

Dear John,

Wednesday

Your letter arrived yesterday and since then I have been trying to imagine this letter. I have nothing very concrete to say but I have thought of you with great warmth and appreciation. Really, that is all; I might very well stop there.

I had to write reports on my eighth-grade class last night. It was very difficult; I could not think of the words that would describe them, and I ~~hoped~~^{wished} so sincerely and hopelessly that the parents and children would not look at these remarks as if they had been handed down by a very wise and learned person. If they could know how I wandered back and forth, took a bath, washed the dishes, so many little postponements - and how some of them were written this morning on the elevated. A ridiculous process, ridiculously performed. And all the time I was trying to write a report ~~for me~~ on myself for you; and for that there was even less factual basis, no marks in a book, hardly ~~any~~ any work of any consequence - and my general impression is so vague.

So I will try to tell you some of the things I have done and how I have felt about them. I made a strange pilgrimage on a dark rainy afternoon to The Cloisters with two other teachers of the eighth-grade. We were preparing to take our classes. It was so dark we could hardly see anything, but I decided to go back soon because I liked the glimpses. Peter spent part of the weekend with me - movies, shopping, the zoo and restaurants. I walked a great deal and felt very well physically and very fond of Peter - so I was content. This week has been very mixed - some good teaching and much of an indifferent quality. The important part of the week is still

to come. Dory arrives Saturday morning, a week earlier than expected. So that terrible and ludicrous party will take place Saturday night. Joy sits hard on her anxiety and I try to surround her with affection and cheerfulness. I am under no pressure so it is easy. Tonight Joy and Marty (the focus of this uncomfortable triangle) are at the Ballet. I have spent a peaceful evening sweeping and scrubbing and making things neat. I must go to bed soon or the two of them will come back to talk to me, to beguile me after my lonely evening. I am too tired to appreciate such kindness.

Since Dory comes this weekend I ~~will~~ shall be able to come to Cambridge on the 16th ~~and~~ or 17th. I shall probably stay for a couple of days with the Cunnighams and then come to Aunt Priscilla's, Sunday night or Monday — though not unless you want me to come then and think that Priscilla can put me up. I will write to her after I hear from you. I know that you will probably have a good deal of work to do that week, but since I have other people ~~to~~ whom I would like to see I would not bother you more than you wanted to be bothered.

Friday
9:30 A.M.

My eighth-graders are working on a test. They think it is quite easy so they are happy. Especially at moments like this I find it strange to be teacher, to be examining instead of examined. Then I remember that I am still being tested; that their papers reflect my teaching. I remember that the same principle applies to all the people who are close to me and who depend on me in any way.

I like some of these girls so much. If they were not my students I would want them as my friends. The sensitivity and warmth of their response to ideas makes me as happy and interested as you were because of Judy's responsiveness. My feeling for it is framed and enhanced by the poignant realization that this sensitivity, may and probably will, be calloused over and lost - that if they remain sensitive they may be terribly hurt. Some of them have no strength to protect their sensitivity - no fortress; and it is not my job or within my power to help them build fortresses.

I have been reading "The Cloud of Unknowing" again. I have found it hard, even impossible to read the Bible recently. Tiredness is perhaps the reason for this impatience which searches and does not find. But Kierkegaard and "The Cloud of Unknowing" are more open to me. I wish I understood this lassitude. Now that my work is diminished, I must force and coerce myself to do what remains; and I sleep badly and am more tired. Perhaps it is simply the accumulation of fatigue - or people.

The period is coming to an end. My little girls are frowning and rumpling their hair over the misspellings and confusions which will amuse and trouble me this evening. I must prepare my mind to lead a discussion of U. S. U.S.S.R. relations. How incompetent, detached, and uncaring I feel.

Margaret