

Sept. 25 [1939]

Dear Parents,

By the time you receive this you will have had all too long a time to contemplate those two cables. I did so wish I could make them warmer and less cruelly abrupt! It was obviously impossible. I hope also that you will have looked up the name Jimmie Jones in my letters referring to the Montparnasse friends, or have remembered the name by chance.

Here's the story: I gradually grew to know and like Jimmie there at Montparnasse. We talked and argued alone and with friends many and many a day. Sometimes we disagreed about things, but most of the time we didn't. Once or twice we became annoyed with each other, and settled things later amicably. I kept on going out with anyone I felt like, but toward the end other people bored me a bit at times, when they didn't react to my jokes and arguments like Jimmie did. Meanwhile James said he loved me as well as liking me, but that I wasn't to let that bother me if I didn't feel the same way. Needless to say, I soon did. But he had a lowly poor job at the Amer. Library, and anyway I was sure I could soon get over it, just as I had unconsciously pushed the thought of Jose from my mind, for different reasons - (because I knew quite a while ago that my feelings for him were almost entirely physical, and that he had a rather annoying way of dominating me).

So the time came for me to leave, then the war. Paris was a mad house, the trains were jammed when and if they ran. Jimmy [*sic*] suggested the Bordeaux plan, Mme. Rouvier was having an attack of conscience because she felt she ought not to let me go to Bordeaux at a time like that alone, and yet she knew the horrible kind of trip it would be. Jimmy asked for a week's holiday and extra pay in advance and went down with me. We had a lucky trip, the regular 8 hours turned out to be only 18, and though we did not sleep or eat, we got to Bordeaux. He installed me in a hotel, and that particular unhappy experience was over. Rooms were very hard to find at any price, he stayed till I got a respectable cheap one outside Bordeaux in a little resort town. Then he went away. We weren't happy about it, but, we knew there was nothing to do. I had lots of company in Arcacachon¹ and Bordeaux, but it was several days before I let myself even think about Jimmie. Everything turned to ashes in my mouth. It was the first time I had ever felt that

¹ **Arcachon** (*Arcaishon* in Gascon) is a resort town 34 miles southwest of Bordeaux.

badly in my life. When I got the ticket², I saw that I had time to go back to Paris to collect two bags which I had left there (since it was impossible to take more than one the night we left) and of course, to see Jimmie just once more. The trains were running normally again by that time (Sat. before last, the 16th). So I went up with a young man who insisted on accompanying me, to his own chagrin. I found that Jimmie had got a new job with the United Press, ever so much better. How can I describe how happy I was to see him again? We both didn't say a word for about a minute. We had dinner together, pretending it wasn't going to be the last time, and talking and joking as normally as possible. He finally said that if he didn't think it were selfish he would ask me to marry him, but "that was out of the question he supposed." At first I said yes, it was impossible. But there I began thinking it over. Yes, I could get over it in a matter of months, it would be sheer emotionalism of the moment to deny it. But I was so happy with him, so satisfied with him in every way, and it was no question of a second chance. There was no possibility of thinking it over and perhaps marrying at the end of a year. When I talked to Jimmie like that, he was over-joyed, and offered to make it easier for me by going back to the U.S. That I was entirely opposed to, because he has a goodish job here now, opportunities are many, and he likes Paris. But if I were to try to return to France, it would be impossible. They are just not going to issue visas until the war is over, voila tout. So I had to decide in about three hours whether I should leave him forever, or stay. I knew there were going to be very rough times, we might often be poor as I had seen them in Montparnasse, and I knew that was not in the least pleasant nor romantic, that at times you had to shut your eyes and nose because it got sordid. It is, frankly, a dizzily bad time to get married. But the advantages are these: I love Jimmie with all my heart, he grows on me, he is sweet to me, steadily and gently (and I know him very well, under many difficult circumstances). He suits me temperamentally. I know his faults equally surely. We have a good time with each other under amazingly hard circumstances (i.e. the incredible tension of a war crisis, 30 hours without sleep or food, complete financial breakdowns). Needless to say, I thought long and hard about my last year at Swarthmore. But I decided the other way.

When I did, I immediately tried all human and inhuman means to sell my ticket on the Roosevelt. It was impossible. So I'll just have to try to get the money back somehow later when I have the time to devote to it. Same for the other ticket. We felt very bad about all that money.

² Apparently her ticket to return to the United States.

I can't make this letter too long. Just got mother's cable, which was a great relief. I was trembling with fear that you would be completely and irrevocably heartbroken. Jimmie was busy comforting me, but was naturally worried also, so the relief from strain was a pleasure.

This is a nasty thing to ask you to do, but it's awfully necessary. Please send me at least my fur coat, and any possible other warm clothes you can. It will be a job and a half, Heaven knows how you could do it, but would you make inquiries? It is getting cold already. And the only other thing I want is a jar of my all-important Covermark, in tan medium. That will be simple to send, c/o the U.S. Embassy (Ambassade des Etats-Unis).

I forgot to say that Paris is perfectly safe, in case you were worrying. Of course, there is the matter of how long it will be so, but don't worry about that - Jimmie gets news, if you see what I mean, and will be the first one to attend to the evacuation business in case it's needed.

All that I can say now is that I love you all just as much as ever, or more so, and am so very contrite to think I must have caused you pain and anguish!

I'll write again very soon.

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