

Cape May
June 26, 1950

Dear Tocken,

Your letter came to me this morning as I sat in the bright sunshine and struggled through the last lines of the third scene of Iphigenie. I shall not be finished long before you come. Thank you for writing even when it is difficult for you and you feel that you have little to say. I wish that I had your letter with me now to make me feel more at home in this very strange place. This room is a small, ^{canny-}yellow, and very hot box. Papa looked anxiously for fireescapes before he would leave me. Poor Papa; he will sleep very badly worrying about the heat, the fire risk, and his talk tomorrow. The bed is very clean, but the towels at the washstand are very dirty; I do not feel like making the necessary fuss to get clean ones.

I have had only a brief glimpse of the ocean. We arrived just in time for a terrible talk by an arbitrator of labor Disputes. The general topic of the Conference

is something about bridging gaps of misunderstanding. The arbitrator, who is a very simple, good-hearted man, worked the metaphor to the heights of incredible absurdity. The poor man was so vulnerable to satire that I tried hard to ignore him and to listen only to the sound of waves breaking outside. All of this seemed to depress Papa very much. I suppose he imagined himself uttering similar inanities tomorrow. I felt quite unable to say anything reassuring. Sometimes I worry very much about what seems to be an increasing incapacity to respond to Papa's moods, ^{which disconcertingly combine} ~~with~~ ~~and~~ violence and excitement ~~and~~ tenderness. And yet he seems to want me with him.

June 27, 1950

In a few minutes I must go back to the hotel to have breakfast. I have been walking on the boardwalk since about 6:30. The sand looks dirty and used, but the ocean is as it always is. Last night I thought of a great many things that I wanted to say to you, but now I am too tired and too lulled by the sound of the waves to think. They will have to

wait until all of this is over.

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The only thing on which my mind now dwells is that you are twenty today, and that I am six years older. I think of this only very occasionally. When I do I wonder what is the practical effect of this physical difference. That it should produce an effect only in the remote future, and that that effect should be produced primarily by physical changes, has always seemed to me somewhat absurd - though it ^{seems} sometimes to trouble you. So I must look for the difference somewhere else. If it is a question of emotional stability - I doubt that years will ^{make} (or have made) ~~much~~ much difference to either of us. Whatever the reason, I think that you steady me.

I hope that your mother is as glad to have you with her as I feel strange and lonely when I realize how very much alone I am.

Margaret