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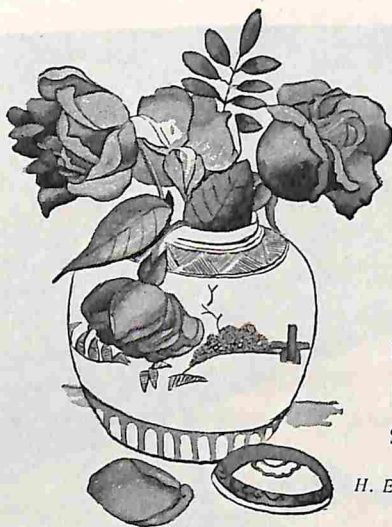
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Dear Mother:

I'M GOING TO WAR TOMORROW, and I'm leaving this letter pinned to my pillow to tell you the things I haven't been able to tell you personally.

Of course, there is—"I love you," and "You're the best mother in the world," and "I'll be back," but that's not what I mean. The things I want to tell you are serious, Mother. More serious than you or I. I'm going to scold you some, and warn you, too. And maybe I'm not just talking for myself. I don't think or believe I am.

It's this way: down there at the station tomorrow the high school band will be playing—what's left of it. There'll be gaps in the heavy brasses. My old trumpet will be missing—and Pee Wee's bass horn—and some others. And there'll be a speech by the mayor. (Confidentially, it'll be lousy, Mother. I can hear it now! "Our brave young men . . . hrumph . . . clean young manhood . . . hrumph . . . save the world for democracy . . . hrumph . . . preserve freedom . . . hrumph . . .")

We'll be looking very brave and confident. And that's the point. I may as well jump in with both feet right now: *we won't be confident*. At least I won't. Daddy fought in the Argonne to make the world safe for democracy, and here we go again. It was tough on Daddy's generation, but it's tougher on ours, because we aren't going filled with the faith his crowd felt. We've seen how you older people can lose the peace after we've won the war. We're going with our fingers crossed, and it's hard to fire a gun with your fingers crossed, Mother.

We don't doubt democracy is worth fighting for, and we're not afraid to go. I don't think I'm a coward. You made me dive off high diving boards and go to the dentist alone. I'm not afraid to die, but *I'm afraid of dying for nothing*. You see, we're afraid of the old shell game. You won't know what that means, or maybe you will. I hear that you were a knowing young flapper before you married Dad and settled down to bring me up so well.

And that brings me to another point: *did you bring me up well?* You kept me clean and taught me to be honest. (That's why I'm trying to be honest now.) And you held the highest ideals before me. But did you teach me the truth about the world, and life, and men? You didn't, Mother, or we would not be going to war tomorrow.

You taught me that there would never be another war. You took away my toy soldiers. You brought me up to think all we had to do was mind our own business, and be good boys, and we'd live in peace and prosperity forever. I believed it. We all believed it. Every boy in my class at school signed pacifist pledges. We were still signing them when Hitler marched into Austria. We were signing after Czechoslovakia, Poland, after the invasion

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BUY MORE WAR BONDS!

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