

January 16, 1951

Dear Jochen,

I feel very tired and anxious. I have felt this way since I left you Sunday evening, and yet there is nothing over which I should worry, except the letters that don't come and your letter that will come. I have felt as continuously troubled, though less intensely so, as I did during that week in December. All of this anxiety in spite of the fact that my work goes well. Before your telephone call this evening the woman downstairs stood and shouted angrily for a long time at her baby who would not go to sleep. Now everything is very quiet. The baby and its mother are asleep. I would like to sleep too, but I will not go to bed for a long time--not until I know that I can sleep. I feel tired and childish enough to cry myself to sleep if Dorry were not on her way here. She has her own troubles which are so modern and seem to me so empty and almost sordid that I do not know how to begin to help her.

January 17, 1951

I have had a long time to think about your letter. Dorry brought it with her this morning when she came to have lunch with me at school before taking the plane. She had assumed from the postmark that this might be the letter from Winsor or Buckingham. Your letter was read at first in snatches--between an interview with an eighth-grader in which we discussed Shakespeare, modern poetry, and Wordsworth's definition of poetry, and a period with a tenth grader in which we discussed the process of making laws and enforcing them. And there were conferences with Sarah and another history teacher about possible changes in the curriculum and how to fill up the gaps in the department. Then all the way home I read the letter and thought about you and wept a little. Now having spent four hours in cleaning the apartment and bathing and thinking about you and the letter I think that I should tell you some of the things that I have thought. This is not a "flehender Eilbrief" nor is it an angry letter, though my attempts at clarity and precision and my effort to tell you quietly and without tears what I think and feel, what hurts me and troubles me may perhaps sound to you like anger. I have no reason for anger, nor do I feel it.

What hurts me most is that you speak of my "Heiratspläne" and your fear concerning them, the fear from which you would be freed if you did badly in Medical School and had to leave. Either we both have plans or neither of us has plans. There can be no difference of opinion about this. And I would prefer to assume that we did not have plans. The fact that I am leaving a good job and a place to live and that I hope to find both of these in Cambridge perhaps makes it appear that I have "plans". Under similar circumstances most people would have plans. But we are not most people. The reason that I am leaving New York is that I cannot live here any more. I made my own decision, and you were surprised when you learned that I had told Miss Mitchell. Evidently you thought that I should wait until I had found a job in order to make up my mind. The reason that I am coming to Cambridge is that I love you and need to be near you. But perhaps I cannot come. Perhaps I will not be able to find a job. Then everything will have decided itself and I will go home, to teach if I can, if not, to I will be a housekeeper for my mother. She will pay me, and I will still come to see you on weekends, if you still want me. I do not intend to register at the Graduate School. I would not feel justified in spending the money, and I know that I need a job ^{in which I can express} the things that I cannot express by reading books and writing papers. I wish that I could express the love that is in me by reading and writing and thinking, and through music as

music, as you do, but I do not yet know how. If ever I learn, you will be my teacher. If you should decide that it was too hard and that you could not even see me, then I would hope to find enough work so that I would be so exhausted that I could not feel anything. What more can I tell you. So far as they exist, these are my "plans." I hope God will find better ones for me.

I know that you do not think that I understand your fears, but I believe that I do understand them as well as anyone can besides you yourself. Sometimes I wonder whether you understand your own fears. You are much more afraid that I do not love you than I am afraid that you do not love me. You ask me continually and you search for occasions and symbols which will prove to you that I do not love you. Sometimes I wonder whether this search is also a search for escape. You have told me often of the impossibilities with which you are confronted: that it is impossible to live without me, but that it is equally impossible to live with me. Why do you make plans? We are together only on weekends; we can only plan for those. Sometimes I have also wondered whether you would feel differently if I were more anxious, if I lived as you do in the midst of conflicting possibilities. Would your perspective be better? Would you be able to distinguish between what is impossible and what is very hard, between what God asks of you and what He does not ask? The decisions and plans are His; yours and mine only insofar as we accept or reject His plan. Perhaps if I thought that I were writing this book, instead of God, I would write to you or come to you in tears to tell you that I, too, was afraid and that it was impossible for me too. But what a silly, trite, "True Story" kind of book. Who would finish reading it. Yet, still, I might be tempted to write my story that way, since you are so disturbed by my tears, and since you understand them so little and could be so easily misled by them; you think they are my weapons, that I plead with them, and by means of them convince you that I need you so much that you cannot leave me. I will admit that occasionally they have been used in that way, but that is not what they have meant most of the time. I weep because I am helpless, because I can do nothing but feel the pain. Often it seems to me that God is closest to me then, that he stands very close and watches me, hoping that I will learn to see him better soon. My tears plead with you for nothing. They are prayers for a kind of protection and a gift of understanding which you cannot give me, which no person can ever give to another. And yet if we both had what I pray for, we could share it. Verstehst Du, Jochen?

I feel very guilty about my family, both on their account and on yours. I do not know how much of the depression in which your letter was written was a product of Alex's behavior,, but what you have written to your parents is exaggerated in a way which will not clarify anything for anyone, including you. What Alex says when drunk, his manner while working under the tensions which are present in his life seems to me relatively unimportant. It is certainly true that he tends to regard you as "cold-blooded" and me as a martyr. That is mostly my fault. I do not know how to cure the fault now except by the maintenance of a public manner which is less emotional and more cheerful than I think I can manage to sustain. As for my Father's letter and sedative. I had asked for these for the alleviation of chronic insomnia, an ailment for which he has given me limited quantities of sedative since I was at Bryn Mawr—long before I knew you. Perhaps you would like to know that I wrote a cheerful letter home (more cheerful than I felt) on the train down from Boston, telling them, among other things how well I had slept. My letter yesterday said nothing of the insomnia which has been even worse this week. I wish that I knew of a way to get pills without asking Papa. Then it would be completely unnecessary to discuss the matter. When my work goes well, I find that I can manage on two or three hours of sleep without too much exhaustion, though I long for oblivion and my emotions are very difficult to control. When I am so tired, I want to confess myself, be forgiven, and sleep. Often I wonder whether I should tell Mother and Papa—and Alex—all about my relationship with Leo. I wonder whether it would add more to their understanding or to their

misunderstanding of me. Usually I believe the latter. I wish that you would help me to decide what to do. I wish that Mother had asked questions, that you could have told her. It will be so ugly if I tell her. I seem to understand it now even less well than at the beginning.

You told me this weekend that I would help Mother if I could "confide in her more." What shall I confide? My fears and anxieties. That can hardly help. My love of my work? That I try to do. My plans for the future? I have none to speak of. And yet you make it so hard to remember that I have no plans. You are practical and decide that we should save money. And, hesitantly, because you imagine that perhaps I regard my money as mine and not also yours, you suggest a joint savings account. When everything is decided, you seem so happy, and you make the fact that I give you a check into a symbol of something. And then your mood and mind changes and the symbol that you made is discarded. It sits in a drawer with time-tables and is mentioned as you walk with me to the subway. Is it all right? Yes, of course, it's all right since that is the way it is and must be. Logically, it must be all right since the symbol meant nothing to me in the beginning. But the trouble is that now it does mean something because you spoke of it and made it a symbol that had meaning for me. Do you understand why it is hard for me, why the silly symbol that means nothing comes again and again to my mind, though I tell it to go away and not to bother me. There are others too. Please, let us not make plans, not use symbols, until they can represent something that exists, not something that we hope to see. Please, if I come home with you at Easter, let us not look at your Uncle's ring. I do not want to see it until the day I wear it - if I ever do.

I am very tired, and I have written a great deal and yet nothing about the fear that is at the center of your letter and which you do not think that either your parents or I can understand. -- the part of you that would be lost in marriage. I have thought about it in the past, and I still think about it, but I do not know how to speak of it -- partly because you have said so little to me about it. I do not believe that it would be lost in marriage, though its continued existence apart from me might make you feel very lonely. Whatever happened, it would be hard and painful. You must find out what is possible and what is impossible. Then we will make our plans, together or separately. There will be no "emergency" marriages.

Now I must try to work and to sleep. Do not worry about answering this letter. If you want, we can talk about some of these things the weekend after the examinations.

Ich möchte bei Dir sein

Margaret