



portholes

Dear Me!

It is hard to believe that I can be so flippant in my letter writing ... such a cover up to what I am – such a con artist – such a smarty pants. I am leaving Los Angeles *forever* – going home without anything to go in there to except my mother and brother and sister – going there and leaving all my friends, contacts and my way of life behind me. Regressing. What in heaven's earth has possessed me? Boredom. Certainly not challenge. Itchy feet? What am I to do there? Pretend like I do here in L.A. ... it will never work! Los Angeles is the one place for great bullshitters the likes of me. I shall go back there and be snubbed for having lived so long in the States and pitied for not having become a pair of cement hands on Hollywood Boulevard.

June 19

Dearest C.F.K. -

Usual apologies ... sorry you haven't heard from me these last few weeks - but it's not the usual B.S. excuses this time - for, hold your breath - I'm busy packing. Everything. And getting myself ready to go off again - this time though looks like it's for good. Even knowing me, I should never make such rash statements, especially on paper! (We know how many times that's gotten both of us in boiling water.) Anyhows, as of this very moment, the big news is I'm traveling out of San Francisco, Friday, to Australia. Everything to go - and - hold your breath again, darling, sailing on an old Norwegian freighter, and taking over 45 days to get to Fremantle. The limit of passengers is twelve - is that us or what? There is a waiting list of God-knows-how-long to get a cabin - years, I think - but with all my polite begging and screaming, and a few horrific white lies thrown directly into the heart strings of the booking agent - I conned my way into a single cabin. So I sail out on my birthday, September 6, and it's helter-skelter time packing paintings, 250 pairs of shoes, clothes, books, manuscripts, and boxes of endless unnecessary junk that is totally important to us Virgos. The packers have been filling endless boxes of stuff I shall never use, but then again may. I can just see my mother's face when I, and all of "it," land in her small beach house where she hangs her six clothes hangers and three pair of shoes, one pair being for gardening. But everything will just have to stay in the garage (luckily, Maggie doesn't have a car) until I get a nod from the puppeteer as to what the hell I am going to do. One thing I know, I won't be teaching school at the two colleges I was expelled from for blowing them up! I have just enough money to pay for the freighter and to keep a few bucks in my pocket - but as I've always traveled lightly in the wallet department, I can't say I won't manage most graciously on the kindness of other idiots.

Your dear brother, Paul, is driving me up to San Francisco from Los Angeles with Jack and his present inamorato of the hour, John Strange. Of course, I can see no further than the thrilling prospect of being at sea for almost 50 days with a crew of handsome Norwegians, and hopefully, eleven estranged men running to Australia from their over-bearing, hen-pecking wives and desperately being in need of female sympathy. I visualize it all

now and hope the vision I've already painted, and is hanging from my brain, turns out to be the real McCoy.

I've really been so very unhappy in that grand pool house up in Beverly Hills, swimming all day long, gulping down oodles of wine through my own salty tears, playing Callas, singing the aria from *Tosca* all day and all night - feeling desperately burnt out of myself and Los Angeles, hence my impetuosity. So, here goes the blithe spirit one more time, and I'm sure it won't be the last. Dearest, promise, I'll write frequently from the ship (I must remind myself NOT to call it a boat), and fill you in on my daily travels and travails, the latter I'm sure of which there will be more than a few.

Takes seventeen days before we get to Japan, and by that time I surely will have either become quite the sailor, or will have hung myself from the flagpole. Only pray the passengers are what my imagination expects, and they have a decent cook and corkscrew aboard, with a full bar to go with that little item. Knowing something about the Norwegians, I seem to recall they are always committing suicide over indulgence of the bottle and the massive problems with depression. Anyhows, the Bette Davis suit is out, *avec* the slouch brimmed hat and platforms for my grand entrance "up the plank," even though the boat doesn't sail till 11:00 pm. Well, weighing all pros and cons, it seems better me making this major move than wallowing in those salty tears and guzzling all that cheap wine up in the hills of Beverly. May as well trade it in for another anchor.

Next letter will be from the 7th Wave heading out on the Pacific Ocean. One thing that will be simply glorious is no phones - unless you go to a helluva lot of trouble - and no wretched bill collectors. They can do exactly what I've been trying to tell them to do for years.

Wait for the next installment. I cherish your friendship and support in knowing that what I'm doing is okay by you.

Your ever-loving friend,

W.E.H.

Dear CFK -

We have now been seven days out to sea - can't tell you what a bloody nightmare it was to get on board (there was definitely a Bette Davis major performance in the works), and the antics commenced even before I walked the plank and the ship finally