

Cambridge, March 12, 1950
Sunday

Dear Margaret,

The past fifteen minutes I have spent deciding what to do next, and in the process of my deliberation the plight of this decaying day became so prominent in my mind that I must write to you about it, before I can try to do more work. The cynic who would list God's errors in the order of their magnitude, could well start with the first day and follow the account in Genesis to the seventh day, Sunday. This institution of resting and doing nothing for a whole day, is for me at least a monstrous proposition, although some people whom we know have done just that all their lives. But I must not talk that way.

You have one very bad effect on me. You make me too self-confident and over-bearing, probably as a natural contrast to your own attitude. Not only after the last letter I wrote you, but after almost every letter I feel very guilty about having been so loud-mouthed, and for having said things of which I know that they are only half true, and that even if they were true, I have no right to say them. Attitudes which are innocent and humble enough in the ridiculous frame of my own life have a tendency, which you have often noticed, to become disproportionately proud and vaunting, in a less narrow context.

Nevertheless, this has been a weary day. I have spent almost all of it sitting in the same chair reading Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Shaftesbury, and feeling oppressed by my deformed room. I wish the walls were not so slanting; they make me feel very ill at ease. I wish the wall paper were not quite so flowery. The cheap ornament looks ridiculous in the empty bareness of the room. Besides I have had nothing which one could call a meal all day, but worst of all are the people. The British aunt is moving out tonight, and in her place, - the bed will hardly have had time to cool, - a "family friend" is moving in, I hope not for long.

Nicky told me this, else I would know only from encountering these various feminine shapes in the hallway or on the stairs. This family friend has a most frightfully saccharine manner with the children, the mentality of a kindergarten teacher, and the mannerisms of a cat. This cat-like element has always been the major cause of my revulsion from some women. Oh! this is a very silly thing to write, but Nicky seems to feel somewhat the way I do. Last Wednesday there was a cocktail party here, and Nicky climbed up the outside of the house, to avoid being introduced by his mother to the crowd. Alex, who was invited, tells me it was not a good party.

As soon as I finish this, I shall go ~~out~~ down to mail it, and venture into the kitchen for something to eat. I would have gone earlier, but those three weird sisters have been sitting in the living room, and I would have felt like a thief. I hope they are gone now. In two hours, at least, they will have gone to bed, and then I can walk through the sleeping house again, and turn out all the lights, and feel a little bit more free.

This is a very selfish letter, a kind of emotional purgation. But I have been thinking much about you, hoping that you were well and not too discouraged with your work, and trying to look at myself ~~from~~ and my actions from your point of view, and thinking about the preposterous impossibility that I am.

Lein Johen.

P.S. - I think often about your coming. I shall have much work to do, but your plans must be determined by what you need or think best.