

Dear Tochen,

May 11, 1950

Thank you very much for your letters - all three of them. I do not know how to answer them, especially the last one; the gentleness and tenderness of it means a great deal to me, and I have nothing to answer, only a grateful quietness.

I do want you to write to me as often as you can. I do not think that your changes of mood would upset me more with the greater frequency of letters. Anyway, even such a bitter incisive letter as the first of these three has a beautiful and positive meaning for me in addition to the painful meaning. It is very strange that at the first reading I completely misunderstood it, knew nothing of its contents except that it was a letter from you and that you cared about me. You see, I am quite irrational.

I sometimes find it very hard to write to you; I hesitate over each sentence. If I answer the things that you say to me, or ask me, I seem to run so many risks of misinterpretation, through my own awkward wording, your mood, or some action of my own, which interprets my words in a sense I never meant. Think of this, my constant insecurity and fear, which makes me awkward. I have been through a very hard day. Actually, nothing terrible happened; only my anticipations were painful. And now this dinner party with the Binghamms looms ahead in less than two hours. Thank goodness that Alex will soon

be here to go with me - companions in misery.

I want very much to love all the things, animate and inanimate, in my life. But you do not mention people in your list. Do they come in? And if so, on what conditions does one love them? Because they are part of what has been created, part of a seamless web? Or must there be some other more immediate reason? Please do not answer this as if it were an argument. It is not; it is an honest question. I think that people should be included in the list of simple things to be loved - not because ~~in real~~ they are essentially simple, but because they can be loved in a way that is right and good and simple. And please remember, I am not standing on my record.

There are so many things that I would like to talk to you about - my reaction to your dichotomy of body and spirit, the pure and impure; the complete innocent ignorance of the children I teach when we discuss the Salem Witch Trials. They have "progressed" so far that they are innocent animals who could not distinguish Satan from any other democrat. And I would like to tell you about the trip with my eighth-graders today to the Cathedral of St. John the Divine. But now I must do something much less important. I must dress for the Bingham Party. I will try to keep my head above water and write soon again. And I will be able to get to Bethlehem in time. Miss Mitchell has given both permission and a blessing.

Margaret