

Chapter Twenty-Four

Halcyon: April-May, 1939

Louise had spent the entire last week of March recovering from a very bad cold. Being confined to bed gave her plenty of time to read interesting novels and to write nice long letters to Herb.

Now as spring is in full bloom, Louise is much better and she resumes working at the Dower household. She also returns to her active social life. She believes as Herb does, that being very busy will help her to feel like time goes by more quickly. She and Herb still have 12 months to go before he is expected home.

April, 1939

“Darling, this is just a short little note to apologize for not writing sooner. It’s been over a week since I wrote. Saturday I got up, and since then I’ve been busy catching up for the week lost” (April 7).

Last Saturday night I did see the show after all, “Yes My Darling Daughter.” An excellent picture. Sunday I saw “St. Louise Blues,” also a grand picture. ... Then Wednesday I went to the dance and had a good time. I do lately at the dances – I have so much fun. And the other nights rehearsal at the Lodge. (April 7)

Her mother’s music project closed last Tuesday; Louise writes “And so she has no job. Bernard’s did also, but he’s young – he should be able to find work somehow” (April 7). At the time Ebba was 47; Bernard was 36.

Luckily, Fred is 65 and entitled to a pension of \$35 a month. Nice going. I don’t know what they expect the people to live on – about ten thousand in the country put off, and then I eat at Pearl’s and I have my \$2.00 a week to buy clothes with but doggone it – it was hard enough before with about \$68 a month.

Those big fat politicians who get four and five hundred a week, and expenses, ought to have to live on \$40 a month. ... Isn’t life a complicated mess? Some people get so much money – look at the movie stars – and others starving; wars, etc. Oh well – what’s the use of thinking about it? (April 7)

She begins another letter on Sunday morning. It is Easter, and Louise is thoroughly enjoying the warm, spring weather while listening to the Mormon Tabernacle Choir on the radio. She misses Herb greatly, and she writes “Oh if only you would come home – I need you so. I really do Herb, much more than you know or could realize” (April 9).

I met Mrs. Pasteur's son yesterday. He is very big – six feet six and weighs 250 lbs. He's a blond and quite nice looking. He's going to be here indefinitely – and Mrs. Pasteur wants me to go and see them often. She's quite determined it seems. Well, it won't do her any good – my heart isn't mine to give away any more. It belongs to a very nice person, whom I love very much. (April 9)

I love church music – it makes me feel so good – and at peace somehow. I guess I'm in a morning after mood. I went to a dance last night – we got home about two, and sat in the car with a friend of Anita's until quarter after three. I got up at quarter after eight this morning, and though I'm not sleepy, I feel kind of subdued. (April 9)

On Tuesday Louise starts another letter, telling Herb the latest news from Halcyon.

Easter Sunday was a lovely day. Everybody had a nice time – and the play went off swell. Although the day ended practically, in a dog fight between Napoleon (Pat Mallory's dog) and Georgie. Napoleon is a great big dog about three or four times bigger than Georgie. They have always hated each other. Well, Napoleon got Georgie by the throat and hung on, Georgie yelling and grasping and men were standing around not doing anything – it just made me so mad! I got Georgie and tried to pull him away, but Napoleon hung on too much. So I opened his jaws and ruined my best pair of stockings. I should say my only pair. But Georgie is all right now, just a little sore on his throat. My, but I hate that Napoleon. (April 11)

My mother is terribly sick. She hasn't been sick like this for six or seven years. The doctor came and said to stay in bed for a few days.

Life is very hard at times Herb, and the sooner you come home, the easier it will be. Right now, I'd give anything to have you here. But what's the use? It will be a very long time before you are here. I get so discouraged sometimes – what can I do?

You do love me, don't you? I seem so in the need of being reassured, that I keep asking you. And I won't get an answer until two months from now, when I won't need it. But if I should get a letter today, tomorrow, or the next day – it will be just what I need because I know you'll tell me you love me in it. (April 11)

That night she got a lot of sleep, and on this night she is in bed early, as she begins writing. "Mother is still very sick. She hasn't eaten since Sunday – can't keep anything down – and a high temperature" (April 12).

Louise apologizes for not writing longer letters. But she writes "I don't seem to have time – and when I do have time, no energy" (April 12).

Then I do seem to contradict myself because I do go out at night. Oh Herb, sometimes life is so boring! I seem to be getting so dissatisfied with everything lately – just counting time till you'll be home. (April 12)

On Sunday she and Patty went to Shell Beach and stayed until 1:30. "It was warm there, although cold and foggy here" (April 17). They took pictures of themselves sunning, and she promises to send some after they are developed.



Patty and Louise at Shell Beach



Georgie on Rocks and Louise's Sunbath at Shell Beach

Louise got a letter from Yoshiko, which raised her spirits. She is excited about Yoshiko coming home soon. Also, she just received two letters from Herb, which helps to elevate her mood. She confesses.

I haven't been very good lately, have I? Oh darling, I'm so sorry – I promise to be good for the rest of the time you're away. I mean – not complain, not expect you to feel bad about the time left, or anything like that.

Next year at this time probably we will be Mr. and Mrs. That probably, is a concession to you. I know we will, but you're not so sure. (April 17)

Louise again writes about her lack of time to write. "I haven't been writing long letters lately, have I? Is it because I go out so much? But I'd go nuts if I had to stay home, and you wouldn't want that, would you?" (April 17)

Louise reveals a bit more about a person that has been annoying to her.

You don't mind if I don't tell you who it is that bothers me do you? I'd rather not. Anyway, he's been awfully nice lately, and doesn't bother me quite so much. I guess I should be ashamed of myself, feeling the way I do about him, but I can't help it. I try not to, but that does no good. You probably know who I'm talking about because I'd have told you otherwise. Anyway, I won't deny who it is if you guess. (April 17)

She continues answering his letter.

I think those Filipino girls are kind of cute. Thank you for the picture. ... But of course, look who you had your arm around. ... I showed it to my mother before I came to where you said not to show it to anyone. She didn't mind either. And I won't tear it up. I'll show it to all our friends after we're married. (April 17)

Do you know the song "You're a Sweet Little Headache"? It starts out

*You're a sweet little headache
But you are lots of fun
I've a good mind to spank you
Then thank you for all you've done*

Anyway, Bing Crosby sings that in "Paris Honeymoon." A swell picture. Is that the way you feel about me? Someone at the dance the other night called me a sweet little headache. (April 17)

She writes about trying to stretch her \$2/week pay from Pearl.

I wanted to go to the show last night and was wondering how I'd get some money to go. Then Byron came to pay me for some typing, only I hadn't done any. So I told him to come in two weeks and I'd have 40 pages, and incidentally rate \$2.00. ... He gave me \$2.00 in advance. I went to the show and saw "Let Us Live" with Henry Fonda. (April 17)

She tells Herb more about Anita's husband, and why she left him.

When he couldn't have her, he'd abuse himself. And he's a leader of a white male slave gang too.¹ He told her all men were like he is, so she believes it. There's lots more she told me about what he did, but I'll leave that to your imagination.

She will be 32 in June. She likes to dance but hates the idea of dancing with a man. She doesn't like you - I don't know why. ... And because we say you're nothing like Bernard. And she likes him.

¹ He was a dark-complexioned man of Mexican origin.

No, I don't blame her for running away. ... The reason she ran away was because he was going to commit her to an insane asylum, and she wasn't insane – only her health was broken down. (April 17)

The next Saturday Louise got two letters from Herb, which made her quite happy. But Sunday was a busy day for her; now it is Monday evening, and she begins answering them.

She responds to his account of his difficulties with some of his coworkers.

The only excuse of the three that you give for going into the storeroom again, that is any good, is because it hurts your eyes. ... I'd hate to think that you couldn't take it. ... I know its hard to work with people you can't get along with. ... Maybe I shouldn't write this either. I hope you don't get angry with me. (April 24)

Then she shares with Herb a prayer that is recited in the Temple during a monthly service called the "Feast of Fulfillment." She hopes it will help him.

"If thy brother hath offended, go to him in peace so that both he and thou may be reconciled." Boy it's hard - I don't know if I've ever thought of it when anyone did something wrong to me. I was probably too busy feeling sorry for myself. (April 24)

She writes about what fun she had on Saturday.

Saturday night Mr. Nye took Anita, my mother and I to San Luis. Mother bought a bicycle for her, Anita, and me – a beautiful one. Then we went to the show and saw "Pygmalion" the best show I've seen for ages. ... Then we had Chow Mein in Pismo, and home at 1:00 or 1:30. (April 24)

Louise then reaches the end of her letter; and now, as she stated at the beginning of the letter, she has to tell Herb about something she did; something about which she feels embarrassed. She believes that confessing to Herb may help her understand her own feelings.

Wednesday night, Anita and I went to the dance in Oceano. I sure had fun. Anyway, a guy named Freddie, and his friend took us home. Oh we've seen them there lots of times and Freddie asked us to go home with him before, but we had other plans. He's awfully nice anyway. Well, they had to leave Friday morning, so they asked us to go to the old-time dance in Arroyo on Thursday night.

We did – by ourselves. That's the only way I got to go. Anyway, Freddie asked for a picture so I gave him one. ... But Freddie is in love with me – I didn't mean to have him fall in love with me. He shouldn't have, and I told him so. He knows I'm engaged. Anyway, I told him it was best that he was going away, because it wouldn't help him any to stay.

After the dance I had to take the car to Pearl's for Fred to have in the morning, and Anita and I were to walk home, but we didn't feel like it so we asked them to take us home from there.

Freddie wanted me to kiss him goodbye, but I wouldn't. I was stubborn, I guess. You know Herb, it's awfully hard to say no. I like Freddie, and it wouldn't have hurt me to kiss him, and you don't care. If you cared it would be easier to say no. The only reason I

didn't was because of the way I'd feel next day, and because I wanted to see if I could say no. I wanted to kiss him. Do you think I'm awful?

It's hard to dance with someone a lot and like him and have him in love with you, without wanting to kiss him. Why do I want to when I love you? It's all wrong. I don't know why I feel like that; I never did before.

Oh well – it was fun. It's funny – if I had kissed him, I'd be sorry. And since I didn't, I'm sorry too. I think I'm nuts. (April 24)

The next day Louise writes another letter. "I think, for a change, I shall start an installment letter" (April 25).

I'm hoping that Yoshiko's being home will start things rolling. You know – seeing her will make time go faster until you come home. And she can tell me all about you, and I'm just dying to see the baby.

I told you that Byron gave me \$2.00 in advance on the typing? Well, up to this afternoon I only had sixteen of the forty pages done – and Sunday coming quick. I want to have an extra forty done so I can get another two dollars. Poor Byron! Well, I did eighteen pages this afternoon – so now I have thirty-four. Six to go to catch up, and forty more. I hope I can do it. I need the money.

In about a week, we'll have been engaged for twenty months. Twenty months without seeing each other. Why darling, if it weren't for the pictures, I keep sending you, you wouldn't know me. And my dear sir, if you don't send me pictures, I won't know you. On purpose. I'll stick my nose up in the air and say I never saw you before. ... Unless some pictures are forthcoming within the next six months. ... I'll mark it on my calendar. If I haven't at least ten more pictures of you by then – I won't know you. (For at least five minutes!) (April 25)

Late Thursday night, after coming home from the show, Louise writes about their new bicycle. "It's a beauty – two headlights and a taillight. It's blue and cream. I rode it to Pearl's today – and going up those hills got me down" (April 27).

Louise updates Herb on Bernard's latest news.

Bernard has a puppy. Did he tell you of the breaking in of the Sanatorium by somebody? That was quite a while ago. Twice somebody broke in when he wasn't there. Broke the doors in – broke in his room door and broke his window. Nothing taken. Well, he got a gun in case it happens again. So now he's got a puppy to bark when intruders come. ... His name is Patrick. Pat for short. He's a fox terrier. (April 27)

May, 1939

A whole week passes before Louise writes again. She tells Herb that she started a letter on Monday, but she had written something that she later changed her mind about, so she did not mail it. Now it's Thursday, and she begins a new letter.

She begins by revealing her financial difficulties.

It will be surprising if I can get this mailed. I've only a penny, and Mother has no money. I lost out by Georgie getting ear trouble again. I borrowed three dollars so I could take him to the vet and then I paid 25 cents besides for some medicine. Now I'm more in debt, and I don't know when I'll get out. If I could only get in the clear and start fresh everything would be all right. But it only gets worse instead of better. And two dollars a week is kind of slow going to get out of about ten dollars in debt. (May 4)

Then she turns her attention again to Herb's difficulties getting along with some of the people he works with.

But you know better than I, the serious consequences of starting anything with a superior officer. Oh honey I wish I could help you. I do know one small way I can help you, and that is by not unloading all my troubles on your shoulder. Also I shall be happy and cheerful all the time – all my letters will be at any rate.

Maybe my last letter wasn't very sympathetic darling. It was very naughty of me to say some of the things I said – especially when you needed sympathy. I'm sorry. Will you forgive me Herb – and forget that I said them? (May 4)

Louise saw Yoshiko and Gabriel today.

I was walking home from Pearl's when a car came toward me and went straight for me. I sure was glad to see them. And the baby is so cute. He's a darling. Yoshiko has gotten so pretty. Gabriel looks the same though.

At the preset time they are staying in Pismo, in the Philippine section – at the Manila Apartments. Gabriel is looking for a job. I sincerely hope he gets one around close, because I want to see them a lot. Yoshiko and Gabriel both think you're swell.

There's to be a supper in the Lodge Sunday night – and I'm going to invite Yoshiko and Gabriel. (More money going. 70 cents plus my dinner, \$1.05. It's too much.) (May 4)

As Louise is reading and answering one of Herb's letters, she comes to a part that really annoys her; she lets him know in no uncertain terms how she feels.

Talk about masculine conceit! I don't see at all how it is decent of Gabriel to come back to please Yoshiko. If he'd found a good job there, do you think he'd have come home? No – he wouldn't. And anyway, why shouldn't he please her? She stood it long enough because he wanted to stay as long as he could. He's coming back because they've been there nearly a year just spending money – and prospects of a job are better here.

And honey – don't pass over this paragraph without comment. You often have done that when I've scolded you. Oh – I love you anyway, even if you are kind of conceited. At that you're not half as bad as the rest of the men. (May 4)

Then she lets him know how she feels about his attitude about how much time is left.

From ten to fourteen months! Herb – don't say that! You don't mean that do you? You couldn't possibly. A couple of months more wouldn't – listen! First it was two years –

then two and a half – and now nearly three. No, a couple of months more don't make much difference, but when it's a couple on to that, then another couple, etc. – it gets a little monotonous. (May 4)

She is worried about another thing he wrote in his letter.

Don't do anything if you catch that fellow ashore the same time you are. Please Herb, promise me that you won't. Its not worth it, and he's not worth the trouble. Promise – please? (May 4)

After she unburdening herself, she slept well that night; overslept the next morning in fact. Now it is Friday morning, and she starts another letter while in bed.

Tomorrow is the sixth of May. We've been engaged twenty months, a long engagement. And when you realize that we only knew each other a few days – those few days against twenty months. And ten more to go. That last ten is a little hard to take – and then you go and tack on another possible four! You shouldn't. You should hope and not give in to the inevitable. Or is it? I don't believe it is. (May 5)

She tells Herb some things she hopes will make him want to come home early.

Patty says you'd better hurry home or you won't have me. But you will, don't worry.

At the dance the other night, a guy was interested in me – he's a friend of Bob's although he didn't know I was Bob's sister. Anyway, I told Patty I bet I could make him. And I did. He took Anita and me home. Do you mind? He was very nice – and I do know him. But that is why Patty says you'd better hurry home. (May 5)

Early Saturday morning, she picked up her mail at the Halcyon Post Office. She was happy to receive a long letter from Herb,² and that night before going to sleep she begins answering.

I'm awfully glad things are smoothed out now in the office. It makes things lots easier to stand when there's harmony all around. But I'm convinced that I wouldn't want you angry at me.

I just went to see Yoshiko tonight. Patty and I went about 7:30 and came home at 9:00. ... They're thinking of renting a place there – kind of a cute place, we all went to see it. A large living room, two small bedrooms, a tiny bathroom, a small kitchen, and a kitchenette – a breakfast nook, I guess. Unfurnished \$15 a month. Not so bad. Gabriel's going into business for himself. Selling shoes and slippers. (May 6)

Late Monday night, after going to the show with her mother, Louise continues answering Herb's latest letter. She is excited to tell him about Yoshiko, but mostly she is responding to things that he had written, as if they were having a conversation.

Yoshiko and Gabriel came to the [Lodge] supper and everybody was so nice to them. But then Halcyon people would be. The baby was found adorable by all. ... They sure are swell kids. Yoshiko has changed – more broad-minded and sociable. (May 8)

² Dated April 7

Louise got to bed early again on Tuesday night, and she begins another letter to Herb. She writes about a popular song she hears on the radio. She says the words are “quite haunting.”

*The Masquerade Is Over
You look the same, you're a lot the same
But my heart says no, no you're not the same
I'm afraid the masquerade is over
And so is love, and so is love.*

Every time I sing that, it frightens me, because – oh Herb you know, we could be so changed when you get back. Wouldn't it be terrible? Don't ever change – I wont either. And, oh I don't know, its just a silly fear I guess – no grounds for it. (May 9)

Thursday night Louise continues writing.

Last night I went skating and after we stopped in at the dance. I'm really getting to be a good skater because I didn't fall once, and I'm getting so I can keep time to the music. And I haven't skated for nearly two months. But I wore a blister on the side of my foot, and I could hardly walk today. And my muscles are sore.

I was cross today. Anita got up at 6:15 – and she had stayed and talked to me last night till nearly 1:30. This morning she made so much noise I couldn't sleep – so I got awfully angry at her – and now I'm very ashamed of myself. Anyway, I got off on the wrong foot that way, and stayed cross until this afternoon. I cleaned the house and that took it all away. It sure is a good way to work off a mad spell. (May 11)

She was grateful to receive two more letters from Herb on Friday, and then in the evening Louise begins answering them.

Well – I'm not having anything more to do with Ivan. Nor am I going to have anything more to do with any men. They're all alike – honestly! You're lucky in that you have friends in the opposite sex. But I guess I can't – I don't know why. They all try to get fresh – and so a tentative friendship stops before it's had a chance to begin. Oh Herb – why do men always want to kiss a girl anyway? Its no fun unless there is something serious between the two. Like you and me.

Anyway – Mr. Nye (Anita's friend – he's been in the Navy twenty years and gets a pension) he told us that any time we wanted to go any place to borrow his car. So we are going by ourselves hereafter – although we did walk to the dances³ – but we were always too tired to walk home. ... And I suppose I shouldn't have gone home with anyone else – even if I did have Anita with me.

She responds to what Herb wrote about the time remaining until he returns. “I don't keep telling myself the time is long. I keep telling you that. I try to convince myself that ten months isn't long – but find that it is” (May 12).

³ The walking distance from the Halcyon Guest House to the Oceano Recreation Center at 19th Street and Ocean Street was 1.6 miles. The walking distance to the Oceano Pavilion was 2.7 miles.

She adds at the end of her letter “Oh, I am happy for your sake about the cruise” (May 12). She knows that his activities will help him feel time going by more quickly; she wishes she could feel the same.

The next Monday Louise was quite pleased to receive an unexpected letter from Herb, postmarked April 18. That evening she answers his letter before going to sleep.

I haven't written to Ray [aka Tom] any more, and I don't think I will. He won't care anyway.

I know you say I can use that money in the bank if I need to, but I can't darling. It's against my principles. I'll get out of debt myself, without having you help, but it just doesn't seem right somehow. If I were your wife now, it would be different.

I guess I have no right to complain, have I? I'm here with all my friends and in my own country, agreeable climate, etc. ... and it's all the opposite with you. And I complain more. I should be ashamed of myself.

I saw two good shows lately.

I caught a cold again. A very bad one, too. ... It's in my head and lungs. It hurts when I cough.

For over a week we've had foggy, disagreeable weather. It makes me sick!

I went to see Yoshiko tonight. Her house is fixed cute – although they have no furniture except a round table, a coupe of chairs, and a bed they brought over with them.

(May 15)

She closes her letter with a description of what she wants their future home to have.

When, and if we ever get a house of our own, I'm going to plant a rose garden. I'm going to have every single kind of rose I can possibly get. I just love them. I think I'll have carnations too, as they blossom all year round while roses only bloom once a year. ... It would be nice to have a lawn too, but that's kind of expensive. It takes a lot of water for that. (May 15)

A week goes by before Louise gets a couple of letters from Herb, prompting her to write to him again. She thanks him for the enclosed money order for her to deposit into their savings account, then she begins answering his letters.

Last week went by so fast I didn't have time to write to you. I'm sorry to say, I went skating Saturday night and fell down twice. ... The bruises are healed but my muscles are still sore.

There does seem to be much to answer in your two letters – but I'll see.

Why can't you come home on the Chaumont in December? Why be so pessimistic as to think you won't? Or why not the Henderson sometime between July and December? I refuse to admit that you won't be home this year! (May 22)

The next evening, late at night, Louise begins another “installment letter.”

I've nothing to say exactly – life runs on as usual, fairly rushing by.

I'm afraid Bob and Dorothy are broken up. When Bob went to see her last March, when he came back, he was kind of blue. He said they had nothing to talk about. ... And [in] the last letter we got from him, he says that it looks as if it were over. She hasn't written to him since March because she's mad at something he said. (May 23)

She continues the same letter a couple of days later.

Oh, I weigh 124. For over six months I've been up around 128 or so. So now I feel quite proud of myself being down to 124. I think I'll lose four more pounds.⁴

I went to the dance last night and had a pretty good time. Did I tell you I dance jitterbug now? You'll find it hard to dance with me.

Wasn't it terrible about that submarine that sunk? And the men who died in it? Oh, I'm so glad you're not on a submarine. (May 25)

Louise's next chance to write is the following Monday. “I guess I'll try and write a whole letter to you. ... The last letter I carried in my purse for three days because I didn't have any stamps” (May 29).

I've met someone who I think will make a friend. That is – I didn't meet him; I've known him for a long time only I never talked to him much. His name is Leonard Wright. He's 24 and is engaged to a girl who is away from here. I talk about you and he talks about her and we have more fun. However, we'll see how it turns out. You don't mind, do you? (May 29)

I went skating Saturday night, and had rotten luck! I got along fine by myself – I fact I'm pretty good now. But in skating doubles I'd get it in the neck. Er – not exactly the neck either. Once I was skating double and another guy wanted to tag us but he couldn't catch up to us – we were going pretty fast. So, he cut across the rink – we couldn't avoid him as another couple was in front of us. He bumped into us, knocked me down and both on top of me. I nearly got knocked out. ... Both knees skinned and bruised – likewise my arms – and my ribs – oh! I'm not going skating for a long time – until I'm healed, and never on a Saturday night. ... Too rough a crowd then. (May 29)

I think I'm going to Bob's graduation alone on the train. The car needs two new tires and some repairs so we can't afford it. And I'll have about ten dollars so I'll go by myself. It won't be so nice as with Mother, but I think Bob would rather have me than nobody. (May 29)

I went swimming at the dam with Jean yesterday. ... And after we'd been there an hour – Leonard and his kid brother and friends came along. We swam some more, then Leonard and I went to get some wieners and buns and we had a nice wienie roast. ... Even if those brats did throw Georgie in the creek. (May 29)

⁴ Louise's height was 5 feet two inches.

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