly. The Neugartens came down for the baked bean dinner with their friend Bill Henry. The dinner was very successful, with everybody going to bed with stomach cramps, no doubt. I know I did. After dinner we played bridge for a while, and then Cooney and I retired early, to freeze. This is no less of a Chicago winter than any other. Cooney is rapidly becoming known as Mr. Coonheim, because of Fritz's insistence that he changed his name to Cooney when he came over -- everybody else in the building is a refugee and/or a name-changer.

So, anyway, I am surrounded with well-intentioned and, in some cases, companionable people, for whatever that's worth. I can't

think of any other street in the city where I could have been so blessed, or cursed, depending on my mood of the moment. The doctor told me to come back two weeks from Wednesday (that's my usual appointment day but being I was with Julie he gave me today), but he said he really didn't think [*some words lost*]. I'm fine, of course and have only gained 20 pounds, so I'm going out to eat but not fudge sundae now, thinking of you as I do always.

And always loving you 000XXX - Jill

JILL TO AL DECEMBER 14, 1943

My only darling --

Tuesday

Your first letter in a week came today. I had a great struggle to get it, having mislaid the mail box key. It meant waiting from the eleven o'clock mail, shortly after the delivery of which I espied the familiar and beloved Air Mail bordered envelope so tantalizingly beyond my reach, until the four o'clock delivery, at which time I apprehended the postman. To say it was worth waiting for is not only trite, it's downright insulting. Your letters are worth tearing the mailbox from its hinges for, they are worth killing the postman for, they are worth changing one's political faith (from Roosevelt to against-Roosevelt) for -- but never to do anything so pallid as just wait for. I really am burned that you have to wait for my mail, just because the big chief is traveling, though I suppose the results of his travels may bring us together just that much sooner. You see, I'm viewing world events in very subjective terms these days.

This time I would be lying if I were to tell you that I'm glad, along with you, that you're moving. I won't much like your going to the front in your, and my, delicate condition. Furthermore, you may not hear so quickly now that you are removed from the main centers of communication. However, by the time you read all these complaints, you probably will have heard. Which makes me jealous, because, in effect, you know more now (your now) than I do (at my now). Here's a problem for Semanticists to mull

over.

The temperature was a round five above all day and is going down to five below tonight. Nevertheless, I was out in the neighborhood a couple of times, and gratified to note that my green coat keeps my torso as warm as it ever will be. The only parts that get cold are my face and legs, and no fur coat could remedy that -- ski pants and that wonderful all-over hat, which I hope you will give me when you come home -- are really the thing. Now I'm convinced I don't, and never will need, a fur coat. I think I will test this proposition further tonight, by going to the movies with Bernice. We didn't get to go Sunday to see that picture we wanted to see.

I spent a nice day, apart from the great frustration of the mailbox, painting the boards for the bookcase, and the little shelf Fritz and I made Sunday from the trimmings from the bookcase boards. I also started to make some cookies, but did something wrong, irremediably wrong, I might add, and had to throw the whole mess out. I added liquid too quickly to the batter, and it wouldn't mix after that. I've also spent a lot of time addressing and mailing Christmas cards. I'm sending out a lot this year, from us both, since in the past year we've met so many people that we ought to remember. Also, I send the large part out to Mom's friends, a politic gesture, I suppose.

I'm enclosing a card from Bill Evers. I didn't mean to open your mail, but thought, naturally, it was for me. Anyway, I didn't read it, from inability as much as good manners.

Darling, I'll write more tomorrow. I want to get this mailed before movie time. All my love to you -- I wish I could give you more than that, whatever it might be.

AL TO JILL DECEMBER 14, 1943

Dearest Darling,

I can't promise that I won't get as sterile as a mule unless some of your letters arrive. I just had a talk over the phone with a

distant mail orderly whom I have gotten to feel as low as I am about the situation. Someone is f--- up the detail but is effectively concealed in the fine mazes of the army processes. Hans just came back and is also heated up by the delay in his mail. He went through practically the same thing when his child was born.

Nothing of great note has happened since I wrote you the day before yesterday, and in that sense I suppose my letter can't help but be sterile. To go into a long analysis of the painfully slow military situation would be impossible. The company around our tents is very good, the conversation fun. Galsworthy and Heycock are with us for a short time and it is very good to see them again after a couple of months of separation.

Flash!

Two of your letters just arrived, of Nov. 10th and Nov. 21. What a happy day! I'm really delighted to hear you are well and as chipper as ever. I shall plunge into the search for the cigarette box immediately. I remember seeing some fairly nice ones about.

But really, with all two letters to digest, I can't write much more now.

All my love, dearest one, and a big letter tomorrow.

Your

Al

JILL TO AL DECEMBER 15, 1943

Darling --

Wednesday

It is still very cold, but quite tolerable so far as I'm concerned. As a matter of fact, I have the window next to me open now, and it's zero outside. It's just a question of internal heating, or Yoga. So far I haven't been able to communicate this mystic power to anyone else.

I really am tired tonight. I finished up all the remaining painting today, did a big wash, dyed the material for the drapes in the dining room and cleaned the stove and icebox. Actually, I could manage all this nicely if people didn't keep calling me and dropping in. A scene a little while ago was typical -- I started to broil some lovely lamb chops, Joan called, I brushed her off, then I started to eat the lamb chops, Mom called, to bend my ear with the unwelcome bit of news that Mamie Jamboukouka and daughter were planning to visit me, then, a great barking from Cooney at the rear and I rush to the back door to find Fritz Neugarten, who wants to borrow the coffee pot. Meanwhile, my lamb chops grow old and weary. And all of this socializing is accompanied by a great deal of gratuitous advice, warnings and manifestations of over-solicitude. I am getting to be just like you -- I simply can't bear people to make generalizations about me or to be solicitous. Of course, I wouldn't mind solicitude from you -- it would be fun -- but to have a lot of silly women who a) never had a baby b) were pampered when they did c) had a baby so long ago that they forgot what it was like, i.e., how ordinary an occurrence it is bend my ears with admonitions and premonitions drives me frantic. And I'm afraid poor Mom's lot will be that of all mothers-in-law -- to have her advice disregarded in favor of guidance from a professional infant nurse or pediatrician. I don't care if you four kids are the healthiest in the world, which you undoubtedly are. I'm still going to bring up our kid the way the guy I pay tells me.

The old-fashioned point of view about maternity and child care is an anomalous blend of over-indulgence of the mother and disregard of the ordinary rules of health for the child. Mom has been constantly shocked at the amount of work, exercise, smoking and exposing myself to the elements I indulge in. In her day, women above the dead-level of economic status took it pretty easy, I guess. Now the only girls who get indulged -- I mean, if they're healthy -- are the ones who are noticeably pampered to begin with. Of course, a lot still aren't very active because they weren't active people in the first place. On the other hand, people used to, and still do, tend to over-dress infants to the point of smothering them, and also have very little

regard for the ordinary rules of sanitation. I suppose I will be very particular the first couple of months about germs.

I planted some narcissus bulbs about a month ago, and they are about a foot and a half now, and beginning to show the flower sheaths. I don't like narcissus very well -- the leaves, which one spends most of the time with -- are stalk-like and uninteresting -- but I am pleased and constantly amazed by this miracle of growth. By Christmas, they should flower, and then they will die, which suits me fine. All the other plants are the green leafy kind, which don't flower, except for a pepper plant somebody brought me, which is full of peppers, which I shall put in your soup as a practical and malicious joke. If you recall, you once enjoined me to bit into a pepper, and my mouth was sore for hours afterwards.

So you see, I am still irascible, self-willed, vengeful and nasty. But I do love you, and promise I'll never manifest any of those traits with you, except for the vengefulness in the specific instance mentioned above.

I hope you're well, darling, and, to put it mildly, that you'll be home soon.

All my love always --

Jill

P. S. We did brave the weather last night for the movies. The picture, *Watch on the Rhine*, wasn't very good. It was windy and unconvincing. I had seen the play, which was likewise, but thought they might have done a better job with the picture. However, two men walked up the aisle with a ladder in the middle of it, and an usherette swooped down upon a bag of doughnuts of ours Bea had parked on the floor before we could protest, so the whole thing at least had a nice hysterical Hellzapoppin' note.

AL TO JILL DECEMBER 15, 1943

Dear Love,

The strong brew of work to do is beginning to stir a bit, and I am glad of it, I not only have a lot of things to read, and good company, but also work which is taking an interesting shape. I am working on Germans now, to be hopelessly unspecific. I am hoping to hurt their morale and to avoid getting hurt. The latter isn't very difficult, these days. All hell is definitely not breaking loose on the Fifth Army front. Regarding the reading, I have finished in two great gulps, *The Pastures of Heaven* and *The Oxbow Incident*, and for dessert took two of Chekhov's plays. There are other good things about, and I am able to spend some very happy times reading. I thought the *Pastures* was one of the best collection of short stories I have ever read. Each one was a gem and every one was written most smoothly and well. He has a grand style which is definitely superior to that of Clark. But yet the *Incident* affected me very powerfully. Its applications went immeasurably far beyond the *Ox Bow*, and it is one of the best expositions of the marginal mind of which I know. I mean the mind which is passively good but not actively, which fails in a showdown with evil, which destroys an idealist's faith in human nature by its miserable weaknesses and cowardices and then stokes it up by its post mortem remorse. You can search far and wide in literature for even a comparable effort. You may find men like the characters at the lynching who are defeated by their ultimate cowardice and lack of conviction in other stories but they are generally defeated in terms of an author's morality or a god's morality, not in their own eyes. The book is worth reading again. Its lack of many words hides the presence of a real complexity. Its brief, rapid, and stark realism gloss over eternal principles and make it also just a damn good Western. I hope you read it before you shifted it onto me.

I made a big bowl of my Christmas poison special yesterday afternoon and swizzled it all the rest of the day. I think it also broke up a beginning of a cold or maybe I just imagined I was getting a cold. I got Jim Clark to liking it too and he helps to drain the bowl which is left stewing on top of the stove with a

fine hot alcohol odor.

The weather today is beautiful beyond words, not even a cloud finding its way into the blue. The temperature dropped, too, and some mud is drying away. I hope that the worst of the rainy season is over. That may speed things up. It begins to look as if I were too optimistic about taking Rome for Christmas.

Before I forget, I must register my great admiration for your artistic drawings. It numbed my poor heart to see you and Cooney so sadly afflicted and abed. The drawings accomplished more than words could ever do. More, please. I had to take a walk this morning and went past some lovely pools which would be just the thing for summer swimming, and pond-side amours (our specialty). Let's look around for some equivalent some day. I also thought that we must go mountain-climbing in a mild way as we used to do in Texas and California. That was a lot of fun, as long as I could keep you from falling hundreds of feet onto solid rock. You have a frightening faith in your power to fly.

A friend is returning to America in the near future. He expects to go to Chicago and will look you up to tell you that I am always thinking of you and he may give you a better idea of how everything looks over here, though we've been working on different sides most of the time. He was very seriously ill and is returning for a convalescence.

As for myself, I shall probably go on in stinking good health until Germany falls. Then I shall become neurotic unless I am shipped right back to your bedside, and I don't mean that you will be ill either.

All my love, darling, with many kisses.

Al

End of December (first of two parts) 1943 letters

