

Cambridge, Friday, April 15.

Dear Margaret,

It is almost supper time, and in just a few minutes I shall go down to pour the milk. Your aunt refused to commit herself as to when we would eat. If she expected me to wait around until she and her assorted children decide the time has come, she was mistaken. While I was setting the table, she and a friend were gossiping in the living room, a co-incidence which very much distracts me, since my impulse is always to throw silver, plates, and napkins right in her face, or, at best, to ask her if she had nothing at all to do. My charity, you see, has limitations.

*and needed a job.*

Your letter gave me many things to think about, but my thoughts in this respect are so well traveled that my mind has no difficulty at all in finding its way among the unknowns. The answers at which I arrive have only one practical imperative: to be patient and to work.—Your confusion cannot be solved by the logic of words. I do not think you believe in any such solution. What you have need of is some force, - either from within or from without, - which will be a mold and a pattern for your life. To find a pattern is not necessarily to find a good solution. There are good patterns and there are poor ones, and for lack of a better one, even confusion can serve as a pattern, as, indeed, for many people I know, - and to some extent for everyone, - it does.

(The people downstairs have started drinking cocktails now, the children are still playing "guns" outdoors and every few seconds an imaginary murder is committed. How wrong these practical people are to think life is merely a surface phenomenon. We all conduct ourselves under the hypothesis of a great "as if." It seems fewer and fewer people are acting as if they were children of God, and more and more people are acting as if they were savages. Do you think there is a valid distinction ?)

Your letter seems to revolve principally upon only one question, which I have tried to answer many times before. Perhaps my answer is insufficient; perhaps you misunderstand it, or refuse to believe it, but all I can do is to attempt to restate it in clearer words. You must never think that you are bad for me. You must put that idea altogether out of your mind. What is bad is within me and finds only a fleeting reflection in you. But you are very very good for me, the more intimate the spiritual relationship between us becomes. What makes many occasions so difficult is the fact that this relationship depends solely on you.

Superficially you would say that I am stubbornly convinced of a uniqueness to which I demand you unconditionally to conform in small and in large matters alike. Look at it differently: this way in which I live is as essential to me as water is to a fish, and surely you would not blame a fish for insisting on his need for water. But I need you also, and although I loved you when you were in a world very different from mine, I could not then or cannot now come closer to you. It is you who could come closer to me if you desired. But I do not think you do.

Can I do anything but wait until either you or someone else would come to me and save me ? Either you or someone else, because whoever it were would seem so different from anything I have known, that even if it were you, what you meant to me would blot out all those things about you that distract me now, the past, the Cambridge relatives, the lipstick that is there when I am not, the long corridor, and indeed every imperfection I might see. But I have a phantastic imagination which feeds on the unreal and the impossible. Do not let it distract you, and forgive me for writing you about my nightmares and my dreams.

It is almost eight o'clock. The cocktails lasted for a long time, and only just now did I finish with the supper dishes. I must finish my letter now, even though mailing it tonight will get it to you no faster, and you will not read it until you have come home from school on Monday, tired both from the work at school and from the week-end preparations for your wedding. Let me thank you for your letter, which means much more to me than you could imagine. I think about you at times almost incessantly and often turn around a corner on the street or walk into a room expecting to see you there. I would ask you to come to Cambridge on the 30th inspite of your wedding, to which I attach much less significance than you seem to do - to me it seems like a tragedy or a farce, depending upon the future, which I can not tell, since I am no prophet, - but if you came, your staying here would seem incongruous; if you stayed at the Cunningham's the meeting and separation would be too strenuous. I must work now; to write to you is to feel very close to you and to conclude a letter is to say good-bye. But this is nonsense.

John.

1764 Y 12 1420