

MA 214

Germantown, am 7 Juli 1950

Lieber Jochen,

Heute habe ich deinen Brief, dass Du den vorigen Freitag schriebst endlich empfangen. Wer war er alle diesen Tagen wenn ich ihn so viel brauchte weiss ich nicht. Du kannst mir häufig im Deutsch schreiben wenn Du schreibst so schon wie dieser ruhige Brief. Du fragst immer ob Du irgendetwas für mich tun kannst. Ja, Du kannst aber ich glaube Du es unmöglich finden wirst. Du kannst Dich ins Bett legen früher und spazieren gehen so dass der Körper und das Gemut gesund sind. Auch kannst Du versuchen freundlicher gegen Deinen Eltern sein.

Now, having said these overbold words my German breaks down. I was about to say that above all you should try to remember that whatever I may say that displeases or hurts you, you should try not to despair of me, to believe how hard I try to do and to be what you want me to be. It disturbs me when so many of your letters seem to indicate that you conceal yourself from your parents. What do you fear from them? After you had been at Mantoloking this spring, you told me with such happiness how close you were to them and how well they understood you. Is it the closeness that you cannot bear? I have thought about this a great deal; I could probably write more intelligently and understandingly if it were not for the fact that Alex and two companions have emerged onto the terrace to drink beer and to "be boys together." I must talk about things that are less abstract if I am to write to you at all. And I must because I need to be with you tonight.

Margrit telephoned yesterday afternoon while Mother and I were preparing supper and asked if she could come for the night since she had a day off. It was good to have her. Mother and I had been listening to the Mozart Requiem, and I had been explaining, very lamely as I do when I feel on the defensive, what I thought the meaning of the Dies Irae was. The telephone rang just as my lecture was on the point of collapse. When she came she amused us with her descriptions of the children and the situation in which she is living. I do not suppose she has written your parents much about it, nor do I intend to supply the missing details. Having worked in settlements and in a camp, I could listen very calmly to a description which would horrify you, since you do not approve of the project in the first place. But once one is committed to such a job one accepts the stupidities and indignities, realizing them to be unimportant details. I liked Margrit's attitude. She was matter-of-fact and realistic without being insensitive. And at the same time, I hoped that I would never have to do such a job again. Yet I wondered whether I was spending my time as well. Though I am learning a little German and a little history, I do not think that my heart becomes wiser or more tender. I think of you a great deal, but I do little more than recreate terrible and beautiful moments.

Today was better, though, than any day this week. The weather was so beautiful that I would be blindly ungracious not to feel its delight. Now three roses, some ferns, and a spray of linden stand on my table beside the typewriter to remind me of the perfect beauty that is now swallowed in darkness. I sat outdoors most of the day reading English history. Mother spent the day working in the garden, and I prepared the meals. And everything I did seemed to have an almost sacramental meaning. But even this day has the messy ending which always frightens me almost to the point of destroying all the beauty. I have been driven from my study by the sound of those voices, and this is not the beautiful letter that I wanted to write. I stupidly drank too much coffee so that I could read late tonight. Now I can neither work nor sleep. My peace of mind is such a fragile, material thing.

4:15 A.M.

The sickle moon is high in the sky. I suppose I shall still be awake when daylight comes. My head aches a little, and I feel foolish and useless and empty-headed. However, I shall try to read a little Goethe, so as not to waste the rest of the night. See, what an ironic punishment for urging you to go to bed earlier!

sleep well

Deine Margaret

Margaret telephoned yesterday afternoon while Mother and I were preparing supper and asked if she could come for the night since she had a day off. It was good to have her. Mother and I had been listening to the Mozart Requiem, and I had been explaining, very lamely as I do when I feel on the defensive, what I thought the meaning of the Requiem was. The telephone rang just as my lecture was on the point of collapse. When she came she amused us with her descriptions of the children and the situation in which she was living. I do not suppose she has written your parents much about it, nor do I intend to supply the missing details. Having worked in settlements and in a camp, I could listen very easily to a description which would horrify you since you do not approve of the project in the first place. But once one is committed to such a job one accepts the stupidities and indignities, realizing them to be unimportant details. I liked Margaret's attitude. She was matter-of-fact and realistic without being insensitive. And at the same time, I hoped that I would never have to do such a job again. Yet I wondered whether I was spending my time as well. Though I am learning a little German and a little history, I do not think that my heart becomes wiser or more tender. I think of you a great deal, but I do little more than recreate terrible and beautiful moments.

Today was better, though, than many days this week. The weather was so beautiful that I would be dimly unconscious not to feel its delight. Now three roses, some ferns, and a spray of linden stand on my table beside the typewriter to remind me of the perfect beauty that is now swallowed in darkness. I sat outdoors most of the day reading English history. Mother spent the day working in the garden, and I prepared the meals. And everything I did seemed to have an almost sacramental meaning. But even this day has the messy ending which always frightens me almost to the point of destroying all the beauty. I have been driven from my study by the sound of those voices, and this is not the beautiful letter that I wanted to write. I stupidly drank too much coffee so that I could read late tonight. Now I can neither work nor sleep. My peace of mind is such a fragile, material thing.