

JILL TO AL NOVEMBER 4, 1942

Darling --

You fiend -- going to see a mystery picture without me. I hope you'll sit through The Glass Key again as I am very fond of those too.

In punishment, I am sending you a review of Sorokin's latest book. Funny, ain't it.

Gosh I've been awful about writing but you know how the urge and the time diminishes as the loveliness of seeing you approaches.

This is Tuesday. I forgot to put it at the top of the paper and I don't trust this typewriter to move back. Your momma and I just voted, and please God that two million citizens voted as we. We went armed with the Bar Association recommendations for judicial candidates so that there would be no chance of voting for that fiend Robert Crowe.

Last weekend I went on a movie orgy. Friday night I took your Mom to see Mrs. Miniver and we both liked it very much. I guess I was unreasonably prejudiced before. Why even Tom Kelley liked it. Greer Garson is lovely too, as you say. Then, Friday morning, Joan and I took Vesta to see Bambi. My but it was wonderful. I hope we can see it together in Texas. Bambi is very cute and dignified too, as he gets older. Vesta cried when his mother was shot, as indeed we all did.

Yesterday was my last day of work, and I didn't regret it at all. I left on a very undignified note, knocking the hatrack over onto Mr. Rubin's desk as I said goodbye. So in effect I left on all fours as I had to pick up his papers, in all justice. Then I met Marion Gerson and had a couple of drinks with her and Jane Cates at the Palmolive Building, and then Marion and I came home here to dinner. There was lots of ravioli left over from Sunday's post-anniversary feast, and I think Marion enjoyed it very much. Kate had to go over to Aunt Lil's after dinner, and Marion and I sat around drinking vino and talking politics with Al

til about ten. Al was wonderful and unusually talkative with Marion -- you know how sometimes he retreats before company. But Marion's such a sweet girl I guess he felt happy and at ease. It's a real pleasure to bring my friends up here -- I couldn't ask for a better family to entertain them. Even Vic was slick and sagacious in his zoot pants (which he did get): he predicts Brooks will win but that Day won't.

Mr. Rubin sends his regards to you. His oldest daughter, Betty, who is my age, just had a female bairn, and he is very happy. I bought him a box of candy in celebration, and ate it. Betty is feeling fine. I guess it's not so hard to have a baby. Her husband is overseas now with this travelling photographic unit. He's your rank.

Gosh every time you call I am asleep. You must be getting a very poor opinion of my diligence. I just was tired from the movies, I guess. It was fun talking to you though, blinded as I was.

[line crossed out]

That last sentence, which got all mixed up, was written two hours ago. It was just a plaint that I was sitting on the floor and not very comfortable. However, with the greatest effort of will and three hours brooding about it, I managed to get the typewriter on the kitchen table and off I go again.

I am amazing your mother, to my great delight, with my typing. She thinks it's just the most wonderful and unattainable virtue in the world to be able to type without looking at the keyboards, and I am taking no trouble to disenchant her.

Gosh, I know I have something else to tell you (I mean relating to this world of objects, not to our spiritual love) but I can't think what. Your depraved mother just gave me a glass of wine, so you can well imagine that I am working under a handicap.

The election returns are just starting to come in (it's six o'clock) but they are very splotchy and inconclusive. Nothing worth reporting.

This afternoon, after I wrote this first page, I took a bike ride with Cooney. It's very clear and quite cold out and my feet were damn near frozen when I got home. Gosh, no, I don't mind not bringing all the lares and penates of our happy household down. I'll just take clothes and not very many, either. A selected assortment. After all, things can be sent, and it's much easier for us both this way.

Make sure you select a flattering picture for my identification card. I hope your big picture comes out well. I'd like a big one for such bureaus as I may have in our long life together. And I know your Mom is dying to have one. She says she wants it Tuesday to show her ladies. I guess a fiesta is being planned for that day.

We got another swell letter from Paul and Ann which I'm bringing down with me. They are all three very well.

Your plans for a hotel room at first are swell. Make sure it's not at too great a distance for you to travel.

I'm really getting excited in my Vitamin-B deficient way. (I've started to take those pills again so I will be blooming for you). Your mother says that already, after one day of not working, I look very rested and that I shall look like a bride when I see you.

By the time you get this letter I shall be breaking my leg to catch that train on time. Gosh it's wonderful, isn't it?

See you Saturday, darling. I repeat, it's wonderful.

All my love,

Jill

SHE arrives on schedule. The airport, well... The uniforms, well... El Paso, well... Himself, buddy boy, my man, ready to go, here we go! The Hotel Cortez, O.K. What's this? The Bridal Suite? Don't worry, sweetheart, it's O.K. (Actually, it was nothing but a large room and anteroom, and bathroom, drably and darkly furnished, but what a great

view, and quiet, and you should have seen the other rooms!) Nothing doing. "Oh, Al," she exclaimed a few times despairingly," by which he inferred that he had not quite managed the coup of the year.



Jill arriving at El Paso



Jill arriving at El Paso.



Jill taking over at El Paso.

Still, they performed the bridal act with unvirginal finesse and adumbrations. And the next morning, after he went off to his battalion, she began a search of the environs for something suitable, comfortable, likeable, affordable. She found it, and on the third day they dumped her suitcases into a typical humble rancho of the great Southwest of America, a rambling affair descended from a mismatching of a chicken coop with an adobe hut, and graduated in material status as the inhabitants of the region accumulated aspirations and wealth. The ramble was halted at a dissection that extended into a room and bath; this was for Jill and Al; the rest was occupied by the washed-out watery-blue-eyed landlady and her likewise little girl, her Army

husband being long gone to far places. Jill loved it. She liked its scraggly yard, its view of the mountains far off, its unpretentious I-ask-nothing-of-you, don't-bother-with-the-dishes-or-anything-else, would-you-mind-Sissy-while-I-go-shopping, your-man-reminds-me-of my-man conglomerated boredom. She could have spent the whole war there in quiet happiness, turning a hand as a waitress in a local diner, or a scribe at the post hospital, if given the chance or the need.

No need, no chance. Within weeks came the order for the Battalion to go nowhere, more precisely, to head for someplace referred to as "Desert Maneuvers," across the Arizona into California, somewhere south of Death Valley in the Mohave Desert, where they would find the Sixth Armored Division if they looked hard enough. She packed her grip and headed for Russian Hill in San Francisco; that's where her brother Paul and his wife Ann Whittington sailed and danced the while. He, the Lieutenant, stuffed his bag, collected his platoon, and cut into the convoy that headed toward Parker, Arizona. How he loved to convoy: "O.K. Let's get the show on the road!" And out the vehicles towing their cannon would pull, roaring onto the highway from the sod, then purring and finding their distance, stretching out like an old-time wagon train, always in the sweet air of the southwestern dawn, interspersed with whiffs of gasoline exhaust.

End of November 1942 letters

