

Konnarock, Virginia

January 30, 1950

1 a.m.

Dear Margaret,

Sometimes I wonder whether Judy is right when she complains that I have nothing to say except that I am tired. But today was a very difficult day, and I managed myself rather well. Prof. Vieter and his wife were here for lunch. Mother and father think rather highly of them. Frau Vieter was enchanted by mother and seems determined to be treated by father, and her husband seemed to be pleasantly surprised. He has very low expectations of unknown people, probably that is one reason why we get along so well.

For my part, I found it very strenuous to adjust myself to the changing moods and situations, although I think I succeeded to every one's satisfaction. I have managed to rewrite roughly a third of my paper for PMLA, so that with even moderate persistence, I should be through on time. But now I hope to have most of the remainder of the week to myself. I have been thinking of you often, but very haphazardly, sometimes in harmonious and then again in incongruous situations. I am very much afraid of all incongruous situations.

Until I started writing to you, I was too concerned with other things, but now I wish very much you were somewhere in the vicinity, that I could talk to you, and this desire pierces the gray fog of my tiredness. I don't yet know whether I shall come to Phila. in time to see you or not, although I would very much like to do so. But father has been ill, and may go to the hospital for observation, in which case I should stay with mother until Saturday. I shall find out on Monday night, and then I can write you of my definite plans.

You must excuse my short letter; in my mind I have written you so many good ones since I left you. . . .

January 31

I was too tired last night; I gave up and went to bed. Today has been one of the most depressing days for a long time; I have tried to work hard all day and I have accomplished nothing. Now it is evening and I am discouraged and discontented. I spent a long time explaining to mother about Aunt Priscilla and how wrong I am in my harsh judgment. Not that my observations are wrong, but the horror with which they inspire me is far out of proportion with their seriousness. And you know that I always wonder in this connection how it can be that you see any value in me, and I think that it would be much more fitting if you despised me, and thought me sentimental, or hypocritical, or self-righteous, or abnormal. What have you to do with my unhappiness?

Do not be afraid, I am not going to write you another letter as I did two weeks ago. I do not want to hurt or to frighten you. But what shall I write to you, if not the truth? You must not be afraid: we shall see each other again soon, next Sunday even, if you have time. I shall take either the seven or the eight o'clock train from Washington and arrive in North Philadelphia about 9:20 or 10:20 on Sunday morning. If you want to meet me, it will be nice, although going to meeting will probably be better for your soul, and you must care

for your soul above all other things. If you are not at the train, I shall telephone and see whether I can get hold of you in that way. You must decide what, if anything, we should do together. I have no commitments until after supper, about nine or ten o'clock, when I must go to the Gardens. If I feel Sunday as I do today, it would be better to avoid being with too many people for any length of time. Otherwise I shall do whatever you wish, and be as nice to you as I know how.

The more I think of you, the more I wish you were close to me. But usually I try not to think of you too much, because when I do, I can think of nothing else. I often wonder why I met you; you are a better thing than I deserve, and you deserve more than I can give you.

I cannot close this letter. What shall I tell you? If only my silence could speak to you and tell you how much I need you, and how painfully I like you.

Your
John

Until I started writing to you, I was too concerned with other things, but now I wish very much you were somewhere in the vicinity, that I could talk to you, and this desire gives me the gray fog of my mind. I don't know whether I shall come to this, or not. But to see you or not, although I would very much like to do so. But father has been ill, and may go to the hospital for observation, in which case I should stay with mother until Saturday. I shall find out on Monday night, and then I can write you of my definite plans.

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