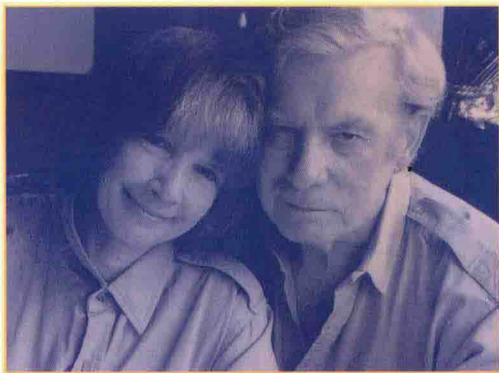


A LOVE STORY

FALLING IN LOVE
WHEN YOU THOUGHT
YOU WERE THROUGH



By JILL ROBINSON
STUART SHAW



Falling in Love
When You Thought
You Were Through

A Love Story



Jill Robinson & Stuart Shaw



HarperCollins Publishers

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*Falling in Love
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ALSO BY JILL ROBINSON

With a Cast of Thousands

Thanks for the Rubies, Now Please Pass the Moon

Bed/Time/Story

Perdido

Dr. Rocksinger and The Age of Longing

The Streets of Paris

Star Country

Past Forgetting

This book is dedicated to our children:

Stuart Shaw, Jr. (in memoriam); Susan Shaw; Philip Shaw;
Johanna Simmel; Jeremy Zimmer

and to our grandchildren:

Nathan Shaw, Kenneth Shaw (in memoriam), Tucker Shaw,
Katherine Elizabeth Shaw, Justin Simmel, Ethan Simmel, Alice
Simmel, Peter Simmel, Phoebe Zimmer

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*Falling in Love
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You Were Through*

It's close to midnight. I'm alone in this dark Connecticut diner, writing here in the window by the desolate highway. I see his Jeep pull up outside. That Englishman, Stuart, comes in, places an order at the counter, and when he turns around to go, I shoot him this look, like 'I'm designed for you.'

He comes over and says, "Would you like to come to my place for a cup of tea sometime?"



'Round midnight. I stop by this lively Connecticut diner to grab a coffee. Across the room I see that woman, Jill, a writer, I think, amusing a pack of laughing friends. She catches sight of me and fires me a look that unmistakably says, 'Please come over'. I go over.

"Would you like to come to my place for a cup of tea sometime?" I say.

About Jill



“I Hate Sex.” That’s the story I was writing for *Vogue*. Sex had eaten up all my other drives, distracted me from my children, diverted my ambition, subverted my political energy, and tarted itself up as love, pitching me into two marriages, three selfish affairs, and lots of speedy bashes done by dawn in cars, on beaches, roadsides, desks, unmade beds in unmarked motels.

I never called love affairs relationships. That implied steely partnership, balance—no hysterics, no tragic endings, no despair—so how interesting could that be?

The Englishman was here at the ten o’clock morning meeting again this Saturday. I was sitting behind him. His blond hair rippled over his collar. He was clearly rational and smart. His well-worn, khaki workman’s shirt was real, but he sat as if he was used to being in charge. Probably a manager.

I could wrap myself up, give him this fierce present of myself. He’d hear the time bomb ticking inside. ‘Where do you put this?’

he'd say, 'It just doesn't go, isn't me.' He'd hand the gift back and run. It's easy to fall in love. Hard to climb out.

I looked out the window, across the highway to the tree-lined Connecticut road leading out to the house I'd just bought. This was where I wanted to be. I was forty. I'd learned all I had to know, and I was through with love. My best women friends had shown me how to pull myself together one more time. 'Push-ups, yoga, and tough deadlines will keep sex where you want it.'

I loved my best girlfriend, Josie, when I started school in West Los Angeles where I grew up. We'd stand together off to the side by the playground's ivy-covered wall, appraising newcomers. We knew we were different. It is hard to find someone as out of the ordinary as each of us believes we are—a condition we realize when we meet this special, private companion, the other side of the soul that makes the form complete.

If love includes magic attraction, jealousy, and possession, this was where that learning began. This was someone I couldn't wait to talk to, to look at. This was someone I wanted just for me. My heart jumped when she was on the phone.

How thrilling to glance at each other's smooth bodies on overnights. 'You have more breasts than I do.' Such a compliment. 'Yours will come, you'll see.' One night we tried on my mother's nightgowns. 'I'll wear the black lace,' she said, 'I'm more like that. You wear the pink.'

Our best evenings were spent lying sleepless, discussing what love might be and where it would lead. Same way kids sit up on the hillside, talking about their friendship and how they won't tell anyone, ever, about their secrets. They trade their best marbles or favorite crayons and nobody's ever going to know about this. And that's how it would feel on the first night you fall in

love—the combination of going back to the past, that private, small place of childhood, and this huge, sweeping voyage of what would be the rest of your life.

Later, I used to take the Heritage Classics down from the bookcase in the living room. I'd slip the books out of their cases, looking for clues about sex—references to breasts, perhaps. The rough parts of *Leaves of Grass* I knew by heart.

At night, I'd wait until the house was still and my father had gone to his own room. It was stylish for married couples in L.A. to have separate rooms, like New Yorkers and European aristocrats. I'd go down the dark hall and tap on my mother's door. "What do you do with this pounding in your heart?" I sat in her pink chair, picking flecks off the painted-on silver flowers, sipping at just a touch of her sherry. I'd tell her all my crushes, like the one I had on Miss Lippincott, my art teacher. My mother was amused, never thrown. "Women often love women, and you probably are in love with Miss Lippincott's English accent." Yes, and her long, pale, cool hands.

Like getting a nose job, a convertible, tight slacks, or a bikini, going all the way was taboo. We'd made tracks into some taboos—seamless stockings, strapless dresses, sheath dresses, petting—above the waist. The romantic part of love was charming, softly lit, just like the movies. You'd send poems to each other, dedicate songs, and hold hands. He'd carry your books.

But I heard the other part could be gory, awkward; you'd be grabbed and turned like a calf wrestled to the corral's ground and branded, plugged, for how long and how exactly? No one ever made that clear, even though my mother assured me that once you got married, this dangerous, wicked thing would become 'quite beautiful.'

I expected to fall in love at the beginning of each summer holiday, when the aloof and intellectual boys came out from their Eastern schools to spend summers at the beach and around our pools. They took me to foreign movies in small theatres, and I gave the impression this was more interesting than watching the studio's dailies at home with my father. If I was going 'to find myself,' as some writers were putting it, I'd have to break away from home.

I had to be a virgin, but my mother said, "You don't want to marry one." Someone had to know what to do. "Here," my mother said, "you'll learn some other things you can do." She gave me her copy of *Lady Chatterley's Lover* and I fell in love with Mellors.

You could tell which girlfriends had gone all the way before they told you. You'd watch after summer when everyone came back from vacation or after a big holiday. It was there in the mouth, in the eyes, and the way they'd throw back the shoulders. They owned their breasts now, because they knew what they had and what it meant.

My father longed for me to become Eleanor Roosevelt, devoted to significant concerns. I longed just to be sexy and carry Lucite purses you could see right through. I wanted to feel arms around me and lips on mine. I loved the *idea* of someone loving me.

My boyfriend, Alex Glass, went to France one summer and smuggled home Henry Miller's *Tropic of Cancer* printed on long strips of paper. We sat together reading pages fast as we cut them, both of us more interested in reading how Miller wrote about sex than we were in doing it.

Alex was not only unpredictable, he wasn't into touching, and he wanted to be a writer, too. A combination that's hard to find or beat. With Alex I'd be part of a team, a woman out on the trail

next to her man. When you fell in love, you'd love each other's work. Love meant sharing each other's days, having a partner.

My mother's parents ran a music school together, and my father's parents had a catering place. The school I went to was started by a couple, like the couple who built the hotel we went to in Palm Springs. And we knew couples who were screenwriters and songwriters. I wanted a man who wouldn't leave me behind each morning when he went off to work.

But Alex was killed in a car accident in Mexico. This, I explained to my writing teacher, was why I hadn't shown up at class. "You don't have to show up," she said, "so long as you're somewhere writing about it."

That summer my friends and I sat around making up lists of the types of men you could marry. Then we discussed which one was best for ourselves and for each other. A politician was perfect for me. There I'd be, by his side. I'm good in crowds. 'Except,' Josie said, 'you want to be the one running for office.'

A writer? I'd have my arm over his tweedy knit shoulder, consoling him as he wrote, bringing his scotch. 'But,' one friend said, 'you want to be the writer.'

'A businessman?' None of us knew what they did, 'and they're too neat.' And then, the wives of the studio stockholders and theater owners have to stand in the background, like politicians' wives, and parents working in the movie business wouldn't let us marry actors. If your mother was married to an actor, it would never occur to you that marrying one was a good idea.

The Englishman I was sitting behind at the A.A. meeting in the sunny room could be an actor, but actors are fragile. This guy was built like Picasso. Could be an artist, but his big, solid hands were

too clean and smooth. The watch he was wearing wasn't a rough guy watch.

I touched him on the shoulder and asked for a cigarette. He handed it over his shoulder and didn't even look at me, which meant he'd noticed me and was already trying not to get involved. I've never been involved with a foreigner, but then, do the English consider themselves foreigners here? Or originators, and superior?

I never really fell in love with a man who had it easy. There always had to be challenge, a dark edge. Then, too, if he's already got a problem, there's maybe something you can do.

There was a reason for my first husband to need me and, therefore, to love me. "His father died when he was really little, and his mother's been married four times," my cousin had explained.

Alone with him on our first date, we talked about ideas and principles we shared. As we sat there in his mother's convertible, Jon said, "I don't know what we're going to do about this."

"Well," I knew, "we're too old to go steady, and I'm too young to have an affair."

"I guess we'll just have to get married." He radiated the sturdy security you wanted from the man you'd marry.

My parents would be delighted. They had struck magic, too, the first time they saw each other, when my father went to the Art Students' League and saw my mother standing at the tall, pine easel in her blue smock. My parents understood each other's creative work, and they had a spiritual match that kept them together through all the complicated years of their marriage.

Jon and I talked about our children, Jeremy and Johanna, how we'd raise them to have character. I'd make a serious leap into the

world I'd seen when I baby-sat for my cousins, a world of Danish modern furniture and Saturday night dinners with beef bourguignon.

My father was waiting at the front door when Jon got me home at three in the morning. But my father would see right away this was perfect. Jon was Russian Jewish, his family was from New Jersey, and he'd lost his father so young. My father would mean so much to him. And Jon loved his singing voice, the idea of himself and theater. He'd be close to that dream world with me.

Does the man come with instructions, like the Sunbeam electric fry pan and the Mixmaster? 'You'll see,' my cousin explained, 'it's really easy, really fun.' I wanted sex to stay unspeakably private and sweet.

With marriage I could avoid going back to college. This couldn't be better timing. "He won't have the kind of money you're used to," his mother said. She'd sized me up quickly: a willful ingenue.

When you're a parent and you remember how you were when you fell in love, you know there's no point in trying to stop it: they'll grow into what they've done, adjust, and accept it. They'll hate you for stopping them (if you could), or not stopping them.

"But I'm different," I told her, "I'm not like that." I tried to recast myself as an earthy little homebody, my notion of his (or his mom's) idea of an ideal woman.

Perhaps he wanted a version of his truly epic mother, a powerful woman spilling over with expectations. She expected her son's wife to run his home the way she had, to be neat and organized. She eyed me up and down. "You'll have to work out a weekly budget. There won't be room for mistakes on Jon's Navy allowance." I'd be a manageable relief for him.