

Jack Side 2

40

DEAR JACK, DEAR LOUISE

him, he's sweet and funny, and my friend Patsy is crazy about him.

He came backstage right after the show, and he made a hit with everybody, especially the girls, as you can imagine. They all just loved that he takes care of children. And you know what he did? He brought me *flowers* to thank me for arranging the date with Patsy. What a gentleman.

It turns out that he'll be here for the rest of the week, and everyone's hoping to see more of him. In fact, he's asked me to dinner after the show on Thursday to talk about *you*. He says it's the least he can do for the trouble we took. And he says he has lots of stories about you that I'll want to hear. Now that should be interesting.

START

JACK.

Dear Louise,

Do not believe anything that Greg tells you. He'll make up stories because he thinks they're funny, and you never know when he's telling the truth. And why on earth is he taking you to dinner? I thought you set him up with Patsy!

LOUISE. Hey! Can't a girl have a decent dinner now and then? I need my strength.

JACK. (*To himself.*) Oh, great.

LOUISE.

Dear Jack,

Well, Greg took me to dinner last night, and it was very interesting. He told me lots of stories about you that you never told me yourself. He says that all the nurses always made a fuss over you. Is that true?

He said that one nurse in particular, named Ginnie something, had a real crush on you while you were in San Antonio. Did she go abroad with your battalion? He seemed to think so. It must be nice to have company from back home.

(*Beat.*)

JACK. Yes, Ginnie did come over with us. She's a lovely young woman who was born and raised near Coatesville, believe it or not. We used to kid that we were neighbors and that we must have gone to the same football games.

(Pause.)

LOUISE.

Dear Jack,

I had dinner with Greg again, just a few minutes ago. He said there was something he had to tell me. He told me that you and Ginnie were a "couple" in San Antonio. He says that...that Ginnie used to...spend the night sometimes in your tent, or at least till quite late, and that you and she were an "item" as he calls it. Is any of this true?

(Silence.)

JACK. Yes it is. Ginnie and I did get close. Then we split up. That's all I want to say about it.

LOUISE. *(In anguish.)* Jack, how could you spoil everything?!

JACK. I was lonely. All of us are lonely every day of this God damn war.

LOUISE. ...Why did you split up?

JACK. Because I told her about you. I told her how I waited for your letters every day and that all I thought about was meeting you.

Listen. I know that this whole thing we're doing is ridiculous. Obviously, we like each other, and I feel as though I've known you forever. But we've never even met each other. What if we meet and you're not... attracted to me? What if I'm not as great as all those actors and stars you spend your life with? What if we meet and you take one good look at me and say, "Wow. He's really nice, he could be my brother." *Or what if you don't even like me at all? What if we don't get along?!*

We don't know anything! Nobody knows a God damn thing right now!

So that's what I was thinking when I got involved with Ginnie, and I'm sorry to have hurt your feelings. I know I did and I'm sorry. But it's wartime and I'm scared to death. I shouldn't say it. It's not very manly or brave, but it's how I feel, and I'm very sorry.

I'm sure you don't want to write any more and I understand. I hope we do get to meet some day. I'll bet we'd have been pretty good friends.

Good luck with the tour and with everything else. You deserve it.

Jack

(Beat.)

(Then LOUISE packs up angrily. The tour has finished. Then they both drag their luggage/footlocker, etc. back to their original sides of the stage.)

(LOUISE goes to her desk and sees all the letters from Jack. She yanks open a drawer to put them away forever when one of them catches her eye and she stares at it with longing.)

(Finally.)

LOUISE.

June 12, 1944

Dear Jack,

What the hell's the matter with you? Can't you ever write to a girl and say hello?

(Pause.)

JACK. Do you even want me to say hello?

LOUISE. Yes, funnily enough I do. Though I don't think funnily is actually a word.

JACK. It's not. I looked it up once.

END