

I regret this abominable
name.

Pocono Lake Preserve
Stokes Jr. Camp.
→ [Comfort Cabin]

August 16th, 1949

Dear John,

I am stuck in my letter to your mother; that discussion about gratitude is part of what paralyzes me. Only in this case what I would like to express is gratitude and appreciation, not so much for inviting me and making me welcome, as much it is for being the kind of person she is. It is the kind of thing which most needs to be expressed—always, in every relationship—and which is the most difficult to say. Only within the last couple of years have I discovered that it was possible to say more than I had been used to saying without offending by undue enthusiasm and sentimentality. Yet still I fear the pitfalls. Anyway, I will begin to write to you; I will wait and reread the other letter and hope for the courage or inspiration to finish it. It is ^{easier} to write to you because I am accustomed to the difficulties and have accepted the hazards of possible misunderstanding.

The trip home was calm and uneventful except for the evening ^{and night and morning} spent with my cousin, her husband, and baby. Alex will probably tell you something of his 70 mile an hour drive with the trooper husband.

over tortuous roads to break up a brawl. I wish I could describe them to you, their house and the way they live and think. My cousin, who is just my age, looks a little like me, and I understand why Enge sees certain ~~some~~ similarities. Sylvia has qualities which I wish I knew I had. She has always been generous and self-denying and undemanding. She finds pleasure and delight in her life in whatever circumstances she finds herself. The circumstances have usually been difficult, and they seem very hard to me now. They are poor; her husband works hard and long, drives dangerously fast; he is terribly different, and ^{she} must simply swallow and think of his good qualities when he begins to express his deep-rooted prejudices. She played her meagre stock of records and talked about the music and people we knew or she knew with love and animation. Alex was wonderful. Though tired and feeling that "we must get home" he relaxed and was gay and talkative.

The ride home was quite quiet both days. I was exhausted. The night with the Whitts was ~~was~~ cramped and short. Alex asked me ~~if I had~~ ^{at Kennaroch} had a good time, so I told him

yes and thanked him for his discretion and
 undemandingness. He asked me nothing more but I
 told him that you and I liked each other, felt
 happy together, but knew nothing more than that—
 except that we ^{each} felt ~~that~~ in our own ^{separate} lives the
 possibility of growth and change. He probably
 knew or felt ~~this~~ this already, but I did not
 wish to be mysterious or to make him wonder
 by ^{my} silence whether there was ^{much} more than he
 saw or felt. Both he and Margrit have
 been kind and generously discrete to a degree
 which I cannot imagine in myself. At the
 beginning of our visit, I was afraid that the
 conversation between you and me (which is ~~so~~
 subtle and a little perverse and acrobatic)
 would exclude him; I feared for a moment that
 I would only come between you without adding
 anything. So I was very glad to ^{have} ~~see~~ Margrit
^{arrive} — to be able to make picnics and feminine conversation
 with her while you repaired the recorder and
 made masculine conversation with ~~the~~ Alex. He
 seems to understand perfectly. ~~that~~ I hope you
 do not feel that I should have said nothing. I
 know how much you prize solitude and privacy

and that I have been let in to a place where few people have been. I don't think I have left the door open; I have simply told Alex where I was and that I wasn't ~~same~~ where else. [Sorry - very bad expression but I want to go on - after all it's not for publication. And, oh dear, I didn't get to a place where I could look up the P.M.L.A., but I am writing to a New York friend who will know and tell me quickly.]

When we arrived Sunday evening both Mother and Papa were glad to see us but quite anxious and distracted by the problems of getting ready to go to Pocono the next day. Mother, in particular, felt everything slipping between her fingers. We worked hard. I had to move all my possessions upstairs because of the impending English invasion by Dr. Marsh and his wife. That was ghastly; my room in the third floor is littered with things I couldn't decide about - like a pretty pebble, a single earring, a dress too old and tattered to wear, but too dear to give away. These things I want and cling ~~to~~ to at the same time that I would be free and untied.

But at last we are here. Papa sleeps

more than he has ~~in a year~~ in a year - since we were last in Pocono. I have been reading ~~aloud~~ aloud to Mother, and this afternoon the three of us went for a leisurely walk. Alex was looking for "the wildlife" but found nothing worthy of his charm and intellect; so now he's looking for Willy Davis who is somewhere nearby.

I feel very calm and happy. ~~I think~~
~~and was~~ ~~little about the future~~ I live very much in the moment thinking little about the future and ^{a little} more about the immediate past - in fact I think of it a great deal, and I ~~believe~~ ^{believe} it contributes to the ease and pleasantness of my relationship to my family. I feel ~~closer~~ closer to myself as I would like to be. And I assure you again that I am not building castles and inventing fairy stories. That is quite unnecessary when reality is so satisfactory. And though you are so careful and acute an observer, know me for what I am and realize that I will change little in direction; most of that happened before you knew me. I am not what I ~~was~~ would like to be, but I have the definite feeling (which is only faith and quite illogical) that I am on the way. Knowing you has strengthened that ~~best~~ sense of direction and given me a "security" which, if you prefer, could also be ^{described as} _^

as patience. I think you are correct in believing me more vulnerable than you. Yet I wish you were more vulnerable; the only real peace and serenity is one that is acquainted with both pain and delight; and solitude is more beautiful if you know a crowd, its warmth and tolerance as well as its horror. Perhaps you will not accept this, just as you do not accept my duality of good and evil, sin and holiness.

Now it is almost time to go to bed. This is a very small cottage. There is nowhere to read. ~~comfortably~~ when the others have gone to sleep. Fortunately, I sleep on the porch. I can read in the morning or lie and listen to the dew dripping from the trees. I have my usual impression of the incompleteness of this letter. Even the things I have tried to say are not as I would have them. But I will try to be patient, as you would have me, and hopeful and believing, as I would have me, and it will be better next time.

Papa says its time to go to sleep.
Good night,

Margaret