

AL TO JILL FEBRUARY 16, 1945 V-MAIL

Jill, Dearest,

This is the kind of day on which every cell in my body gets up on its legs, beating its chest and shouting "I love you". The sky is full of sunlight and friendly airplanes, like yesterday. How we love this unseasonable weather. The ground is almost bone dry. I would like to go and go, ending up finally all exhausted and in your lap, with your fingers in my hair and your giggle in my ear. Some mail came about an hour ago, yours of Feb. 4 and Ed's of Feb. 5. You are right about your change of mood in January from December. January was a very sunny month in your chronicle of moods: you were very playful most of the time, full of interesting gossip, treating your friends as if they were human beings, and nipping at my backside which is too hardened from jeeps to mind anything save a hat pin. The sombre motif for the month came from the twin colds you and Kathy had. And of course, the terrible holiday - loud jeers - season was past. The radio today is full of most exciting reports from Japan. The nearer this war in Europe comes towards finishing, the more interested we are in their progress over there. Never have the ordinary Americans worried about what was happening in so many damned remote parts of the world at the same time.

I am glad Kathy seems to have a taste for music, classique et jazz hot. You had better start thinking about how big a house we'll have to live in in order to accommodate aesthetically a piano in one room plus whatever other musical paraphernalia we may acquire. I'd like to be able to bang out a few chords myself or at least the ones to Stormy Weather, the only song you know, unless you learn The ole man's grave from me meanwhile. But for that you will have to pay many a stein of beer, ale and stout. Incidentally we got another whiskey rations a couple of days ago, 100 francs, \$2, Johnny Walker. I have acquired quite a taste for Mirabelle, the new crop of which has just been given the magic touch by an itinerant Johnny Mirabelle who visits all the villages. He is months behind time

this year because of the war. It occurred to me that such a valuable man like that might be a fine asset to our company but he got out of town before it was too late. What a cocktail I'll be able to mix you when I get back! Don't you miss me, darling? I can wash your back, teach Kathy dirty verses, cook anything under any conditions, sleep anywhere, wash windows, manage the exchequer, hold your hand on long walks, pay your carfare - if you have the money - teach you to keep your head down while swimming, change records, and kiss you all the while. Disgruntled vet seeks employment. With child.

So long for tonight, sweetheart. I'm terribly sorry you can't be here tonight with me. But you can be sure that you are always in my thoughts and account for a high proportions of my feelings regarding everything in life.

Always your,

Al

JILL TO AL FEBRUARY 17, 1945

Darling Al --

I always end up with that sedate beginning (varying it with Al darling, my darling, or just darling) suppressing my Al-sick-making desire to regale you with pet names like the ones I use on Kathy. Like "Poopoo" or "Kulu" (you know what that is, don't you,. Mom taught it to me). But when you come home and I can watch your diet (it shall be a bland one, no doubt, since you always hinted I was giving you ulcers and the way I feel now, I probably have them myself). I will pet-name you to my heart's desire.

The delight of the day was getting 2 letters from you, one as late as Feb. 9, truly miraculous (it was even postmarked Feb. 10). I explained several days ago that I didn't get your very cogent objections to Cal. until several days ago. By then I had the

ticket, not to mention everybody agog expecting me and/or waiting for me to leave. I repeat again -- you're right but I'm a tool in the toils of fate. Kismet it is writ. But anyway, what's the money (she said, throwing a handful of 20's over her shoulder into the fireplace) and the trouble -- a mere pah on influenza. Anyway it will pass the time and if you don't think I get tired of your unfulfilled oral optimism (oh yes, I will be home this spring - - quote from the Almanac of 1942). I know tain't your fault but you get your silly, also oral optimistic mother fooled and I confess that circa the winter of 1943 I also had hopes. Now I just wait, beyond tears and laughter, to quote from that old fool Luis Gutany (or is it Winston Churchill. I've given up hope of having my 1st 2 kids close together. In fact the only thing I gather comfort from is that people still think I'm 24! Speaking of my fatal charm, that CPA neither assaulted it nor has brought the pictures back.

Walter never passed by this way.

I also got a fine old letter from you today (like fine old bourbon, or women), Jan. 10, in which you were giving orientation talks and taking pure walks. Well, when you get home you won't ever have to take walks for that purpose, sweetheart.

Oh my health. A dreary thing it is. Mom was here all day yesterday and nursed me -- I seem to have flu -- and today took Kathy back with her, until I get my strength, such as it is. Very dull. I seem to be run down and will continue to be so until I can get more fresh air, I suppose. Now I'm in bed, drinking in the solitude and the silly basso of Laurence Tibbett on the Hit Parade ('tis Sat. night). I can't help it, they always sound silly to me, affected, you know.

You must think me very heard-hearted abandoning the small temperamental Kathy without a struggle but I wasn't doing her any good and she can have fun up north. And she might get whatever I have. Oh, I have an M.D. apprised of my condition and he's given me 14 varieties of pills already. Very dull.

It seems as if I've been writing for ages. I guess that is because my handwriting is so small and dainty. Do you remember we once had an argument over the relative merits of handwriting vs. typewriter? You, you lousy old conservative, came out for the former. But what romance is there in this tremulous old hand of mine, strictly from psycho-neurosis.

Well, back to taking my wolfsbane and garlic.

Your loving wife Jill

AL TO JILL FEBRUARY 17, 1945

Jill, my Darling,

If I finish this, I shall be very proud, because I just wrote a letter to Ann and am fatigued by the effort. One letter a day Al. Still I hadn't written you yesterday and blood is thicker than water or something. You gave me no occasion to reply to anything in your letter which arrived yesterday. Evidently the die is cast re your San Francisco trip and you are running around like in a maze trying to circumvent wartime travel regulations, and, may I suggest, being somewhat reminiscent, at least from this indiscriminating distance, of the people rushing to Miami and trying to get back that you wrote about with your characteristic color some time ago. Lest you get angry, I can see differences, even if you can't. I hope you have a wonderful time there and manage to take care of Kathy at the same time. While you're there, make some estimates as to the living possibilities of the city. We might like to move there someday. I have no preconceived ideas where I'm going to spend the rest of my life, save that it be mostly in bed, with you.

Incidentally, while you are there - or did I mention this before - you ought to call up Yvonne Woodmansee and ask her over to see Kathy. She expressed herself as wanting to meet her very much. Her address is on Edgewood Road in Redwood City.

We have a new officer, name of Hutchins, attached to us for a while. He is Air Corps and has completed his round of combat missions but wishes to stay over here for a while instead of going back to the States. He is a nice fellow, was studying law at De Paul and working in a law firm in Chicago meanwhile. He comes from the Northwest side. We were out most of yesterday together. On the way we stopped at a hospital that used to be in Italy and where I have friends, for lunch. I arranged to draw a liquor ration for our officers through them, a notable accomplishment.

Last night before going to bed, I read almost the whole of that wonderful book by Croce which you sent to me and this morning I finished it. He is a most remarkable man, and is a notable case of someone who could be a most awesome pamphleteer with his command of language but has subdued it in the interest of philosophical objectivity. Only a couple of times in the book does one see a slight loosening up and then the earth cracks and the flames of hell rise up to devour the Germans. Works of such fine erudition entice the intellectual in me and I feel that I could best find my work in academics. I know what my trouble is. What I will do is dictated by the temperature of the outside world. While it is hot, I feel I must be out participating in the interesting transformations, and while it is cool I can forget it and think and do the most interesting things. I actually wish life would leave me to read and reflect and enjoy a few things like you, children, and rural comfortability. Instead I am continually distracted by movements, events, and a tugging towards the arena which if they must not be entered into must at least destroy study and reduce one to an active life wherein one is not so easily distracted.

Next morning at breakfast

While I munch a piece of French toast done with dehydrated eggs, I ought to end this letter. I was in a melancholy spell last night and very, very homesick for you. When I finally went to bed, I dreamt about the neighborhood where I was born, around Hill Street. I was with a couple of other guys who thought we

were lost, but I said "No, that's the house where I was born, I know where we are". I wish the rest of the world was marked so easily.

Once more I say I love you beyond everything.

AI

IN hopes of getting across the Rhine at the earliest moment, the Captain is cruising in Third Army Territory. The Third Army is a shiny one, as it was in Sicily; Patton likes spit and polish. Anti-Pattonites, of whom there are many, ridicule this facade. The Captain agrees with General Patton, however, up to a point, and regrets the bespattered banged-up condition of his jeep; he is shaven and clean, though, his guns are burnished, he is ready to confront any superior inquiries as to the reasons for his presence. But, as has happened often before and under stranger circumstances, nobody asks questions. In fact, they are glad to see a vehicle with "foreign" markings. It's like seeing a stranger in Podunk, Ia.

He has not given up the concept of morale, but it has changed its shape in his mind. It has been two years since he has had any faith in coffee and doughnuts, if ever he had. More seriously, he begins to doubt that faith in one's country and in one's form of government matter a damn. The Home Front begins to dwindle in perspective and grow hazy. Religious faith does not dawn upon him nor does it seem to seize anyone in the Company, nor do the Germans talk about the comforts of religion or practice noticeably a religion except National Socialism which, too, is less and less alive to them. In all the hundreds of letters that he sends and receives, no talk of religion consoles them, though the baby is baptized at the nearby Roman Catholic Church after months of hesitation and indifference. He feels that if Jill and his Mother decide to have her baptized, that is O.K. with him. At the Front, God is not conspicuous by His presence. The Exec has not tried to recall a prayer since he watched the French Corporal die, and before then since putting himself to sleep in the first days of the Sicilian landings. When he remembers the hokum, blarney, media splashing of

God in the face of the war mobilization on the Home Front -- "God is My Co-Pilot," "Praise the Lord and Pass the Ammunition," he feels disgusted.

So far as he can see, and in every army, and on every side, and in the units from the infantry platoon to the Army Group Headquarters and SHAEF itself, the war is irreligious. God is completely wanting, and perhaps that is just as He would have it. The letters from home will say from time to time, depending upon the family, "God bless you, son!" and "We pray for you at Church every Sunday, John." There is no standard of the Cross leading the battle nor is the Cross anywhere to be seen, except occasionally as an amulet, and of course every man's dog-tag has an indication of his sectarian attachment, should he or his family have one. Wallenberg told him he was a Catholic, though he came from a Jewish family, but that was more for information rather than to indicate that the Exec should bury him beneath a cross if he caught death.

Like the Germans and all other nationalities, the Americans wage battle because they happen to be there by reason of a host of varying circumstances and from having nowhere else to go at the moment and from having a feeling of being wanted by a few men around him and wanting them. The military is a profoundly homosexual experience as it moves closer and closer to battle and death, even as overt homosexual conduct is carefully avoided and penalized. Why were the last words of Admiral Nelson as he lay dying upon his Flagship following the tremendous victory at Trafalgar, "Kiss, me, Gridley," said to his devoted Aide? But read the *Iliad*, too. It is not much of a puzzle save that myth, wish, prejudice, ignorance makes it so: Faced with prospect of death or wounds, the soldier feels that he wants to die right there in that group and among those men who feel as he do and therefore mourn him properly, although he will commonly not admit that he wants to die and may claim vociferously that he will do anything not to die.

It does not take many whining bullets and screaming and booming shells to give the front line troops an obsession with what they are doing and a conviction that events elsewhere are irrelevant, and that, starting with the regimental staff, the whole string and

network of organizations going back to the civil population cannot be trusted and is against him. What he possesses is a negative value of great preciousness, the equality or near-equality of risk-taking of everyone around him, and it gives him a feeling of kinship sufficient to dampen differences of background and attitudes.

This is the way the Captain senses the men's feelings, whatever the Army, whether American, British, Italian, French, German, Austrian, Canadian, Indian, Polish, New Zealand, Australian, Algerian, Moroccan, the Jewish Brigade, the German Cossack Division, these being what he has watched in action up to this point, not too close to the crunch of action too often, else he would not have survived to be telling of them. There is no explaining otherwise than in the mutual affection of their fellows the near hopeless bravery and staunchness of the Polish Corps in their assault upon Cassino, as they go about losing half their force owing to the idiotic strategy of the Allied Commanders, and this mutual love came from the loss of country, family, property, almost everything they had once cherished, and being victims of not one but two most brutal occupying forces. The Lieutenant would look at them, look at them, look at them. Men on their way to death or to be maimed or to at best suffer a hell for a while.

There comes a time when the number of replacements breaks through the remaining cords of morale. A more careful and informed study might devise a formula for this occurrence, but too many unknowable factors are involved to know much more than that the breaking point occurs around and about some kind of situation, with certain types of events and behavior. A large volume of authentic information about the people of a unit exists, but the fluidity and fog of war destroys its most meaningful unit statistics.

JILL TO AL FEBRUARY 18, 1945

Dearest darling --

I know by now you must be so thoroughly bored with my apparently ceaseless battle with bacilli that you are, at the very

least, ready to claim annulment on the grounds of misrepresentation i.e. I represented myself to be sane and healthy and I turn out to be ill and hypochondriac.

As you can gather by the eccentric tilt of the hand, I am writing this in bed. It is 9 PM and I have been in bed since 7. Previously I was up, feeding Kathy, playing (hypocritically) with Kathy, telephoning the doctor and attending a luncheon for Lucy Ollendorff (from 12:30 to 4:30) leaving Kathy with a sitter. Previous to that I was having the G.I.'s getting dressed, playing hypocritically again with Kathy and taking my temp. It was 101 then. Now it is 102 but it is evening.

Undoubtedly I have the flu, a commonplace ailment. What annoys me is that I've had so many things wrong with me this winter -- I'm beginning to sound like Joan Kelly. But you needn't worry. Unlike her I don't enjoy it and have enuf sense to call the doctor and get good advice -- in this case taking sulfa, which I am doing every 4 hours and which makes me feel very queer indeed. I just pray Kathy catches nothing. I think that whatever is wrong with me is the result of a) lack of outdoors in wintertime; 2) you not being there. I am definitely not sickly by nature or preference.

But I couldn't escape the luncheon and anyway preferred going out and leaving Kathy with sitter than beating out my brains with her at home. There were 6 girls including me, consisting of Lucille, who has been analyzed, 2 conventionally-comfortably-married-to-4--F's middle-class Jewish girls, a 4th girl who might have been a Jewish radical at school (to be distinguished from non-Sectarian radicals) but of an independent frame of mind, a 5th girl the daughter of a refugee analyst and very well adjusted and me. It was a funny bunch. We discussed clothes, other people, husbands (the 2 Jewish middle-class and Lucy did -- I remained silent, the married virgin, as did the analyst's daughter, the unmarried one) and finally got to sex (how should you warn your daughter, or should you) and race prejudice. I could hardly get a word in edgewise on any of these topics. I did note, however, how conventional even Lucy the analysant, was

on many of these themes and was led to conclude I have come a long way. For instance, somebody asked what would one choose if one had to be reborn -- would you take being Jewish? The Jewish radical and I were the only ones who said yes. I said I'd do it for the kicks -- that I've taken a certain sardonic pleasure in adjusting. I guess I might not feel that way if I had had to die in a Polish death factory for what is only a label, after all. And I wonder if I'm not a frightful masochist in saying yes. I do feel this -- that being a have-not, whether in money, race or anything, for short periods anyway, gives you a little more feeling for living than you might otherwise get. I don't feel that being Jewish is a problem any more, a personal one. I like getting mad at and contemptuous of the prejudiced and I like the shock people get when I come out from behind my dirty blonde hair and romance-language name. Of course if this should prove inconvenient to you some day when you are running for office of dogcatcher of East Frankfort, Ill., I shall cease and desist my sallies against the rich ghetto-bound and the Nazi-minded alike.

I wonder how you react to my above remarks. I know you don't much care for martyrs and I avow (though you may not believe it) that neither do I. But maybe you can sympathize with quixotic impulses of various sorts -- on the surface they may seem self-destructive but, when found in a reasonably tough nature, they are mere pleasurable caprices, like the asymmetrical whirligigs the Indian rug-maker puts in rugs (if they do -- I'm getting a fat hernia straining for a simile). And baby, I am getting tough. It takes a long while, and there are relapses, like before Christmas, but when you ride them through it puts just a little more scar tissue on until finally you can eat 'em alive, like all the celebrated lady murderers of fact and fiction. Not that I will ever exhibit any desire to murder you -- but don't count on my not poisoning any chums who drop in for 11th-hour meals.

But how I digress. I got two letters from you today, a late V-mail, Feb. 2, in which you titillate me unbearably with accounts of a court-martial. You know -- you spoke of pictures and that jerk from the navy still hasn't shown up with Kathy's. Maybe he is out

of town. However, I took snap shots Sunday which will be ready tomorrow if I am in sufficient shape to get them. Sulfa certainly makes you feel funny, I reiterate.

Speaking of the Beast, as you did, the thaw around here hasn't been of sufficient duration to alter my blood pressure. But then, I long ago decided I was so over-sexed mere seasonal changes didn't make any difference in the general tempo of my drooling at you (and Humphrey Bogart). And if you doubt that I can be worse now than I was at 21 or 23, consult reliable references on the subject ... a woman does get worse. Particularly when she doesn't have anything to do but pop soft boiled eggs into her mouth all day long.

That reminds me -- food -- dare I?

Your other letter, as of Jan. 25, was in your usual pleasing style -- cheerful, full of descriptions of your various oral activities (this time Camels and shad roe) and containing that eternal and quite pleasantly familiar-to-me now request of yours for a financial statement. OK, here it is.

We have

4000 or 5000 in Harris Trust Co.

3000 or 4000 in Industrial National Bank

2000, 3000, or 4000 (or maybe 1000) in war bonds

200 or 100 in Univ. State Bank

200 ± 200 in Riggs checking account.

Take it or leave it.

Where's that 50 rocks, you gonif.

And now what have you to say. Do you think I am a darling little husbander of reserves or a drunken sot, spending your blood money? I honestly don't know either. To be sure I spend more

than on the mere necessities of life -- I have people over for dinner, occasionally buy a bottle of liquor and sank 30 bucks last fall in a completely awful corduroy suit. I take trips and have my accouchement via a private doctor, not G. I. But I have no idea what you want me to do -- how much you want me to save. (I told you I'd be willing to make a war bond deduction for any amount you say.) So meanwhile the 200 comes in and goes out and I figure I am doing well if I keep the balance around 300 and never had to dig into the larger monies we have. I also give the family presents when present time comes and occasionally buy a book I want ... What else?

As you say, my letters are prone to be quarrelsome. But I don't really mean it and how else can these two great minds meet?

I do love you.

Jill

JILL TO AL FEBRUARY 19, 1945 V-mail

My darling --

Kathy is in receipt of a letter from you today dated Jan. 13, which, through the expedient of stepping on the typewriter, she did her best to answer. I think it's a fine thing for little girls to get letters from their fathers, particularly when they have such fine fathers. It was funny -- when I got the letter I said "Oh, it's addressed to Kathy -- I'd better not open it" -- so strong is habit.

Kathy's pictures are coming tonight via the CPO. Mom is here again and can help make the selection. I'm still running a little temperature and the doctor tells me to take it easy. But I feel fine, albeit a bit bed-ridden. I've had lots of rest and time to meditate -- the later I hate because one's thoughts when one isn't used to bed invariably concern why one is there -- and never get free enough for Proustian reveries.

The pictures came -- he is going to do them up and just brought the proofs which are a little on the gruesome side. He tried too hard to have us pose, and at that, in the wrong positions.

I'm reading a fine feature in the New Yorker about the Persian Gulf command. It really sounds like rough stuff with [diusall ?] not the Germans, as the enemy. My ex-cleaning woman's boyfriend is there and I used to think the mournful tales she told were sheer paranoia.

Mom and I have been sitting around gabbing and are now about to drink some ginger ale, old soaks that we are. I think she's going to spike hers with some of the Old Tennis Shoes I have lying around. This isn't much of a letter but not much has been happening to me. Mom sends her love and I love you, and Kathy does too.

Jill

AL TO JILL FEBRUARY 19, 1945

Jill, my Love,

I don't know what rashness makes me write you tonight after a day that has been anything but eventful. I suppose, however, that if I can simply hold your hand for extensive periods of time without doing anything else, I can justify the same principle in letters. Did I ever finish telling you about my last trip to Paris? The play I saw with Martin was composed of episodes in the life of Molière, who, apparently, was a bad lover and like most comedians (so the saying goes) quite a tragic character - you know "On with the show" and all that sort of hogwash. We walked over a good part of the city afterwards, trying to find a bar open but without success. I find that Martin leads a very dull, busy life there and it's mainly his fault. He hardly seems to go anywhere. Many other officers do worse. They stick together & waste away their time at the bar of their hotel or play cards or go out with Wacs. It's a rare one that gets into Parisian life to

any extent. One of that type is old Earl Rittman who used to be with us in the Seventh Army & is now very comfortably set up in the big city. He has a half French, half Indochinese girl as a mistress. She speaks English well and that is fortunate for Earl is unilingual. He is also an incredible wolf - very sultry looking for a blonde. Since he hails from Chicago, you'll probably have the opportunity of judging for yourself some day.

On the return trip we stopped underway for lunch, and a woman in a café heated our water and C-rations for us. The incident is worthy of comment because she didn't want to take any money. She acted almost as if we had liberated France. You see, darling, the honeymoon is over on the liberation. Ten years from now the French will have liberated themselves. WE were very angry today when a small news item reported De Gaulle to have refused to meet FDR outside of France somewhere. What used to be pardonable pride is now only disgusting arrogance, disgusting because it is so ill-founded and short-sighted. The British & ourselves have given them most of their modest reasons for self-aggrandizement. It is disconcerting & disillusioning to keep giving to people who keep nipping at your hand, but I suppose it will be worthwhile if they once become contented & turn to purring. No one should be so naive in politics as to expect gratitude for favors rendered. A tougher attitude on our part might be more impressive. We ought to insist on credit where credit is due.

On the pleasanter side, give Kathy a fine big kiss for me. As for you, I love you too much for words. What facet of divine justice separates me from the only thing I really need and want in the world will always be a mystery for me.

Always your

Al

JILL TO AL FEBRUARY 20, 1945

Darling Al --

Here are some pictures of your little mite. Some, as you see, are taken in her (blue) snowsuit. The majority of her looking so very grown up are in her gold colored tweed suit, which my cousin sent her when she was born. It's really still too large in the sleeves and legs but it somehow doesn't show up in the picture. Isn't she a silly little thing, though?

I got your v-mail of Feb. 8 today, the first I knew you'd been to Paris (at least you mention seeing Martin and living in a French edition of the Biltmore, so that's what I guess). My previous letter from you was the 9th when you were back with your company again. I hope you had a nice time there. You know you don't have to send me presents wherever you go. Your letters are all I want, next to you. And by the way, sirrah, I want more equality between the sexes. How about sending me a lock of your hair too. Well, say piece. Lock sounds so damned poetical for a man. I want to compare the color with Kathy's. That is, if you have any. I remember that you used to have a rather enviable coiffure.

Diane was over all afternoon with her little girl, an odd little creature. Kathy treats her quite condescendingly, in the light of the five-month difference between them. And is nearly twice as big. We just hung around the house as I am still taking it easy after the flu or whatever it was I had. Poor Kathy has to suffer too because she can't get out as much or have as wild times, although she manages to mess up the place to her heart's content.

I have all kinds of devices like strings and curtain rods rigged around to keep her from opening drawers, her current passion. She also adores examining the contents of purses, as who doesn't?

I just cleaned out the desk drawers (one at a time), a much less

edifying task. The one I keep letters in always gets to looking like a bird nest but by the time I clean it out I'm so tired I never get to the other ones, the ones containing photographs, Christmas seals and other photographs. I keep vowing to get art corners and paste up all the pictures you've sent recently, but when that will come, I know not.

I've got to do it right now! I have the urge.

Darling, I love you more than anybody could and will write you a lot more tomorrow.

Always your

Jill

AL TO JILL FEBRUARY 20, 1945

Dearest Jill,

I wish I could have written you last night but that was impossible. I was in the throes of a spell, not a silly spell, but the kind of a spell created in fairy tales, wherein one is in a magic fantasy with the very air full of emotion and meaning and one's spirit slips easily out of the body and joins forces with the electricity in the atmosphere. It was one of those aware periods when I was most conscious of how I was imprisoned by my present life and of how much I needed and wanted you. Perhaps it was the not too cold wind that came through the open window to where I was lying on my cot. Darling, the shock of memories can only be cushioned by the spring of hope. If I hadn't that, it might have been unendurable. For it carried me back to the depths of our nights together, to when we lay there letting time slip by and feeling the slight thread of the wind in the pastoral security of our companionship. It can't be described. Though no great writer, I realize the limits of verbalization. I was in a spell those evenings, the happiest times of my life and I was in the same spell, though bitterly confined to the actuality of

the past, last night. I felt I ought to turn to you, to touch you, to reassure myself that I wasn't alone in the world. How the futility did hurt! How incomplete! I would live if I ever lost you. But I believe it would be the sands running out, not the waves dashing in. I believe it would mean my resigning myself to having lived the most precious moments of my life. It would mean the rest of my existence toneless and tonedead in part. Happiness is much less mechanical than even beautiful music. Beethoven could live in lost chords and create new patterns of beauty. But from the loss of you, I could never create anything save pain. Nor could I hope for the salvation of maturity or naiveté, the ability to fall in love again, but better. It would never be the same, much less better.

That, for what it is worth, is my vulnerability. Knowing it, you had better look both ways before crossing the street.

Perhaps I didn't sleep too well after that. At any rate, I have a slight cold and headache today. I wish we had a cigarette shortage here too. Every time I would generally reach over to kiss you, I now reach for a Lucky.

Once more, I love you dearly. And Kathy too, providing she gulps her orange juice in a fitting manner.

As always, your Al

JILL TO AL FEBRUARY 21, 1945 V-MAIL

Darling Al --

Two whole letters from you today, to brighten up an unceasingly rainy day -- the 26th and Feb. 4th. The former contained a very rare request, that is, you make them rarely, for a book which I'll hunt up for you. I was interested to hear more of your reminiscence of the Rome days. I wonder if that lady ever did get the shoes. It would be nice if more people wrote home for things like that to send civilians over there. It would be the only

way of probably ever getting most Italians half way decent clothed. The newspaper here really tell very sad stories of conditions in France and Italy. And damn it, we have so much, even if people do complain. The latest big beef (I hear through the papers again) is the midnight curfew on bars and stuff that Byrnes ordered. My God, how the people do rave on. Of course I can afford to be smug, snoring away at eleven as I do nightly now. I've been sleeping vast amounts lately, the result I suppose of my recent infirmity which is all gone now. Today I spent in limited activity, sleeping in between times and trying to keep poor Kathy happy. She couldn't go out on account of the rain and felt pretty badly about it.

From what Liz guessed in her recent letter to me, I have a feeling Bill may be in on this Iwo Jima campaign, which is apparently a very terrible one. I surely pray that he will be all right -- they're just about the nicest people we know, I think. I don't know what to think about Chris's story about George. I don't know why or how she could tell it in this case if it weren't true, even if her general record for veracity ain't much. Oh well, by the end of the war we'll know all, I presume. And speaking of the end of the war, what's your guess now? I'm still not very optimistic. I made a bet with Dieter Dux, that great student of international relations, that it wouldn't be over May 1st (he said it would). The stakes are a bottle of bourbon. And I have a somewhat larger bet of a convertible with you that it will be over June 1st, don't we? I'm cautious. I say October 1st. That means an armistice in the European theater, nothing more. But then I can afford to be cautious. If I lose I win.

I'm starting to read the Pickwick Papers. I gave up Hardy's The Return of the Native. He's just too doleful for me and I'm in no mood to be tortured by the dark [*word lost by photocopying*] of English country folk. I still think he's a great novelist, however, and I can imagine moods in which I might welcome his fatalism. Right now I want to be amused. I'm considerably subdued by my battle with the fever thermometer this past week -- or rather subdued by my reactions, which were far from the stiff upper lippery I had imagined would characterize my attitudes to minor

crises. Instead I get panic-stricken when I am sick because I get so worried about what I'm going to do with Kathy and the housework. And I don't enjoy the leisure at all. I guess the only time I'll ever enjoy leisure is when I have corps of maids, cooks and nurses to take over. And then I'll probably be bored.

Gosh I've had the radio on all day and my head is so full of singing commercials I can't think. Which is why this is such a very dull little letter.

But I LOVE YOU.

Jill

AL TO JILL FEBRUARY 22, 1945

Darling, my Jill,

I feel fine. It's about midnight, I've removed my mud-caked boots, gulped a good strong shot of whiskey and am about to turn in. But, as always when I have any reason to be happy in the slightest, I think of you and feel I must tell in a few lines anyway how much I love you and feel happy thinking of you too. Despite a number of things popping up even at this hour I think I ought to be able to sleep the night through. The only thing that may get me up is a report on one of our soldiers who was stricken with some sort of heart attack and was carried off in an ambulance. I tired myself both mentally and physically today, the latter by the simple method of driving over 200 kilometres in a jeep over some of the most horrible roads ever rutted about by the machines of man. What bomb & shell craters hadn't done, ice, thaw and traffic accomplished. One time we got stuck for a half an hour or more in knee-deep mud. Finally a prime mover was enlisted to pull us out, happy day. I thought we might have to spend the night there. The only nice thing was the weather, and from our mud-bound roost we could see lots of sleek planes dashing hither and yon.

I haven't had any mail from you in a couple of days. Needless to say those were therefore empty days. How I love you! You ought to know how much. But I'm tongue and wrist tied. I can just sit here and fume with frustrated love. And now over and over again that I'll make it up with you, that I'll devise ingenious techniques of stretching time and pleasure - so that two years from now instead of saying that we've passed two terrible years & two normal years, we can say that we've passed four normal, beautiful years.

But you wouldn't want me to lose more sleep, after I say that I love you so very much.

Your

Al

JILL TO AL FEBRUARY 23, 1945

Al darling --

Three, even four letters (if you count the note along with the old Fifth Army pictures*)*[footnote at bottom of page: *Those were interesting and good pictures. That drip Westbrook!]* from you today, Feb. 10, 11 and 12 all neatly stacked together in the mailbox. So whereas yesterday I stared sullenly at the typewriter without a thing to say to you (and I gave up without saying anything and fell to pasting pictures in your album instead), today I had to dash out and buy a new sheaf of air mail paper, I have so much.

It is funny that some days can pass without my feeling like writing to you. They are the days completely without character. I stagger through the routine of housework and playing with Kathy, the weather is so unutterably bad, i.e., damp and cold, that it arouses no sentiments except sheer disgust. I read but am not impressed and listen to the radio and am likewise. But today was quite different. First there were all those letters, then

there was Kathy acting sillier and trickier than usual, and then tonight on the radio Jimmy Durante sang Hinky Dinky Do with his old partner Jackson and it stirred me to the depths. Do you remember the old team of Clayton, Jackson and Durante? I don't either but nevertheless have a sturdy nostalgia for them.

It was fun to hear more of your Paris trip. I can imagine how that hot bath must have felt like to you. I wish I could have gone shopping for pictures with you. I wonder if they are as bad as you make them sound. I saw some Matisses while I was in New York that he did during the period of occupation, from 1939 to 1943 (I wonder how they got them out) and they were wonderful. But then I doubt if you could exactly find him batting around the open market in Paris. Your selection of a book of biographies of mid-19th Century French representatives was just darling. I shall read it with greatest interest. I hope it isn't in English. That would spoil the fun. Well, I am making a scrapbook of footnotes to Thomas Hardy -- you know, in the text it says "Heathcropper" and the footnote explains "a species of bandilocks." When I get one hundred I send them away and get a lock of Harold Gosnell's hair by return mail.

I don't know who the people are who sent you that packet of Turkish delights from the block. I think the janitor in this building had something to do with it too, not only because of the cultural level of the gifts but also because he was the one who let me into the little secret of the contents long ago. But whoever sent it to you would probably be delighted with a reply and said reply would be posted on the bulletin board of the Block, to forever haunt and humiliate me. ("I got yer gift and it wuz very nice.")

Little Paul is a beauty, isn't he. The friend of Paul's who came to see me said he was a very winning child, very shy and sweet (so unlike our Kathy). I had her in the bank today and she was dashing about yelling at children her own age and giving the knee to the bank dick while I cringed in the anonymity of the line in front of the teller's window. The people in front of me started talking about her, isn't she (rather, he) cute, he must be lost, look at the size of those eyes, how well the little thing walks,

look at him stick his fingers in that little girl's eyes. Today in the bookstore I ran into this girl I used to chat with on the beach last summer. Kathy ran right up to her and yelled "hi", not that she recognized her, she just acts that way with everybody, and Barbara said that Kathy hadn't changed at all except for size. The personality was exactly the same. Oh yes, Kathy has two words, goodbye and hi, it's funny she doesn't say "Momma." She knows it because when she is particularly anguished and impatient she will yell that syllable before she starts to cry but I guess she just isn't interested enough in me to bother to talk much about it. Other children with perhaps more limited horizons will learn their parents' names first, but Kathy, with her general interest in the whole world, has apparently found it more expedient to learn the more generalized modes of address. Today she also found a loose manhole cover in front of the house and the two of us spent a pleasant half hour jumping up and down on it, with Kathy just splitting herself laughing, until all the neighbors took their places disapprovingly at the windows.

Yes, I guess there is a resemblance between Maugham and the boy in Samuel Butler, or rather a resemblance between Maugham and Butler, since both Cakes and Ale and The Way of All Flesh were autobiographical in those respects. It must have been a fairly common way of bringing up children in the 19th century, common and dismal. Some people say that the Germans are so brutal because of the brutal way they are brought up, with the father figure dominant, but here were a lot of Englishmen also brought up in loveless authoritarian environments. I don't know what you could say were the effects on the English -- it certainly didn't brutalize them -- perhaps it made them chilly and reticent -- I'm sure I don't know.

Oh, an accounting of your clothes -- well, all that are left is your Finchley suit (one set of pants, Ed wore out the other, the slacks that Cooney tore), your brown and white striped job that I never liked, and a light colored gabardine. Your shirts looked so awful I gave them away long ago. At least you could buy them new, couldn't you? They really were bad, so don't be mad (poem). I

don't see what's wrong with being a new civilian anyway. It's a lot better than being a habitual one. I still do not know any more about the why's or when's of Buss's coming here. I assure you the University will never be the same and I can't say that it bothers me very much. I guess my identification never was very strong to begin with.

Well, I guess it's time to go to bed and get me 14 hours' sleep. Tomorrow I'm celebrating my birthday, which I keep forgetting about anyway, by going downtown and getting myself checked up by the doctor. Hot dog. I may also buy myself a pair of shoes as a present from you. High heels.

I love you sweetie.

Jill

JILL TO AL FEBRUARY 25, 1945 V-MAIL

Darling --

There were a few minutes there where it was doubtful whether this letter would ever get written at all because Kathy managed to jam my fountain pen down into the keys of the typewriter board so successfully today that it just took me a good fifteen minutes of sweating and swearing to get it loose. When she is feeling low or bored I put a cushion on the desk chair, some paper in the typewriter (to lend it an atmosphere of realism) and let her bang away at the keys. After all, it's what Mother does, why can't she? But it seems like a helluva sad end to come to for a fine upstanding typewriter like this. And in these times.

Another reason why this letter is long in coming is that I have had another one of those fantastically busy weekends, with people dropping in from all corners, with me dropping out, and with conditions prevailing so as to give me a relapse -- except that I still feel fine, or rather, feel better than I have for a couple of weeks. In the first place yesterday was my birthday and I also

had this doctor's appointment and it was also a warm springy day. So in the morning I paced up and down the street with Kathy letting her drink up the sun and then, leaving her with the competent Germanic sitter, I went down at noon to the doctor. To my eternal relief, he pronounced me OK, although rather mysteriously smitten. It seems that since my flu I've had a rather non-stop curse and I thought I might have God knows what female trouble, and also felt ashamed, associating female trouble only with women who play bridge in the afternoon. But he said it was just one of those things that could happen after fairly high fevers and gave me some pills. I still have the curse but feel immensely relieved. He was a cute little gynecologist -- Greenhill is away on one of his non-stop vacations. So that was a nice birthday present, finding out I was OK. Then I went to Field's and bought a beautiful pair of brown high heeled shoes. You dope (pursuant your letter of Feb. 13 which I got yesterday) of course I won't wear them around so I can complain that I can't wear them when you come home. I almost never wear heels any more but I still like to have them and agree with your thesis that they improve on a woman when she is dressed up. Of course I never dress up these days round Kathy but certainly will when we go out when you come home. Anyway now I'm smarter about choosing my shoes than I was when you first knew me. There's just about one type I can wear - pumps with open toes and a sensible shank and also very expensive (the last is an essential requisite) -- and now I know where to buy them. I also and inadvertently found a beautiful sports dress at Field's, sort of light grey with long sleeves which I'll be able to wear in all but hot seasons. So that made me very happy too. Then I met Mom for tea and we had club sandwiches and coffee and big mushy fudge sundaes and came home and took Kathy for another walk. After she was to sleep, I went over to Lettie's and we had chop suey and sat around with two other dull girls and mooned at each other (it's never fun to be in a crowd of girls I decided) and then I came home and went to bed. Today the Kerners came over and stayed for hours and this friend of Letty's husband dropped in and gave me cigarettes and then I went out to the Neugartens for dinner with Kathy and then they

came back with me and just left a few minutes ago. I'm giving Bea a lot of stuff for her baby that Kathy has grown out of. I tactfully refrained from relaying your very funny remarks anent 4-Fs' wearing a serviceman's tux to Fritz, knowing that he is not a civilian from cherge (one of the few). So now I am very tired but, as they report in hospitals, in good spirits. And dying to get to bed and read the Sunday papers. The only birthday present I got besides the rather magnificent one from you, i.e., the 12.95 shoes and the 29.95 dress (and thank you so much) was a handsome selection of four white slips from Day. This is again an example of the unparalleled good taste and thoughtfulness that runs so strongly through the Oppenheim strain. I had told her a long time ago that you hated pink underwear. Since I hardly ever wear slips they'll be trousseau fresh when you come home and at that time I'll let you round out my hope chest by allowing you to fork over any pajamas you may have saved from the fray. And your white shorts too.

It was sort of warm today too, but grey, and we were out both morning and afternoon. But I fear that the warm spell is only temporary. I remember how awful March was last year. So now I look forward to California with renewed enthusiasm, now that I am sure I don't have t.b. or any of the other little things I had doctored up in my imagination. I'll be leaving in less than two weeks. I'd forgotten all about it while I was sick. (Having not run a temperature since I was nine years old I was mightily impressed and chastened, as you can see, and my life is herewith marked off as before and after MY Fever.) I still feel apologetic about mentioning it (the trip) about your disapproval and about the very real discomforts we'll face on the train. But I know very well that the change will be good for both Kathy and me -- maybe she will learn to use the john seat and rink out of a glass from Paul's example and maybe, too, she will get slightly unspoiled. And, as I've pointed out before, it's a long wait ahead for us both and I might as well break it up. Besides Liz Evers takes trips from Boston to see Bill's family in New York so it's not an altogether unusual pattern for servicemen's wives to push around the country, chasing the rainbow until the real one

comes home. I think with self-control I'll get along with Ann. After all, when I knew her two years ago I had no understanding of her problems with home and infant and she none of mine -- of the homelessness and insecurity. But now we are more in the same boat.

The mails are going awfully fast now. I can even remember the insults I wrote you two weeks ago which you rebut today. Perhaps it was better when the APO limped along -- it gave the wounds time to heal. I don't know why you're always saying I'm so sassy. I think I'm the perfect wife, loving but not servile, i.e., unbending. Oh by the way that business about the wrong check to the New Yorker got all straightened out -- they sent me a refund and blushing asked my pardon (after I had blushing asked theirs). All in proper New Yorker spirit was the correspondence carried on, dignified, literate with a superficial air of humility. And in that mood I leave you. Also with a lot of love.

[arrow piercing heart]

000XXX

Jill

AL TO JILL FEBRUARY 25, 1945

Dearest Jill,

Life is one crisis after another and I just cut myself shaving. We're piled up high with jobs and we're low on men - just think of the army not having enough manpower. We used to have more men for details than we knew what to do with. The most hard worked are fortunately too exhausted to do anything but feel resentful. But the job as a whole is going fine. So much for an admirably vague resume of what we're doing. I got 1 swell letter from you today, dated Feb. 12 and containing 2 ea., hair, locks of. I wasn't able to deduce much from them although it was very pleasant to receive the fetishes. Yours looks

somewhat darker than I had expected, but I know that hair is a total impression rather than a lot of individual parts.

I just realized that this letter may reach you in California provided that you've arranged with Mir to forward your mail. I hope you have a fine time and don't find the train trip as disagreeable and annoying as I feel it will be. Perhaps you'll be there for all the excitement of the Conference. I wouldn't advise (if this reaches you before you leave) you to carry much with you. Send everything possible apart from the direst necessities by express even is the cost is considerable. Travelling is so much fun without baggage, he mumbled from the depths of his enormous bed roll.

So Oscar has quit the war & found solace at the Chez Paree. I don't know which act is more reprehensible. Tell Bill S. that he owes me a letter, and if he argues don't press the point because he might be right. Same for Buzz when you see him. Tell Dad and Mom I'm very sorry not to have written for such a while but will do so immediately. I wrote Walter the other day. So much for the amenities.

I haven't reported on the last three movies I've seen, all of them above the standard. I stand aghast! There was a Robt. Benchley, etc. farce called Her Primitive Man, silly, but somehow amusing. There was a surprising Deanna Durbin tragedy that took place in New Orleans. She acts as if she might be able to act. The third was Claudia, again not bad, though Claudia accomplished overnight what it takes ordinary people years to do, if at all. Oftentimes tragedy & crisis makes people more infantile than ever. I know cases in point over here. People become stark naked babies under pressure of one sort or another.

You were undoubtedly very right about the Russian movie The other night. No reason to give them credit where they don't deserve it. We far outshine the Russians in all sorts of things, not the least of which are the movies. And by the time this World War is over it will [*be*] very debatable if we have not done

more to win it than any other nation - a stupid argument, of course, but one which will come up. Casualties are very unreliable measures of success. Our armed forces have done a marvelous job of taking them only where necessary.

But here it is the next morning and I wasn't able to write as long a letter as I had planned. Villeneuve is leaving with the mail. I had a most wonderful dream last night. I had been ordered transferred to a building on University Ave. near the U. to take over a small, well-behaved company. The dream only got as far as my taking over, washing up and getting ready to meet you. What a fine dream.

Now I love you even worse for having been so near to you. And Kathy of the soft brown hair too.

Always yours,

Al

XXXOOO

JILL TO AL FEBRUARY 26 ?, 1945 V-MAIL

Al darling --

I don't know how I deserve you, you and your wonderful taste. (At least I hope it's you -- I don't know who the hell else it could be, except my long lost great uncle Morrie). Anyway, from White Plains today came two of the most beautiful scarves ever made in this world. They are designed by that person Vertes who also did a stunning book jacket on the Maurois book you sent me, and they are really other-worldly. The man (or woman) really has much more aesthetic gifts than you usually find in commercial art. I wore the ascot immediately and nearly was strangled when my two fellow connoisseurs on Ridgewood Ct., Claire Oppenheim and Lettie, saw them and tried to make off. Thanks loads darling. That's the kind of gift you don't find me

objecting to, on any grounds, digestive (as in the case of the candy), aesthetic (like the bad Sardinian voodoo) or fiscal, as in the case of that darling IOU to Hank Danenburg you gave me. I just leaped up and fell to draping them around my bare uppers, trying to achieve some kind of sunsuit effect. However, the fact that I am pale and somewhat less than my usual husky summer self defeats the illusion. I sure hope I gain weight in California. I don't look good so thin. Kathy lost about three ounces from what she weighed a couple of months ago but she looks well and the doctor made no comment so I guess she is about average for her age now, whereas before she was somewhat more than average.

Juni King just left with her kids. They came around four and stayed for supper and a visit afterwards. You should see those kids. They are both enormous. Their faces aren't grown-up -- Leslie even looks pretty much the same way that he always did, but they just look like ordinary kids viewed through a telescope at close range, or else a pair from some master-race brood. They have huge heads, lots of straight blonde hair and long beautiful legs, particularly Mary Edith. Leslie had a prison haircut and looked very tough but he retains all his babyish attitudes towards me, including willingness to be kissed and hugged. Mary Edith is good and ladylike although one realized soon that she was more of a baby than she looked, because she sometimes acted quite competitive with Kathy. She is a sweet child but doesn't have the inordinate silly charm of Leslie. Leslie still jumps around and, as he told his mother, likes to make people laugh. But God, what a colt. It's frightening. I thought they were both singularly unproblematical and unannoying. The three of them circled from room to room, carting about toys and fooling around with the record player - every time anybody made a move to close it, Kathy cried - and in general acted like large healthy children. Bill is in the Navy but Juni still doesn't know where he is. She is staying with her foster parents and is, as always, quite unhappy with them. They do sound awful. But they will stake her to the rent of any small apartment she can get, and I hope she does get one.

Maxine also dropped in today. She has been out of town with her husband for six months and it was quite a surprise to see her. She looks marvelous and I hope having you home again will do the same for me. She said Bob Cook, now a Lt. Com. got back and took Marion Gerson, his wife, to Norfolk with him. The lucky dogs. Maybe my time will come soon. If loving you has anything to do with it, it should.

JILL TO AL FEBRUARY 27, 1945

Darling --

Four letter from you yesterday and I'm ashamed that I didn't have the time to answer them then, and hardly have the time now, it being near ten and I've just finished an exhausting session clearing the kitchen. I just don't seem to have the time to write during the day -- Kathy keeps me so busy that I just drop in my tracks after lunch when she is taking her nap, and while I get some good ideas to convey to you, I then don't have the energy to put them down on paper. So instead I read and doze until the next round, our afternoon walk.

It's been damned cold for walking too, back in the tens or twenties again, but I doggedly persist, thinking it is good for us both.

Your letters were respectively, the 2nd (containing Mike Holmes letter which I found very interesting, although isn't he rather on the conservative side politically?), the 15th, 16th and 17th. I wish the mail wouldn't bunch up so. I'd much prefer one letter at a time so I could answer it fully and gracefully. When I get four at a time and then don't have time that day to answer them, I get the oppressed feeling that I used to at school -- too much homework. And that doesn't do justice to your letters, which were wonderful, full of everything interesting. But in their bulk, all they leave me with are two questions - what the hell is mirabelle and since when did you start drinking in the morning

(viz. your description of one menu -- soft boiled eggs with Three Feathers. Ugh).

I didn't read that Croce book before I sent it to you, although I did read all the novels I've ever sent. My limitations must be obvious to you by now. By the way I am having the most embarrassing vicarious experience one could have, short of being with someone who has just lost their pants. I'm reading Wickford Point by J. P. Marquand -- Mac brought it over for me to read for some reason or other -- and it is a direct and blatant and therefore embarrassing plagiarism of Cakes and Ale. You may wonder why anyone would want to bother to plagiarize that particular opus of Maugham and so do I. The parallels are inescapable -- the method of presenting the subject of exposition -- in this case some Emersonian figure instead of Thomas Hardy, the pretentious researcher (not the first person, the other one) and then the first person, who knows more than the stuffed shirt. But Marquand is, if anything, duller than Maugham. Maugham is at least controlled but Marquand has this blubbering weak-minded subjectivity added to the monotone of style so characteristic of Maugham. At least Maugham is a perfect stylist in his way, just because he is so objective and his English is so good. I shall probably finish this book but won't enjoy it. I did finish The Return of the Native today and still feel the same way about Hardy -- that he is silly but impressive.

I hope you have been getting the New Yorker regularly. They have been running a three-part profile of B. Ruml. This week's was Ruml's days at the U. of C. and how he came to be such a big wheel in the social sciences. It also makes Adler out to be a disciple of Ruml, for whatever that information is worth.

Other kids will hold your hand when you go walking with them but Kathy squirms and eventually sits down when you take her hand, unless she thinks you are helping her over a difficult step. So when we go strolling we are usually about forty yards apart from each other. I take her into the stores with me now and she strolls up and down the aisles, looking at the people and

occasionally picking up a loaf of bread and hugging it, completely content to be apart from me. When we finally meet up in the cashier's line a half hour later she may suddenly remember that I am her mother and then let out an anguished howl to be picked up, but if she isn't tired she is just as likely to go wandering off, subsequently to be found necking with the butcher. She is a really funny little person and I think you'd better get a good idea of what she is like so you'll know how to treat her when you come home. She is excessively friendly so there is absolutely no chance of your being rebuffed. Just wear pants and she'll be nice to you. It's funny that our first child, brought up completely under my influence, should turn out to be so much like you, the adult you. (Mom claims much more precocity for you than Kathy evidences, although she admits you didn't jitterbug at the age of one. But then there was no Frank Sinatra.)

Darling, I really should be getting to bed now. I'm doing my best to avoid social engagements these days so I can catch up on my housework, sleep and equal your current enviable record of a letter every day. So tomorrow I'll write again.

All my love to you,

Jill

AL TO JILL FEBRUARY 27, 1945 V-MAIL

Dear sweet girl, by rights my wife,
There's nothing new in this dull life,
I spent last evening with a jug of champagne
The better side of this campaign,
And fell asleep in all my clothes
making curious sounds through my nose.

Not delicious sleep like with you,
But just sleep.

I arose at dawn again a pawn
in the hands of a day at war
And this day too has slipped away
on the banana peel of nothing.

The same food was washed down
the same old gullet to the tune of
the same old conversation with
the lame old jokes and
the half cold coffee.

The news was good but not good enough.

The weather was fine but too fine

For Spring is the stuff

that feeds our love

And it is the line that

hauls me gasping, to your feet.

And news which isn't completely good

only ticks off the miles of time

between us and makes the remaining

ones hardly bearably stood.

A letter of yours came today

And as always you're at bay,
facing a house of guests or my
darling daughter pest,
having finished a dinner of shrimp
whose preparation left you limp
which is how I like you
though not from shrimp.

The Ministry of Fear you may recall
my having read with zest last fall.

But I haven't read Koestler's Darkness At Noon

Could you send it to me soon,
Please?

And for that and everything else I love you,
Which when all is said and done, is a constructive
Way of passing any day - Loving you.

Darling: You see to what straits I'm reduced. I simply must get home to you some time soon. I hope that visiting San Francisco will help you pass the intervening time quickly, and I hope my visiting Germany will do the same for me. I read an article on houses with lots of windows today. That's what I want for you. A house full of windows so far from everything that you need never worry about drawing the shades. With my intentions, one could spend the [other ?] half of her life pulling up & pulling down. Many kisses to Kathy and you my Love.

Al

JILL TO AL FEBRUARY 28, 1945

Darling --

I still haven't written the envelope for the enclosed so I thought I'd write some more. I had the most awful dream last night. You had come home and were stationed in some camp in the Middle West and had called me up and told me where, and then hung up and then I couldn't remember whether you had said Libertyville or Coffeyville, Illinois or Kansas or Kentucky. People told me to go to the Woodlawn Station at 63rd but I could never get ready to go there and I kept forgetting or missing train times and anyway, I knew that when I got to Libertyville or Coffeyville you wouldn't meet me because you were being held incommunicado (this duplicates my anxieties and the situation when you were at Ft. Patrick Henry in Virginia). There was no way of my getting in touch with you and I woke up exhausted and depressed. It seems as if this is the sole theme of all my dreams about you -- that you are here and I can't find you. You better come home and erase the trauma of those last days we spent together at Newport News. It is odd, isn't it, that I never dream of you in any other context except this anxious situation, despite all the other times and places we've been together?

I spent a busy morning cleaning and going over my clothes, preparatory to musing them up packing them. It seems as if from one year to another my dresses malignantly either shorten or lengthen themselves and are, in either case, never the right or even length. Kathy stood by and tried on my poor old battered hats and occasionally dusted the floor with some beloved old garment.

The postman rang twice (they really do, do you know? I bet you don't because when we lived at 5479 I remember sternly instructing the poor befuddled mailman not to ring our bell because it would wake me *[typewritten]* up ... I just ran out of ink ... mornings I wanted to sleep. But those sybaritic days are gone for ever). Anyway that nice man brought me two letters from you, as well as a pair from Adele Rose Saxe and Juni King,

which I will try to touch on later.

Your letters were from Feb. 19 and 20. It's amazing the order they are keeping. I was still interested in more details of your Paris trip (as if I ever could stop being interested in anything you say, except when you start yodeling for financial statements from me). I thought that by now Martin would have dug himself up a girl but it seems not. Martin is nice and if I were not married he would be one of those guys I'd spend time with just because he is rather intelligent and nice and because he obviously admired my teep, translating from the original French, but he lacks that mystic flypaper which has nothing to do with a man's looks. Like you -- even as a beer-jacketed twenty-year-old bent over with the cares of holding down ten jobs at once, you had that adhesive quality so far as women were concerned and you knew it and I damn well found it out. If you want me to, I can recall (although you probably don't) a very degrading conversation we had, degrading for such lovers as we turned out to be. I said in a moment of pique, brought on by what I can't recall now, "What makes you think you can get any girl you want anyway, you big baboon, or words to that effect," and you replied, "Hah, look at you," and I did, caught as I was in the embarrassing position of being in your quarters with nothing between me and the mores but a half a pound of liver sausage and a dog named George.

But I digress. I was also interested in your remarks anent the French and liberation. I think I wrote you the day the Yalta conference news came out that I was glad the French were recognized as much as they were but I too later was puzzled by the stiff-necked behavior of De Gaulle. But from the news we get here it does seem as if the French are still suffering terribly from deprivations of all sort and we are the only ones who can help them, and help them we should, with or without thanks. Are things really as bad there as we hear? You would be in a position to judge, especially after having seen the Italians.

This has been a day of funny moods for me, clouded over by the dream of last night (this typed portion is being written much

later, around ten, after babying and cleaning are behind me) and then your last letter, Feb. 20 (how fast the mails) which described a night of funny moods. I too remember those inexpressible moments of lying down together and feeling spring blow over us, best at your little room on 57th St., where we lay under the window, and at my little room over Mrs. Richardson's garden, where we could spend the afternoons together and make it look legitimate. We managed to be very happy together although, as I look back and recall how I positively crawled with conflicts, now long since disappeared, I don't see how I could have given you much happiness or peace. But we shall have a spring together soon when everything will be peaceful -- the world and us too. Oh, I've been dreaming too of having another baby and of being terribly happy about being pregnant, and going down to Nudelman, the delicatessen store keeper, and discussing what I was going to name the baby with him. My God, that must be Freudian. Nudelman (either one, the brothers are practically interchangeable in looks and disposition) is dark, lean and immensely cynical. I don't think you are the latter but there must be some sort of identification going on. Anyway I can't remember if it was this baby or one by an earlier dream pregnancy, but we decided on Elizabeth as a name. Although this might have been the boy called James. How do you like the name Gene for a boy? I just noticed somebody in the paper by that name the other day, an Army captain to be precise, and it struck me as an attractive name to go with De Grazia. Oh well, there is time enough to discuss that, as I couldn't be further from being pregnant, not only lacking the agent but also having the curse for these many weeks now. I've started taking, or rather using up, an old bottle of liver pills I found around the house and now it is going away, so maybe I was anemic. That sometimes happens, as I recall my old wives' lore, I mean, the anemia causes the curse just as much as vice versa. You are right about my taking too many pills but I only do what the dumb doctors tell me. In the past two weeks I have had sulfa pills, bicarbonate pills (they go with sulfa like scotch and soda) charcoal pills (for the stomach), empirin pills for the fever, phenobarbital, epsom salts, some pills for ladies, marked

poison (I feel fine) and now liver pills. However, yesterday I took all the pills out of the bathroom, put them in a shoebox and placed the shoebox on top of the highest shelf I could find. Now there is nothing left in the medicine cabinet (I managed to spill the rest of the iodine that I hadn't spilt a month ago when I had a slight edge on one night) but lipsticks and bobby pins. I have about five different colored lipsticks, being a woman of many Moods. I get them all at the dime store. They are a quarter apiece and very good. My sister, who knows everything like that, says they are made by Elizabeth Arden's divorced husband, who uses her formula just out of spite and puts them on the ten-cent store market. My sister knows things like that Cary Grant is a flit, too.

I have been doing a lot of odd things around the house tonight and every night and listening to the radio. It's funny how you get into a rhythm of staying home and working and are quite contented to do so. It may be that I still haven't got the energy to bounce out to the movies and such but I have been having a pretty good time at home, sewing up things (and having to take them to the tailor the next day to have them straightened out) and listening to all the mystery dramas on the radio. Some of them are pretty good, I mean, they don't rock you to sleep. I have yet to hear a really good radio program, in the sense that you sometimes see a good movie. Radio is too damned one-dimensional to ever be art. The most you can expect is to be mildly amused or even more mildly excited.

Darling, I am enclosing the enclosed before Kathy mashes them up further. They are just the proofs of the pictures that silly sailor took but I don't think they are good enough so that no matter how he works on them to cut and regroup them they will never be much better or more interesting. [PS *on top of letter, with arrow pointing to this spot*: Pitchers don't fit. Will have to get another envelope., OOOXXX J]. My hair got all mashed up as you can see because he insisted that we hold our heads together (I don't think he knows his blank from his blank about baby pictures) and anyway, by the time he comes around again with the finished products I will probably be in Cal., where

brother Paul will be able to do a lot better, I hope. Kathy opened the drawer and mangled them so. Don't blame me. Doesn't she have big front teeth? They are a combination of yours and Buss's, your for bigness, Buss's for the space in between. her lowers are all scrunched up like mine. She has eight, four on each edge and they are very sharp. She is beginning to drink a little milk out of a glass. Maybe by the time she is ready for college I will have weaned her.

My, this turned out to be a long letter. I should really use two envelopes but will apply the six cents I save to your convertible. The perfect wife.

I'm not really but you are the perfect man and I love you.

Jill

End of February 1945 letters

