

## JACK - SIDE 1

**JACK.** He better or my parents will kill him. As soon as you left Coatesville, they wrote me a three-page letter raving about you. As soon as I read it, I marched right in to see Colonel Ramsey and I reminded him that it was eight months since I requested leave. He could see how angry I was, and he looked me straight in the eye and said he'd think about it.

**LOUISE.** "Think about it?" Holy Hell! What's the matter with that man?! What the hell is he doing, crocheting a hat or something? Please send me his address right away.

**JACK.** No.

**LOUISE.** Why not?

**JACK.** Because I know you, and I'd be court-martialed the next morning.

**LOUISE.** Well we have to do something!

**JACK.** But I'd be in jail.

**LOUISE.** Well at least I could visit you!!!

(Beat.)

START

**JACK.**

April 21, 1943

Dear Louise,

Guess what, guess what. Colonel Ramsey just gave in.

**LOUISE.** Well hallelujah!

**JACK.** I have no idea why he changed his mind. He called me to his office and he was holding a letter and - ...Oh my God. You didn't write to him, did you? No, don't tell me. I don't want to know. In any case, I'm getting a four-day pass and I'll be there to see you on the seventeenth. What do you think?

**LOUISE.** Well let me see. I have to check my calendar. As usual, it's filled with appointments. Hmm. On the sixteenth, it's chicken and biscuits at the boarding house, I wouldn't want to miss that. And on the

seventeenth the Aga Kahn is taking me to the opera, as he always does.

**JACK.** (Totally serious.) Oh no! I should have checked the date with you first. I'm so sorry. I'll talk to the Colonel and see if he can move it back a day.

**LOUISE.** Jack, I was kidding! I don't even know the Aga Kahn.

**JACK.** So then Saturday night is all right with you?

**LOUISE.** Yes, it's fine. It's more than fine. I'm looking forward to it.

**JACK.** Great! So now we have over a month to plan the big event. What would you like to do? Shall we say dinner first, then a Broadway show? Is there anything special you want to see?

PS: Could you send me a picture of yourself?

PPS: Only forty-eight days to go.

**LOUISE.** How exciting! Forty-eight days is barely enough time to buy a dress! I'll go out tomorrow morning and start looking.

As for the evening, I think dinner sounds good. I'm very fond of dinner. And yes, I'd love to go to a show. The one I'd like to see at the moment is a comedy by Noël Coward called *Blithe Spirit* about a woman who's a ghost, and she drives her husband crazy when she visits him from the Great Beyond. If I die young, that's exactly what I want to do. Just think what fun it would be, walking through walls and watching your husband kiss another woman. Incidentally, I walk by their box office all the time, so I'm happy to pick up the tickets. In fact, the tickets can be my contribution to the evening. Okay, here comes the hard part: I'd love to go dancing after the show. I know you said you didn't want to learn, but can I change your mind? Dancing is easy. Honestly. It's just walking with rhythm. No practice necessary.

PS: Enclosed is the picture of me you asked for, though I'm hesitant to send it. It's just a snapshot that

my sister took. Please glance at it briefly while wearing sunglasses, then destroy it.

**JACK.** *(Sighs.)*

Dear Louise,

I'm speechless. You're so beautiful. I don't know what to say.

*(That's the whole letter. LOUISE turns it over, confused. There's nothing else.)*

**LOUISE.** Please keep talking.

**JACK.** Are you a model? Is that really you? I had no idea. If I ever introduced you to any of my friends, they'd die of jealousy.

**LOUISE.**

Dear Jack,

That was the sweetest letter I ever received, and if I looked like you say I do, I wouldn't have to do auditions, I'd just sign contracts. Now about the dancing: Is it yes or no?

**JACK.** Yes, but I've got to warn you: The last woman I danced with is still on crutches.

*(About this time, LOUISE turns on the radio in her apartment. We hear the sounds of an upbeat big band swing dance of the era. It continues to play as they spruce up for their date. JACK puts on a tie and LOUISE changes her shoes, adds a stole, etc.)*

**LOUISE.** Aha. So you *have* danced with other women. How many?

**JACK.** No comment.

**LOUISE.** Were they all beautiful?

**JACK.** Still no comment.

**LOUISE.** Only thirty-three days to go.

**JACK.** How's show biz?

\* Please see A Note on the Use of Music in the Production on page viii.

**LOUISE.** As crazy as ever. I have an audition tomorrow for the USO. Ha! Wouldn't that be a kick in the pants. Do you know that Hollywood has raised over *fifty million dollars* to support the war effort? And over half of that has been raised by only two stars, Betty Grable and Rita Hayworth, who made it by selling kisses at charity events. Holy Hannah! My lips would hurt!

**JACK.** They'd do more than hurt. As a medical matter, repetitive kissing has two disadvantages. First, it can spread disease, which is particularly dangerous during wartime. Second, if your lips get too dry, they can crack and get infected.

**LOUISE.** You mean you wouldn't buy a kiss from Betty Grable?

**JACK.** No, of course not. It would be far too dangerous. Heddy Lamar, possibly, but in moderation.

**LOUISE.** You're a fraud.

**JACK.** I know, but it was a trick question.

**LOUISE.** Wait! I just had a terrible thought. What if we meet and don't get along?

**JACK.** Then I'll introduce you to Colonel Ramsey.

**LOUISE.** Send me a picture.

**JACK.** Of Colonel Ramsey?

**LOUISE.** Nine more days.

**JACK.** Six more days.

**LOUISE.** Three more days.

*(They circle into their next positions and are hit by two hot spotlights, only a few feet apart, at which moment: Ring! We hear a telephone.)*

*(As always, they face away from each other.)*

Hello, Curtain Call Boarding House, may I help you.

**JACK.** Is Louise Rabiner there?

**LOUISE.** This is she.

*(He's stunned.)*

END