

December 12, 1959

Laura D. Wilck Literary Agency,
14647 Dickens Street,
Sherman Oaks, Calif.

Dear Mrs. Wilck:

Thank you kindly for your Dec. 9 letter, awaiting me at home last night. Our last letters "passed" in the mail and I hope this will assure you of my "contentment."

I have a much better understanding now.

I'm not dismayed or "upset" by the "not so good news" from New York. I am glad you have written to place it with another publisher. And I will welcome the contemplated report. In fact if this reaches me by Christmas, I may feel back in writing form and have some four days then to start rewriting.

I've lost confidence with doctors. My ankle has improved on its own. It is still stiff etc. but at last the irksome pain has gone. Now I'll get a chance to get back at writing. I'm still more inclined to put Sorority Row in shape. The Lonely Road is still "growing."

I agree with you about the timidity of Miss Shore. And I suspect she is out of the picture for the time being, it being more necessary she get her grades and degree than anything else. I think perhaps that her romance kept her from uncorking as she could have, but no sweat there because my own sources elsewhere are more productive. I guess her major problem has been to delay her marriage until she gets her degree although I've told her I didn't see why if she's going to get married she should wait so long. Anyway she's even more determined to get the necessary grades than spend much time with romance and her man is also engaged in the same intensive attitude. What free time she has she'll be in no position to do much, if any.

If you find an editor sufficiently interested, I think I know now -- thanks to Vic Hurley -- what he'll say. The characters will have to be "talked" through the book instead of "walked" through it, more than at present; simplification of characters, development of plot; and stamping the principal characters, clearly. Dick goes and comes and that's it; Letty is worth developing; Teri Ann isn't strong enough. Eliminate the nympho part for Letty (those kind aren't capable of reforming). The girls should all be after the same thing, happiness, a husband etc. They have different ideas and attitudes about "the perfect one." Who wins? And of course the underlying, strong and evident theme that now exists.

Vic thinks the action, the first page, should start with Ter

firmly in the house, and action from there; and with Teri Ann "succumbing" and learning a lesson many girls learn.

I think there are too many characters, too few who are "stamped" and identified. The dialogue frequently is only the idle chatter of the girls and contributes nothing to the plot. There's no conflict and nothing happens in the house.

I think that will give you the idea I've a better grasp of the situation.

There are enough situations etc. to enable me to go ahead pretty fast. And I think the further production of "The Lonely Road," would benefit therefrom. Selby, the main character there, has to really be developed, and somewhat finely.

Any sculpturing I'd get underway would be a relaxation at dull times

So I'll be patient hereafter, although I perform best when I get an occasional reaction. If the report comes through and I can get it before Christmas I think perhaps it may be helpful for both "Sorority Row" and "The Lonely Road." (Vic isn't even sure that Sorority Row is a good title.) He's waiting for proofs now on the Parthian, which is indicated for about April publication.

The Seattle produced "The Family from Abeline," is going good in Seattle and Tacoma, 300 copies at one book party in a big Seattle store. It was designed as an experiment and not too much "nationally." It's been out about two weeks and big inroads on the 7,500 issue at \$5.95 I think for a less than 200 page book, have been made. McCullum is a salesman, not a writer. Vic just happens to be a fraternity brother of the publisher and is the "editorial adviser" etc. pretty much in the background. McCullum lines up women's organizations etc. like Catholic women's groups, Republican women, who take it on as a fund project and Torrance, the publisher and McCullum are good enough salesmen to get it going in stores in the area. Vic's The Parathan is different of course. But the Seattle deal is an "experiment" on which I'll keep you posted. (old clip attached) The Abeline deal has been out about three weeks now and Vic hasn't even a copy, he's that disinterested.

Another long letter, for which I apologize. I'll write infrequently now.

After the kickback due from the publisher now having Sorority Row, how about Monarch? I've a hunch there, the top editor in fact. Of course that would be only a paperback deal and rather unfair to you for the money involved. I'll write of that later.

Also, The New Yorker started a four part deal on the Indian situation October 17 through the medium of the Iroquois. I guess the easterners are finally realizing there is such. If you have a chance, take a glance. It takes up about 50 pages in the first issue. Haven't gotten too deeply into it myself but I know what it has to be.

Hope you have a chance to ease off before Christmas, so you can enjoy it with your family. And in case I do not write before then, the best to you.

Sincerely

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December 23, 1959

Laura D. Wilck Literary Agency,
14647 Dickens Street,
Sherman Oaks, Calif.

Dear Mrs. Wilck:

Thank you for your letter of December 15, and the interesting bit of information concerning Mr. Dmarr's interest in Sorority Row.

The pre-Christmas period is a terrific time about a newspaper plant, but I've tackled the job of speeding up the action in the manuscript. I've outlined some rather radical changes, so it's not a simple job of rewriting some of the chapters. And come Thursday I'll be heading for two days in Seattle where I will find some peace and repose and should get things worked out in my mind.

I can't estimate now, when I'll have the work finished, but I think it will come along rapidly. My biggest problem is to do a bit of simplification with characters, reduce them to major and minor, and stamp them accordingly.

I do hope there's some favorable reaction from the Messner staff, enough to spur me on. I've seen Miss Shore and she has done about all she can. The type of thing to be done now is on a level she has not yet reached, and probably won't for some time.

One of my biggest difficulties is from keeping the writing in style. It would work fine with The Lonely Road, but not with Row.

Please do let me know what you hear from New York. My guess--and I think it might be close to a schedule--is that Sorority Row, revised and corrected, will be ready for the typist the last week in January. I'll be more definite, very soon. Any excerpts from the report of the first New York reaction would be darn helpful at this time.

I'll be back in town Saturday and have Sunday and Monday to get actual typing under way.

A happy New Year to you and yours.

Sincerely

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