

Love,
Marjorie

LOVE, MARJORIE

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Love,
Marjorie

Jessica B. Brown

To all those who have

/

1 October 1943

Dear Papa

I dreamt last night that the war ended, and you came home for Christmas. It felt horrid waking up and knowing none of it had really happened. I desperately wish that it would. Your last letter made me miss you so much my heart actually ached. Perhaps that is why I dreamt what I did. Do you think you'll be able to come home for a visit soon?

I've finally managed to knit a pair of socks! With Aunt Lucy's help, of course. They aren't quite the same size, and they are a bit holey from where I've dropped stitches... but I can only improve from here! I'm so glad I'm able to do my part in the war effort. I want to do what I can to bring you home.

Love,

Marjorie

2

7 October 1943

Dear Papa

Autumn has arrived! The whole world is so beautiful, that I can almost forget about this war. The trees in the woods behind the house are turning the most brilliant shades of red and orange, and it's getting colder in the mornings! I had to wear my hat and scarf to school today.

Luna caught a spider yesterday. I'm so proud of her! She's usually too scared to catch anything bigger than a fly. I don't blame her seeing as she is so small. But it's funny because the whole reason Aunt Lucy got a cat was to catch mice and other unwanted creatures.

Are you absolutely certain you wouldn't be able to get even a couple days' leave?

Love,

Marjorie

P.S. Do you need anything? You know I will send it to you if I can.

3

13 October 1943

Dear Papa

Aunt Lucy let me stay up late last night, and we sat by the fire and knitted on our socks. Not too late, of course, since it was a school night, but I felt so grown up!

This pair of socks is progressing much better than the first. I'm knitting it in a lovely dark brown; very autumnal but also practical for the soldiers, I suppose. I've been praying over the socks too—or rather, over the soldier who will be wearing them. I hope they will remind him that someone cares.

Peg and I have been doing some exploring, and we discovered a little stream running through the woods! I never knew there was one, even though I've lived here for three years now. Peg didn't know about it either. I find it so exciting to know that it's always possible to discover things you didn't know existed.

Love,

Marjorie

4

7 October 1943

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Are you absolutely certain you wouldn't be able to get even a couple days' leave?

Love,

Marjorie

5

19 October 1943

Dear Papa

We played dodgeball at school today, and somehow, I twisted my ankle. I don't know how exactly I did it, but it hurts terribly. Aunt Lucy gave me an herbal balm and ice to put on it, so it feels a bit better now. I'll have to stay off it as much as I can, which ruins quite a few of my plans.

Peg and I wanted to do more exploring in the woods this weekend. We didn't know the stream was there, so what else don't we know of? There could be an entire town hidden away in the trees for all we know!

But needing to stay off my ankle has its benefits too because I don't have to take part in the school race on Friday.

Love,

Marjorie

6

28 October 1943

Dear Papa

Tommy Hendricks' father is missing in action. I found out yesterday at school. ~~Did you~~ Do you know him? I never met him because he signed up before I arrived, but I have no doubt he ~~was~~ is a wonderful man and father.

I can tell Tommy is really hurting, and so is his mama. I wish there was something I could do that would make them feel better.

I hate to think the same could happen to you; I don't know what I would do with myself. I try not to worry because there is no need to if nothing has happened yet. I know God is taking care of you. But it feels like I really can't help but be anxious.

Worry is like the dripping of a tap. Even if you are doing something else, it's still there, and it bothers you. Please, *please*, Papa, stay safe.

Love,

Marjorie

7

3 November 1943

Dear Papa

The sky looked so beautiful tonight. Red, pink, and orange were smeared across the sky as if it were a canvas. All the colours of autumn were on display for the whole wide world to see, basking in the golden glow of sunset. I felt so glad to be alive. There was no way I could bear to stay inside. Aunt Lucy nearly had to drag me in for dinner, and even then, I was glued to the window to see out.

I was careful of my ankle, seeing as it isn't completely better yet. I want to complain about how annoying it's been to deal with, but I know I shouldn't. It's nothing like the wounds I'm sure some of the soldiers are experiencing.

On a brighter note, I finished my second pair of socks! They're the same size this time.

Love,

Marjorie

8

12 November 1943

Dear Papa

There was a toad in the kitchen tonight! It was jumping all over the place and wouldn't sit still for even a second. Luna was no help, of course. She just stood hissing in the corner while the toad carried on its theatrics.

Aunt Lucy finally caught it in the soup pot and took it outside. I think she was slightly scared of it too, although she pretended not to be. She made a joke about cooking it for dinner, which made me think...

Do people actually eat frogs and toads? Would you eat one, Papa? I want to say I wouldn't, but I'd rather eat a yucky toad than starve to death. How do you think you would cook it?

Love,

Marjorie

9

20 November 1943

Dear Papa

It's just my luck that I've re-sprained my ankle. Aunt Lucy told me to be careful since the joint is still weak, but the girls at school were playing my favourite skipping game, and I couldn't resist joining in.

I'll heed her advice better in the future, but until then, I'm afraid I'm practically an invalid. It hurts much more this time, but who am I to complain? I'm sure you and the other soldiers have experienced things I can't imagine.

The newspapers certainly don't have anything good to tell us. Not that Aunt Lucy will let me read any of it. She hides the papers away just as soon as they arrive. I'm lucky if I catch a glance at a headline. I'm lucky if I catch a glance at a headline, but that alone tells me all I need to know.

How are you faring, Papa? I pray for you every night.

Love,

Marjorie

10

2 December 1943

Dear Papa

I've been knitting a lot while resting my ankle. Socks mostly, but I've also started working on other things. I'm knitting a hat I want to give Aunt Lucy for Christmas. It's hard to work on because she's always coming into the room! The yarn is so soft and a beautiful dark red which is Aunt Lucy's favourite colour.

I'm knitting you something too, but I won't say what it is. You'll find out soon enough. I think you'll love it!

I wish you could come home for Christmas. Are you sure there isn't any way it could be possible?

Love,

Marjorie

//

10 December 1943

Dear Papa

The world was all frosty and beautifully white this morning. I hoped we would have a white Christmas, and now I'm certain we will have one!

Christmas is very quickly approaching. Almost too quickly... I still have a lot of gifts to finish up, and I'm afraid I won't have enough time to do it all. I love giving people gifts, so I'll use any excuse to give them, but I think I might have overcommitted this year.

On a more somber note, Peg hasn't heard anything from her brother for almost a month. She and her mum are really worried. Have you met anyone named Timothy Andrews, Papa? Is there any way for you to find out if he is alright?

Love,

Marjorie

P.S. I realise now this may be the last letter I get to send before Christmas, so Merry Christmas! I'll be mailing your Christmas package soon.

12

26 December 1943

Dear Papa

Timothy Andrews is dead.

The news came yesterday. Of all the days the telegram could have come, why did it have to be on Christmas Day?

We were at the Andrews' house, just getting ready to carve into our goose when the knock came. I don't know if I'll ever get the sound of Peg's sobs out of my head.

She loved him so much. It nearly broke her heart when he signed up a year ago, and he promised to come home as soon as he could. But now... he's gone.

I can't help but imagine this happening to you too. I don't think I could bear it. Oh, Papa, please... stay safe!

Love,

Marjorie

P.S. How was your Christmas? I hope it was better than ours.

13

3 January 1944

Dear Papa

And so, we welcome another year... I hope 1944 will be a year bringing victory to our troops and our boys home. Only time will tell, I suppose.

Yesterday, there was a small memorial service for Timothy Andrews at church. The preacher said such nice things. I don't think there was a dry eye in the building. It's a good thing I had an extra handkerchief because Peg needed one.

I've spent most of my time with her since the news arrived. I don't know what to do for her, but she tells me being there is good enough. I've been trying to pray over everything, but it's been hard.

I hope to have some happier news with my next letter.

Love,

Marjorie

14

12 January 1944

Dear Papa

I'm so glad my gift for you arrived safely! Does the sweater fit well? Aunt Lucy had to help me finish it since I started a bit late, but at least half of it is knit by me.

Thank you so much for my gift. I love the journal so much! The paper is so smooth and easy to write on. Wherever did you find it?

At church today, the preacher talked about peace. More specifically, the celestial peace we get from God. I didn't understand much of what he said, but it sounded so nice. I don't know if I'll ever be able to feel that kind of peace. I feel like God barely listens to me anymore. I know I shouldn't entertain such thoughts. I need to trust. But... *I can't*.

I try. I really do. I want to believe He is working things out for the good. Will you pray for me?

Love,

Marjorie

15

24 January 1944

Dear Papa

Thank you so much for your kind words with my last letter. I will think over what you said.

Peg seems to have made peace with the fact that her brother won't ever come back. I don't know how she can be fine with it so soon. It's only been a month. I don't think I'd ever be able to make peace with it if you died.

I wish more than anything that you could come home—for good. And I wish there was something I could do to make it happen faster. I know I can't do much besides knitting socks, but it's starting to feel like it's nothing in the greater scheme of things. Although I suppose a soldier can fight better when he isn't worried about his toes freezing off.

You wrote that you might be able to get leave in the new year. Do you think it will be happening soon? It really doesn't need to be long. Just a couple days would be nice. I so want to see you!

Love,

Marjorie

16

2 February 1944

Dear Papa

As hard as it is to understand why you can't come visit now, I will try to be content with it. I just hope it will be able to happen soon!

It's Peg's birthday tomorrow. It will be her first one without her brother. I want to make it as special and memorable as possible. I know he would have wanted that for her.

Aunt Lucy said we can bake a cake, even though it does take eggs and butter, which as you know, is rationed. We'll be baking a carrot cake since it's Peg's favourite.

Oh, and thank you for asking about my ankle. I've forgotten about it with everything going on, but it is fully healed now. Aunt Lucy still tells me to be careful with it, and the joint aches when it's about to rain, but it's not giving me any other problems.

Love,

Marjorie

17

12 February 1944

Dear Papa

The cake flopped. It wouldn't rise at all. I don't know what I did wrong. I followed a recipe, and Aunt Lucy supervised everything. But it stayed a mushy mess, even after it was in the oven for a good two hours!

Since we couldn't eat it, Mr. Hewson's pig did instead. He enjoyed it well enough.

The weather is slowly warming up, so we had a picnic down by the stream. We took along sandwiches and lemonade, and I think Peg really enjoyed it. My gift to her was a box of store-bought toffees. I wrapped it in patterned paper and tied it with a ribbon. It looked really pretty!

Love,

Marjorie

18

22 February 1944

Dear Papa

Aunt Lucy hardly ever gets mad, but I'm afraid I got her pretty riled up yesterday.

I was dusting the mantelpiece when I accidentally knocked over the flowered vase she inherited from Grandma Lily. It shattered into a million pieces—completely and utterly beyond repair. The minute she saw it, she burst into tears. She wouldn't let me get near her or help her clean up. She just sent me straight up to my room.

I felt terrible. I still do. I know how important it was to her, and it was such a nice vase. I did apologise, but she hasn't forgiven me yet. It's not like her at all. I wish I could turn back time and be more careful. Do you ever wish you could turn back time? The more I think of it, the more things I would want to turn back time for...

Love,

Marjorie

19

5 March 1944

Dear Papa

Do you believe in angels in disguise? I do. After my near scrape with death, I don't think I could *not* believe in them.

I'm sure Aunt Lucy has already written to you about it, but I'll give you my side of the story.

It was a really warm day on Friday, so Peg and I went down to the stream in the woods with the plan to wade in the shallow bits. But I wasn't being particularly careful, and I must have stepped on a slippery rock because the next minute, I found myself in the water. As it turns out, the stream is much deeper than we had thought it was. For a split second, I was sure I would drown. ~~But then~~

Scratch that. Aunt Lucy is calling me for dinner. I'll have to finish writing tomorrow.

Love,

Marjorie

20

6 March 1944

Dear Papa

Alright, now for the rest of my story. To recap, I was in the water, and sure I would drown.

But then out of nowhere, this man appeared and scooped me right up. He got me back on dry land and sent Peg for help. He didn't wait for her to come back but disappeared into the woods again. Don't you find that so strange?

I have no idea who he could have been, but he was so nice. He had to be an angel, Papa. He had to be. Aunt Lucy worries that he might be a German spy, but I think that is impossible. How could someone who cared enough to save a drowning girl be so wicked as to kill others without a second thought?

Anyway, I am recovered from my ill-timed 'swim'. Aunt Lucy's been hovering over me like a mother hen. I think I really scared her. She has most definitely forgiven me for breaking the vase.

Love,

Marjorie

21

16 March 1944

Dear Papa

Are you really right there on the front lines now? I hate the thought of you being in so much danger. I hate the thought of there even *being* danger.

Knitting socks feels ridiculous now. I almost can't bear to pick up my knitting. Nothing I can do will be enough to bring you home. I'm afraid. Afraid that...

I won't finish that thought. I shouldn't add to your worries. But please know, Papa, there is nothing I long for more than to have you home safe and sound.

How much longer can this war drag on?

Love,

Marjorie

22

17 April 1944

Dear Papa

It's been more a month since I sent my last letter. Why aren't you writing back? Sorry if that sounded rude. I understand if you're busy, but I do worry about you. Please write back soon!

My birthday is coming up in a few weeks. But you know that, of course. Do you think you'll be able to come visit?

We had a church prayer meeting last night. I know why, but at the same time, is God even listening anymore? Are our prayers falling on deaf ears?

I shouldn't write things like that. I know He is listening even when it doesn't feel like He is. But what if He *isn't*?

Please tell me you are safe!

Love,

Marjorie

30 April 1944

Dear Papa

Where are you? Why aren't you writing back?
It's been six weeks already...

I'm almost expecting a telegram any day—one that tells us you've died and lay now in an unmarked grave. Or one that tells us you're missing in action like Tommy Henricks' father was. They found him, you know... *Dead*.

Please tell me that I'm being ridiculous! The same can't have happened to you. I want to believe you're still there, but I don't know what I should think. Are my letters still arriving? Are you reading them at all? Or has a telegram been sent to tell us the horrible news?

Write back, Papa. Please.

Love,

Marjorie

24

16 May 1944

Dear Papa

I'm thirteen now. But honestly, I feel older.

I think I've seen too much of the world's ugliness—and I haven't seen anything!

I can't imagine what the soldiers on the front lines have gone through. What you've gone through, Papa. What you might be going through this very minute. I don't want to imagine it. I want to keep telling myself that you are alright, that you're not hurt, and that you're not... I can't even say it.

Oh God, please...

Love,

Marjorie

25

1 June 1944

Dear Papa

I haven't given up on you. I refuse to believe that you're not there anymore. I'll keep writing until the day we receive a definitive answer of what has happened to you.

Aunt Lucy's been writing to anyone who might have even the smallest bit of information on where you are or what has happened to you, but no one can tell us anything. How is that possible? Someone has to know something!

Where are you, Papa? Where are you?

Love,

Marjorie

27 June 1944

Dear Papa

I thought my faith was strong. I thought I knew what I believed in and why. But now I'm not so sure anymore.

How could God let something like this happen? Take away a girl's father right when she needs him most? How can He bring good out of this?

I don't want to be angry at Him. I just want to understand. Why Lord? Why?

I feel like we should have heard *something* by now. I would be content with anything at this point. I just want to understand what happened.

Love,

Marjorie

19 July 1944

Dear Papa

I'm certain this will seem like a big jump from my last letter, and I suppose it is. But God has been working on my heart through Aunt Lucy and dear Peg. He's helping me see straight again. And because of that... I think I need to let you go.

It's time for me to accept that I might never know what happened to you, and that you might never come back.

Don't think I'm giving up on you. I'm not. But I am going to step back and keep going, even though it feels impossible to do that right now.

I'll always keep hoping and dreaming of the day I can see you again, whether that be on this earth or in heaven.

I love you, and I always will.

Your daughter,

Marjorie

4 September 1944

I pull on my mustard-coloured cardigan as I take the steps two at a time. Morning sun streams in through the windows, and the smell of cinnamon oatmeal fills the house. Today will be my first day back at school after the summer holidays—and technically a bit longer since I stopped going to school when we stopped hearing back from Papa.

It's been a little over a month since I wrote my last letter to Papa, and although I never thought I'd be able to say it, each day gets easier.

I reach the last step and run across the hallway into the kitchen. "Good morning, Aunt Lucy!" I sing-song, throwing my arms around her waist as she stands at the stove preparing our breakfast.

"Marjorie Waters," she turns in my embrace, wooden spoon in hand. "What have I told you about running in the house?" But she isn't really angry, and she wraps me in a half hug.

"Sorry. I'm just excited about today."

"For school?"

I hum the affirmative as I start laying the table, darting a glance at her. "Why? Is there something else happening today?"

She doesn't get a chance to answer because there is a knock at the door. I watch as her chest heaves with a sharp breath, but she turns back to

the stove. “Will you get that?” Her voice almost sounds choked.

Suspicion gnaws at me, but I can’t leave whomever it is waiting, so I make my way back into the hall and to the door. I prepare myself for my rehearsed greeting as I twist the doorknob, but the words die on my lips at the sight of the person standing on the doorstep.

It’s a familiar figure, although much changed. A crutch is tucked under one arm while an empty pant leg is pinned up. Crumpled clothes indicate they’ve been slept in, and the man’s face—oh, his face—scruffy and unkempt as it is, still makes my heart beat out of my chest. It’s the one face I thought I’d never see again. The face of my papa.

A cry slips from my lips, and I launch myself forward. I faintly hear the crutch to the ground, and I feel his arms slip around me as I bury my face in his shirt and burst into sobs.

He’s home.

the end

Acknowledgments

This story wouldn't exist if it wasn't for a challenge called Inktober and a group of friends eager to read what I have to say. Thank you to everyone who read and loved that first draft. You gave me the courage to share it like this.

And it wouldn't be sharing it all if it wasn't for my beta readers—Molly, Kimberly, Joscelynn, Bella, and Naia—thank you from the bottom of my heart for all your feedback. I hope you enjoy what this story has become.

It would be ridiculous if I ended this without thanking my parents, so here is that thank you Mama and Papa! Thank you letting me off washing dishes and helping with dinner as I raced to finish this. And thank you for fostering my love for reading and writing. I promise I will make you proud.

I just want to give a final thank you to my God and Father for giving me the words for this story, and I pray He will use them to impact others.

And thank you, dear reader. I hope you've enjoyed *Love, Marjorie*, and that you'll carry a little bit of our protagonist in your heart always.

ALL MY LOVE,

- Jessica

About the Author

Jessica B. Brown is a young author, avid bookworm, and daughter of the King. She lives in the scenic South Island of New Zealand with her parents and two younger sisters.

When not writing or reading, you can find her playing guitar, spending time with family, or keeping up with one of her many other creative hobbies.