

May 6, 1950

Dear Tochen,

This is a very harsh letter, more harsh I think than I deserve in spite of my weakness and what you consider indifference; but I am not indifferent.

I am very glad and very grateful to you for having telephoned to me Thursday night. How else would I know that you know my pain. For you say that I must not be angry or hurt or upset, but it is so phrased that an indifferent reader or one who saw only my side of it would imagine that you simply wished to avoid responsibility for doing something unworthy. But I know how hard it is for you; I am not indifferent. I hope that you feel better for having written the letter. I do not think that anything I say in reply can make you feel better. I have said it all before. Yet it must be said again and again and again. It is a ritual, a very strange ritual, which gains meaning and reality in its repetition. If you will look again at my last two letters, you will see the statement and even more the implications of what I must say again.

I had expected your revulsion for the "cheap farce". I do not feel the same way. My closeness to you is built on complete trust and certainty of your value. My intellectual perception of what you are, and my acceptance of it, is much clearer than my emotions or my ability to express what I know. Yet I do not

Your closeness to me is not.

think that what happened was right. (Look back at my letters.) The fact that I could not prevent it springs from a weakness and lack of courage to which you must never reconcile yourself. Yet you encourage it by making me feel that every disagreement with you imperils our relationship. I have thought of what happened in terms of a clumsy metaphor: You ask me for an apple which hangs on a high limb; in getting it I <sup>hurt</sup> my back and know at the same time that ~~the fruit~~ <sup>the apple</sup> is bad and bitter. When you taste it you look at me reproachfully. Some day you will fling ~~the apple~~ away and go away, leaving me with my hurt back. I think you knew this before; you said something on Sunday which indicated your sensitivity to my feeling. But I think you need to be reminded.

Your letter is full of so many angry reproaches: ~~that~~ I "help you ~~very~~ eagerly to bury falsehoods and incongruities", that I am "adept at ignoring... the obvious". I do not want to say anything in reply because I know how intense everything is for you. But, remember, that while you are free to express yourself as freely as you choose, I am not, because I am afraid of finally cutting the last thread. If I were not so afraid, perhaps I could feel angry. I do not know.



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Now there is something still more difficult to be said. And here you will probably not believe me, and everything I say will only make more trouble for me. I did notice that Priscilla seemed to be quieter when you came down and that her manner was <sup>not</sup> cordial. Yet there was not the dramatic change which you portray. She had said very little up to that moment. As you said to me, I do not think that she finds Alex completely sympathetic. Your criticism of Priscilla to me has always seemed to suggest a responsibility on my part. And in this letter you remind me that my relatives are the only things ~~among~~ I leave with you. What do you think my responsibility is in this matter? Remember that after my first excuse, I did acknowledge her silence. You put me so much on the defensive; I do not ~~know~~ know what to say or what you want me to do. I do not think that you are well taken care of; nor ~~do I~~ think that ~~Priscilla~~ Priscilla takes care of her children or herself as she should. My mother would do things differently and so should I. But we were brought up differently. What judgment do you want me to make?

Do you want me to hate her? Or do you simply want me to have nothing to do with her? In either case, you are asking a great deal. My sense of responsibility to my family is very strong. I should like also to be able to love my responsibility. I do not think that you want me either to hate or ignore. You simply want to be reassured as to my feeling for you. And nothing I can say now will help. It will take time and change in both of us.

There is one other thing not stated in your letter, but perhaps implied; or perhaps I have just become supersensitive. Do you ~~think~~ feel estranged because I was not "very much affected" by the music? Do you think that it or the extent of your emotion left me indifferent?

I told you that the music is very strange and very <sup>to me</sup> frightening. You know that I had a great deal to think about - what had happened - and you. I felt then as Peter must once have felt years ago. He was still very little; and once when I was taking care of him, something happened that made me weep and sob. He was very gentle and awed. He did not understand, but he tried to tell me that he loved me.



I do not think that you need to answer any of this. Perhaps much of what I have written will only make you feel impatient at my misunderstanding. But I feel very lonely when I think that the music and an incident with a third person remains as the only significant memory from that weekend. — nothing that is good and which has to do with me, only bitter, poisoned fruit.

Now, I have been writing for two hours, and I have said nothing. What can I tell you of things here. The birds are singing that beautiful evening song that hurts me. I tried to get you a ginkgo leaf, but I could not reach it. The ~~del~~ daffodils that Ken planted are very beautiful; and Mother got the beautiful dark mahogany-colored pansies that I love best in my <sup>and's</sup> room where I am still sleeping. This summer I shall be downstairs, again at the back of the house. One room will be my bedroom, and another will be my study. Melancolia will hang on the wall. Perhaps I shall work for the Library instead of going to work camp.

All morning was spent in dress fittings, Janet's and Mary's and mine. I was very quiet and patient while my hemline was raised and lowered; I had a great deal to think about. Janet has chosen "nice music", including "Make thee clean, my heart." She still behaves in an excited, somewhat exhibitionistic manner. We must be patient.

Mother received a nice letter from your mother today thanking her for the tickets. So they will come. The only difficulty now seems to be one for me. I have a class which lasts until 1:10, and there is no train to get me there in the afternoon. So I probably shall not get there before evening. I shall come back <sup>the</sup> next weekend for the Crest. But I wanted to hear it all with you.

Papa seems to be living in terms of the Bach weekend. Last night I had to work hard to prevent him from inviting someone to come to Bethlehem "next weekend". Poor Papa.

Sunday morning  
It is such a beautiful morning. The music is gay. I would like to take a walk with you, but instead I must go to <sup>the</sup> meeting and then be part of the family and then work very hard. Please remember that my life is difficult too. My friendship with you is not something with

which I amuse myself. It is a difficulty (4)  
which might resolve all other difficulties  
— or rather show me how to face them —  
— or which might leave me more defeated  
than I have ever been. I am willing  
to be patient, to work at understanding and  
being understood. Though you talk a great  
deal about patience, and though in the  
rest of your life I know that you are  
more patient than I am, I do not  
think that you are patient with me. And yet  
as I write this I remind myself how  
terribly hard and agonizing this is for you —  
to depend at all on someone else. And  
the bitterly sharp logic of your mind demands  
proof: ~~of~~ that I am or that I want to be  
what you want; somehow the ~~very~~ objective  
evidence of my life now does not convince  
you, and you are dismayed by what I tell you  
of the past. So my words seem quite empty  
and lying. I know that you misjudge me.  
It will be a very hollow victory for you if you  
ever convince me that you are right and  
that all that I have been doing is  
"to help you bury falsehoods."



Like my father I am living in terms of the weekend at Bethlehem. But that too can be a very bitter and hard thing for both of us unless you remember that I have long-standing responsibilities to other people - that I cannot speak to them coldly and curtly simply to get away and to be with you. You cannot ask me to "forsake all others" unless you are willing to assume responsibilities for which neither of us are ready. This is my "realism". Does it seem a stupid and deliberately falsifying misrepresentation to you?

I have been told to stay home from Meeting to be a chaperone. Mother will take this letter to the mail and I will try to begin on my work. Remember, I do not need an answer to all of this. I need something else. If you can't send it, send anything. Thank you for your telephone call on Thursday. It means more and more as I think about that letter.

Margaret