

LAST WILL AND TESTAMENT

FOURTH: I give and bequeath as follows:

OF

A. My collection of AUGUST DERLETH

bequeath to the State Historical Society

of explanation I state in the following: KNOW ALL MEN BY THESE PRESENTS, That I, August Derleth

of the Village of Sauk City, Sauk County, Wisconsin, conscious

of the uncertainty of human life, hereby declare this instru-

ment to be my Last Will and Testament in form and manner as follows:

FIRST: I revoke any former wills by me made.

SECOND: I direct the payment of all just debts.

THIRD: I give and bequeath as follows:

A. I give and bequeath Arkham House and all pertinent

effects (to wit: complete stock of Arkham House & Mycroft

& Moran imprints, one desk, two typewriters, address file,

stationery, and all such material pertinent to shipment of the

books) to my wife and such legal heirs as I may leave, to be

divided as follows: an equal one-half part and portion to my

wife, and the remaining half to my offspring, with the sugges-

tion that the effects of Arkham House be disposed of in toto,

first option to buy given to Donald Wandrei, of 1152 Portland

Avenue, St. Paul 4, Minnesota, if he survives me, said effects

to include all Arkham House books in stock, which should command

as remainder stock not less than \$.25 per copy, together with

copyrights and rights attendant upon them; failing which, sale

of the books should be arranged for as remainders with one of

the various remainder firms listed in the annual, Literary Market

Place, published by R. R. Bowker Company, with the stipulation

that the assistance of Alice Conger and John Stanton be requested,



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SEVENTH: All books (and specifically my library), magazines, papers, notes and material of like nature not specifically otherwise disposed of by this will, I give and bequeath to my residuary legatee or legatees.

EIGHTH: If my estate on Lueders Road is retained as an occupied homestead by any of my heirs who become my residuary legatees or legatee, it is my will and I further direct the remaining books of my private library shall be retained in the home until such time as it is vacated as a residence by my residuary legatees, at which time the said books may be sold to, or presented to the designated repositories as follows:

Each book upon whose file card is marked the letter "B" may go to the Sauk City High School Library.

Each book upon whose file card is marked the letter "C" may go to the Short Course Library of the College of Agriculture of the University of Wisconsin.

Each book upon whose file card is marked the letter "D" may go to the Sauk City Public Library.

Each book upon whose file card is marked the letter "E" shall be destroyed.

NINTH: All the rest, residue and remainder of my estate, I give, devise and bequeath as follows:

A. To my wife, the life use of my home on Lueders Road, its household furniture and housekeeping equipment.

B. To my wife, the family car.

C. To my wife, the income from all the rest, residue and remainder of my estate for the care, comfort and support of herself and our children, and the education of our children, until such time as the youngest of my issue shall reach his or her majority, provided always that if the income from my estate is not sufficient for the above requirements, then so much of the principal or corpus may be used as is necessary,



employed by them for the duties. The Wisconsin State Historical Society, or the literary editor employed by them, is vested with discretionary and editorial powers. The proper officers of the Society shall exercise editorial discretion over the publication or suppression of such unpublished manuscripts as I may leave. The Society shall be at liberty to consult other impartial authorities in the field of American Literature to aid in the exercise of their proper discretion, together with a discretion to continue the publication and sale of any of my already published works, or to prepare anthologies of my published fiction, poetry or journal excerpts, published or unpublished, for publication, either under their own imprint or by lease to some other publisher, for which service they <sup>may</sup> ~~can~~ assess my estate the customary 10% agent's fee. Title to my literary work is to remain the property of my wife, daughter or other issue, or as I may hereinafter provide by a later testamentary direction, but in the event that circumstances should occur to deprive me of my wife, children and grandchildren, or any descendant in a direct line, then I give and bequeath to the Wisconsin State Historical Society all title, copyrights, etc., in all my published <sup>and</sup> unpublished work. Editorial discretion shall also be exercised over my letters, and the said Wisconsin State Historical Society shall be considered as empowered to proceed with publication or arrangements for publication of any of my unpublished work of whatsoever nature, provided that a just and fair royalty of not less than 10% of the retail price per copy on such publications shall be paid to my surviving legal heirs. The 10% royalty above specified may be altered by a mutual written agreement between the Wisconsin State Historical Society and the persons to whom the agreed royalty is to be paid, this to be evidenced by a written agreement and subject to change from year to year as circumstances justify change.



FOURTH: I give and bequeath as follows:

A. My collection of comics and cartoons, I give and bequeath to the State Historical Society of Wisconsin; by way of explanation I state that my collection of comics shall include all bound or unbound comics, original drawings, all books in reference to comics, as well as notes pertaining to them, all clippings, etc. in any way relative to them.

B. I give and bequeath to the Wisconsin State Historical Society Library my collection of my own works, consisting of one copy of each book and one copy of each magazine, newspaper, etc. containing work of mine.

C. I give and bequeath to the Wisconsin State Historical Society Library all manuscript copies of my work, together with the option to publish at the customary royalty to accrue to my estate, any hitherto unpublished work among those manuscripts which the Society shall see fit to publish. I suggest that my wife and/or my literary executor lease or sell to the Society for their publication at the customary royalty the plates of my historical novels, specifically WIND OVER WISCONSIN, RESTLESS IS THE RIVER, STILL IS THE SUMMER NIGHT, BRIGHT JOURNEY, and SHADOW OF NIGHT.

FIFTH: All autographed letters, all other filed correspondence and all other unspecified papers, personal correspondence, and other manuscripts, or other records, or material relating to my life and my literary work, I give and bequeath to the Wisconsin State Historical Society Library and Manuscript Division. My collection of magazines, more specifically described as "little magazines or reviews" shall go to the Wisconsin State Historical Society at Madison.

SIXTH: I hereby appoint as my literary executor the Wisconsin State Historical Society of the State of Wisconsin, to be represented by its proper officers or by a competent person



LAST WILL AND TESTAMENT

I give and bequeath as follows:

A. My collection of AUGUST DERLETH books. I give and

bequeath to the State Historical Society of Wisconsin; by way

KNOW ALL MEN BY THESE PRESENTS, That I, August Derleth, of the Village of Sauk City, Sauk County, Wisconsin, conscious of the uncertainty of human life, hereby declare this instrument to be my Last Will and Testament in form and manner as follows:

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B. It shall be my wish that reasonable time shall be granted to permit removal of Arkham House effects from the house on Lueders Road, if, (a) it is desirable that such removal be effected; (b) sale of the house and property is contemplated.



## AUGUST DERLETH BOARD-2000

*August 20, 2000*

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## THE AUGUST DERLETH SOCIETY

Post Office Box 481, Sauk City, Wisconsin 53583 • <http://www.derleth.org>

**For Immediate Release**

### **News Release**

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#### **August Derleth Society Endorses Recreational Trail Concept**

SAUK CITY, Wisconsin, August 13, 2001. At a meeting of the Board of the August Derleth Society on June 10, 2001, one of our members, Mr. Bart Olson, offered a proposal for a recreational trail named after Derleth that would cross the Wisconsin River at Sauk City. The proposal suggested repair or replacement of the old railroad trestle that crosses the river south of the current Route 12 bridge, and our Board voted to endorse Mr. Olson's personal efforts to establish a recreational trail honoring Derleth.

We wish to clarify, however, that we take no specific stand on the disposition of the trestle bridge itself, whether it should be repaired, replaced, or removed in favor of a trail constructed as part of the new U.S. Route 12 bridge to be constructed in the near future, or whether snowmobile traffic is appropriate on this thoroughfare. By giving our endorsement, we simply indicated approval of the concept of a recreational trail spanning the river at Sauk City that would bear Derleth's name.

We understand that there are numerous and complex aesthetic, environmental, safety, and financial issues that must be fully addressed before the various parties with interests in this matter can be resolved, and we support a full discussion of those issues.

August Derleth loved his native Sac Prairie, and we strongly believe he would have wished that any resolution of these issues preserve the natural beauty of the river and its environs, protect its flora and fauna, and ensure the safety of visitors to its shores. We sincerely hope that any trail established in his name will satisfy all of these criteria.

The existing trestle bridge has historical and literary significance as a frequent subject of Derleth's writing and one of his favorite haunts; we would, of course, be delighted if the structure or some part of it could be preserved in a fashion consistent with the conditions mentioned above. We also recognize that its preservation in place may not be feasible. One possible solution would be transfer of a section of the bridge to an off-river location as a memorial to Derleth and the trestle's role in his work and Sauk City's rich and proud history.

We look forward to participation in these discussions and working with all parties to find a solution that will make the trail a popular destination in Derleth Country.

For additional information, please contact Kay Price, Executive Secretary of the ADS, at Post Office Box 481, Sauk City, Wisconsin 53583 (Telephone: 608.643.3242. E-mail: [kprice@midplains.net](mailto:kprice@midplains.net))



( Let me know about Sandy + my mother's meeting )

7<sup>th</sup> A.D.

my grandparents on the, German side, were German  
+ they had a very different saying, very bluntly that love  
went wherever it was sent even if it was up a pig,  
nothermost extremities. Only they called a pig *ne* is  
a very blunt name. Do you really love Sandy A.D.  
Bluntly + frankly is it a lovers love, for remember she  
at her age could be your own child, or you could have ~~the~~  
one at her age, or is it a protecting fatherly love, my mother  
advised me, to my own loves was harsh. She usually  
either ridiculed the ones I liked or praised to high heaven  
the ones I hated. Consequently she ruined, with Ralph  
help, my love affairs + as a result have led a very  
unhappy, dissatisfied, drudge of a life for years. Embittered,  
wary, sometimes don't care attitude, my mother + she was  
a fine person, nagged + preached, until I gave up the way  
I should have married + didn't. He has never married  
lives in Michigan + is a successful professional man. I  
wonder sometimes if he ever thinks of me + if he does, it  
is probably as a weird sister. I have taught myself to  
be contented + have made my own life, among my books,  
music + hobbies. I have had chances to marry + very lately  
too, but I have past the love stage, even if deep partly  
hasn't, + should that almost impossible thing happen.  
it would be for security, a home, + a deep respect  
+ companionship. Love went out of my life years +  
years ago, it is dead, boxed up + it can never rise  
from the casket. I have assigned it to the my  
mother's death a friend said this to me + I heard it  
reflects my life as no other remark could. Hey, now



do the many things + feel free to do them, the things you  
have always wanted to do + get the many things <sup>you</sup> for  
years have been deprived of. Act the way you  
want to speak the way you want to + feel free  
for the first time in your life". My mother dominated  
the household she took for us, ran our lives + ordered  
us about. Sometimes I did everything wrong. even my  
speech, my likes, my dislikes, my friends, the book I  
read, everything was wrong + when I resisted all this  
a big family row resulted. I was never happy only  
very uncomfortable + miserable. I should have, instead  
of leading a respectable life, revolted + been a downright  
slut, then mother would have had good cause to complain.  
After all this is your own business, you must make  
up your own mind as to the one you want to marry.  
I hope it isn't this child, for a child who is so  
short in experience, only in play acting as she is  
equal + I believe she is carrying this all off very  
well. She is quite an actor. I frankly perhaps  
brutally say. I don't want to see this marriage  
take place. It will not work. Sandy know what  
love is? that's a laugh. she hasn't been alive long  
enough to know what a gnawing, consuming, love  
is the longing, the tears, the sadness + the happiness  
of it. She hadn't met with enough men of this  
world or associated with many or varied persons to  
know her true mind. She should break away from you  
go away to school or a different town + associate  
with more people. Tonight the card gang has a bang  
up party. In going Goldene will work. Myrt is  
still dam awfully wish she would quit or take an  
extended vacation. God bless you dear friend + I do  
mean, dear friend, for your help me over many rough spots.  
Best of everything my dear Sep



19 November, 1949

Dear Inez,

I continue to appreciate your very genuine interest in my amatory existence, but I assure you the problem is not just one of an older man and a chicken scarcely hatched, for I am younger than my years, and Sandy is older than hers. I truly do not exaggerate when I say that despite the fact that Sandy can act fully in character as a high school girl, she has the body of a young woman of 20, and the knowledge of a woman older than that. It was all the more apparent the other day when she and Myra met. Myra is now 22, and after an hour or so it was perfectly obvious that Sandy at 15 was in every way the superior of Myra at 22. Moreover, without anything blatantly obvious, it was clear that Sandy concluded that despite Myra's charm, she could hold me against any attempt to move in on me that Myra could now make. And so she could. What was even more patent since it was finally put into words, was that Myra herself recognized Sandy's superiority, and in the course of the luncheon and the subsequent hours -- for Sandy refused pointblank to return to school and insisted on spending the afternoon with Myra, her small son, and myself, which I did not obstruct for reasons of my own and since Sandy would miss but one class period by so doing -- Myra quite frankly began to give Sandy advice right in front of me, which I found vastly amusing, by telling her how "dumb" she had been, "I had him but I lost him," and warning her never to take me for granted. "Augie is always around when you need him, and you get to thinking he always will be, and that's where you make a mistake." Sound advice, and Sandy recognized it.

Their meeting was an excellent idea all around. They took to each other. Myra's final verdict was in agreement with my unvoiced one -- she could not believe that Sandy was as young as she was, quite plainly admitted that for all her youth Sandy was already wiser than she herself, save in the actual experience of having children. Myra is still desperately unhappy, though she held up well before Sandy, broke down only after Sandy had gone; but she is still resolved to try to make a go of their marriage, though I think this hopeless since her husband steps out on her and cannot be talked to by her. I have suggested that she bring him up for a talk sometime; perhaps I can talk to him where she cannot, since there is plainly some latent animosity and resentment there, as there always is in such a situation.

When you ask me whether I love Sandy, I must answer that I do; nor is it paternal -- far from it. Sandy's very nature would preclude



any possibility of that. And yet, on her part, her love is undoubtedly for both father and lover, which she associates in me. This common situation is called the Electra complex, and women of this stamp should always marry older men, though not as much older than Sandy as I am. The reverse or obverse is the Oedipus complex, which often shows itself in the marriage of a younger man to an older woman, the man in this case subconsciously seeking both lover and mother, who represents his actual "first love".

But it ought not to be assumed that any emotion of mine is blind or unreasoning. I can look dispassionately at Sandy and see all her objectionable tendencies; she lies most imaginatively, she is lazy, she lacks inner discipline, she lacks a sense of responsibility, either personal or social, she enjoys flirting, though this is on the decline, she can be ill-mannered and ill-tempered. But her graces do actually offset these apparently grievous shortcomings, some of which will be lost with her increasing maturity. I would not venture to say that she is genuinely in love or knows what love is. I know women who knew at 16, I myself knew at 14; I have not materially altered my basic conception since that time. One thing I have learned -- you cannot make any fundamental rules of this kind, and to say that someone of 15 cannot know what love is is an error; the best one can say is that at that age a boy customarily cannot know, a girl very probably doesn't; there is a subtle distinction which fits the case, however. The determination is not by age, but by the sum total of experience which precedes any given age. Thus Myra now admits that prior to her unfortunate accident she did not know what love is; it took the loss of me to make her realize that she had been in love, despite her lack of even ordinary physical maturity at that time. Right now, at 22, with two children, she is not a whit more physically mature than Sandy at 15. This is in part due to the background-racial difference -- Myra being largely Cornish-English, Sandy being Hungarian-German, with some Irish.

That Sandy does not know her mind as yet I readily concede. I doubt that we will be married. But there are circumstances in which I could envision us married, and in such circumstances we would be. Loving her, I am primarily concerned with her ultimate happiness, not my own; I have other compensations in the long run, for my work always ultimately offers me an outlet few people are fortunate enough to possess.

So much for that. I have done little these past few days except being busy at journal, letters, book reviews; now I must compile my annual list of best books of 1949, and then resume work on THE DARK HOUSE.

All best always,





26 Oct. 1951

All Chicago put together. Truly beautiful. Night clubs are all around town with top name orchestras. In the center of town is the Golden Nugget and the Westerner. Filled with slot machines - roulette<sup>22</sup> wheels, dice tables, poker tables, and Black jack tables all as ritzy as they come. The first night, from 0130 to 0730 Eck and I won over \$80 ~~ee~~ a piece. We hit the sack in the best hotel in town for 2 hrs & then off again where we then lost all our winnings. But - it was a time none of us will forget.

That's it for now.  
See ya! - Jim

Dear Aug,

Due to circumstances in Las Vegas, Eck and I are staying in every nite. He have company, a parrot<sup>see</sup> (I think that's the way it's spelled) named Pedro. He makes a hell of a lot of noise but is too young to talk.

Jerry has a nice ritzy room. I'm staying here until Monday when I'll report to the base.

Las Vegas - Ah - what a fine. We hit Vegas at 01:00 Tuesday just when the town was getting hot. No bidding Aug, there's nothing like it. It is lit up brighter than



13 November, 1951

Dear Jim,

Your mother just gave me your address, and here, in turn, is Karl Ganzlin's address -- 3243 Nile Street, San Diego. It would be a lark, indeed, if you could get together a group of local lads now in that vicinity and challenge him! He doesn't seem to like SD very much -- he says too many people would rather wash cement than rake or mow lawns.

Your card from Las Vegas was timely. Not long after we saw pix of the Golden Nugget in that film, "Painting the Clouds with Sunshine," which has a Las Vegas setting. I was amused by your letter of 26th October, in which you set forth that you spent too much time unwisely in Las Vegas. Now, I thought you knew the way to gamble. You begin by fixing a certain amount to risk: say, ten bucks. If you win forty, you can afford to raise the ante to 15 or even to double it to 20; but when that is lost, quit, and you're still ten to the good. If I had won \$80, I'd have returned to risk \$20, but I'd have stopped cold when that was gone, and felt the winner still. Try that on your gambling instinct sometime, eh?

Sandy is down with the mumps. I had 'em when I was 14, and I was a sight, big as a pumpkin. I'm going out to spend the afternoon with her -- I was out the last three days, for she was coming down with them on Friday already. Possibly earlier. She is griped as hell because she can't go along to CARMEN, the opera, on Wednesday evening; her folks and I are going, however.

Her folks have finally got wise to Sandy's deliberate way of leading on the boys. They had quite a time with one of them late one night; he had followed Sandy and me home, was lit, and made quite a scene after I left; he waited that long. So as a result, the folks have finally wised up to what I was wise to a long time -- Sandy just enjoys no end leading on the boys. She does it by a variety of ways. She lets them think she has to go with me; either her parents force her to, or I do. Well nothing could be farther from the truth. I have offered to step aside so many times that I believe I could recite the words backward; her parents have assured her so many times she could go with whom she wanted to. The only time she ever does is to stir up trouble, quite deliberately; she just dotes on a scene in which she is the principal. As for example -- after you were home, had danced with her mother, she came around and reported that you had said Sandy was the only girl you could ever love, you were crazy about her, but you couldn't do anything about it because Darleth would "get" something on your parents and hurt them, and so on. She expected me to blow up and stir up a scene, naturally; when I didn't,



11.

she just kept on adding details, making it sound worse and worse. Still I wouldn't bite. After a few days, she announced she had a letter from you; I expressed no wish at all to even look at it, and was not interested in what it contained. So she turned elsewhere in the attempt to stir up something, only, instead of involving me, she got her parents involved, and got the whole family angrier than the devil at her. I had been trying to hint to them that Sandy's games included this form of amusement, just for sheer deviltry keeping boys on strings, and feeding them lines like nobody's business, but they didn't want to see it. Thank heaven they did at last, and by Sandy's own foolishness as much as by my refusal to bite. I used to bite once in a while, just to stave off other and worse trouble, and sometimes, I confess, for my own amusement, watching Sandy go through her act. But even the best play grows tiresome after you have seen it so many times.

So her folks clamped down on Sandy like a ton of bricks. Now at last she had to choose just which fellow she wanted to go with, and no more horseplay. They've tried to get that out of her before, and the answer always comes out the same way -- Angie. So, after it happened that way again, for about the 12th time, they turned to me. What were my intentions? So I told them I had already selected a setting and a diamond, and before the school year was over, Sandy would have the opportunity of taking it or rejecting it. Since Sandy herself set the date on which she wanted a diamond, I am pretty sure of what she will do, and her folks are similarly satisfied. So that seems to be that, and it begins to look as if the great Darleth has been snagged at last.

Dave was home last weekend again. He certainly misses you kids. Kennie got home for ten days or so on Saturday; so Dave had some company for that night and Sunday. Otherwise he works or comes out here and mopes till Froly gets up from Rockford. He was depressed last Friday evening for fair. If I hadn't had Sandy to take home, I'd have taken him in hand and given him a pep talk.

How's your parakeet? Wait till he begins to talk!

So much for now. All the best always,

A handwritten signature, possibly 'Lew', is written in dark ink. To the right of the signature is a large circle containing the number '5'. There is also a small, faint mark resembling a checkmark or the letter 'A' to the right of the circle.



6. Dec. 1951

Dear Aug,

I got your letter this noon and decided that I'd answer it right away. I've written you letters like the one I'm going to write now but this one should settle and answer a lot of things.

I wrote Sandy a few letters just laying it on, as much as I could lie and still sound realistic and I wrote you not saying anything about my writing her. I thought I'd give the both of you a little of your own medicine but this week, judging from some of the letters I've received, I found that your advice had been true and was good medicine. I was so stuck on not believing the letters I've received that I took them all to be 90% lies and compromised on such as two parties and got reasonable results. I couldn't get it through my thick skull that you were sincere toward my well being, and now I'm sorry to say that I ever doubted you. But what's done, is done, and it up to only the person hurt to have consideration.





Never had I told Sandy what you had written me or you what she had written me, so I think I played the game fair.

She has, from what I heard, been playing the same game with Dave Kahn, but I guess he has less interest in her than I have.

When I heard of your engagement, I wasn't surprised but I still don't think she can reach your standards, in others words - she "ain't" good enough for you, as Tom (a buddy here) would say. He always says that when a Mex tries to play up to one of the guys.

Enough of that -

I found several of your books here. They all have been read alot and several of them are on the second and third replace. (Maybe they were stolen, but I think they were worn; anyway it's a compliment either way.

We're getting an ocean side cottage to spend Xmas leave in.

Guess that's it for now.

See Ya, Aug, Jim

8 October, 1951

Dear Jim,

Many thanks for your good letter of the sixth. I always have maintained that if people are honest with each other, few misunderstandings could arise. Lies usually beget lies. I do make allowances for youth, of course, but I admit I had a hard time steering among the clouds, lies, deliberate evasions and concoctions of the situation regarding Sandy. What helped to make up my mind, curiously, was a pair of factors which may not seem to you related at all -- the first was that in any situation involving men and women, it is a good safe adage to realize that a woman is less to be trusted than a man, because a woman has all sorts of devious and obscure reasons for trying to lie up or down a situation, whereas a man, after just so much of it, simply throws up his hands and says to hell with it. The second was liking and knowing you -- when I like somebody I don't damn him because he has some flaws; now, one of your major flaws is that you have a tendency to lie yourself, but in final analysis, I had to decide from the evidence I had that you had never lied anybody into trouble -- you lied to prevent somebody from finding out something, you lied yourself out from under, but you never deliberately and maliciously lied somebody else into a jam. So there you had two good reasons for not believing everything I heard. Now I confess that when I finally grew fully aware of the little game that was played, I had two reactions -- the first was to take a hand in the game. I could outplay anybody in that kind of a game, with my imagination. I was so furious at Sandy at first that I was perfectly willing to co-operated by fixing things so that you'd be saddled with Sandy for life; I thought it would serve you right and teach you a lesson, even if you couldn't benefit by it any more. But in final analysis, Jim, I had to face this fact -- even if you were deliberately trying to cut in on my time, I liked you too well to hurt you. What I meant by saying it would serve you right to be saddled with Sandy is that I knew you'd have a hell of a lot of trouble with her; she needs an older man to keep a tight rein on her and to understand why she does the things she does. You wouldn't stand for a day the things I stand for that she does and says. I am fond of her and used to her; it may work out. And when it comes to liking you, I'd be a damned liar if I said anything else. When I like somebody, I like him; I may be griped now and then by something he says or does, but I still like him. Just how much I happen to like you is something there's no reason for your knowing. But it is a curious fact that at least two of your three pals have always been mildly jealous of what they feel. Make out of that what you like.

You may be dead right in what you say about Sandy. Everyone here says



11.

exactly the same thing. She "ain't good enough" for me or else she doesn't "match" my standards, and so on. One will never know about those things until one tries and finds out. You may all be right, and I may be wrong. But, Jim, there is one other aspect of the matter to consider. I believe in living by a strict code of honor. By taking up with Sandy, I am responsible as much as her parents for any state of mind, stage of development, or what have you, she may entertain. If I were to drop her now, any fellow her own age would find her absolutely "spoiled" for him; sooner or later she would reproach him for being inadequate, which, in her meaning, would mean being not "like" me. My course therefore, as indicated from the beginning, allows of but one path -- Sandy must have a chance to marry or to refuse to marry me. She will have that in the near future. I have thus discharged any obligations which are mine -- over and above my fondness for the little rascal -- within honorable terms, and there is nothing with which to reproach me if Sandy elects not to marry me.

Dave seems to have found a girl in Florida, and is much smitten with her, according to what he writes his parents. He is talking of getting married, actually, says Cap. Time will tell. He's bringing the girl home in December. This month, that is.

My books do get around, eh! The old boy isn't just limited to Sauk City, you see. ... By the bye, McGuine and Bonnie got married today; I'm going to the reception in five minutes or so. Spent all morning to 1 in Madison, shopping, getting my folks off to Atlanta for the holidays and a month or so more. Tonight I must do another chapter in a new novel for young readers, ordered suddenly for delivery in two to three weeks (!). I did the first chapter yesterday; the second is coming up.

So much for now. Oh, did I tell you Frankie brought the recorder out and I read enough of my poetry in it to arrange a whole program of poetry readings for "lecture" use sometime.

Best always,

A handwritten signature, possibly reading "Lester", is written in dark ink. It consists of a long, sweeping vertical stroke on the left, followed by a series of loops and a final horizontal stroke extending to the right.

14 May, 1951

Hi Aug,

Won't have much time to write  
'Been awful busy lately - if you  
know what I mean?

Anita and I went out to Arkader  
in Arkansas. It's a beautiful  
place although my whites got  
plenty dirty. Mom sent my cows  
down. They'll be a big help.

I'm Glad to hear you and Sandy  
are getting along good. "Yini" bah  
small and I hope neither of you  
are "ill" at me for any thing  
I did.

Well, Anita wants to go to  
a "picture show" "Wednesday" note



we went to the Sweden last  
night & discovered that Alvin's book  
seen the picture - no loss of time  
or money though.

She's a swell girl -

What, you all gotta do some  
letter writin' to me? Are you being  
hated - Sho ruff now.

See you soon,  
Jim

P.S. Did you know that the  
South really won the war -  
Ha

16 May 1951  
evening ...

Dear Jim,

Yes, I guess I know what you mean when you say you've been "awful busy lately" -- good luck with the "project"! Anita sounds like a good thing, as the British would say (they have a habit of asking of everything whether or not it's a "good thing"). I'm glad she's a swell girl -- and I fully appreciate your postscript about the South really winning the war. I've met that kind of people too. Fun, if you keep your sense of humor and don't argue.

I don't quite know what to make of your writing that you heard Sandy and I "are getting along good". We always did that, in a sense. I see her for lunch most of the time, but I always did. I drive her to school now and then, or walk with her; but that's nothing new. I've not taken her anywhere for six weeks or so, though I may do so again. What is new, though not generally known, is that I have finally told Sandy she can have a diamond whenever she's ready for it; if that's what she wants, well and good. She has set a date to receive it, but I want to see the day. I know Sandy. Sandy likes to be thought popular. She went to the Prairie Prom not with Marle, whom she apparently led on to believe he was taking her, though she says he didn't come through finally, but with a Badger kid who goes to high school at Prairie. Billy Frosch. You'll know the name. I won't judge the kid by his parents, of course; that isn't fair. For my own part, I went out with a gal from Madison the other night, and I'm spending some time with Myra when she comes. I can tell Sandy doesn't like it very well, but what's sauce for the goose is also sauce for the gander. I know all Sandy's faults, and I know mine; in many ways, despite the difficult times she has caused me, Sandy has been wonderful to me (and so have I been to her, for the record), and though I don't think Sandy is really in love (she's just too young to know what that means), I do know she is fond of me and can't seem to do without me for very long at a time; and I'm afraid, despite my doubts about the gap in years between us that I'm in love with her. But, Jim, being in love with her means that I want to see her happy, and if that means some other fellow finally, then that's it. I've lived alone for a good many years, and I can stand still more years alone, if it comes down to it. And when you love someone, you love her despite her faults -- or maybe, quixotically, because of them. Sandy probably knows more about my private life than any other living woman, but she evidently never talks. No matter with whom she goes out, she gives me a blow-by-blow account, though I never ask for that; but as far as I can find out, she never tells anything of my taking her out except to fob off or fake answers to questions. From my rudimentary knowledge of pay-



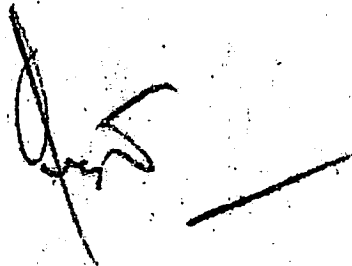
11.

ehology, that is significant; she does not hesitate to give away her other dates, but she does not give me away. It adds up to the fact that she evidently thinks more of me than she does of her other dates. Yet, at her age, that may change over-night; no one can say. Girls at sixteen are neither fish nor fowl, they say, and it is certainly true.

The upshot of it is that, if Sandy doesn't change her mind, I'll give her a diamond within a year, and will marry her sometime after her graduation from school. But I still continue to think that she may change her mind, even though this is beginning the third year we have been together. And we'd never have had a hard time between us if only Sandy could persuade herself to stop play-acting, to stop pretending other fellows mean something to her, to tell them frankly she thinks she's in love with me and learn to say no to a request for a date. Anyway, keep your fingers crossed.

Not much is new here. I'm having fun plugging away at my new book in progress, WISCONSIN MURDERS, and the other day I contracted for the first of what may become a series of short historical novels for boys of from 11 to 15, to be sold through schools and the like. That ought to be interesting work, and not too hard, if I can put myself back into the mind of a 11 to 15-year old boy! .... Saw your mother and dad to-night on their way to the Country Club supper. .... I've got a funeral coming up tomorrow. Louis Glas of Milwaukee; I just "preach" at the cemetery, since they're bringing his ashes for burial. Just between us for the present, he left \$20,000.00 for the Community Memorial Auditorium! That gives us a total of almost \$30,000, which ought to help get some sort of new gymnasium-auditorium space eventually. .... No rain, no mushrooms! I don't like that!

All the best always,





U.S. NAVAL ACTIVITIES  
MEMPHIS, TENNESSEE

2, May, 1951

Leike Aug,

'Was plenty tired when we got  
back Montag morning. I drove all but .60  
of the 661 miles.

Pub got move to a different barracks  
yesterday so I don't have him to fight  
with as handy as I use to.

About the letters, Aug, I threw  
every letter away, not only Sandys'  
but Frances', Kates' and all I got from  
home. I guess if I ever go home  
again, it will be to make the money  
from riders and to see my folks and  
"you guys" there.

Anita and I went to the "drive  
in" last nite. We saw Johnny Galt's

and "3 guys called <sup>named?</sup> Offit." The  
latter I saw so I didn't have much  
use to watch it again and occupied  
myself else wise. Anita didn't  
see much of the second show  
either.

Bob and I are planning on  
taking an U.S.F.F. course in "Die  
Quetsch". He wants to learn it; <sup>as</sup> ~~as~~  
~~he~~ he's heard so much of it in  
Sank.

I left Bob in town last night  
and he's here bitching now. We  
both got in kinda "late" last night.



5 May 1951

Dear Jim,

Yours of the 2nd just came in. Yes, I can well imagine that you were plenty tired when you got down to Memphis last Monday morning. Six hundred miles is quite a way to drive. Don Laughnan once drove 765 miles without stopping except for lunch and dinner, from Auburn, New York, to Chicago, and he was dead tired, too. .... Sorry to learn that Bob got transferred to a different barracks; he certainly seemed to be a swell kid. .... I think I said, by and large, to do what you thought best of it with the letters. In a way I wish I had seen one or two of Sandy's typical letters. She has done just what I predicted she would do; she maintains that you began the correspondence, while you say she did. It doesn't really matter, but she has one letter from you giving her your address and telling her to write; she has that much proof to offer. You have thus put yourself in the position of not offering any proof beyond your word. So I am again left sort of up in the air. .... To tell the truth, I am plenty tired of the whole set-up. I know so much more than I told you; in fact, I didn't tell you very much at all. The fact is, you've had a very narrow escape; if you have now made up your mind to keep to the course you are now following, some day I'll tell you just precisely how narrow an escape you had; but if you change your mind again, I won't say a word, I'll just sit back and let happen what happens, and to hell with whether you bitch at me eventually or not for not having warned you. .... Meanwhile, Sandy has kept right on telling whoppers, though, of course, she denies it. But the evidence is overwhelmingly against her. She told the kids in school you had sent her \$5 and then \$10 for Valentine's Day; she told them you had given her all your medals, and such. She denies it all. But the kids to whom she tells them are not liars, wouldn't have any reason to say anything of the kind, since they are her friends. I don't know why she does it, but I must admit she never did it with me. She told me how you had asked her to fake some letters to ~~me~~ so that ~~me~~ could try to pull the wool over my eyes when I had asked you to send two of her letters to me. And a lot more. So it goes. .... I take it Anita is the girl-friend on the spot. I got a kick out of your writing that she "didn't see much of the second show either." I caught that one, old boy! .... German language study can be fun, but the endings are tricky. Sandy told me how you wrote her "Ich liebe du," and of course, the object should be "dich," or, more properly, with a capital, "Dich." And you began this letter of yours to me with "Leibe Aug," which should have been "Lieber Aug," the masculine, not the feminine ending.

11.

Not much news here. Dave's home tonight, cruising around with Jerry. Ken Meyer has been transferred back from Kansas to McCoy, which pleases him. .... Sandy told me that Arnie Haselwander's girl, Keck, I think, is pregnant; but don't take that from me; it's just hearsay, and it may be another fiction. If not, I'm afraid the finger is on Arnie. "Witnesses" don't always count, I fear; the courts tend to take the "poor, wronged" girl's story as gospel, despite the fact that many a so-called "poor, wronged" girl has deliberately put the finger on the wrong man and forced the poor bastard to marry her. ... Jack Bachhuber is home again this weekend. He's still his old surly self, sure that the world is his apple. And I suppose Joan Young is hanging on him, as usual! ..... Haven't seen your mother to talk to except to pass the time of day last Monday at the band concert. Too much of a crowd to talk.

Jim, take care of yourself. I happen to like you, faults or no. Don't get yourself hurt. I know what danger is, boy. Where Sandy is concerned I'm sitting right in the seat of honor!! -- right squarely on the volcano, hoping I can hold the lava in. Whenever I'm tempted to run, I'm afraid the lava will catch me on the way down. It doesn't take long to learn that a sweet-looking, innocent-acting little girl who tells lies can get a fellow into so much trouble that sooner or later he won't be able to catch up to it.

You can guess my mood when I tell you I'm working on a new book -- 20 case histories for a book to be called WISCONSIN MURDERS.

All the best, always, and give my regards to Bob.

wie immer,



29 October, 1949

Dear Malcolm,

I am glad to learn that you are coming along all right, if slowly. The disease is no joke, and I know of a good many cases which are apparently far more serious than yours, and yet are making slow and steady recovery. It will take some of them much longer than evidently it will take you. Perhaps it is "clean living", eh? I shall hate to contemplate myself getting anything of the kind!

As for my current affair -- it is actually far more serious than I want to admit even to myself. But unfortunately I have never been able to kid myself. I am in the middle of a situation which ought not to occur outside of books, but having incurred a moral and ethical responsibility, I am not the one to cut and run for it now. No. I have had nine months, or thereabouts, of soul struggle, and I have made up my mind that I am in this thing to the bitter end. And it is likely to be bitter. The girl fancies she is in love with me, wishes to marry me, would do so if opportunity offered even at 15, rather more for what she believes to be security than anything else; at the same time her attractive, unhappy mother of 34 is herself very much in love with me, but tries to hold it in, unsuccessfully. The mother's suppressed desire is to have a child of mine; this will work out she anticipates by my impregnating her daughter while she is still under age, her refusal to permit marriage, her forcing the daughter to have the child and then taking it over herself. This is no pipe dream of mine; the mother has actually put it into so many words. So I have no illusions. I have also no alarm. If I had any sense I'd be running like hell in the opposite direction, but I haven't. So I'm seeing it through, partly because I am obliged to assume a responsibility which is properly mine, partly because I want to. And maybe there is nagging at me the conviction that there is ultimately a good book in this. There is.

My indulgence in sex, friend, is my achilles heel, make no mistake about that. Once a woman gets me to bed, I am lost. I don't get there very easily, I must still first have a powerful affection for her, and at least believe myself to be in love with her; after that the game is hers. With Psyche I started out holding all the aces; now she and her mother have them, and I have the deuces. But if they knew my weakness, I know theirs. And they, being women, may have instinct, alertness, wariness; but I have perception and subtlety behind what appears to them a bumbling amiable canine exterior. Your association of this in my poems was in error; for Achilles heel all other readers properly read sex or flesh.

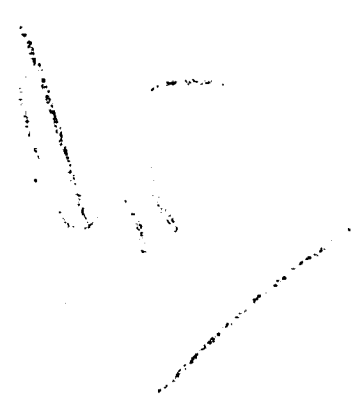


11.

So I disagree with you re the use of the term in PSYCHE, which is now, by the way, just about finished in its parts, with the long poems (14 connected small poems on 14 Donne themes as one prelude piece) coming first in the book, explicating the theme of love as death. It needs many more revisions, however, before I can think of sending it to a publisher for production. Psyche recognized my Achilles heel instantly and made her plans accordingly, for all her youth. I felt it only fair to suggest to her mother that Psyche was not being fair in her weapons, but received scant sympathy there, the mother holding that no one could expect a woman to be fair about a man she meant to marry.

No, we don't have that "going to Sawyer's" expression in Wisconsin. What is its genesis, if you know? I do not find it in A HOG ON ICE AND OTHER CURIOUS EXPRESSIONS (Funk, Harpers). .... I did see and largely read LOVE AND DEATH, reviewed it at length in my Madison paper column. .... I'll expect that GLOBE any mail now; thanks. I needed it for my files.

All best always,



Dear A. T.

Well, you have thought all this out very thoroughly, but just the same despite all these very fine premises, I still maintain my outlook. Perhaps I should change it, were I to intimately know Sandra. I have never met her. I don't condemn her, every one has good qualities & I don't doubt but what this child is full of them. She seems to be an abnormal girl for intelligence, social graces, charm & personality. The whole sum & answer to this complicated problem is just as you have expressed it yourself & that is this, (quote from your letter in re. to ending it) "I simply don't want to." Therefore, it is all up to you, & really is not one tiny atom of my business (I am a meddling fool). The fact, & it is an enormous fact is this, if you love the girl & want her as your wife, no one should oppose you. A man in love, defied, usually sticks the closer to his love. As I have said many, many times before, I want the best for you, I want love for you so gloriously heart taking that it will be an incentive for furthering (for it couldn't be bettering, for I feel that now, for your writings prove it, it is of the best now) your talent & sending you on to greater literary successes. Marriage can make or break a man or woman. My bro Ralph is a mouse, I have seen it so many times make people cynical, overbearing, distrustful people. Then like Ralph, broken in spirit, I feel, whom I loved so dearly, led a life of hell. He never changed to his

never religion, until when dying (unconscious) she had him baptized in her faith. She was a sweet charming personality before her marriage & turned out to be a terrible hellion. She never fit in & tried to "fit in" to his home, she refused to mother his child (by her) she consistently stuck her nose into his business & it made him a harassed man. What good he done, what few pleasures he had, what good friends he had, were all unknown to her & performed secretly. Ruth married a bounder, against all reasoning, drunken, lazy & ruined her life. None of these had the guts to separate or divorce & consequently they had unhappy, frustrated lives. I have a friend (woman) who married for love. Love is blind so they say & she found out after marriage that her husband was a cheat, a liar & oft times embarrassed her so that she gave up her friends & socially was an outcast. She missed all her old, fine connections. This cruelty was ended by a terrible accident which so affected him mentally it was impossible for her to live with him. A divorce ensued. It was interesting to watch her, she came back like a beaten, cowed dog. People looked down on her, & it was years before she took her rightful place in the world & she was one of the most intelligent, capable persons I know. Yet if she had her life, she could have been so much more than she now is & she has let her family & relations & even friends know about her & put her down because she was a divorcee & that in the eyes of the world then, was a shameful position. She became a family budge, but now I am glad to see that she has shaken some of these shackles off & is alert, alive, & is being looked up to as an intelligent, forceful helper in her community.



But it took years for her to do it. We have a couple  
here who just observed their 52 years of married life.  
Personally I think he should have been presented with  
the ~~cap~~ <sup>leaf</sup> ~~leaf~~ <sup>leaf</sup> cluster for endurance or a special medal  
struck off. Gossip has it that he was a gay Lothario,  
smart, likeable, always helping others, kindly, generous,  
& friendly. Today he has few friends, stingy, little, sarcastic  
mean, pessimistic. His wife rules him & her little world  
she has created for themselves. Its such a narrow  
stupid unhappy world for them. Oh I see many more  
cases, the shy timid wife who doesnt fit in with her  
husbands world, a big business one & who is always making  
blunders. The over bearing wife, and vice versa a husband  
it can be either male or female you know. Any of  
these I dont want for you. I want sheer  
unadulterated happiness plus contentment & peace.  
These to me are the greatest qualities fate could give  
one and are conducive to furthering ones talents.  
I have often wished for a home of my own plus  
financial security, but of what good would  
this home be to me if peace-contentment did  
not go with it or if it was not among  
congenial people, one could love & associate with.  
I havent ~~never~~ had any property of my own &  
have had hard "slidding", but I have peace of  
mind, contentment, you as a friend, giving  
the love of my "kids" & what a lot of blessings

these are. Now it all seems "up to you". You know  
what is best for yourself, you can "sign up", other  
personalities + capabilities + you know your own  
heart.

Best of everything

God bless you

Dred.

13 October, 1949

Dear Inez,

Never think that I do not appreciate your interest in my welfare; I do. But I know perhaps better than many another that we are not always captains of our souls or masters of our fate, if you can forgive my triteness. And your account, in your letter of this morning, of all the failures in marriage you have known, of the bitterness and unhappiness, only underscores that fact. We are all driven by forces and compulsions which, though most often outcroppings of our own development, are actually beyond our control. And when I say of Sandy that "I do not want to" end this situation, "I do not want to" give her up, which is a manifest way of saying that I believe I love her, it is a decision come upon as the most desirable but also as the only possible one to make, for if I put an end to seeing her now I would be violating my own moral and ethical obligations and I might do her such irreparable harm that its backwash would catch and destroy me.

It is true, as you point out with such ardor, that marriage to her might destroy me, too; but at least then it will not be in violation of obligations I myself incurred. No one asked me to take up with Sandy, nothing but my own impulse is responsible for that; that she should have responded to it as she did was foreseen, though I had honestly believed that she would tire of this relationship long since, I had conceived that she might cling to me for three months at the most, and now it is in the eighth month. And now that I feel it cannot last much longer, I am reluctant to release her or to be released by her, because even being released by her no longer obviates my obligations to her.

I could not ever escape my honestly incurred obligations. My own integrity, my self-respect demand that I stay with a situation which I helped actively to bring about; I cannot run out on it. If Sandy were a mature woman, matters would obviously be different; since she is not, they are not. I recognize as she honestly admits that I am necessary to her, and to a similar extent she has become necessary to me. Her mother now believes, as does the analyst who saw her photograph, that if she marries me she will be loyal and not leave me in five or ten years, as I myself have felt she might. Perhaps. Only time will tell. But we are not as yet married, and I am by no means sure that we will be, since I cannot fully know her mind.



Even if this obligation did not exist, however, I am afraid I would be selfish enough to fail to end the situation. Is it not easy, after all, to suggest to another that he resign himself to something which does not seem to him necessary at the moment? A long time ago I had to resign myself to choosing either a career or marriage, and I chose a career, even though I was already then aware of a certain emotional emptiness in it. I had to repeat that resignation several times thereafter, but now I am loath to do it again. Surely that is understandable; at forty, I can look back with far more pleasure than I can look forward, and perhaps this very alteration of my outlook is responsible for a decline in my common sense.

But the picture of love you foresee for me or want for me is virtually impossible. My life with Sandy now is stormy enough, it will be more so if we are married. But every marriage has such moments, and the net result of adding them to the opposite face of marriage usually is a tempered and balanced existence together, always in a precarious harmony, of course, but then, when is any relationship with another person not in a precarious harmony? Sandy thinks, too, of my writing, but as yet she has no great conception of what the creative life means, nor does she know what love is, really. One learns that slowly and often painfully. Sandy has never sought to disguise herself with me; she reveals herself with an almost painful honesty, which is good; I know her bad points, she makes no secret of them, and I cannot help but admire a person who is that honest, even when it might lose her friends, as it has, many.

Besides, love knows no reason. It excites a different kind of world, it exists apart from rational thought, and its indulgence to passion simply masks all reason. "Sheer unadulterated happiness" is simply not possible for anyone; it is a romantic delusion. One finds the best in affection, contentment, peace, as much of these things as possible; one dares not hope for more.

All best always,



109  
somewhat biased as well as not  
being an authority. Don't it enough  
to have said it all, I have written  
it, but the pain and pleasure into  
words. If I were you I'd at least  
change it, mask it, then, in the  
event it is read by hostile eyes  
it will be only a suspicion not  
a definite conclusion as it is  
now. You can perhaps keep it from  
Cous but what about the rest  
of the world. I know my father  
is an avid reader of pocket-books,  
to read it would hurt him greatly,  
even if he did nothing. I strongly  
suspect he would try to do  
something altho what is indeed  
a good question. Don't tell me  
to do anything would sell more  
copies and do Piper more harm.  
I know that. As for her reactions  
I know perfectly well she would  
cry, insist it was lies, and  
secretly be very pleased to have  
been so immortalized. In passing  
another suggestion, leave it as  
is but to be published after a  
period of say twenty five years.  
any harm done then would be  
of no importance I should judge,  
again your business.

Dear Aug.

That sort was easy. The healing, I  
mean, what now. What can I say.  
It is indeed difficult to venture  
anything. However I must say  
thanks for not saying the many  
things you might have, I'm sure  
you know what I have reference  
to. My twenty-five years should  
have lent me some wisdom but  
I'm afraid it fails me now.

I must say this as it is in  
my mind will this hurt any-  
one, if you hurt yourself it is  
your business, but what about  
the other parties - are you hitting  
back so to speak. Perhaps I really  
didn't mean that but it is a thought,  
are you sure you want to do this.  
I realize you might well use any  
reuneration you might gain but  
can you ever forgive yourself for  
telling the world of another's very  
intimate life, will there be any  
 repercussions, even in your heart  
and mind - only you must  
decide.

I do think it a good enough  
book I can't say more as I am

If you realize the book as is cannot possibly hurt me etc. to recall to people's minds those years and I do not fear that, my only concern is the others. Actually, with the love, so aptly described, the book is harmless, or at least very nearly so - Have you the right - I know of no man who wants to know his failure and I think the father recognizes what his error and pain betide, in his peace of mind, must be he reminded. The girl and her husband (Randy) are doing fine, there are three children to be considered - that brings the total to six - You will say I have never had a great love, perhaps not but surely there is something to be said for a more tempered love, at least it suffices to propagate (propagate) the race and gives life some meaning, which in itself is not to be denied. From this you will know I think it best to let well enough alone, take it from there.

Please don't be displeased with me Aug, you asked you know - it seems to me people will choose to believe all of it true and however much you desire it to be so it is not as yet, is it.

I cannot seem to stop preaching, missed my calling - Adam. In a lighter vein it is a good job as such and thank's so much for the preview.

About your wedding, such misgivings are to be expected, remember my letter or some months back, you must see it there if you go thro' with it, you are assuming a tremendous responsibility, I know you are capable but it will be far from easy, and you are lucky in a way. Your talent should see you through, it often helps to get things of your chest and mind and what better way than writing it down. I think it will bring remuneration so much the better. The very best to you and a sincere hope that the 'still small voice' will guide and be with you, do I sound like page 29, there is the Creed - forgiveness perhaps they know now, who knows. I must close and get busy, will expect to hear soon - one last word it seems as yesterday and I do remember all of it - Always, Mary.



16 March, 1953

Dear Mary,

What else could you have written but what you have written? Surely nothing more. That is an opinion in any case shared by Effie Bachhuber, who also read the ms. It was a story I had to write; it demanded utterance. It doesn't demand print, but if I need money, it is admittedly publishable, though in any event, before I send it to a publisher, I intend that Pipsie shall see it and read it, even if Sandy has to invite her up here after the wedding specifically for that purpose. Sandy has also read it.

I have no wish to hurt anyone. Certainly Pipsie doesn't come off in it half as badly as I myself do, as you must admit, for it ought to be clear as glass in this one that if I had gone boldly ahead in the first place, I'd be married to Pipsie today and all this anguish of mine would be for nought -- though perhaps I'd just have another kind of anguish in its place. No one can really say. But if it is ever published -- and I don't know that it will be -- it will have the by-line given it -- "Stephen Brenner" -- and my own name will be nowhere associated with it. Thus there will be no public connexion to me, and, frankly, Pipsie's husband I think knows so little of her background here that even if he chanced on the book by accident I doubt that he would recognize it as pertinent. Your father would, yes, but any pain he might endure would be wholly illegitimate.

Hitting back is the last thing I would or could do. Who would get hit but myself? I have certainly no wish to hit or hurt Pipsie; I still love her, still want her -- which proves the folly of the wise, as I said before, and the witlessness of the witty. I will probably always feel that for me Pipsie was ideal -- and so she was. I need not dwell on this subject, but I say it again only to illustrate that the person -- the one person -- who comes off with the least honor in THE DROUGHT OF MARCH is myself, certainly not Pipsie, of whom the worst that could be said is that she was a fool, and that is questionable, too, isn't it? I think so.

Oh, there is nothing anyone could do. If Pipsie were so foolish as to admit adultery, then her husband could do something about it. But that would involve so much, and to so little ultimate end, that I much doubt she would ever be so stupid. Your father, at least, could do nothing, and the whole pattern of events in his life indicates that he would do nothing. I think you flatter the book to suggest of it that it immortalizes Pipsie. Nonsense. It isn't that good, by any means. Anyway, it ought to do your heart good to be told

that, after reading it and expressing her pain, Effie said, "Well, at least you did show what a fine person Mary is." As a matter of fact though, if her children are to be considered, publication now would be infinitely preferable to publication in a quarter of a century, when, very probably, I would no longer be here.

THE DROUGHT OF MARCH was one of the few books of mine which practically forced itself out. I don't like the beginning, the introductory portions; they seem forced, unnatural. And even as is, it is only another -- MOIRA was the first novella on the story -- version of the ultimate story which is to be called THE FORTS OF REASON, and which I have hoped to get along into before I go west in June. We shall see. I have 35,000 wds. done, and Pipsie has read and much liked such portions as caught her eye on one of her visits (secret) here.

Great love? Not on Pipsie's part, surely. Of that, I think her utterly and completely incapable. She is Narcissistic, but on the other hand, contrary to what you say of yourself, you are completely capable of a great love, one in which, if you gave yourself your head, you would throw all overboard to keep. Do you think I was never aware of that? Pipsie was always too cautious to upset the apple cart until she got caught, and even then she had a choice and took it. I helped to spoil her, just as I have spoiled Sandy to such an extent that she is now a sexual nympholept, and must climax from 10 to 25 times at every intercourse period -- she has gone to 36 and 41 at one time -- which need, luckily, I with all my imagination and the end results of using it can still fill without too much trouble or stress.

Dear Mary, I have no right to be displeased with you, and would not be. I want you always to feel free to say to me what you think, and without any fear that I will decide I can do without your friendship or anything of that sort. I might be hurt, but only people of whom I am fond can hurt me, and isn't it good that that is so? I think so. Besides, I have no use for friends who pull punches -- friends ought to be able to say what they like when they like, always. But you are right -- the preaching won't do any good. Pipsie and I are like magnets for each other, and it is always best we stay apart. So we do -- almost always, but not quite, just enough seeing of each other to keep that fire smouldering. But alas! to Pipsie it is just a little bonfire, and will never be more -- nor will anything ever be more for her -- while to me it burns at the roots of my being.

All best, as always,

affectionately,



My Darling, -

When you read this, the distance between us will be widening again, as for all that time before -- and perhaps it will never close again, because time passes so swiftly now, and events move in such rapid sequence that it is doubtful that the circumstances will fall right again -- or that you will care again to renew the special intimacy of this summer -- or that I may be free to do so, for naturally I am too proud to wait hopelessly, and you have never given me the slightest reason to believe that even if you left Dick you would come back and marry me. But there is one thing I ask you to remember -- I love you, and I wanted to really love you physically as well as spiritually; and, if I had not loved you as much as I do, I would have done so -- for I know that if I had done so, you would ultimately have been made unhappy for more reasons than one. And, then, too, I had my own integrity to consider. If I had thought that there were any chance of your ultimately being my wife, I would not have hesitated. But I want to say, also, for yourself, that I hope you do not let other men become as intimate with you, for, if you do, several things might happen -- being as sensuous as I am, you might find someone far more satisfactory than Dick, and that experience would always shadow your married life; or you might really find yourself utterly and completely and recklessly in love with someone else who is only dallying; or you might forever be torn between wanting someone else and having to take Dick.

I say all this to you knowing that events may be such that we may never see each other again. No one knows what will happen now. War and destruction are all around, and we are actually watching the death-throes of a way of life that will never come back, never. But this past little while with you, for all that it was essentially trivial in its aspects, was something so enormously important for me that I don't think you have any comprehension of it. The opportunity you gave me to tell you at last how I have always thought of you, the inspiration you gave me for the poems and the novel, and more, the faith you restored in myself -- my darling, a man cannot buy these things, a man cannot go out and buy the affection of a woman he loves, a man cannot by design know the pure ecstasy of love, however forbidden it might be, he cannot feel as I have felt in this past little while with you as if a prairie fire raged in his breast, and still know control, however much he would dispense with it. For this little while you brought a kind of magic back to me -- a magic I have felt only twice before, for I have wanted only two women before you, and one of those an adolescent girl in my own adolescence. It was necessary for me to let you know I loved you; I am profoundly grateful that you gave me the chance. Because when a man carries in his heart a secret love unvoiced, it hollows out a little pocket there, and he is haunted by it forever afterward. That is not to say that there will not always be a place for you in my heart; there will be; being a woman, you should know that. My pride smarts and stings now in the belief that I acted foolishly in taking every opportunity to see you, but I know I did not, I know that I felt harried by time, like Alan in The Mona Lisa Smile, when he said to Leslie: "I thought if I should never see you again, if something happened, I would never forgive myself for not spending every available moment with you."

However casual you may have felt, however indolent and complaisant, I will still be haunted by your eyes' glance and your smile and your lips under mine -- and by everything else that has happened between us, from the most casual to the most intimate. It was never necessary that love come from you, but only affection; you gave it; it was necessary only that I love you, I did and do, within the limitations imposed by circumstances. I loved not only the woman you are now, but the girl you were back when first I loved you. When you asked that night out here in the studio how it was that you could permit someone of whom you were merely fond to make love to you, I asked myself how it was that I, who have at my fingers' ends a score of attractive, handsome, even wealthy women, must love you instead of any one of these more available women, and I thought there is somehow a destiny that shapes certain ends; I do not know what destiny has in store for us; neither of us can know that. But I do want you now to sit down and write and tell me this -- if that remote possibility ever

occurs, if you should leave Dick, how much chance is there that you will come back and marry me? And I want you to tell me, too, truthfully and honestly, how you feel now about our little summer -- as I want you to sit down and write to me a month from now. I do not think I should write more to you, unless you want me to; it would be so hard writing and not being able to say what lies in my heart; and still more difficult, knowing you do not really care. But I must know how you really feel, I must have this tangible knowledge, so that if I must lock you away into my heart once more, I can do so; or, if I need not, that I can keep you alive in the secret places, not simply as the woman you are, but the woman I love. Think of me sometimes, and remember that love.

I know how it will be with me for many nights now and later -- how I will start up from sleep and the dream of you, and it will be as if your face looks at me out of the darkness, your eyes and your Mona Lisa smile, it will be as if you are there tangibly in the room with me, your mouth haunting my lips, and your dear body close to me in that ecstasy of love that is the final ecstasy of mankind; how I will walk the streets with the ghost of you at my side, and live over again those little moments we had together -- yes, yes, all this, a pattern I know. Think of me sometimes, and remember -- and remember that I love you.



4 November 1949

Dear Malcolm,

I enclose two photos -- a recent one of myself, and one of Psyche. You need not return either, since I have duplicates of both, more than I will probably use, since I also have cuts and mats of the shot of myself. .... No, I have never had any irrelevant remark out of Psyche during our amorous hours, at which we spend from two to six at a session, with great mutual enjoyment and a wonderful sense of spiritual release which is likewise mutual. Despite her years, she puts herself completely into love, eschews all irrelevancies, leaves me amazed to realize that this 15-year old girl is the most comprehensively satisfactory sexual experience in my 40 years.

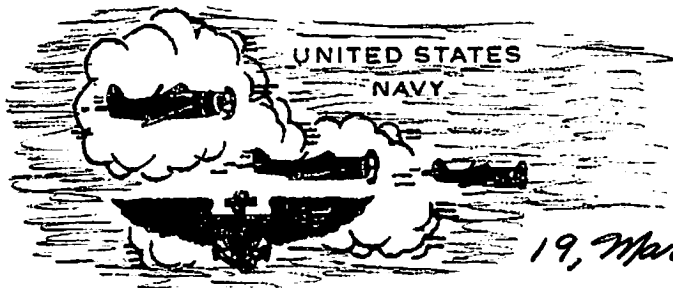
As for the position of her mother, that is unique, and certainly fit subject for a novel. She has a clear fixation on her daughter, dislikes her husband almost to hatred (largely his fault, I believe), and is in love with me herself. Since she prefers her daughter to everyone, reliving her own lost and often suppressed youth in her, she hopes that her daughter will eventually marry me, but is too tenaciously fond of her to release her before legal age (18) in Wisconsin will permit her to marry without consent. The mother is primarily a tragic figure, though a young (34) and attractive woman still; and any tragedy which might be precipitated will come through her. She is emotional, impulsive, irrational; she has said that if we had an accident and I knocked up Psyche, she would still not permit marriage, but would force her daughter to stay home, have the child, and give it up to her, and she herself would then rear it as the product of the "two people I love the most". Thus the mother.

Marriage would not remove her from the picture. She has established a need for her nearness in Psyche, and Psyche must yield to it from time to time. I am not averse to it. The mother realizes that with each year her position weakens the more, and yet knows it cannot be entirely eradicated when she stops to think; but she does not always stop to think, she yields too readily to impulsive emotions, and the result is often unfortunate. One day she blows hot, the next cold; so too Psyche, who implores me to impregnate her on one day and fears it the next. The mother frankly confesses her need for me one day, confides her hatred of me the next because I "am taking away" her daughter.

I am thus buffeted by these conflicts daily, and that I get any work done at all is a sheer miracle of persistence in the face of emotional obstacles the like of which I have never had to overcome before. It is not a felicitous situation; I wish only that the girl were a little older, so that marriage could take place in the foreseeable future. But my sobersided guess is that no marriage will take place later, if one does not take place soon.

Best always,





19, March, 1951

Dear Aug,

I got your letter today. I'll have to admit that it was a surprise to me. Sandy has inherited some writing ability from you. She can really make a story sound real. I guess I was taken, but good.

as for Sandy's letters; as you might know we're not allowed to carry mail in our sea bags so I destroyed all the letters I got from home, except for a few which I had Bob Johnson keep until I come back to Memphis. I'm leaving for Memphis the end of this week so I'll be able to send you them when I get there.

None of this hurts me except knowing that one of my best friends was against me. That really hurts.

Do me one big favor and send me the letters ~~if~~ she got from me.

I hadn't any idea that you two were so near marriage or I would not have written. I haven't heard from Sandy in 3 weeks; as it is, I haven't gotten any letters at all in 3 weeks, because of being shipped here. It was funny how every thing added up to be just the opposite of what they were. You last letter said that there was a rumor of you and Sandy getting married but it wasn't true. The press I last received didn't have any personals about your being at the Winters, etc. From there Sandy took over; you know the rest.

I hope Mrs. Winters hasn't said anything about me trying to deceive you because I could give her some pretty red ears. But I think enough has been said about this. Let that be all that is.

I spent a nice Saturday at the beach. It was truly wonderful. I'd take the good old Wis-consin over the Atlantic <sup>though</sup> any day. There isn't any salt to cover one in the Wis. You get a face full whenever you dive into a wave.

Was I ever surprised to hear about Shirley Hicks. I sure hope she's OK now.

a young Jet Pilot (about 21) hit the drink a while back. All they found was a wing.

G'd have to take off now.

I might see you in about 7 months if war isn't declared before then.

Jim



21 March 1951

Dear Jim,

All thanks for yours of the 19th. I am glad to have it, of course, because I feel that the problems Sandy brings about ought to be settled one way or another. I have simply got tired of taking Sandy's word for everything; what you wrote in your letters to her seemed to me clearly as a result of something she had written to you, no matter how much she had denied it. It is not easy for me, because I do want to be fair, and because, while I am very fond of Sandy and I would marry her if fate would have it so, I am also in the position of liking you very much. Sandy and I have been running around together for just about two years, short a few days. She has insisted repeatedly that she was in love with me, and intended to marry me. I have indicated that I am perfectly willing to marry her despite our difference in ages, but all along I have said that she must be sure beyond all doubt that that is what she wants, and, since I am fond of her and want her to be happy, I have told her repeatedly that if she decided that she liked someone else more, she need only tell me and I would make myself scarce. That was not the expression of a wish to run away and get out from under, but only setting forth my wish for her happiness.

I discovered even before I knew Sandy that she had a propensity for an imagination which was hard to equal. I found out quite early too that she could rattle off a lie as easily as she could eat a piece of candy. It was never hard to catch Sandy in lies, often such silly lies that a blind man could have seen through them. So you must understand that Sandy has always been given the chance of telling me to vamoose. She has never done so. She has instead used every means to hang on to me and to keep me hanging on to her, but secretly she has done everything possible to stir up a storm. Somehow, she just loves to create a hullabaloo involving others. I have an idea she thought, too, she could get me so griped at you that I'd take a notion to give you the business; what she didn't count on was that I am not so easily taken in, and secondly, that I happened to like you personally. I think you would be shocked if you could have sat with me on the sidelines now and then and watched Sandy stir up a storm in her own home, setting grandmother and grandfather against father and mother, and so on, and then professing complete innocence, all because of a seemingly congenital inability to tell the truth. She has involved me, as well as her parents, in one rumpus after another. She can go and tell her parents something I am supposed to have said or done, then turn right around and tell me something they are supposed to have said, and then sit back and watch for fireworks, which never follow because I simply compare notes with her folks and catch her

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redhanded. I hate to admit that this is so, but there is nothing to be gained by kidding myself. If Sandy were older, some of the ruckuses she has stirred up would be inexcusable; I overlook them because she is so young, just past 16, and in an age when a girl is neither fish, fowl, nor human.

As far as you are concerned, I have seldom heard anything good from Sandy. Jim had always "threatened" her, or tried to force himself on her, or called her a "slut" and the like; he propositioned her, or he suggested that Derleth was making her, and so on. I had such a steady diet of that that if I hadn't checked up with you, I'd have begun to swallow all of it; as it was, I was always left in doubt, since Sandy told one story, you its exact opposite. Now, when I see her letters, I will know beyond doubt; I won't have to take anybody's word, for her own letters will tell the story.

You ask for your letters. I gave them back to her, Jim; I felt that they were not mine to keep. No, Mrs. Winters hasn't said anything because I have kept her informed. She is more angry at Sandy than at anyone else in the picture. Among her Black Hawk friends, Sandy always tried to give the impression that her parents were "forcing" her to go with me; that was one of the reasons I finally let Karl run our goings and comings in the paper, so that her Black Hawk friends wouldn't be taken in any longer. And no, again, we aren't "near" marriage; I have told you just what the situation is, but a marriage couldn't and wouldn't take place until Sandy is somewhat older. I am very fond of her, true, but I would want her to be clear in her mind as to what she is going to do. Even though I am fond of her, however, I cannot be blind to her very real faults.

We all have such faults, as you know. And none of us can control whom he likes or dislikes very easily. I always try to keep my balance, of course. Sandy has done things I dislike very much; yet I remain fond of her. You have done things I wish you hadn't done; just the same, I happen to like you, and if we had been more of the same age, I'm pretty sure we'd have been doing things and running around together.

All the best always.



evening: 3d June 50

Dear Roberta,

I suppose no matter who a human being is, he exists principally because of hopes and dreams and illusions. Everyone gets to that stage in life when he believes that he can never be disillusioned again -- only to find that everytime he believes in someone and that someone lets him down, he is, after all, disillusioned once more. I was disillusioned by you today, and I was hurt by that disillusionment because I did not think that you would either believe gossip about me or judge me by it when my actions ran so counter to it; and I was additionally hurt to discover that you were not, after all, a friend of mine, because no friend would ever carry gossip "from authoritative sources", so-called, without telling me just what those sources were, unless she had some ulterior reason for wanting to believe this gossip, contrary to facts.

I say again that whoever presumed to speak with such authority was more than just a liar; that source of information was one of calculated malice, and I am ashamed to feel that I was so wrong in my judgment of you that I must now realize that you secretly wished to believe some such story in order to justify your breaking your promise to me. For you must know by my actions alone, even discounting all my words, that such a story is not true. If this were not so, you would have confronted me with what you had heard immediately and allowed me to reply to it; you would also have told me who told you this wild tale; but instead you chose to judge me by it, and immediately you rationalized yourself into a state of believing that every kindness I ever did was a "bribe" of some sort -- anything at all, you see, to make me fit a picture that would paint me as bad and untrustworthy and worthless. This is what comes of trying to keep a balance in your mind between affection, on the one hand, for what your heart tells you is the man, and hatred, on the other, for the man who might marry Sandra and thus take her from you and spoil your dream of escape, quite regardless of what that dream might do to Sandy in its fulfilment. And regardless, too, of what this constant blowing hot one day, cold the next in that house of tension can and will do to her.

I don't care how you disillusion or disappoint or hurt me; I'm so used to it that I come almost to expect it. I still try to trust people, despite all that. But I do care about Sandy's being hurt, and you know that you are in a far better position to really hurt her grievously than I or anyone else. And there is a very real

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danger that you could ultimately do her such harm as to start growing in her a hatred for you which would make your feeling for your mother seem passionate love by comparison. No matter what gossip about me you choose to believe, no amount of gossip can impair my intelligence, nothing can change my knowledge of people and their motives and my ability to see people as they are, and I know what is possible for Sandy, and probable, too. This power you have to exercise; but if, through it, Sandy is hurt, then in the end you will surely be hurt even worse.

Additionally, when someone tells you that for the past 15 years all I have done is ruin high school girls' reputations and then slough them off, that is vile and despicably untrue; it is a plain attempt to blacken my character; and that you should so readily believe it simply stuns me. The manifest fact, which just anyone who is at all interested can prove, is that I have never let anyone down in my life; I have stood by people through thick and thin, and that has naturally galled a good many people who would have liked to kick those who were on the way down and couldn't very well because I stood by them, I and a few other people who have other and better values than the mob. The fact is that I have never had anything to do except in the most casual social way with any high school girl but Myra, and now Sandy. I certainly did not let Myra down; she let me down, hard. I did not then see her for two years, in order to make sure that my presence would not complicate her adjustment to her unhappy existence; then I did, I saw her publicly, and that just infuriated people because they had been so busy kicking her reputation around in the interim. Another plain fact is that I have never in my life spent, or wanted to spend, so much of my time on or with one person as I have with Sandy. You must know that, for if I had spent time like that with someone else repeatedly, how in the world would I have got any work at all done?

But didn't people come to you in the very beginning to slander me? And didn't people come to me at the same time to tell me about you -- that you were white trash, that you were out to "rope me in", that you personally were mentally unbalanced and that your daughter was "just like her mother", that you personally were "on the make", and so on? They certainly did. But did the fact that people would take the trouble to tell me "with authority" or "on reliable information" make anything of this kind true? Yet it did for you when things were said of me.

I never believe gossip and I certainly never truckle to it. Nobody scared me away from Sandy by telling me things they presumed to "know" about you or her or your family generally. They filled my ears with their "knowledge" until I brushed them off or cut them off angrily enough to make an impression. I have never said anything of the kind you quoted me today about Sandy and myself going together. Only three people have ever faced me with the blunt question of what I meant to do, after I have said that I supposed in due time Sandy would get tired of a man old enough to be her father, and to each of these three people I said that if Sandy did not get tired of me, I intended to marry her, and I have been just as honest as I was with you, by adding that I would not attempt to stop her seeking her freedom if in five or ten years she wished it, since I desired her happiness above my own or anything else.

I have always been perfectly honest with you; perhaps the trouble is that I have been too honest. I would hate to think that you can be too honest, because it certainly doesn't speak well for our civilization if it is true. But it is undeniably true that the very thought that I might marry Sandy frightens some people out of what little wits they have. I have said all along that I doubted such a marriage would take place. And why have I said it? Because of two principal reasons -- first, I really believe that Sandy will tire of me before it is possible for her to marry me; second, I believe Sandy can do better than me, unless she is spoiled by being allowed to run out with the wrong kind of fellow to the wrong places. In addition, I realize also that you will never really reconcile yourself to Sandy's being married, and you never can quite believe that the break between yourself and Sandy will be all the deeper if she marries someone finally who is not sympathetic with you and does not understand all the trials to which you have been subjected. You will remember now how many times I have spoken of the "three" of us, not just the "two", and you will understand what I meant.

And everytime you hear something about me, just remember that something like 50 local people have gone out of their way to "speak" to me about my "romance" with "that Winters girl". You say that Sandy's reputation is suffering, and I say that if that is so, it is not on my account, but on account of the careless way certain boys she was with before I came on the scene ran her down -- with their parents' help, if you please. I say furthermore that that is damned non-



iv.

sense! The plain fact is that Sandy's stock has gone way up since we began going around together. People openly ask what it is she's got to entangle Derleth like that, and make no bones about it. And those who have tried to throw their own daughters into my path quite naturally see nothing but bad in Sandy. Isn't that life and human nature? It certainly is. Even the teachers in the high school looked on Sandy with new respect, and that's simply undeniable because other students noticed it.

You say that it would be understandable that I would say the things that were supposedly "quoted" from my "going around saying" things -- as if, between the time I have to give to my work and the time I have enjoyed spending with Sandy or at your farm, I had time to "run around" talking about my "romance" (what damnable idiocy!) -- if I thought I were going to be given the gate by a fifteen-year old girl. My dear child, what do you think people will say if and when we do break up? Sandy and you could get up on the housetops and sing a chorus entitled, "We gave Derleth the gate!" and repeat it every hour on the hour; and I could publish a testimonial that it was true, every word of it -- and what do you suppose the people would say in spite of it? Why, they who know just everything, who can "speak with authority" "on reliable information", they would tell everybody else that that sly old fox, that sonofabitch Derleth got out from under again, he slipped away, the cagey bastard! That's what they said about Marcia's breaking our engagement; that's what they said about Myra's tragedy. They weren't aware of any heart-break I might have had; oh no, they didn't want to know anything about that, and I kept it from them because my private feelings are none of their business however much they try to make my private life their own.

If such a story as were told you were true, and it were told in honesty, would there be any reason to ask you to keep the teller's identity secret? How do you or I know she isn't the same person who is running you down? If the story were true, why, if I were "running around saying I was going to ease myself out gradually" I must surely have said it to enough people to be able to prove it easily. But the fact is it isn't true, and the sole reason you were asked to keep it quiet is the fact that the mischief-making gossip knew I'd make trouble for her and make her apologize to you when I found out. And I would, too. I don't intend to stand calmly by while common swine slander me without any other reason but to interfere in what little happiness I have.

V.

It is true I never had any real hope of marrying Sandy. I wanted it to happen so much that I didn't dare to torment myself with even entertaining the hope that it might. You of all people knew that; you had every opportunity to know it; I told you everything there was to tell, and you know I did. Perhaps I was wrong to do so; for certainly it invaded Sandy's right to privacy. But I trusted you, even if you could not quite bring yourself to trust me; I believed you when you spoke, whether you talked of Sandy or the boys or of your youth; and I felt in you a very sensitive person, eager for someone to trust, someone to believe in, looking for a kind of security she will perhaps never find, and for that I am sorry, for there is no security except in yourself, there is never any security for anyone but within himself. That is the only real security. If I had not had it, I would have been crushed time and again by evidence of the terrible maliciousness of the people around me, even of those I have helped and befriended again and again. Do you ever understand, I wonder, what little things cause people to slander me? To object to my going out there to see you? It is ridiculous, but the fact is that people who think themselves a lot have repeatedly asked me to dinner, not because they like me, but just because they want to show off to visitors that they "know" me and imply that we are "great friends", and I do not go, and they read in the papers, week after week, that I have been out to your home; so their inflated egos are pricked, their pride is hurt, and they are angry not only at me but also at you, and they say, "Who are those people that he should go out there? Well, he's no better." And young people who would like to come out here and entertain themselves and eat what I have to be eaten cannot do so because I am not home, I am out there, and so they resent Sandy's coming into my life to break their pattern. And their parents do, too, because they don't know where the kids are now, or else they have them under foot, and it's so inconvenient for them either way. So if the kids do go to a tavern and take a drink, why, it's my fault, mind you, because I'm not at home so they could come here where they can't drink. And so on, endlessly. So the pack starts baying at my heels -- the inconvenienced, the offended, the envious, the malicious -- they go out to break it up because they cannot bear to think that anyone like me, who pulled himself up by sheer force to being who I am today, could be happy now and then, too. Hit him, hurt him, mow him down -- but be careful he doesn't see who does it, because we may need his help sometime again, and he might strike back. That's all of it in a nutshell.

The fact is I enjoyed coming out to your place with all its tensions


vi.

because there I felt and did feel always that I could be myself, perhaps sometimes my most offensive self, because no one out there had any reason to envy me or hate me or wish to hurt me as so many of my local "friends" do by trying to break down my self-respect by their attacks on my going with Sandy, by their carrying word of gossip about me to me. Out there I had the same sense of freedom I had in the woods -- only without the mosquitoes. And in addition there was Sandy, who means so much to me that without her the sun doesn't seem to shine, and the moon and stars might as well be forever under clouds.

You have laughingly cried at me many a time, "Now who's got a complex?" when I appeared to demean myself before Sandy or the thought of marrying Sandy some day. But it was no complex. I knew I had no right to love her, but love respects no one. You know I fought it a long time, even avoiding Sandy; but there was no good in that, it had to come through and it did. I knew I had no right to think of marrying so young and sprightly a girl with such a difference in age between us; I did not dare to entertain the hope that I might, and surely there is no greater evidence of my own humility than in my willingness to grant her freedom if we did marry and she grew unhappy in that marriage. Nor is there any greater evidence that above all else I wished for her happiness.

I do wish for that. I want to love with respect and admiration, with self-respect and pride, and I wanted always that Sandy must understand that we must always make a choice in life, that we cannot both have our cake and eat it, too, because out of that understanding comes self-reliance and the sense of compromise which make for wise and intelligent adulthood. Ever since I have taken Sandy around, I have thought too much of her and of her feelings to even be seen with anyone else; it is not a course I ever asked or expected of her, but it is my way of showing my respect for her, so that no one could tease her or cause her any discomfort by making her think that I thought little of her.

But I am writing, I fear, against the wind. You have made up your mind now against me, and nothing I can do or say will alter that. I had thought my friendship meant something to you; I am sorry I was so presumptuous. I ask now nothing for myself; I want only Sandy's happiness. When she, without any pressure from anyone, tells me she wishes me to drop out of her life, I will do so; I will do all I can to uproot the love I bear her; but even so, she knows and you know that if ever she needs me, I will not let her down.



15, Nov. 1951

Dear Aug,

Got your letter today; Thanks!

Sorry to hear Sandy has the mumps.

I've a watch tonite so this will have to be short, so act I. —

Please don't worry about me getting hurt, Aug, because there was only one girl that I ever cared about and she was married last week. I don't pay heed to what is written in a letter because I know how easy it is to write something one doesn't mean. It was a game with me all along except for a few exceptions. I know now that I'll never be hurt again but I only hope I haven't hurt you or will hurt you in the future. I tried hard to be nice and give way a lot to others but I've finally seen it's dog eat dog. I don't want to hurt anyone but I'll never give way like I use to. I know you'll show Sandy this but all I can say is that it's all true. The hell if it is, if I ever get married it won't be a girl I will really love as a person to be more than a companion, because I really don't know what "love" is.

Well, I was already for Japan this Friday but they're giving us a month of special's train.

ing, and from the "Seattlebutt" it's something really  
big. After school we'll go to our <sup>assigned</sup> ~~regular~~ duty stations.

We saw Karl, (Gory and I) He has a new  
home and seems to be liking California real well.  
His wife is very nice and has an exceptional personality  
as you know. It was good to see him again.

So the great August Sedleth has finally been  
trapped. I never thought a woman good enough  
would come along but I guess she's it. Congratulations  
and Good Luck.

Guess that's it for now.

See you,

Jim

P.S. I "bought you" a bottle of Tequila.  
It's drunk in this way, as you might know.  
You lick your hand on the side and put salt on  
it and you're ready. Drink some Tequila, lick  
the salt and then suck a piece of lemon. It  
is a good drink but powerful. I can't mail it  
so I'll have Gory bring it when he leaves here.

~



19 November, 1951

Dear Jim,

Yours of the 15th got in just as I was about to go to Men's Club for the annual football banquet -- an occasion you'll remember, of course -- so I couldn't get at it until I got back to my desk. I slipped out after Warren Jollymore had finished talking and was introducing Dick Murphy as the commentator for the film of the Ohio-Wisconsin game -- it's now 10:20 P. M.; Chuzzle Sawyer just dashed in to check with Jerry Bunters about the hour for going hunting deer tomorrow morning, and said the whole program was now over, though I've been home already an hour, and the program, I thought, was more than half over when I left!

I was glad to have your letter. I think you understand completely about Sandy. I knew what Sandy wanted from the beginning; I thought it would wear off. Apparently I was wrong. I am fond of Sandy; it may be a tragic mistake, but only time will tell that. All I ever asked of Sandy was that she be careful of her reputation; over and over again I offered to step out of her life when she wished it; but she never did. I still leave the door wide open. I bought a diamond ring the other day -- \$465! shot (though a diamond is a reasonably good investment) -- but it will be some weeks before she gets it. And then there will be no ~~ifs~~ <sup>ifs</sup>, ands, or buts about it -- either she will take it, and we'll go on from there; or she will not, and we will stop there.

I understand about letters, also, though I must say I am not in the habit of writing anything in a letter I don't mean; the spoken word may be misinterpreted or misunderstood, but the written word, never. So I say what I mean, and I put down what I mean. Life is a process of getting hurt, and there is more to life than dog eating dog, believe me. What you have professed to discover is something I learned a long time ago, something I would rather back away from, but, since it is all around me, something no one can escape. You must take the measure of every person you meet and try to meet him on his own grounds or else force him to meet you on yours. You ought never to face the world either with a chip on your shoulder or with too soft an attitude. Be wary always, but never suspicious.

As for hurting me. No, Jim, you've not hurt me in the past; what the future holds no man can know. I should not have wanted to hurt you either; no quartet of boys ever enlisted my affection the way you four fellows did, and it seemed to me important to be sure that no misunderstandings caused a rift among you, as was once threatened. In any picture where there is a woman, you may be sure that there

will be distortions; women never see things quite the same way men do, and they live by an entirely different code. It ought to be understood early in life by men that in any picture in which a woman takes part, it is the woman who chooses, not the man. Long ago I learned to be philosophical about women; I have seen them make mistake after mistake and then come weeping and crying about those mistakes, which should've been clear to them and were pointed out to them in the beginning; I have not stood in their way at any time. At the same time I have known men to make perfect fools of themselves at the behest of some woman.

No, I see no reason to show your letter to Sandy. I showed her only one of your letters, and that was a very casual one written just before you left Memphis, containing some jokes and nothing at all about her or myself. Particularly, I don't show my letters, since I do regard them as something personal; what you do with your letters received is your business. And there is one other thing -- if Sandy and I are ever married, I would want you to feel as free to come out here as you have always done, not only you, but a good many other young people of whom I am especially fond. And I'm sure Sandy would feel the same way. I have always had the conviction that a good deal of what Sandy does that is not for the best is done out of an insecurity complex which ought to be lost if she marries me.

I can appreciate and sympathize with your desire not to hurt anyone. Neither do I. I used to be distressed when I discovered that someone had his or her feelings hurt because of what might have referred to him or her in my books; but I found out that most of the "hurt" was false. I've always tried to avoid hurting people, you see, and all the more so people I like. I knew your faults perhaps better than you yourself know them; but when you like someone, you like him despite his faults, and you don't nag him about them, because you know that you, too, have faults, not only others.

Love, dear Jim, is a state of mind (and body) which means different things at different ages, believe me. Who among us would presume to say certainly what it is. But it is many things -- it is the same tie you call friendship which binds you four fellows together. I know you have affected to be "disgusted" by the thought of "love" among people of the same sex; but I assure you that the love one man can hold for another can be more beautiful and more satisfying than the love of a man for a woman. Love is necessary to everyone; it is knowing that someone "needs" or "wants" you; that you have a reason for existing; it is passion, as well, the urgent need to be physically and spiritually satisfied. Its symptoms are readily

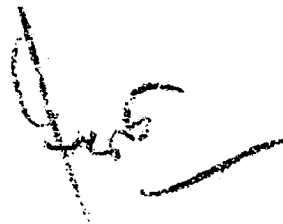
recognized -- when you want only to be with that one certain person and no one else, when you eat, sleep, and breathe "her", when the very thought of her quickens your pulse and lights a fire inside you -- that's it, pal; you've been tagged. But that first, early rapture doesn't last. Margery in *EVENING IN SPRING* was a first love; nothing else is ever quite like it because it's the purest projection of the self outward in a blind searching for a mate. Later on comes a more even and tempered affection, and at basis this soon becomes the recognition of the need for a companion. Companiability is the first consideration, believe me; passion and all else are second. Nothing wears off quite so quickly as sex, once indulged in -- but to like the same things, to dislike the same things, to take pleasure in similar pursuits, to have similar tastes, to get along easily together, these are the important factors in love and ultimately marriage.

So much for that. I'm glad you're not off for Japan yet. Shimmel called up Cleo from Korea the other night; she said he sounded just as if he were calling from Madison. I'm delighted to know that you're getting a month of specialized training; but I hope that "duty stations" doesn't mean you'll be off to sea for months at a time, because I'll certainly miss seeing you. ... So you saw Karl, eh? Good! I wrote him that you were in town, might get around to seeing him; and I'll bet he was tickled down under to see you, because no matter how much he pretends to like California, he's really nursing a terrific yen for Wisconsin, only he can't come back with his wife since, by marrying before June 1952, she's in contempt of court and would be arrested if she came back into the state now or before June next year.

There isn't much news here. Local scuttlebut has it that Snooks Noel was pregnant, after all, hence the hasty marriage. The boys brought out word tonight that Vera Goodyear, a high school girl from the country (reputedly easy), given to running out with stray soldiers, has "disappeared"; she left her home last night, Sunday, that is, at about six, hasn't been seen since. ... Rumor has it that Coach McGuire and his Bonnie Mae Austin are about to get hitched; as you perhaps know, she's been taking Catholic instructions.

I'll be looking forward to that tequila! I've read about the stuff. Are you serious in your instructions about drinking it? What a ritual!

All the best to you always.



11 March, 1953

Dear Sandy,

I read your two letters this morning, as I have read all those others you have sent to me in this interval, with tears in my eyes and a terrible weight of grief inside, realizing how you have come close to knowing what love is at the very moment when there is virtually none left in me, after four long years of devotion. I have known ever since it happened that some day soon I must say these things to you, I must in honesty tell you what both of us face together, for the girl who is coming into my house as my wife is not the girl I loved, and the task she faces, of trying to begin a new love on the ashes of the old is one that is almost humanly impossible, one that can be done only out of a deep and selfless love, of which I fear you are not capable.

It was such a love I bore you, dear Sandy, a love I thought could never die, and yet now, at the end of four years, I look back and know how, step by step, you ravaged it and tore it and in the end slew it. A long, long time ago, when I was very young, I wanted very much to love someone who could love me with the same kind of honesty and decency, who could be loyal and fair, and time after time, I discovered that I loved only to be disappointed. Four years ago, I fell in love with a beautiful young girl who seemed to me the sum total of all the girls I had loved before. I knew her for what she was -- too sensual for her years, a liar, and begged her not to lie to me, if she loved either me or herself. I took her body because I knew she would let someone else take her if I did not, and I thought only of her day and night, and I wrote to her some of the most beautiful -- and, yes, anguished -- love poems I could have written, and in those poems I foretold our end, even as it came to pass, if she had not the will power and the honesty and loyalty to be honest and fair just with herself alone. I called her Psyche, because that was the name of one of the most beautiful women of mythology, the woman whom Cupid himself loved.

I loved her very much, almost to distraction. Yet I knew she was incapable of anything but selfishness, though I dared to hope. Love, I have so often said, is like a mirror, a polished glass, and the least defect soon shows on it. And, in you, you first destroyed my trust in you. Oh, I know I blinded myself time and again, I did not want to think and believe what my mind told me, what the facts set forth, but it was to no avail; though I continued to hope, I knew that slowly, surely, Psyche was dying; and late in March of 1951, Psyche died, and the love I had for her died, too, giving place to another I hoped to have for the person who was really you. Yet my new kind of love was not untouched by contempt, as you must have sensed, for I knew it was not in you to be honest and fair, it was in you only to lie and cheat, to be cheap, and I knew unless I fought desperately against the mounting odds that sooner or later you would prove yourself to be what the boys all called you: a cheap whore. You knew how hard I fought. I did not want you to go out to work. You said I did not want you to meet other men -- what I did not want to happen did happen; it was not meeting them I feared.

Now you come to me as my wife solely because I have too great a sense of moral responsibility to let you suffer your ordeal alone. You came to me pregnant, with, I am convinced, another man's child in the womb I had hoped to fill. Can you think

dear Sandy, how I must feel? How must a man feel after he has spent years on a young woman he loves, has written to her beautiful poems, has offered her his name in marriage -- and a name that stands for more than most names in our brief history -- and given you a ring to wear to signify his faith and his love, and knows now at last that she has disgraced his ring, has scorned his love, and brings shame to his name and his life because she could not resist indulging in an affair so cheap and shameful that even the thought of it makes me physically ill.

Can you ask me even to be faithful to you in such circumstances? I cannot be. I cannot make such a promise. Can you ask me even to say to you "I love you"? when the very words are a mockery of all I said to you before. Love I have none. I am fond of you, and I hope and pray that love may again grow between us, but I have no real belief that it will. We find ourselves trapped by our mutual passion, and by this ordeal of fire through which neither of us will pass unscathed. But all this will call for the utmost patience from you. For four years I was patient with your unkindness, your lies, your disloyalty and finally, your cheapness -- now I have none left to offer you. When you come here to live, you will always have to defer to my wishes and my decisions; when we are at one in what we like or do, all will be well; when we are not, please do not quarrel, for without patience I will be so quick to anger, since all my unpleasant memories will rush to the surface, and my withheld rage will burst out. And I do not want this to happen. You will have to bite your tongue many times.

But this patience with me, with my anger and my infidelities -- for I have now learned that no woman appreciates a loyal and faithful husband, no woman, I should qualify, of the kind that always seems to attract me -- is only the least of your possible difficulties. Deep down inside me there is still that boy of long ago who wants very much to love someone who can love him with the same kind of honesty and loyalty and decency I can offer to her, and your danger lies in this -- despite being married, I may find someone like that. I confess I do not have much hope, but a little is there still, or I could not live.

Nor have I, indeed, much will to live. I tempted fate by counting on you too much, by pushing aside my mind for my heart. I knew I could never count on your people, and I could have won against them -- but only with you, and it was you -- as I knew you would when you left this village to work in the city -- who destroyed my love and us in the end. What have I left for you now? An old fondness, a habit -- no respect, no love -- and the terrible need, however distasteful it is to me, to lower myself to your level so that I can wipe away this dreadful contempt and anger which tears at me and wears me down. I have no pride and no self-respect left, either, and yet we are starting out with all the chips down against us. What you had that Myra did not have you deliberately destroyed, and you now have nothing left that Myra has, and now, forever after, Myra will always be the woman in my heart, though for so long you had pushed her away, kept her out of my heart and mind, until you opened the door for her to come back two years ago, and last autumn swept away every barrier for her to return and take your place.

So be it. Now the child will always be a ghost and a wall between us. If I were capable of prayer -- I'm not, for I used to pray nothing would happen to you there -- I would pray that the child would be miscarried or be born dead, anything but that it be born to remain a terrible doubt forever between us. That it will always be. That you have born a child fathered while you were engaged to marry me, even while plans for the wedding were being made, whose parentage is uncertain, and whom there is little to convince me is mine, and whose existence will be a constant reminder of that horrible, cheapness of which you were so wantonly guilty is an unsurmountable obstacle I hope time will deaden. But it is something that will always



lie in the back of my mind, like a spreading cancer. Had it been disposed of, had you not been so stupid as to try to conceal what you did in time for it to have been taken care of, all this could have been prevented. But, no, with that fatal gift for error after error, you made this additional cross possible, so that I, who was always so careful of your reputation and your well-being, must now bear the public disgrace of your act, and the inner bitter unhappiness of all its consequences.

Time, they say, wears away and tempers all things, all griefs, loves, hatreds, everything. But even time will be powerless against a living child who serves as a constant reminder of the little worth in which you held my love, my ring, my name. I tell you all this so that you may remember it when your patience with me is tried, for it will be tried severely and often. And you will have no redress, no recourse to a sympathy and a consideration for you which no longer exist or have any reason, short of common decency, to exist. I dislike above all things to be petty and mean; I beg and warn you not to make me be.

All that could have been between us you destroyed by your wanton harlotry -- all that ~~incomparably~~ wonderful love I had cradled for four years, all the faith and the loyalty so necessary to every man, all the fire and the longing I had expressed in my poems, all gone in one selfish cheap act and its aftermath. What remains is but a ghost, a husk, a shell -- and sex.

On this sand we hope, nevertheless, to build our future. May God help us!

29. Nov. 1951

Dear Aug.

Whew - I just had a time proving to the boys that the Germans are the smartest people in the world. They have seen "The Desert Fox," and were arguing about Rommel's strategic brilliancy? so I gave them the "goose."

Well - no leave to go home for Xmas or New Years ~~so~~ it really should be a happy one for you because I notice you are weary of my ~~assertions~~ forwardness toward Sandy so that will be off your mind. As you have said I have my faults and you're right - I know them.

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Jerry should be home about the time you receive this letter. I've brought some beautiful Xmas presents for my folks in Mex. and we got you a couple nice presents. If Jerry ever got caught smuggling the goods out of Cal., I'm afraid I'll be in the Navy (brig) for a long time.

Quers that's it for now, Aug.

Be careful and if you can't, name it after me.

As Always,

Jim.

P.S. Laddet Scuttlebut is we're not suppose to ship out before Xmas - so - well probably leave tomorrow.

1 December, 1951

Dear Jim,

Yours of the 29th came in this afternoon. I found it at the post office when I came back from Madison, whither I had gone with Dave, Christmas shopping. So my reply can't go on its way until Monday, which will account for the disparity between the above date and the date on which you receive it. .... Jerry got back last night, by the way, as no doubt he wrote you today. I've not seen him yet. He called Dave, Dave said, but Dave hadn't seen him either up to four this afternoon. Irene said this morning he was busy washing the car. No doubt it needed it, for he must have had some rugged going last night, since we've been shrouded in fog day and night here for about forty-eight hours or so. No fun. I had to drive in it, too, and I certainly didn't like that.

I would qualify that about the Germans being the smartest people in the world. They have one fatal flaw. They tend to follow anyone who looks, acts, and talks like a leader, without analyzing carefully what he stands for. There are still many Germans today who swallowed so much propaganda they don't believe in the evil that was Hitler, and whenever we try to re-educate them, they dismiss it all as propaganda. Those Germans, at least, aren't the smartest. But it seems to be true that the German race has the most ordered mind, and seems to be scientific in its thought.

I'm a little at a loss to understand your writing that I resented and was weary of your going for Sandy. I cannot recall that I ever said anything of the kind to you. I was weary of the way Sandy carried on; but none of that rubbed off on you as far as I was concerned. Sandy always exercised a choice; she could go with you -- what I didn't want afterwards was her saying she was forced to go, that your mother arranged the date, and so on, so on. What I want to say, obviously, is that in any situation like that, it is the woman who is to be blamed, not either of the two men. I certainly always made you welcome out here, and I surely didn't in any way show that I was griped at you for something which Sandy had a right to say no or yes to. Yet even today I hear about that March 30 date -- how you asked her to spend the night at a motel or in a hotel room with you, what you were supposed to have said -- like, "If you marry that s-o-b Dexteth, I'll strangle you with my bare hands!" (pretty, eh?) and so on. All that was bait I never took. I didn't come bullroaring at you to demand a showdown or anything of the sort, did I? No, sir! Candidly, Jim, men would get along a lot better with one another if there weren't any women.



Jan. 12, 1952

SUNLIT WOODS

Dear August,

As one of your lifelong friends  
I should say "Congratulations!" But  
I must confess I am a bit  
disturbed by the news. Perhaps,  
I am unkind when I say I am  
not too happy over the difference  
in your ages. (You are probably  
saying "she should talk!") That  
is the reason, though; I've had  
some experience. I hope you  
make a success of it and that  
you can make her happy.  
Hope you have considered  
all the angles carefully.  
Wish we could talk in person  
about it, but you're in  
love, I imagine and  
nothing would change  
your mind, anyway.





ORCHARD

For my children's sake I  
would not do it over again  
myself. There are many problems  
which arise. You may not  
encounter the same ones, but  
there is the possibility that you  
may.

Nevertheless you have  
my sincere wishes for a  
truly happy marriage. You  
have waited long enough  
for it.

Best of everything  
as ever,  
Maybelle





16 January 1952

Dear Maybelle,

Many thanks for yours of the 12th. I appreciate your thinking with some dubiety about the possibility of my marrying a girl 26 years younger than I am, and certainly there is very real cause to concern one's self about such an age difference. That is surely true even though the girl in question is a) of Slavic descent in part, and thus considerably more mature than her years; b) possessed of a strong Elektra complex, with a behavior pattern which has for years indicated that she is predominantly interested in someone appreciably older than herself in whom she finds a combination lover-husband-father; c) motivated in very large part by an urgent need for emotional security -- I do not have reference to the customary chaotic state of the adolescent mind of the female homo sapiens, a state in our time which increasingly great numbers of women carry over into their adult life.

I have been taking Sandy about now for some time. It will be three years in March that I first took her on a date. She first met me at 13, and decided not long after that she would marry me if she could. I did everything possible at first to avoid her without underscoring the class-consciousness of which she was being made cruelly aware by the usual reaction of classmates to a stranger in their midst, especially one whose economic circumstances did not seem up to their own. When I could not discourage her any further without hurting her, I reversed my tack and took her everywhere with my crowd. She took to concerts, plays, etc., like a natural. I had not thought she would. She was even able to deliver sound criticism, which, at 14, is somewhat unusual. I exposed her to some of my feminine friends who can be very cruel; except for those who held to an amatory interest in me themselves, she won them all over. I have steadily emphasized our age difference, painting the future as darkly as possible; I have never left her in any doubt about my financial standing -- that I'm still \$18,000 in the red; I have urged her to go with younger people of good reputation -- she has gone with them, not always those of the best reputation, challenged by that alone evidently; but in the end she has repeatedly come back to me.

Now in these three years something has assuredly happened to her. I suppose I can put it most plainly by saying she has been spoiled for virtually any other man by her association with me. It is no wonder that younger fellows of her own age bore her. She is used to something better; she is used to consideration and understanding which

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young fellows are incapable of giving. Yet she has had to make a choice between greater freedom of action with them and on the other hand the discipline I offer. She seems to have made it. She is just about through her 17th year, and will begin her 18th in March. She has had freedom of action up to Christmas Eve. She is still absolutely free to return her diamond at any time, but I have made it plain that once she returns it, she will not be offered it again.

Now in these circumstances, Sandy is as much a responsibility as could be conceived. She is in part my responsibility. Even if I did not love her, I could hardly avoid that. Understand me, I am not marrying her to absolve myself of a responsibility. But this thought undoubtedly enters into the picture. The diamond is in very large part the symbol of that responsibility, also. If on due thought she returns it ultimately, I can feel that at least I have discharged that responsibility; it is now publicly known that I will marry her whenever she says the word, once she's out of school and her parents agree, or, if they do not, once she's 18 and owes them nothing more. Her home circumstances, too -- they are not poor -- are such as to impel her forth; there are cross-currents of deceit and hatred in that household which she must have struggled valiantly to escape, and which can explain readily the tenacity with which she holds to me. Were I to let her down, I could not live with myself.

Yet she has not been sugar and honey, or all cloying. She has been with me perfectly natural. She is not concerned whether I see her looking like a tramp or in a tantrum; if she were acting a role, she would be. I have looked at this thing from every angle. I do not enter into marriage without qualms; I have plenty of them. I would have, no matter with what woman. That is only natural. Largely it is because, though I very much enjoy the company of women, their intuitive and inductive faculties, I tend rather to be scornful of their lack of reasoning ability (even though they arrive at the same rational conclusions by intuition) and their emotionalism, and am thus by nature dubious -- though with a sense of humor -- about getting along ultimately with any of them. But Sandy and I are compatible, however strange it may seem. Both of us like good music and hot jazz, dancing, good books, movies, plays; both of us would like children, both want to travel moderately. Neither of us is dust-daffy in a household, each of us can do a modicum of cooking, housekeeping, and the like. Sandy can type, if I need sudden work done my secretary can't do and I can't afford to have hired done.

ii.

As for our sexual compatibility, I have no qualms whatsoever. Because I am one of those rare men who are motivated first and foremost by the desire of satisfying a woman sexually, with my own satisfaction coming last, and because I have absolutely no qualms about the various modes of sexual gratification, I find it possible to make a woman climax five, ten, twenty, even thirty times, if she is capable of it, before climaxing myself, or so dividing time as to climax twice myself in that period of two to four hours of loving. Being in love does not mean I am blind, my dear. Mother always says that love falls where it will, even if on a pile of manure. I have had many anguished moments over this situation, and I expect to have many more before it is resolved, one way or another. I am convinced that if two people are determined to make a wedding work, it will work; if they are in doubt, it will not. There is still some time to elapse before any wedding can take place. We shall see what comes of it.

My best to you always,

A handwritten signature, possibly reading 'L. S.', is written in dark ink. The signature is stylized with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Monday

My dear August

*congratulated*  
You should be ~~congratulated~~. For the first time in my *never had* life, someone made a remark that floored me. And one that at the moment, I could find no answer for. If I ever write another script for a grade B movie, I'll try to clean it up a bit and use it. *if you discuss*

It was nice of you to see me yesterday and nice to speak to Tal. It did nothing to change the situation but just make me feel that Tal is not for me. Today, I received a letter from Copeland telling me some very nasty things about him. It seems that when I was in Europe with my child, Tal used my apartment to have an affair with some gal he picked up at Minnetas. The rotten thing about it was that she needed an abortion and not having all the money, used me as a credit reference. They had to borrow the money from the Chase National and never paid the loan back. People called about it and not being there, they contacted Blitzstein to find out if I would pay it. I am not even shocked and for some damn reason don't even care. But I did call New York and informed my mother that she had better put the screws on Tal's father or on Tal. I felt that for once she had better see him as he really is, instead of writing and telling me that he is a wonderful person, because no doubt, his family belong to the same club and that I should grab him into holy Matrimony while the grabbing is good. After all (Paula's Argument) I'm not getting any younger and it will be so nice for the family to know that I'm safe. Paula's reaction was typical. After all the girl really wasn't any one we knew. Men do do that sort of thing before they are married and the rest of the tripe that goes in a situation like that. I'm afraid that I really was nasty about the whole thing. I told her the truth and informed her that if the note wasn't paid, I would call Rockford myself. I then called Tal and told him to take care of it at once and not to call me or come to see me until I contacted him. I am now in the process of trying to put in a phone that I can use for outgoing calls and not have to receive any.

I am in the process of packing and making arrangements to leave for Colorado Thursday. Three days of skiing, fresh air rest and food should do the trick. Then perhaps I can come back and really work.

It is funny that once you talk something out with someone, the problem seems small and unimportant. I realize now that the whole damn trouble with me is that ~~I treated Tal as one of my possessions, in the same way that I treated my home, car and everything that I purchased with my money. In Tal's case, it wasn't the money that was spent because he spent far more on me than I ever did on him. It was the time, effort and energy that I used up. Since I have barely enough for myself these days, I no longer can afford to use my reserves. I explained that to him over the phone and I have a hunch that there will be peace until he sees and speaks to Kant.~~ I treated Tal as one of my possessions, in the same way that I treated my home, car and everything that I purchased with my money. In Tal's case, it wasn't the money that was spent because he spent far more on me than I ever did on him. It was the time, effort and energy that I used up. Since I have barely enough for myself these days, I no longer can afford to use my reserves. I explained that to him over the phone and I have a hunch that there will be peace until he sees and speaks to Kant.

This is the first morning after seeing him that I could honestly say that I went to sleep and slept. In fact yesterday morning when I arrived in Sauk City, I checked into the hotel and went to sleep after I saw you. I feel fine and have been able to get quite a lot done in one morning which is unusual for me. I usually spend

and I once had an English girl who told me  
repetition was bad - He predicted for their future  
a whole morning waking up and wondering why I'm alive. But not today.

I keep thinking about you and the youngster and remember the Frank Waters affair. I liked Frank. He was one of the nicest and sweetest guys I'll ever meet. Frank was like you to the extent that he knew just what he could do and did it. He lived rather simply in New Mexico, wrote, raised a garden, walked a lot and talked to about everyone in town. Frank had something that I don't think you have. A capacity to love people, but really love them, to understand them, aside from himself. He used to suffer for them and I use to rebel because he was so generous with himself and so patient. He married a sixteen year old. A nice kid and rather bright. She was going to college at the time that he met her and love bloomed. Suddenly school didn't matter but he did and so she left it for him. When I saw them last, some time ago; Frank was rather unhappy. There wasn't a thing that you could put your finger on, it just wasn't coming off as well as he or she for that matter expected. And I knew why or at least I ~~think~~ think that I do from my own experience. A youngster needs time to grow. She needs youth, not age or someone else's experience. You have to find out for yourself and your experience will never help another person. I can tell you what it is like. I went through it in Paris and Arthur ~~was~~ was near my age. The friends that you have and that understand you are the ones that you grew up with and went to school with. You understood each other because you were going through the same thing. And suddenly that relationship ends. You're the first in your set to marry. Your problems are different. ~~They are different~~ Your husband's friends suddenly become yours and you grow up but too fast. Growing should be a gradual thing, something that you ease into gently not so fast that one day you wake up and wonder what hit you.

No matter how you love a man, how much, how deep or what you feel toward him or for him, you still remember part of your youth and still have the feeling that you might have missed something out of life and you did. I know because ~~like~~ I felt that way and I took time to grow and to learn. I know what it is to write a script, clean house, cook, take care of a baby, and prepare dinner for eight people and greet them as if you just got out of bed ~~and~~ for that one occasion. It's hard and you have to have a hide an inch thick so that you don't feel the pain connected with the work of the ~~exhaustion~~ the tired ache in your body. I'm glad that I could do it but I do wish that I didn't have to learn so fast. Arthur was an artist and a good one. What I knew of art then could have been written on a pin. What I learned was entirely different. I had to, because I wanted my marriage to grow and the only way it could was understanding just what each of us were interested in and to be able to discuss it intelligently. I'll tell you how I reacted to having a baby at seventeen. I was almost through college. I had written a book and earned enough money at writing to help buy a home and I had been taught to be self sufficient. But when labor pains started, I wanted my mother, not Arthur, not my Grandfather or my best friend but my Mother. My Mother was intelligent. She was there without the proud I'm about to be a Grandmother look. She talked to me, played cards with me and never once felt sorry for me. When I was wheeled into a labor room, she took Arthur dancing. When it was over, she fed me orange juice, combed my hair, made up my face and let me cry. No sympathy, but love and a great deal of understanding. It was Paula who told me not to cry out at pain. That it was the easiest emotion to forget. It was true, physical pain is something that we can never remember. When I lost my first child,

Arthur couldn't help me. He was suffering too. But my Mother did and not with sympathy. She told me that at that moment I wanted to die but one day I would get up and realize that I hadn't thought about Darcy for a long time and that I had lived and kept on with my life and duties and she was right. Paula made an early marriage and understood. She was wise and knew what to do and what to say but only because she had gone through it herself. I could not learn by her experience because my father was a different man from Arthur. But she made the ~~knock~~ knocks that I had to take a little easier by explaining them to me. I was lucky because she has the capacity to understand and to be impersonal about it. She knows when to be ~~impressed~~ mad and when an issue is so big that you have to handle it ~~intelligently~~ quietly, calmly and most important understand it. When Arthur killed himself, she knew what I felt and how I felt toward my family. But I was married again and having a child. She told me frankly that the problem was too big for her to cope with and to go for help to someone who would know how to handle it.

Life with Mother wasn't easy. It rarely ever is when you have a parent who happens to be a professional woman. But there is something that I learned from her. I never heard my father or mother quarrel and yet I know that they did. Every couple does. My brothers never heard it either. And so I learned from training how to keep my child secure and happy. I couldn't stand Bill for the last few years of my marriage but Michael doesn't know that. He never heard us quarrel either. When he was told about the divorce, he knew I hadn't been happy but he was sure in the knowledge that we both loved him and that he came first with both of us. He never will know just how unhappy I was because ~~after the divorce~~ <sup>after the divorce</sup> behind closed doors. And thank God for that. Life is tough enough without parents making it harder for a child.

Right now, You're a kind of Greek God to that child. And that's fine but sometimes in life, we stop worshiping our Gods and realize that they are human too. Having an affair with someone and living with them are two different things. I know and far better than you. I've done both and believe me when I say that the nice thing about an affair is that there are times when you can be alone. My greatest luxury has been and still is to stay in bed one day a ~~week~~ week, have my meals brought up, read and write. Sleep when I want to and know that this one day I don't have to be clever, flip or charming. Arthur was my life until I discovered he was human too. I learned more about people like Auden, Isherwood and Bev Nichols than I would ever have learned from a book or mere conversation. I learned to understand them, to realize what made them the way that they were, what they suffer and they do and more important than that what they've accomplished in spite of the odds against them and to realize that in their small ~~world~~ <sup>world</sup>, they've given a great deal to this world. August, you will never make the average person see that. Not in a town like ~~Sauk~~ Sauk city or any town including New York where your background is conventional and abide by every standard rule that society sets up for us to live by. I learned a long time ago that it was easier for me to pretend that I was abiding by the rules than to let people know that I was breaking them. But at least when I did it, the other party ~~under~~ involved understood and went along with me.

I'm neither the best or smartest person in this world but at the age of twenty seven, I've learned the hard way. I'll never forget when I left Arthur and came home to live the things my Grandfather Frank told me. By that time, he was growing old and had mellowed a bit. I knew before the family found out that a good share of his money was going to Ann who had been his mistress for twenty five years. Ann was nineteen



when the old man caught her. She never had a chance to live, to really know people or to grow. Frank never knew just when he would be there. He realized that in spite of luxury and that she had that her life was tough. There could never be children in her life and she wanted them. He wouldn't have it. He had them but not her. He had profited by Henry Ford's experience and that was something that took Detroit years to forget but when you are a Ford you can get away with it. He told me that he would never marry Ann if Grandmother had died. That at the age of seventy he did not want a forty three year old wife. And being ~~frank~~ honest, Grandfather loved the arrangement as it was. It enabled him to do his work, have the kind of life that society expected of him and the kind that relaxed him and made him a bit happier. Feel sorry for Frank, I never did. For Ann yes because of a wasted life. I wish that someone had told her before she found out that a marriage whether it be legal or otherwise is for better and better not for better or for worse.

This has the makings of a swell soap ~~my~~ opera. A sort of glorified version of anyone of a dozen plays. It's usually up to the sponsor and the radio audience whether the thing lasts thirteen weeks or goes on forever. I may sound hard but I'm not really. I've learned from experience that I must keep from really getting involved if I am to get the work that I must do done. I feel sorrier for the kid than I do for you because what ever happens, she'll be hurt. Not you so much because like me, you've always got work to do. But if I was that girl, I would rather suffer now than later and if I were you I would rather regret the course of action that I must take now rather than later.

This is what I ~~me~~ meant when I said that I rarely ever wrote letters. It takes so damn long. This one has helped me though. If I ever go back to writing Joyce Jordan, I know what I can use as a problem for the good doctor. Good for at ~~least~~ least three months.

Best of luck at Appleton. Thanks loads for everything and will call you sometime next week when I return if I haven't broken my neck on skis by then.

As ever

Jane -

Not leaving me to doing my own typing.  
I have found that my letter writing is forced  
stately like my conversation.

Please don't resent my advice or comment. As  
I have said always before, I can't resist a  
chance to write fifteen minutes of garbage —

18 January, 1950

Dear Jane,

Your long letter of Monday drifted in this morning.

Glad to know that you are beginning to see yourself and your problem in sharper and less worrisome perspective. You know, we are never really self-sufficient until we realize that we never possess things as much as we are possessed by them. That is true, too, of people as well as things.

It is good of you to offer advice and comment. But be assured I have thought myself of everything you have said, I have pointed all these factors out to Psyche (so has her mother), and you know there is nothing like giving advice to an adolescent girl, particularly when she is at that age in which she is convinced she knows what is best for herself. But do disabuse yourself of the notion that she exists in a romantic haze, or that I am like a Greek god to her; I could think of nothing farther from the facts. I represent to her simply the opposite of what she has been most accustomed to -- kindness, generosity, emotional security; we like the same things and by and large we dislike the same things; she has few friends, tending to be clanish; so do I; but the friends we have are mutual, and they are in her age-group (and were my friends before she was on the scene) as well as in mine. Her state of mind is not wholly understandable, admittedly; no other's ever is. Her perspective is often keen. On one occasion we were at a movie together, and I, being fully aware of what action the picture must follow, turned to her to say something; whereupon she said, rather sharply, "Don't talk during the picture!" to which I replied, amused, "You talk to me as if I were a child!" whereupon she answered as seriously as possible, "Aug, in some ways you are a child, and I hope you never change."

No, Psyche is not letting go her adolescence for my sake, not by any means. She has her high school life, she dates other fellows, she goes to dances, et al; she has simply made up her mind to marry me when she can, and meanwhile enjoys a sex life with me, which she insisted in inaugurating solely because she had determined that I would provide as satisfactory a one as she is likely to get. This extraordinary child (she is surely little more in years) has not only come to this decision, but she has planned her sex life like a veteran: twice to thrice a week, with 12 to 20 climaxes each time. It is small wonder that she fascinates me out of all bounds, that if I were given a free choice, I would select her before any of my in-

tellectual equals, so-called, for these women give the appearance of being able to think, while Psyche feels and lives, and has a rationale which is distinctly her own, and which, if the truth must be conceded, is so much like my own that her own mother has admitted she has never seen too unrelated people so fundamentally alike in the way they look at and take life.

When you write that Frank Waters, who married a girl 25 years his junior or so, seemed vaguely unhappy, I rather suspect you might have been confusing issues. I think, knowing the creative life and particularly the kind of creative life that is his, that he is unhappy in marriage, and would have been that in marriage to anyone; it is the alteration of status, of habits, of life-pattern to which he adjusts unhappily, not the fact that he married a girl so much younger. Such marriages have been made most successfully by more creative people, however, than others, from Goethe to Chaplin, from Masters to Wright. The creative mind sits less in any age, and moves about more, shuttling from one age group to another, than the non-creative. I think one cannot take issue on this point.

Your perspective in offering this advice is markedly different from Psyche's, I think you must admit. Psyche has no such thing as "set". She, like myself, tends to move alone. She attracts people; so do I. I try to be kind, decent, receptive, understanding. I usually always understand people, but sometimes I don't let on, I can't because to do so would ultimately involve me too much, as I foresee without trouble. When you say that no matter how much you love, etc., you feel you might have missed something -- dear Jane, this isn't limited to a marriage to someone older. It applies to everything you do, everything. I had to choose between writing to keep body and soul together or living by means of teaching, and carrying on the way the rest of my classmates did; no matter which I chose, I would have felt I missed something, as I did. Indeed, my friends now tell me relative to Psyche that I missed this when I was a boy and am trying to make up for it now, which is arrant nonsense. What I did not experience, I lived vicariously. They were never able to do so. Moreover, the background differences are marked -- yours was of riches, relatively putting it, Psyche's is poor; you write that you never knew of quarrels in your family, Psyche experiences them constantly. She knows the full extent of her parents' inadequacies, and, having seen what her mother has gone through with a husband who, however good an egg he is while sober, is meaner than hell when he's drunk and gambling, has no intention of going forth and doing likewise. I am the opposite to her father, I am the goal of her libido and her father-urge, the Electra again, I am the non-drinker, the non-smoker, the non-gambler, the non-mean, and generally the negative of all those positive aspects of man as man she has come to hate. Oh yes, she has grown old too fast -- but dear Jane, she grew old too fast before she met me, and since she now has the assurance that I am standing by, that I love her and will marry her at a reasonable age if she still wishes it, she can go on with more self-confidence, and does.

For I would not marry her now unless circumstances made it necessary. And I mean that, even if someone else impregnated her, I would marry her. Love for me isn't a matter of precise rules and regulations; you either love or you don't, and it doesn't matter very much what you have held for an ideal when it comes. Besides, her happiness is my first consideration. She is keenly perceptive for her age. Some of the first things she said to me were these -- "Of course, you're lonely, or you wouldn't let the kids run through your house like this. And unhappy. And you're so sensitive most people wouldn't believe it, you get hurt easier than I do." One expects these things to be obvious to a woman of experience and intuition; one hardly expects to hear from a child of 14, as she was at that time. Her line now is equally incredible -- she tries every trick she can to cause me to slip and impregnate her, not only because she wants that baby or thinks she does, but because, "if you sit around and think about us all the time, you'll talk yourself into giving me up for my own good or some fool thing like that."

I do not delude myself. I still have the upper hand, but it is precarious. I have had no trouble with women of impressive experience, but this adolescent and determined girl keeps me on my toes as no woman ever did. I can imagine myself trying the same dodge on her that I tried on Marcia; I know just what she'd do; she'd read it all over, then show up here, tear up what I had written, throw the paper into my face, and tell me to stop trying to run away. It worked on Marcia at 35; Psyche at 16 would see through it without a moment's hesitation.

I would never try to make the average person see that a writer has to sweat blood to give even the second-rate material I do on the average to the world. Why bother? Psyche has some perceptive understanding, enough so that she even now resents anyone's taking up my time away from my work. Outwardly I live a life of indulging the conventions good-naturedly, occasionally erupting against them, privately I live my own life on the theory that what people suspect matters not at all, what they know does.

And you write of never having a chance to live. Dear Jane, is this not an illusion? Surely it is. What do you mean "to live"? Don't you mean something different from what I mean, from what Psyche means, from what your mother or Psyche's mother means? Of course you do. It is meaningless to write so, believe me. One does what he is inclined to do, or compelled to do, out of love, hate, duty, obligation, blind striving, desire, hereditary pattern, environmental pattern. One lives, believe me, as much in a Trappist monastery as in a whorehouse. So often I have heard people say, "but he (or she) never really lived" and I have known better; the intense life of the mind is not predicated upon anyone else or on any other mind's concept of what living is and what it is not. Do not delude yourself. You speak of Ann's not having lived. But she did, really; she lived the life she wished to live; she was not compelled to do so. She may say later she wanted a

baby, and so on; but this is mere ephemeral thinking. She made her decision; she could not both have her cake and eat it. She lived the life she chose to live; no one could have forced her to live it. She could very well have cached away a nest-egg, then disappeared and begun to live a different life, had she wished to; but no, she elected otherwise, she has no reason to complain any more than the cow who sits in a field of clover and tries to get through the fence into thistles or timothy in the neighboring field. And they do, you know, just like people, the silly things.


Yes, it is soap opera, indeed it is. Ann's line and your line, that a girl married to an older man or kept by an older man has no chance "to live" -- that is pure soap opera with no basis in fact, not at all. Think it over, away from the clichés of the field.

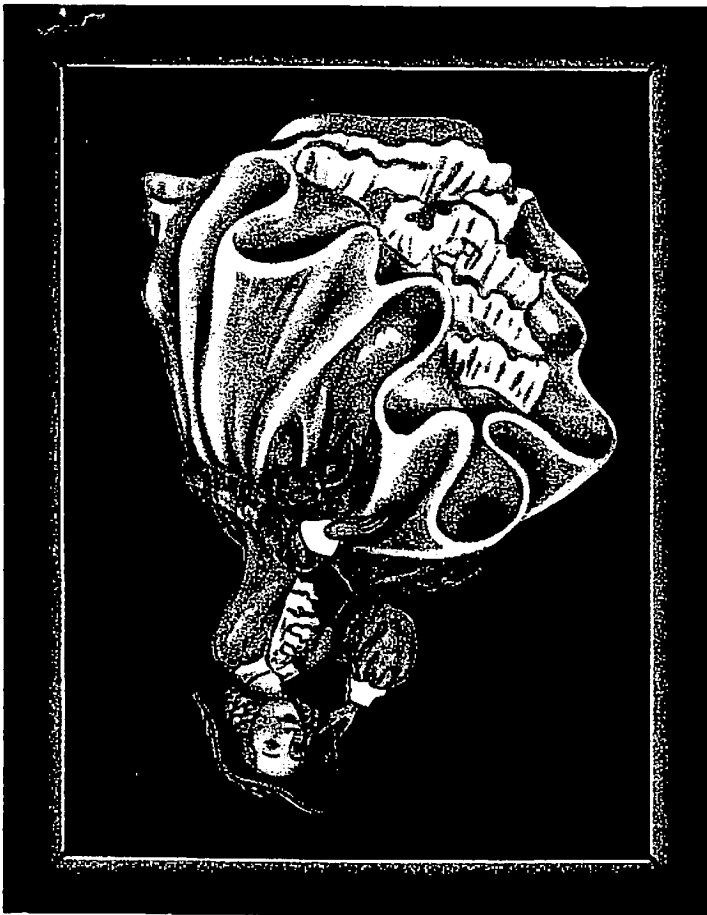
And Psyche will not be hurt, believe me. I am grateful for every hour I spend with her; she has made every other woman in my life pale by contrast; she has reduced them to mighty wan ghosts, and they were real enough before, existing quite bodily on the perimeter of my awareness. I have no intention of letting her be hurt, or, let us say, of letting her be hurt as much as by any other course she might take. If I marry her, I will not stand in the way of her freedom if she later desires that; if she precipitates an explosion, I'll be there to pick up the pieces; if she decides that I should get out of her life, I'll get out, and that's that. Paradoxically, her mother insists that whatever happens, I'm going to be hurt more than she will. That hardly supports your thesis, does it?

However, in these matters, it is time that tells. I never did hold with the idea that time palliates and soothes all hurts, but time does resolve all problems, one way or another. There is no question whatsoever about that.

All best to you.

Sincerely,





Dear August,

Just a note, wrote you one before but I am assuming it didn't reach you. In any event all I had said was that I thought I had time to read now.

Well Aug, here it is almost time for your wedding, not many more days of the solitary life. Can't help but wonder if we will be included, just like a woman to wonder but. I do think you had better at least invite us. We don't know if we could come but sure would like

Bill & I are for now very soon.  
 Aug, will write much soon  
 next time - I report I about  
 have time to read now.  
 August

Don't seem to be able to think  
 of Bill, I must be aping the  
 (the) I am very busy, I have  
 have done as much to the house  
 and all of it ourselves, it took  
 a great deal longer than we  
 planned. I hope to make up  
 some and all the things look  
 great it's some for and me  
 I won't want to be again

out -  
 small affair or are you going all  
 to. Don't you think it proper  
 to have us, you better or I'll  
 pretend to be provoked at you.  
 Guess I've done about as  
 good a job as anyone of inviting  
 myself - alone -

Enough of that, I'll  
 wager you get a good many  
 self invitations with each  
 day. As hope it isn't too  
 serious a problem. For  
 heavens sake pay no attention  
 to me, I'm not serious you  
 know.

How are things going, I  
 hope you are not doing all  
 the planning - is it to be a



12 March, 1953

Dear Mary,

I am now just back -- too late for the last mail -- from Illinois, and I have brought Sandy back with me. She will stay at mother's, apart from necessary trips to Madison and Chicago, until the wedding, though the night before she'll move in with her bridesmaid, or maid of honor, rather, June Doudna, and I'll have a house full of people. Mother gives my wedding two years -- she says she cannot imagine any woman being able to stand me for more than that long. I give it maybe five, but it may last longer. I don't know. I have had to make so many bitter and unhappy decisions in the past two months that I am scarcely myself, though, thank heaven, I've not lost my sense of humor, and I've already outlined a novel about it all, to be called "LITTLE B." I've done three novels, long or short, about my loves -- EVENING IN SPRING, a second which shall be nameless, THE DROUGHT OF MARCH, which you should have by this time since I mailed it yesterday in Madison, and "LITTLE B." will be the fourth. I hope not the last. I still have a lot of life and hope left in me, and the world is full of beautiful women eager to be loved. (Ha!)

But such is the folly of the wise that I would give anything if it could only be Myra who went down the aisle with me Easter Monday, believe me. For all her legion of faults -- we know how many they were and are -- no woman ever made me feel so good just to be around. And Sandy will never take her place. You will understand me perhaps a little better after you read THE DROUGHT OF MARCH. I tried to tell in it the truth as I knew it, about myself as well as Pipsie, and I hope you will not feel I have been in any way unfair or unkind to "Coral". I want to know very much what you think of it, and please don't pull any punches or try to spare my feelings in any way. The two times I offered to marry Myra -- the first I offered, the second I asked her to marry me (there is a difference) -- are perfectly factual; indeed, the letter I reproduce in the novel is an exact copy of the one I sent Pipsie in 1948. So you see the fact that she is not now my wife isn't my fault, but her choice. I no longer try to deceive myself; I love her still, to the exclusion of all others. But, fortunately, that does not prevent me from loving others. (Thank heaven!)

Dear Mary, I would not think of having a wedding without asking you or expecting to see you. If you are not here in my house on that day -- the reception will be here -- and acting just as if you belonged here -- and indeed! is not a tiny part of you forever here? (I think so) -- I would be bitterly disappointed. So do plan to come, please.

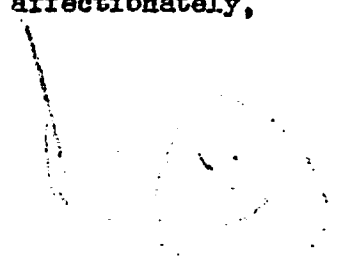
11.

And, just so you can forget about "inviting" yourself, I assure you on my word of honor, which I have never disgraced, that your name was on my list from the very beginning. Pipsie's too, of course. And not just because you invited me to your wedding and I couldn't come and sent a string of telegrams which to my alarm you seem to have taken literally. Remember?

I am indeed doing all the planning. The press will cover this wedding, and I will not have any slip-up on the part of the Winters family, which is little short of white trash, as I've said before, for all that they mean well, they are such botchers. Even, since Sandy wouldn't let me design it and had the brainstorm to pick out a lacy horror that cost \$285, I have insisted on picking out Sandy's gown, have it picked at a more sensible \$100 (her grandmother is standing all the expenses. Wedding at 10 A. M., breakfast at 11:30 at the Riverview Ballroom, reception from 2 to 5 here at the Place of Hawks, as my architect has finally persuaded me to call it.

So much for now. As always,

affectionately,



the story, every word and dot  
I will not let refuse to be  
your house, people as not  
your actions - it's impossible  
I will very hard to explain

impossible that you have  
them such danger. It is my  
people are always willing to  
and will seem as nothing can  
your good after meeting it, I  
no doubt that people will  
doubt as to how to come. I  
for that that is the most, in  
to this, perhaps there is the  
it is the way of the world  
accepted some on this - I am  
one in the book is good in the  
of which I am trying to make  
in this. I hope to be possible  
in as many people, then I  
are I'll say. It is not a bit  
if you will be damned, the  
nearly will do it still bit.

Do I seem mid. victor,  
I hope not. I only want you to  
know I think the book good,  
what about is it not, but it  
does seem a bit unfair to tell  
the world, I suppose I've had  
the same or similar when  
others - it's the not knowing  
the people that makes it  
fiction, right.

Enough, I could go on and  
on, perhaps sometime when we  
can talk.

I took time out to see a  
bit, thinking I would continue  
this when I tired, now I find  
if I don't hurry, I'll have all  
of the book up and then

it from the person - it will  
impossible to be sure of it  
I have no money of the book  
will seem.  
day in a little but I shall say  
to be, there are some people not  
impossible as this will have  
aimed at the that is most  
get together and just talk, it  
more it would be if we could  
destruction of human life  
that and that is the point, you  
Nelson - it was all in my  
I must have spoken without  
and well it before you read this  
day, it is in the way, please wait  
me 5 minutes I'll be with you  
yourself the same time with you  
I will be with you  
And I say.



I'm defeated, so I shall hurry on, probably not get a word done.  
I'd like to but will try again.

And will I say Congratulations to you after your man and  
wife August, it will be easy enough to give my best  
wishes but the other will be more difficult. I shall  
get there it ~~there~~ I think, also I might add I plan to be  
there with bells on. I'm not sure Bib will be able to  
get the time off but he is asking. Roll out the red  
carpet when - if I have to walk I'll need a foot bath,  
think you can arrange it.

The kids are all up now and thinking straight much like  
writing straight is most impossible, to top it all I  
must compete with the Lone Ranger & Kit Carson. Then too  
I will have a jammed trouble, or well it's time to get the  
cleaned up and ready for bed after supper anyway.

Still close for new Aug. perhaps the time will be  
when we can talk who knows - how soon do you  
leave after, the trip I mean

Always,

Mary

17 March, 1953

Dear Mary,

Your second letter came hard on the heels of the first, and I reply to it immediately before setting out for the marshes, where I intend to spend the afternoon listening to the birds, writing a little, and working on my new anthology -- while Sandy and my folks continue to make the house ready for the reception. We've invitations to begin, too, so that they can go out on Saturday, which is the day I've set for them to go; and tomorrow we're going into Chicago to get Sandy's wedding-dress. So I'm in a "hectic" state, as usual, and it's all I can do to stay in this morning, for it's such a lovely day and I want to hurry down into the marshes as soon as I can.

In any case, I'm glad you liked *THE BROUGHT OF MARCH* as a book, quite apart from its application to life as you knew it a decade ago or less. Yes, it was a baring of the heart. I guess, in the final analysis, it was the conflict of my loyalty to Jack that was responsible for the whole thing, for my hesitation until it was too late; and when it was that, of course, Pipsie could not make that decision, however absurd it is that she could not. I don't know even now if she is capable of love, certainly not of selfless love, but I do know that with all our mutual faults -- and these were in neither case minor -- we were always happy together. Is not that the end of all marriages? Love is the author of both the bitterest pain and the sweetest ecstasy; one does not, cannot exist without the other; they are natural concomitants. I would have enjoyed working for Pipsie, but most of all, just having her around would have been the best medicine in the world for me. A pity she did not believe in herself and trust in me a little more. But all these recriminations are pointless; the time has passed for that, and our time is lost. Even this mad wish to bear my child will pass, if indeed it has not already passed. I do not fear it; I learned long ago that each man (and woman) is the author of his own fate, no one else; and that life serves us in proportion to the servings we merit. In the end fame and infamy, honor and dishonor, honesty and dishonesty, hate and love, joy and pain all moulder to the grave together, without distinction between them; what is important is to gain what happiness you can, preferably without hurt anyone needlessly.

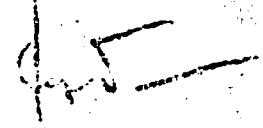
But when you say "no one in the book is good in the accepted sense" I don't know quite what you mean. Conventional sense? Perhaps not. But to my way of thinking no one in the book is bad. Evil and good are abstracts, dear Mary, and none of us ever has the same concept of them. Nor could he have. What is right for me may be wrong for you, and vice versa. I have always tried to do what is right for me, and I have very seldom had any regrets. And when I have, the regrets haven't been for

anything I've done, but something I've not done -- like not being fully honest with Pipsie and telling her early I loved her; like withdrawing a little from you when I heard about Hugh, just the time I might have been able to mean more to you; and so on. My regrets, you see, are all for negative actions, not positive. I don't regret a single moment spent with Pipsie. I tell you quite frankly -- and I know it will shock you perhaps more than anything in the book -- that if I had the opportunity to possess Pipsie on my wedding day I would take her without a qualm and go straight to the altar with Sandy and come straight back and take Pipsie again. In any case, I have been utterly fair with Sandy, certainly more so than she has been with me. I told Sandy before, and I've told her again and again, that in a sense she will always be sharing me with Pipsie. If in the face of this calculated risk she is willing to go ahead, she need not complain afterward. But the risk is not too great, knowing me, and Pipsie. Is all that good or evil? Or will you fall back on saying it is life? For me it is right; anything other would be hypocrisy. Pipsie is in my blood and bone, and you were woman enough from the first to know it when you told me years ago that Sandy was just another Pipsie. Yes, of course, she is; I fall in love with Sandy because of Pipsie, because of that terrible, unquenchable fire for Pipsie which still often disturbs my sleep and tears me from bed to pace the floor in an agony of desire for her, the same fire which will tear me from my wife's side and from the beds of my children for Pipsie. Yet, despite all this, I can sit and write dispassionately, I can live just as always, without a betrayal of what I feel -- I had to learn to do that a long time ago -- and with the cynical and ironic conviction that if, if indeed, Pipsie were mine, I might be feeling just precisely the opposite. So feeling, and knowing perhaps that this anguish is good for me, as a man and as a creative writer, good because it remains an unassuageable agony which, like a cancer, stirs and stimulates me forever, and which, were it satisfied, would leave me placid and rutted, like a cow in pasture -- a bull in my case, I suppose, is more appropriate, -- I see in this situation one transcending good and evil, one which will resolve itself, I am confident, without anyone's getting hurt.

One of the book's portions that moves me the most is that brief paragraph describing Pipsie sitting naked on the window seat in the moonlight, and saying how often now I look up from my typewriter to that empty seat and how my whole being cries out in agony for her. I read it over and I feel it all again, I've felt it all so many times, again and again; and that little scene on the xx bridge, when I knew that something had died between us. But I suppose all the book touches me; it is so much me; so much Pipsie; so much that happy time to which none of us can ever return again except like this.

Yes, let us hope to get together to talk sometime. It ought to be possible, since I don't leave for the west coast -- we don't I should say now -- till June 2. But I'll probably be gone all summer, even if Sandy should not remain west so long, though she probably will. In any case, I will see you the 6th, and do plan to make yourself right at home here at the house, like old times, and pay no attention to the hours of the reception 2 to 5 -- I'm inviting you two to breakfast also, incidentally.

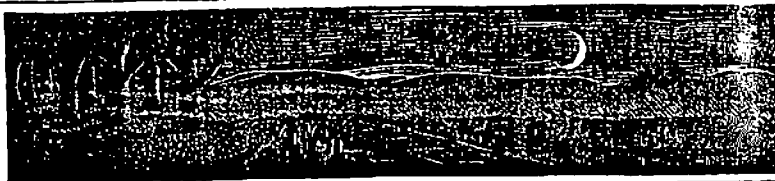
Best always, affectionately,





AUGUST DERLETH

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SAUK CITY, WISCONSIN

Letters to Lona - 1.

24 August '42

My Darling - An hour past midnight -- and for the last hour I have been walking the room with the moonlight flowing in -- and something more -- the thought of you like something alive -- as if it were actually you at my side in the moonlit room, and I could reach to where you were, reach out and touch you, put my arms around you and take those lovely lips again, and tell you again I love you. I tell myself now I should never have told you -- should never have said to you anything of this I have carried alone and secretly for so long -- but it is done now, and I am not sorry. Now the room and the night and the dark, secret places of my heart are haunted by your eyes and your lips and the way of your arms around me, and just the thought of you is enough to quicken the pulse and make the casual pleasure of this afternoon come alive once more here within these walls. Along my arms still there is a lingering aroma that is yours, and I drink it in as if it were the breath of spring -- though I know how hopeless it is, all of this, how futile to hope that some day you might be mine and I yours -- It still seems incredible to me that the afternoon past was ours alone, but it was. I have only to close my eyes to live it again, like any adolescent. But it is something taken up with renewed life and vigor after it was crushed down inside me years ago, when I wanted to take you into my arms and tell you as I told you today how I loved you. If I never saw you again -- if you went your way and I mine, apart -- yet this little while with you would remain forever like an ineffably beautiful flower in the desert places of my heart, a flower whose heart would be your eyes, and your smile, and the loveliness of your body, and the way your slender fingers touched mine, and your lips ... So to bed, my darling, and the dream of you at my side, and love unfolding.

AUGUST DERLETH

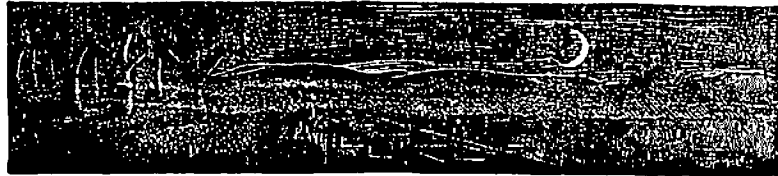


SAUK CITY, WISCONSIN

Letters to Lona - 2.

25 August '42

My Darling - Once more the night with its thousand mysteries, and the deep hour of midnight, and the thought of you and the trivial but vital few hours that were ours today. I think still of the little fear of meanness you expressed today, and it distresses me a little. I am no fool; even if you were free, I know the cards would be stacked against me. Long ago I passed illusions. But love is a strange thing. It is the most beautiful adventure of life, and it is not conditioned, not controlled, not ordered or planned -- but something that happens incredibly and wonderfully -- sometimes with inexpressible joy and ecstasy, sometimes with heartache and pain. I am destined to know the heartache and pain of love before its joy and ecstasy; I am resigned to it. This is the third time I have known this tearing emotion so much a part of love -- but I have never known it, no matter what the pain, but what I was not left wonderfully richer for it. Love takes a man out of himself, humbles him, teaches him to know at first hand the complexity of life, and renews him. I know that the memory of our too short hours together -- the living memory of your mouth under mine, your arms, and your eyes' smile -- these will sustain me for a long time. I understand you very well. I know that, given the chance, we could be very happy together. That is something you cannot know because you haven't thought about me to the extent I have considered you -- nor for so long a time. We have more things in common than you think; I have always felt that, and I know it is increasingly true every year. To you everything that has passed between us is casual and unimportant; to me it is an experience profoundly beautiful, something destined to be as eternal in my memory as it is ephemeral in yours. Only an insensate man could forget your lips, your arms, your lovely eyes. There is an inherent necessity for us to continue



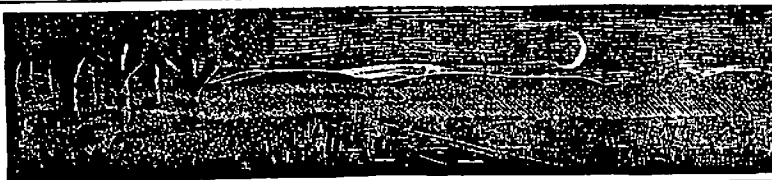
ii.

SAUK CITY, WISCONSIN

on the same status. I could not love you at all if you were to reciprocate that love in these circumstances, for all the anguish that would cause; nor could you give yourself so wholeheartedly to love under the bondage of actually feeling such emotional strain. I do not love you blindly; I have never loved blindly; I would like to love you completely, wholly, with every atom of my flesh and spirit, but that I could only if you were my wife. Ah, as Shakespeare said, "'Tis a consummation devoutly to be wished."

Now it is as if time had been stopped, as if time had been turned back, and something were starting over. Yes, my darling, I love you, knowing well you do not love me, but knowing, too, that this may not always be impossible. You will go home fortified in this knowledge, at least -- a woman needs to know that she is loved, she need not give overmuch of herself. In this brief time I live from hour to hour only for the ineffable pleasure of being near you -- this brief time will be done all too soon, and then only the memory of these wonderful hours will be left. I love you.

AUGUST DERLETH



SAUK CITY, WISCONSIN

Darling,

Tonight the moonlight in your eyes, your hair, the moonlight on your lips and fair skin made me drunk with desire to which I could give no key and no release, except in sterile poetry put down through that inspiration -- and that is small satisfaction, though perhaps more lasting. But I felt throughout these all too short hours once more a kind of doubtful wonder within you, as if you could still not believe what should by this time be obvious -- perhaps painfully obvious to you. Why? Why is it so hard for you to believe that I actually feel about you the way I have repeatedly said I do? If someone were handing you a line, he could hardly go home and 1) write a letter or 2) write poems on the inspiration of a "line." No, my dear; unfortunate as it is for me in these circumstances, I have always been too sharply conscious of the strongest attraction you have for me, just as I have been conscious that the obverse is not true, and I have known for some time that I could ask you to be my wife at the drop of a hat, just as I know that if you should ever be free again, I would be waiting. No doubt, in vain. But still -- there it is, something I am unable to control, something taking utter possession of me as I am haunted by the mind's eye image of your beautiful face in tonight's moonlight, and will continue to be. I know that until I wilfully throttle this long-standing and deeply rooted affection for you, every time I accomplish anything worth while in writing, it will be your shadow looking over my shoulder in memory that has made its great contribution; already I have written some of my best poetry, perhaps I may yet write one of my best books because of you. It may happen; it is entirely probable. You may not love me, but you go through the motions of love so beautifully that it should inspire a block of wood, let alone me. Believe me, I love you ...

*August* (u)

AUGUST DERLETH

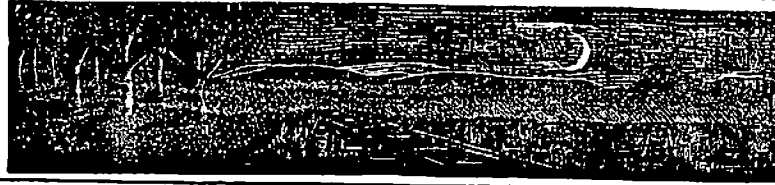


SAUK CITY, WISCONSIN

Darling,

Despite my resolve not to write again, I find to my humiliation that I must write and tell you that somehow we must manage it so that I can see a little more of you where we need not always think of someone coming and interrupting us or seeing us and saying something you might not like later. What is more, despite the release of poems and now the novel, I simply cannot get you out of my thoughts even for a moment; the reason that the novel flows so well is simply that in it I am quite frankly writing about both of us. I think of you last before I go to sleep, and at once upon waking -- to say nothing of what you do to me in my sleep. ((v)) And, equally frankly, if it were possible to do so, I would spend every moment with you. This is especially humiliating to me in view of your own negative feeling -- you can well imagine that it would be. But perhaps I'm too proud for my own good, and a smacking hard fall is all for the best. You aren't giving me a chance even to really love you. Why? Are you afraid? That doesn't seem quite credible, that you would be afraid of love, knowing my own control. After all, you're not so overpoweringly good as to break down my control. But I know you like to love and be loved -- do let me love you! It is so little that we see each other, and it is so much that you are in my thoughts. Having loved you for so long from such a distance, it is only natural that I would want to love you now before the distance comes again. It is twice as difficult to bear now that you are so close, and yet stay so far. Do believe that only a really deep love could ever bring me to this; I do love you.

AUGUST DERLETH



SAUK CITY, WISCONSIN

My Darling,

Past midnight, and I am home again -- and alone again. And yet, not quite alone, for the room is haunted now by memories so strong that I need only to close my eyes to feel again your fingers along my arms, like the gentlest wind, and your lovely mouth under mine, like a flower unfolding, to feel your hair upon my cheek and your arms around me, to hear your voice and see your beautiful eyes in the dusk, and to hear my own voice telling you over and over, I love you, like a wind's sighing in the plain, without answer -- ever and always to be without answer. Out of that place in my heart where you came and into that greater room of this summer, you brought me something of a magic I never hoped I might know, a kind of fragile, dear beauty that holds me and enfolds me and is more powerful than bands of steel. Here in this little place within four walls from which you have gone less than an hour ago, where that lovely perfume of your body still lingers like something wonderfully alive, I feel every atom of my flesh still tingling with your closeness, and all my heart and spirit filled with a terrible, fierce longing to keep you close to me forever and ever for all the nights and the days and the years coming swiftly, swiftly, oh far too fast to bring us all too soon the ending of these years that are ours. Your hands along my arms, your lips touching mine, and all that ghostly presence of you wanting to be loved. I must put out the light, and go in the waiting darkness to where you are, and love you until it is impossible to love any more, with every ounce of my being, body and soul. Oh, God, if only you were here! Here to hear me say I love you, to fill these empty arms and quiet this beating heart. Darling, it is so little to say I love you -- but there is nothing more to say: I love you.



AUGUST DERLETH



SAUK CITY, WISCONSIN

Darling,

I had hardly left your side tonight when I came upon that perfume lingering in your hair, and I thought, Am I having this illusion so soon, so few steps away? Indeed, you were not yet in the house, yet there was this perfume. And then I discovered it -- the fragrance of four o'clocks in a street-side garden -- and I picked a branch of flowers and put them on my desk to remind me -- if I needed tangible reminder -- of you. .... Now it is one o'clock, and the sweet night air flows into the room on the crickets' songs to meet the muted sound of music on the radio, music meant to keep me awake and so assure me that the new book will be completed by tomorrow evening. And I am still conscious of a tingling and dancing in my lips not long ago alive upon your mouth, and of the gentle stirring along my arms but a little while ago enfolding you. And I think now, as I have thought so often, if only I could love you as you deserve to be loved, as you should be loved, with every atom of body and soul, every striving of flesh and spirit! If only! -- the words mock me even as the thought haunts me. But someone as lovely as you are needs to be loved fully and completely. I wish you would let me love you, to crystalize the memory of what for me has been a beautiful, a hauntingly beautiful love -- something that will never lose its own special corner in my heart. I have seldom wanted to love a woman like this, with every part of me, heart and soul -- but that is the way I want to love you because my wretched, humble heart is already committed to you in word and deed. I love you (very much).

August

25 April, 1948

Dear Elizabeth Fellow,

I am taking the liberty of sending Myra the enclosed photographs through you, since I wished in any event to write you this evening. I would prefer that these photographs do not fall into the hands of anyone but Myra or the members of your own immediate household. Will you explain to her that what appear to be spots on her dress and on my coat, are the raindrops through which we had to walk in order to get to the house from the car. You will readily note that she looks and is radiant on these photographs. The other two girls on the group photograph are classmates of hers; the redhead sitting next to me is the birthday child. She, like the girl in the far background, is engaged and with her fiance.

I had some time -- perhaps an hour all told, counting luncheon Friday in Madison -- with Myra, and thus opportunity to talk to her a little. I find it difficult to say what my intelligence dictates, largely because, no less than you, I am very fond of Myra and have always been, and it is unpleasant for me to grant that there are major flaws in her make-up which may mitigate against her rehabilitation. In this I hope profoundly that I am in error.

I have said previously, to you and even oftener to Myra, that in many respects she is a stupid girl. This must necessarily be qualified, of course, and I want to qualify that. Let me refer specifically to certain credos which she clings to with all the tenacity of one who has nothing else to support her. These beliefs are these: a) she believes Bud is "brilliant" and thinks that somehow because of this, she must be in error in many respects, and they "ought" to get along because he is "brilliant"; and he is "brilliant" because he got good marks in school; b) she is vain enough to feel that her beauty will see her through any crisis, and does not have common sense enough to realize that each child she has by Bud diminishes her chance of ever finding a husband who can and will be decent and good to her and who can and will support her, since it is manifest that Bud could contribute little to the support of his own children.

These are but two of her credos, but I think the most damaging two in her present circumstances. I tried to point out to Myra that "good marks" meant nothing; that many a man and woman who flunked out college became brilliant without "good marks"; that most often such marks were evidence only of a momentarily good memory. It did not follow that

11.

her husband was a brilliant man; indeed, he had demonstrated that he was no such thing, for no brilliant man would ever find it necessary to beat his wife. Further, no brilliant man would conduct himself in general as he did, in respect to finances and in his life with her altogether.

I questioned her quite frankly -- she has never withheld anything from me in the past and did not do so Friday -- in regard to her sexual life. Myra is apparently in need of some kind of sexual life, however minor, though she is by no means over-sexed, and I would hesitate to say that she had even the sexual drive of any normal or average woman. Her husband does not trouble to use a condom or take any preparations against more children. I chided her for not insisting on such care, but she replied that she was helpless. That, of course, is nonsense; I told her she could deny him any privilege whatsoever in the interests of her welfare. But she apparently feels that he will beat her up for any such insistence. I tried to point out to her that he was financially irresponsible, and that, since she was so wishy-washy where he was concerned, he would most likely just as soon keep her pregnant in order to prevent her from suing for divorce. She replied, "If he thinks that'll stop me, it won't; if I want to divorce him, I'll do it anyway." But what would she do then? She had no idea. But if she married again, "I'm not making any promises."

I submit that this is the attitude of a young lady who has plainly no sense whatsoever of her position in society. I told her bluntly that few men would be interested in a divorcee with one child; fewer yet in one with two, that such interest as she was likely to arouse would be in other directions than marriage. Nor would her beauty last. Her hands and her figure have already markedly deteriorated, and the hollows of her cheeks are more pronounced. She has clearly no real thought of the future, and if and when she asks, "What shall I do?" it is with the manifest intention of having someone else answer the question for her. One feels even that when she says, "I learned my lesson," it is a routine sentence she says because she is expected to say it or thinks she is.

In all this I have presented the dark side of the picture, obviously. I do so because the indicators are not good, and despite my wish to be as helpful as possible. It becomes increasingly difficult to advise Myra, because -- and I feel it more strongly than ever -- what she wants for advice is someone to justify any particular wish or attitude she harbors, and certainly she does not want to be told anything unpleasant. Yet she tries to be fair to Bud, which would seem to me an unconscious admission that the fault of the failure of their marriage thus far is not entirely his. Knowing Myra as well as I do, I can readily enough believe that that is the case.

But this question of fault is a delicate one because the degree of fault is dependent upon the act and not the word, and in action I am

iii.

convinced that his is the greater fault. He has clearly made little attempt to meet her on her grounds, and equally clearly she has made repeated attempts to submit to him. One would like to hear his story, but she says he "will not talk". I have not any further evidence of this, and I am sorry to say that in my previous experience with Myra I found that she never hesitated to tell a lie when it served her best in her perspective. I touched upon this problem again Friday, and urged her to give over telling untruths, because it would only hurt her, as it did previously. I do not have the feeling that she lied about her life with her husband, however; I do have the conviction that she has tried to put the best face on the matter.

When you add this to such other experience as I have had with Myra and about which I want to talk to you some day when time and opportunity permit, it can readily be seen how difficult it is to advise her. How can one conscientiously advise her to obtain a divorce when one has no assurance that she will be able to take care of herself? Certainly I can and did tell her that she should not endure a life of misery. But if she were divorced, could he even be depended upon to send her even token support for the child or children, whichever the case may be? I doubt it. And as for his fidelity, of which she seemed to be proud, I haven't the slightest question but that, once he has saddled her with enough responsibilities in the shape of children, he will be off with other women just precisely as it suits his pleasure to be. And by that time it will be far too late for her to do anything but endure it.

I wish we had in Myra a woman of spirit and decision, instead of one of mere temper and vanity. She is a beautiful, a lovely woman, yet little more than a child, with no real conception of the role of a wife or mother, though she surely appears to make a satisfactory mother, such as I have seen. If only she had more stamina, and more will to learning and understanding people and events! But these are thus far not among her gifts. I am happy to say that I think she has been somewhat strengthened by her unhappy experiences since leaving Sauk City, but I have no assurance that she has yet learned to take advice and act upon it without deviation. This may yet come; we shall see.

You will understand, of course, that this is an accounting only of those factors which make it difficult to give advice, at least at this stage. I am anxious to help Myra; my manifest preference for her over the other young people of her age who come and came to my home has not abated, and it is therefore all the more reason for my wanting to be of help to her.

I suggest, given opportunity, that you explore these attitudes which need some revision before she can undertake to step back into the world without her husband, if that is the step she contemplates.

Every good wish to yourself and Ben.

Cordially,  
*Wm. D. Hale*

11 September, 1948

Dear Elizabeth,

Your good long letter of Thursday came in this morning, and I am hastening to answer it without unnecessary delay. I quite agree with your attitude and with what you had to say. I answered Myra's innocuous letter primarily because I felt sorry for her, secondarily to force her to get in touch with you. I should not want you to put yourself out in any way, or to make any effort even without putting yourself out, to see that she receives my reply; I sent it to you solely because I insisted upon her coming to you to get it, of her own volition, and it is not to be sent to her but only delivered to her by you personally so that you will have opportunity to talk to her, and to tell her what you think. If she's not called for it within 30 days, you are to send it back to me.

I have never liked this kind of clandestine thing. At the time I asked her to go to the Prom with me, it was my understanding that she would ask her husband if it was all right with him, and also discuss the matter with you. She did the latter, but she did not do the former, she claimed, because she did not know where her husband was. I feel more and more inadequate since I do not know Bud myself, and since I tend to feel unsure unless I have enough personal contact to formulate opinions of my own about people. That is not to disparage the unpleasant information I have about Bud, but it is only to suggest that I cannot fully know anyone without personal contact, and I certainly cannot estimate adequately the effect Myra's personality might have on him.

There is only one reason why I could think that Myra should have resorted to smuggling a letter to me -- quite as if she were a prisoner. And that is that, as she has often said, she does not want to involve me and bring trouble upon me other than I have already had with her; I have thought she seemed sincere in this, and usually her actions have borne her words out. She seems aware that I am in a sense a public figure, and that any sort of scandal would project me into headlines. Yet her letter was so innocent that no one could possibly misconstrue it, even a suspicious husband. And my reply was in kind, and furthermore, remained unsigned and was addressed to her by a nickname, so that not once in its course was her name or her husband's mentioned, thus making it possible in the event of someone's trying to make something of it to deny its authorship, if need be.

But I am distressed by this whole situation. I always have been. I

11.

have never rested easily about Myra ever since she went down to Mineral Point and let this thing happen to her. Perhaps I was born an entire generation too late; the codes to which I adhere, and which I am constantly forced to compromise, seem out of fashion in our own times, when increasing irresponsibility and dishonesty seem the order of the day. Perhaps it is in part, in regard to Myra, that she had become so much a part of the household here that it was not until her tragedy, and all it implied -- which has certainly come to pass -- that I realized the depth of my own affection for her. I can say without the possibility of a denial that the Myra Lee who left here for Mineral Point that day in 1946 was not the Myra Lee who came back that day in September. I recognized the change instantly; I was not deceived as to what had happened, and what she told me in October only confirmed it.

Somewhere along her course -- and I am convinced it was in Mineral Point among her relatives -- the values I had tried so hard to teach her to accept were discarded, doubtless only, as she thought, for the time being, but they were never picked up again. The sense of personal guilt which came to me as a result of feeling that in some way I had proved inadequate has never fully left me, I am sorry to say.

Myra Lee will continue to mess things up, I am sorry to say. She was not particularly devious here, until her return from Mineral Point in the summer of 1946; then the change, as you know, was particularly unpleasant. It upset me badly, perhaps because I had trusted her in the face of criticism from many of my older women friends, and in the face of my own first impression of her the very first time I saw her, when I instinctively preferred Mary's warmth and essential good-heartedness to Myra Lee's selfishness.

Yet the clandestine approach is surely not inappropriate in the picture as a whole, as you must admit, and do admit inferentially in your letter of Thursday. Common sense was never a strong property of Myra Lee's; I told you that a long time ago, but you recognized it even before I mentioned it. It never will be, I am afraid. When she was in Sauk City, she knew how to obey, by and large, though she was careless now and then, too. Her secretiveness now suggests, apart from what I have offered as a partial explanation previously, that she also harbors a sense of guilt for something; that is psychiatrically acceptable evidence, you see. Yes, she is homesick; as she told me when she was here, she has regretted everything so many times, yet she never has once made any attempt to better her situation, once having been caught, remaining apathetic to everything. I actually believe that if Bud pushed her down the stairs to break her neck, she would let herself be pushed.

111.

Perhaps without fully realizing what was happening to her. Her profound apathy is indicative, I think, of a fundamental despair. The wreck of her carefully laid plans for her life with John here, due only to herself, went far to destroy her spirit; she has acted at times as if she were existing in a dream from which she was bound to wake up, if she held out long enough, as if she could not quite believe that this had happened to her, Myra Lee, who had many times received the open envy and frank congratulations of her classmates on her smart planning and good fortune insofar as John was concerned. Can you put yourself in her mind for a little while and see the picture?

The thing is, the helpless -- whether involuntarily or voluntarily, as in Myra's case --, those in pain, the suffering, the unfortunate, the old -- all such people have an inordinate hold on me; I dislike pain intensely, and nothing bothers me as much as the thought of wantonly giving pain, or even accidentally doing so; and a cry for help invariably turns me. This comes of being unduly sentimental and soft, but I cannot much help that; that is the stuff I am made of, and I must live with it and keep my head long enough to prevent any of the helpless from leeching on to me and dragging me under, the while I am doing what I can for them. Hence my own caution where Myra is concerned.

In a very real sense I went as far as I could for Myra when I advised her not to marry, but to go away, have her baby, give it up, and try to start over. Since then any advice any of us has given her has fallen on deaf ears. Your own angry impatience, as evidenced in your letter of the 9th, should now dispose you to consider how Mary's patience has been tried, to understanding how such similar carelessness on Myra's part brought Mary to the stage where she wants nothing to do with Myra save on separation terms, which is natural. After all, you have had to do with this situation only a comparatively short time -- two years; but Mary has had it for a considerably longer time. Understand me, Elizabeth, I am holding no brief for Mary's considerable faults, but in this one attitude of hers I am constrained to admit she is right, and your own impatience now suggests that you too much soon admit the same thing, once you can dissociate Mary's attitude from those other flaws of hers of which you are aware.

I told Myra last time I saw her that any man who would live with her, knowing her past and her nature, could not permit out of his sight for one second a woman with her background, not because of her tendency toward immorality, which cannot and does not exist, but simply because of this lack of common sense which you observe more and more every day.



iv.

I have to add one more fact to your store of knowledge, and it distresses me to do so because it reflects upon me far more than on Myra. Shortly after she went down to Mineral Point in 1946, Myra wrote me a letter; it was filled with enthusiasm about her Aunt Jane, the prospect of school, and so forth. It was also something more; I have it on my desk here as I write, and I have to admit that it was frankly, in an adolescent way, a love letter. It was written just two or three days before that unfortunate affair with Bud began. I replied to it at once, but I ignored that essential part of her letter which was the heart of it, as I felt I ought to, being so much older than Myra. It troubles me now because I did not then want to ignore it, and I often think that if my own reply had been only a little demonstrative, and not a cool, simply friendly letter, she might have thought twice about going out with Bud and drinking and everything else that took place and led her straight to where she is today. I cite this only to add one more brick to the wall which supports my own sense of guilt, as if, by not answering her on the terms she proposed, I let her down. I could so easily have written her the same kind of letter and then, when she came back here, have taken her in hand again.

Everything you have to add about Myra and Bud in your letter is only a continuing part of the upsetting picture they have already presented since their marriage. There is no chance of painting a different picture, unfortunately. I think in your heart you must now know it, even as I am convinced of it. I tell you frankly that if I had the ordering of things, I would not only separate Myra from Bud, but I would try to persuade Myra to part with the children as well and let Tom and Gladys care for them; I am not convinced that Myra is good for her own children in the long run, which is not to be taken as a reflection on her quality of motherhood at the present. I am upset to learn about their making such unnecessary debts, but surely that, too, is apart of the inevitable picture. I am glad to know that Myra Lee looks and seems well.

It is good to know also that Tom and Gladys are under no illusions as to what would be necessary for Myra's benefit and for that of her future and that of the children. A firm hand, an uncompromising hardness, a fixed purpose -- these are the things she needs. She lost the firm hand I gave her when she went to Point, and none has been offered her since then. They too, like yourself and myself, manifestly think keenly of her welfare.


You ask about my lecturing. Indeed, though I am not keen about lecturing, I do it. I lectured yesterday before the Sauk County teachers

V.

on the subject of the comics; I am lecturing before the Green Bay convention of the Wisconsin Presswomen's Association a week from today, before the National Council of Jewish Women in Milwaukee November 9th, and before a few scattered women's clubs in southern Wisconsin on the subject of how an author deals with his characters, an informal lecture allowing for questions from the floor which has always been very popular with listeners. Unfortunately, my fees are perforce rather high -- customarily, for any distance, from \$65 up; but for places as close as Mineral Point or Dodgeville, I could probably make it \$30. If I went lower, it would be setting a dangerous precedent, and I would have to hold to it or be accused of unfairness.

Every good wish to yourself and Ben, always.

Cordially,

A handwritten signature, possibly "A. S.", written in dark ink. The signature is stylized and appears to be written over a horizontal line.

Cassandra, darling, ever since you went away again, I have been living in a kind of agony of hope that you might come back to me once more. I had not thought this wild, dark fire could possess me again, this unquenchable burning which is the ceaseless longing I have for you. It was so the very first time you went away, and it is so again, and to know it and recognize it is at one and the same time crushing and humiliating and wonderful. I should never have seen you again, I know; I should never have taken you in my arms or felt your arms around me again. Do you remember how I wrote you?

Every lost love keeps in a chamber of the mind  
... where time and love are young forever  
free of the heart's finite despair, never  
knowing the erosion slow of time and change --  
and nothing there is ever strange?

I knew it was true when I wrote it, and it is no less true now. But I did not understand fully how that lost love could become alive again; I thought it was securely locked away, and I thought the hunger for you, for the sound of your voice and your touch and your nearness, for your arms and your mouth against mine -- I thought all this was so safely locked away, so covered over by the flux of time and the meaning of events, that nothing, nothing, nothing could ever bring you back into my heart as once you were there. But you see, I was wrong, I was very much wrong. I wish I had not been, because it is an agony to want you and long for you so much that I am simply ill with that longing, knowing all the while that you are not mine, that you very probably never will be mine, and that even if you were, it would perhaps happen as before, and you would shatter me and break my heart all over again. So you see, along with this wild wanting to be with you, to belong to you, is that subtle undercurrent of fear that I will be hurt once more, lacerated and torn as I was before, when the faith that was between us and the trust that was between us died. And yet, when I saw you after so long and lonely a time, I knew on the instant that I felt the same, I knew that nothing had changed -- even as in that "chamber of the mind" -- I knew at the sound of your voice and the touch of your hand and the glance of your eyes that that secret chamber of mind and heart had been riven asunder, and I felt for you again all that passionate love and wild desire I had always known and for long kept hidden from everyone, and I knew at that moment that the love that had been locked away and lost was found again, and that now, instead, I was lost to all else but you. And since then I have gone about by day and night with you in mind and heart, and this mad wild burning inside me, knowing how little a way we are apart and yet how far, how terribly far, and realizing again and again how by one willful act all this torment of mind and spirit was made inevitable. I think sometimes now all this was meant to be; I had no right to hold you in my arms and keep from you how much I loved you. But somehow, I suppose, I thought you might guess, I thought you might understand that I could not so open my heart to anyone without love.

Do you understand? Do you see how the crosscurrents of loyalty, of pride, and yes, of the fear of being hurt -- which availed me nothing, after all -- conspired against me, and in a sense also against you? Just as your blind wanting -- to be popular with someone, without any thought of consequences, without thinking at all -- led to the ironic little tragedy which tore you away from me. Nothing anyone ever does affects the doer alone, but many people far away as well. The smallest word, the most trivial act. The very first time I kissed you began a sequence of events neither of us apparently had the strength or wish to control. If you had believed in me a little more, if you had been a little older and wiser, you would have seen past my eyes and mouth, past word and deed, into my heart, and you would have seen how deeply I loved you long before that jape of time divided us perhaps forever. You see, I knew that my instinct was right -- that I should not see you again, because I did not trust my own heart -- and I was right not to trust it, for now I am utterly and completely unable to put you out of mind and heart, I am haunted by you, I have at my side always the spectre of that lovely lovely girl who was Cassandra, whom I loved so much it hurt even to think about it, and whom I could not tell because she loved someone else, and I was too proud to admit it, and because I believed that no one so lovely could ever love anyone so ill-favored as myself. Divided loyalty, pride, fear -- these things, together with a feeling that no one so young and lovely as you should be wasted on someone like me -- imprisoned me, these things put up a wall with which I could face the world, just as being self-willed, thoughtless, vain perhaps trapped you in a prison of a different kind. None of us can ever tell where his words or his deeds may lead him, and if, as with me where you were concerned, what I did as well as what I did not do led me to anguish and cold misery and smouldering despair, perhaps it is true, too, that these things were mine to shoulder and endure because I -- no less than you -- had made it possible for them to happen to me. We are, each of us, responsible for our own destinies. And so, when you tell me that on the day I saw you again, you did so planned a thing as to wear your hair in a way you knew I liked in the hope that we might meet, and when I tell you that I did not come to where you were unaware, no, I knew you were there, I did not any longer want to go without seeing you, you will understand that both of us are reaching for something which may make us both richly happy, or which may hurt us so badly as to destroy us. Let us not make a mistake again. Let it be understood that I love you, but let it also be understood that I cannot well endure the terrible, destroying anguish of heartbreak again. And, loving you, I want most of all that you shall be happy -- it does not matter much about me, because knowing you are happy is good of itself for me. But if, by some remote, incredible chance -- if you feel in your heart that your happiness lies with me, then I implore you, my darling, do not hesitate to come to me. Because for five years, Cassandra, I have loved no other woman but you.

Morning (at sunrise) of a Day after a  
Visit to Heaven ...

Dearest Pipale,

That superscription being literally true -- heaven that was here in this room yesterday and is now no more, which means of course your dear self with the cat's eyes and the lovely, silk-skinned breasts and the incredibly hot and wonderful flower of your loins (and one ought not to forget the adenoidal look) -- you having been for two hours in my arms as beautiful, as unbelievably beautiful certainly as the most beautiful woman who ever lived or the most beautiful angel in heaven, so beautiful indeed at the moments of orgasm as to almost bring tears to my eyes, to fill me with wonder and humility and self-pity and rage that I should ever, in any circumstances, have permitted myself to lose you, myself all night hearing those soft moans and little whimpers, as a child in sleep marking the passage of a dream -- and was it not a dream, all too swiftly passing? -- that I held in my arms the woman on whose existence my life has pivoted for the past decade. In truth, I was too deeply moved for tears, or for anything but the most sombre, burning joy that we were together for these halcyon hours again.

It did not really matter to me that my tension and excitement -- and it was that and no more, for that creature of mine who refused so nobly to do my bidding since I was intent on more than just pleasure, as you knew, was before I reached home the way he should have been earlier in evening, and so remained for most of the night (what an hilariously amusing joke, really!) -- were such as to preclude a little more pleasure, for, after all, the most important matter was that you should be loved and delighted, and, being that, I too was, as satisfied perhaps -- save for the foiling of my objective (in three years, perhaps!) -- as you, with the warmth of your nearness held close to me all night, and still, at this hour of dawn like something tangible and alive in the room, so that it is as if I had but to close my eyes to see again that enchantingly lovely face, a flower always, at those moments of your most exciting pleasure last night opening like a rose before the sun.

It is small wonder that you cannot say "love" because such a grand passion as this, such compelling, driving passion, eludes definition. But it is love, no less, for only love can bring with it such wonder, such beauty, such humility and magic, as were it not for this world but some other never to be reached except in such hours as those we spent together yesterday, when you were again the dear, innocent child I used to know -- and yet someone more, someone richer for having suffered and lived a little, who could now understand and appreciate what I wanted to say to her long ago, ten years ago, and who did not wait to hear because one of those sad japes and ironies of time drove us apart.

My darling, you were a joy to look upon yesterday -- so surprisingly nubile yet, indeed, without clothes, looking almost quite as young as you did when first we lay together nakedly in this haunted room -- as always, a joy to see, to be with, as always, an agony to part from (and who should better know, having known both that joy and that agony?), as comfortable as a kitten at my side (and quite as soft and enchanting too) -- it is not to be wondered at that I should have been afraid, on top of all my eagerness and tension, because I knew if ever I had doubted it before that the lovely creature that is you had it absolutely in her power to bind and enslave me forever, and because I knew that the hand that held my heart so casually lacked the strength and power, the will and determination to cradle and shield that heart for so long a time.

Love like this comes but once in a life time -- a rare flower indeed, that needs tending and loving care, the substance of a dream to keep it, too, a dream. I

cannot tell you how wonderful it was to love you yesterday, how wonderful it is to know that, however much your conflict is, there is a similar love for me inside you, even if I do not often see its face, for love to me means your happiness, your delight, your pleasure, which, if these are yours, are also mine to their exact and precise degree. I wrote a long time ago to your aunt that I hoped nothing would destroy that "wonderful and intangible fragile psyche" which is in you -- that enchanting spirit which overcame me long ago -- and I am happy, deeply happy, to know now that nothing has touched it -- you are still the same wonderful Pipsie, someone not quite real, someone my dearest girl who will never, never grow old, and when now tears come to lurk in the corners of my eyes at the thought of you, it is not for you that they are there, but for me, tears of rage against myself, of frustration, of bitter self-pity, that we who could have been such a perfect one together, are kept apart forever except for such hours as those of yesterday, stolen from time.

My darling, one man's love is so little a thing in the vast stream of life, less than a dust-mote in the sunlight, less than a bird's call by night -- and yet sometimes it means all the difference between life and death. It is not given to many men to love someone so enchanting as you; I am humble before that privilege. That I should have in my heart not one, but two such enchanting beings, tells me that I am indeed the darling of the gods -- and those whom the gods love, they first make mad. But if this be madness, I shall stay mad forever. I love you, Pipsie, with a deep and strong power that will never, never die; I have tried so hard to kill it, to demean it, to wash it away. I cannot. To lie in your arms is to be cradled among the stars, where the timeless winds blow, where all that is beautiful and wonderful in heaven or on earth belongs to me, because there is nothing more, nothing greater of beauty or wonder than that you bring to me.

keep me always yours  
I beg you

10/23/54

24 October 1952

Dear Elizabeth,

I took a little time to talk again with Myra Lee yesterday, and I find that I had the wrong impression of the "money" she "might expect". She did not have reference to her bonds, which she knew were exhausted, but to money which might be left her, such money, she explained, she would sooner have left to guarantee the children's education or else Bud might get his hands on it. Actually, her expectations, it developed, were purely hypothetical -- if her father died and left anything, and so on. So I hasten to correct this impression, lest it add a stone, however small, to her load.

I took occasion also, after dinner at Pendarvis, at which, of course, Myra joined us, to step into her home, since her Aunt Lottie was there watching over the children during her absence of an hour or so. I did so deliberately, as you doubtless realize, because I wanted to see how the place looked. Though she made excuses about the condition of the house, I could not honestly say that it was in any greater disorder than any other house in which three young children live. I stayed only ten minutes, talking with Lottie and Myra, and then took my leave for Madison where I spent the evening with my fiancée.

That estimable young lady, after but fifteen minutes with me, observed with correct intuition that I had been seeing Myra again, for I am always strongly depressed after seeing her, and I cannot successfully conceal that depression. I suppose I am cursed with sentimentality which does not always yield to reason or intelligence, for I know that were I to live with Myra she would probably drive me to distraction in no time at all, but I find it distressingly difficult to simply drown that old affection I had for Myra. I am always upset to learn the conditions of her existence; I had not known, save in the most general sense, some of the things you were good enough to tell me yesterday. Perhaps, still, I cannot escape a feeling of sharing the responsibility for Myra's plight today.

It was true, as I told you yesterday, that when Myra told me of her trouble in 1946, I wanted her to marry me. After the first shock of anguish had passed, I offered to send her to a place in Illinois, in good standing (The Cradle), pay her expenses of confinement, and, after the baby had been born, marry her. She was woefully confused, and so, I suppose, was I. At first I did not want the child; later on, after I had got over my feeling that so much criticism would fall



11.

on us, I offered to adopt the boy later. My failing lay in not being big enough to take her as she was, without conditions; I was then still of the opinion that she ought to have shared in the consequences of her act, without fully realizing that in a very broad sense Myra was completely amoral. In 1948, after not seeing her for two years, and learning how she had been treated, I wrote her a very strong letter, which I managed to have given into her hands through a mutual friend, in which I set forth just how I felt; I have its duplicate here before me as I write, and I quote its concluding lines: "I want most of all that you shall be happy -- it does not matter much about me, because knowing you are happy is good of itself for me. But if, by some remote, incredible chance -- if you feel in your heart that your happiness lies with me, then I implore you, do not hesitate -- come to me. Because for five years I have loved no other woman but you." I have felt since then that I could do no more, and Myra's quiet assertion now that she has been such a bitter fool, that she has loved me all along, and so on, strikes me now as no longer true or sincere, but a gambit in a little drama of her own -- however much it upsets me.

I am convinced, as I told you yesterday, that she will never grow up or old. I remember, long ago, reading in a novel of a woman who moved serenely about among great catastrophes, not out of serenity of spirit, but out of superb indifference and unawareness -- and that it seems to me is surely Myra Lee. She was tastefully dressed, bathed and scented yesterday at dinner, in contrast to her house; one could wish that she could order her life as beautifully as she orders her lovely person. But that, I fear, is asking too much of beauty, which, in the words of the poet, is its own excuse for being.

It was good seeing you and Ben yesterday, and we shall have to see to it that no such interval between visits occurs again. My very best to you both, always.

Cordially,



Monday. Oct 27/52.

Dear August - Your letter was in the box Saturday morning as we went to Mineral Park. It was somewhat of a coincidence, as I had planned to write you to clarify somewhat the subject of finances. It did not impress me so much during our visit but it came to me afterwards that there was a misunderstanding, whether intentional or otherwise, and for your sake, my own and myra's I feel an explanation was due you, although I should hesitate to burden you with such purely personal affairs, knowing how busy you are.

You are so thoughtful and considerate of others that when I have sometimes thought of writing you I have felt it was an imposition and have refrained.

Ben and I so thoroughly enjoyed your little visit with us. We do come again. We are trying to make our arrangements to get away in about a month, and this cooler weather makes California seem rather desirable. The tea is delicious. Ben says that is really tea - and we thank you indeed for your thought of us.

Some little time after Janet leaving us, there came to me indirectly reports that Verl had made comments which he did not have to worry about the children for they would have all that "Dad" Janet had,

There may be other things I should comment on, but not tonight!

I paid little attention in people will gossip and I knew there was no foundation for such a report. Later I likewise heard that plans had been discussed for him to step in and take over the office - all of which was so completely absurd that I never gave it a serious thought. But when you spoke of Myra Lee's possible expectations, I wondered if their Dad had talked with the girls along that line and I was concerned about it. Aunt Jane was more than generous with Ruth and Vere always doing much for them that none of us ever knew about. Ruth was always very close to us and her loss of health was a tragedy for one as young and ambitious as she was and Jane's strong desire was to help them all she possibly could, for they were greatly handicapped. She began giving the children bonds for birthdays and Christmas and later I did the same - but she had already given them several. These bonds were made out directly to the children "Mary Lou Poole or Myra Lee Poole" and "Myra Lee Poole or Mary Lou Poole" so that in case of the death of either, the other twin could cash them - each one had a like amount and I cannot now recall just what the bonds aggregated but my impression is that it was somewhere in the neighborhood of \$1000 if held until maturity. It was a much. But it was a beginning and might be an incentive for them to add to the amount - and Jane was so anxious for them to have at least a basic education and more if they desired.

I do not want to bore you, my dear good friend  
but wish to give you an outline. The business  
in Mrs. "The J.P. Harkins Co." has been in the family for  
well nigh a hundred years - Father started it with  
very little - raised his family of six of us. When  
Father reached the point that he wanted to give  
up the responsibility, my younger brother, John,  
took it over - Jane was with him in the office  
for years. John had serious illnesses and  
operations and passed away when only 52. His  
married life was unfortunate and his wife made  
all the unpleasantness she could - Jane finally  
shouldered the burden of the business, settling  
everything and turning over to her <sup>three</sup> children and  
two children all and far more than they  
were entitled to, for John's sake - She felt  
need of some moral support and asked Ben to join  
her - which he did, on a 50-50 basis as to finances  
but Jane had sole management, except as she  
asked for and desired Ben's advice and opinion.  
For Ben felt Jane knew far more than he did  
about running the business. In view of  
the attitude of Brother John's wife, as a protection  
to herself and the business, our attorney strongly  
advised, Jane to make a will, which she did  
at that time, leaving everything in my hands,  
feeling that so far as I possibly could I would  
carry out her wishes & desires, and that I have  
tried to do. I think I can truthfully say that  
none of the funds had gone for my own personal  
use - I have made gifts to the children and  
their children, contributions to the Church and to  
various organizations in which Jane was  
interested, wish to mention some ways in which  
the money has been spent. I am sure you will see

why the suggestions credited to her were given  
no serious thought by me. Just before Myra  
Lee married, I gave her a check for \$100 (as I have  
just done for Mary Lou) and she gave half of it  
to Bud. So you see it was helplessness from the Irish.  
When we went to California and left them here  
I gave her further funds for herself and Tommy, in  
addition to what Bud had given Bud for his  
Christmas, she immediately spent the larger  
part of it on trousers for Bud - perhaps she has  
learned a lesson, but how can one be sure?  
Now you have the background - and all of  
this for one but you - except Bud myself don't.

It was good of you to write so fully of  
your time spent in my and you are surely  
more than a wonderful friend. Like you,  
conditions of existence caused me great dis-  
tress but I was forced to the conclusion that  
the suffering was far more on my part and  
as you so aptly put it "a little drama" of her  
ours. I fear "superficial" is descriptive and  
the depth of sentiment or appreciation is not  
present. It is not a happy conclusion to  
come to and I cannot place blame entirely  
on Myra Lee, for she evidently was born without  
some of the finer attributes - and has failed  
to cultivate them. You may have heard the  
old adage "Of all my mother's children, I love  
myself the best". And that seems to apply 100%.

The young lady who is your fiancée must  
be very fine indeed, and seems to understand  
you well. We surely wish you all the  
happiest possible.

This has been rather long drawn out, but  
I could not bear the thought of misunder-  
standing on your part. It is late and I am  
tired, I hope you have made complete sense - forgive  
me I should ask questions if you wish. Elizabeth -

29 October 1952

Dear Elizabeth,

Many thanks for your good letter of the 27th, which reached me this morning. It surely clarifies the position in regard to the financial background upon which no doubt Myra has leaned in her dreams, though truth to tell I have never once heard from either of the girls any suggestion that Verl might ultimately come to run the business. I believe they understand that their mother's family has no great faith in Verl, whom they absolve always with "He was always very good to mother," which I think is very probably true, at least insofar as the girls know or realize, since they were quite young when Ruth died.

I think it is quite possible, if I can trust my memory so far back as six or seven years, that the girls expected to inherit comfortably from Aunt Jane; perhaps their father had led them to believe that, for the remark you repeat as coming from him in this connection would tend to substantiate that. I myself had had that impression from them, for once, when I asked one of them pointblank what they expected, I was told that each of them hoped to receive from "two to three thousand". But neither of them was ever very clear, and neither differentiated between their own bonds and their expectations, so that I never had any very clear picture. Not that it mattered, and the recent touching on the subject only suggests that, as is so common with people in Myra Lee's position, there are still roseate dreams to take some of the shadows from her days.

Though, when I write "shadows" I do so dubiously, for in truth there is no evidence that there is any "shadow" over Myra Lee but any frustration of her will and wishes. I saw her again last evening. I believe I told you that a friend wished to eat pasty at Pendarvis some evening this week. So last night my fiancée, my friend and his companion, and I came to Point for dinner at 7:30. I had hoped that Myra Lee and perhaps Bud also -- I have never met this young man -- might join us, but Myra had not telephoned that afternoon as she had promised to do; so I was somewhat at a loss as to what to do. I did begin the meal, but I was so evidently troubled at lack of word from her that my fiancée insisted on herself going up with my friend to enquire after her, divining that I did not think it best for me to go, should her husband be at home. I permitted them to go, for Sandy and Myra had met as long ago as 1949, and they returned ultimately with Myra alone. She had been ill, having spent the day with influenza, and would not eat, but did take tea with us at Pendarvis, sitting with us for an hour or so before we took her back home. She had simply not thought to call.

11.

Curiously enough, the friend who accompanied me was a young man of 27 or so who had been one of the first boys to date Myra Lee when she lived here. Myra had been superficially fond of him, but had thought him indolent, as indeed he was and still is. Yet she could not repress her astonishment to learn that he was at work at Badger Ordnance, drove a fine new Buick, and had come into \$18,000 at his mother's death early this year. "I always seem to miss the boat," she joked at her own expense. But of course, you felt she did not really mean it.

It was my fiancée, actually, who had insisted on Myra Lee's joining us, and for a personal ulterior motive; she wished to see us together. On the way home she spoke quite bluntly, with that kind of perception which only a woman's intuition can achieve. She said in effect that if it were possible for a man to love two women at the same time, I was so caught, then added with fine and needling precision, "What a pity Myra's mind doesn't match her attractiveness, that she doesn't have any backbone. I wish you could live with her for just one month; that would get her out of your system." This had just enough truth to it to amuse me; I had to laugh, and yet to admire my fiancée's aplomb. She is indeed in many ways a remarkable young lady -- a pity it is she is so young, for these coming years, whether we are married or not, will be trying, and perhaps all the more so if we are married, as we now plan, early next June.

Last night, however, Myra Lee's house was impeccably clean. I was not there myself, but my fiancée made a point of going in to see for herself; and Myra Lee, despite having been ill, looked the picture of good health. Bud is still working, now in the vicinity of Janesville, where he is driving machinery back and forth, to quote Myra Lee. He comes home every weekend in a different car, and asks her how she likes it. "I always say no, I don't like it. I don't want a car," said she; "I want a house." Will she ever achieve even that modest goal, I wonder?

I am so glad you are not disappointed in the tea. And do let me hasten to assure you that you ought never to feel that writing to me is an imposition. Indeed, letters are often my only escape from the drudgery of writing. Moreover, there are so few genuine and decent people left in this troubled world of ours that it is surely a minor tragedy if I should be shut away from communication with them by their reluctant modesty. I do pray you to write whenever you are so inclined, and I assure you I will welcome your letters at any time with the greatest of pleasure.



iii.

Yes, indeed -- I discover on re-reading your letter -- Myra Lee is an actress in a little drama of her own, in which she is forever the leading lady, at suffering, in pleasure in life, in various little contretemps of her own contriving and her own inspiration, a drama in which even the recalcitrant Bud is moved to say, "Oh, Myra, I'll always have to look after you," as she quoted to me, as much as to say, as I told her, "you don't have a lick of sense." Nor does she, I fear. This too my fiancée is aware of, for she summed Myra Lee up when she said she was not afraid of one so wishy-washy, but that just the same I must be on my guard, for Myra spelled trouble, never by intent, but because she was so likely to blunder right into it -- as surely she has done before!

Yes, it was good to see you and Ben. I shall try not to allow so long a time to elapse between visits again.

All the best to your good self and Ben, always,

Monday 3, Nov. '52

more than the other, it is very seldom true, both have to give their all before a true marriage is to be had. I hasten to add that I am not speaking of any one part of the contract but all of it, whether one believes in the Lord or not, there are many truths to be had and wisdom partially consists in living these truths. How I would like to sit down and spend considerable time just talking things over with you, I doubt that it would change things but from experience I believe I could give forth with some food for thought.

In ways I rather sorrow in the thought of my quarter century mark, in many others I'm glad, I feel very much a woman, I have borne four children, have not become fat or sloppy and while I'm far from a glamor girl I do feel I am desired by the man who is my life partner. Gone is the flat stomach, the slim hips never were, neither the lovely bust, in place

Dear Aug.

Your letter arrived today.

Needless to say it gave me a both pleasant and welcome pause to sit and read it. The cards are nice to say the least altho I must agree that your weight could be less. The entire contents of your letter, with the exception of the Star paragraph and your visit with Aunt E., was news.

How involved our lives do become, I do feel this, and shall say so, you are marrying a girl not a woman. No matter what you might say further of her various qualities, only the years make a real woman of a girl no matter what her early qualities. It is however your life, I do wonder however, if, in spite of your wisdom, if you truly realize what marriage really is. I know perfectly well that Sandy doesn't, I'm not even sure I do, seems one learns more each day. Does she know that, altho it often

is a woman who has given herself and in return been fulfilled, thereby gaining a richness and marvelous desire for life that few people attain - this is a heritage - can you and Sandy gain it, can she give, can you? Are you sure she isn't running from something, if she is she'll never stop, I was and find at times I still want to, only then am I sorry and it could lead to trouble, the mind is a marvelous but terrifying thing and never easy to deal with.

I have never experienced a great love, I have, at times lamented that fact, on the other hand I know that I'm lucky, I have been given a love that grows each year, I understand my husband, know him well, have weighed the good and the bad and come out on top. I feel also that he has accepted and loved me in spite of my many shortcomings, can a 17 year old do that, I had good fortune on my shoulder, will Sandy. Do you remember the earliest years of our marriage, the constant struggle to live my own life, I'll never forget them, can Sandy (~~with~~) weather a real storm, all <sup>these</sup> questions you must answer, your advantage in years demands it. In youth mistakes are accepted and unavoidable but when one has gained the wisdom of 3 years of living, plus a more than good brain, reap there should be few mistakes, most certainly when a human life and perhaps children are concerned. What say you Aug, you've seen the result of these mistakes, you've also seen what marriage should be, don't say it, I can hear you, I'm an idealist, I refuse to believe it, admit I'm at least right in part.

I don't mean to say don't, just be sure and think it over well, talk comes easy you know, it's seldom easy when one faces the problem that previously ~~had~~ in speaking of sounded easily solved or at least solvable.

Is there such a word as solvable.

I have talked considerable more than I had planned, there is however, a truly great thing to be achieved if two people try, it would be a shame if you were, thro a mistake, to miss perhaps the greatest experience this life, and few short years, has to offer.

Mistakes are never easy to make something good of and can never be completely undone.

I must again busy myself in the Hausfrau manner, another part of the bargain that can become a nuisance (sp.)

It was so nice hearing from you, rather like renewing an old friendship that never should have ~~last~~ lapsed (sp.?) Do write again when the time or spirit moves you, your letters are most welcome. Our sincere wishes for the best whatever your final decision.

Your news of Myra was most welcome altho a great bit of it I knew. What did you write once, 'youth will not last etc', 'the business of life, love etc'. We all grow older but what is really us, the inside part, either grows

into something worth while  
or becomes true, there really  
is very little inbetween is  
there. Myra, if she has nothing  
else, has an amazing facility  
for seeing only what she chooses  
to and whatever there is about  
it that others may not condone  
much is to be said for it.  
In the ~~present~~ case of her  
home I truly believe she is  
ameliorative of it. Her values  
are not mine but we are  
individuals and I have all  
I can do to keep up around  
here, she is of age and her  
life must be all hers, to do  
with as she deems best or  
at least to her satisfaction.  
I truly believe if one wants  
something badly enough it  
is attainable. That goes for  
making the best of mistakes  
or bad breaks if you so  
desire. I shall not worry  
any more, only continue to  
accept and love as a sister, no  
one is perfect if we were I don't  
doubt but what our life would  
be horriable, to witness the  
doings of those who weren't  
would be unbearable, right  
(Phone 2273W) Always, Mary.

5 November, 1952

Dear Mary,

What a fine, good letter from you this morning! I hope you won't mind my showing it to Sandy; it may do her good to read it -- certainly there is room to do her good. I am sure you realize that nothing of what you have said, and said so well, too, is lost on me or strange to me. I assure you I have had a good many hours of indecision about marriage -- to anyone. I remember when I was engaged to Marcia, I began to have severe qualms almost immediately and during December of 1943 and January of 1944, I was almost in a pathologic state in conflict with what I had the impulse to do and what I felt I ought to do. This is all the more fresh in mind because at the moment I am going through my journal for those months for paragraphs to give to the local editor for the Star (whose subscription list, by the way, has now passed 500), and I am once more keenly aware of all my conflict at that time, which was resolved finally when our engagement was broken.

I do indeed realize that Sandy is a girl, and not a woman, that she will not be a woman for some time to come. Nor have I any illusions that marriage to her will be something easy for me -- quite the contrary. It will take the utmost in patience and tolerance, not only on my part, but on hers as well. The trouble with any girl in her teens, and especially one in Sandy's position, is that she tries too hard to be a woman. I find myself much irritated when Sandy attempts to "correct" me -- to lower my voice, to dress differently, and so forth, when instead I should let my sense of humor prevail; however, when my thoughts are fully occupied with worrisome details, such impulses on Sandy's part are trying indeed, and I know very well they will become more so as time goes on. Perhaps this is age finally settling on me, that I should find myself less patient and tolerant when the circumstances demand more of me. Sandy's typically adolescent impulses, her lack of self-discipline, her possessiveness all trouble me. But the picture is not entirely one-sided; I told Sandy a long time ago that it was not easy to hold a lion by the tail, even though she had managed to take hold. And I do believe that any marriage succeeds in direct proportion to the wish of both parties to make it succeed. In that I am sure you will agree with me.

If you will permit at this point a digression, I have concluded that a somewhat curious thing has taken place in me. I long ago realized that my own generation, my classmates, etc., were lost to me; I was always galloping off far ahead of them, and of that whole crew I re-

11.

tained but four friends -- Karl Ganzlin, Hugo Schwenker, Pete Blankenheim, and Mark Schorer -- with perhaps Lillian (Margery) and her friend, Norma Kahn Kjilsen (now a sad mental case) on the perimeter. In this galloping ahead I achieved one thing -- I kept my youthful exuberance, my drive, and everything but, paradoxically, my place in time, so that I found that though I was well ahead of my generation in keeping up with the times, I was behind them in sheer living in accordance with the course of life by nature. Sooner or later I knew I would find a level among the young people and take off from there; I now know that that level, at which, for all my advanced years, I considered myself one of others, was the level at which Froly, you, Pipsie, and the others lived; so that I am now in the anomalous position of growing older from that level, with far less time to do it in, than from what would properly have been my own back in 1930 or so. I need not tell you what a quandary this is, nor how interesting, in its way, nor what difficulties it erects in my path.

One of these difficulties is most certainly my attitude toward Myra and Sandy. I seldom think of them as separate. Indeed, much to my embarrassment, I find myself in Sandy's company often calling her Pipsie or Myra; and by the same token, I keep calling Myra Sandy or Sniff (a family nickname), wholly unconsciously. Fortunately, I seldom see Myra; so there is little harm done; and it is only when I do see Myra that I make these slips with Sandy, who is only amused, while Myra is invariably irritated. On the telephone, I can hardly tell the two apart, and time after time have to hesitate to identify Sandy lest I call her Myra, for each opens exactly the same way, same tone, same inflection, etc. Naturally, this troubles me. I was long ago amused at Myra's naive and vain decision that I had fallen for Sandy because she was so much like Myra, but perhaps, for all its vanity, it is no less true. If so, then my marriage is even more risk and venture than it is on the face of it now.

Of course, as you say, our lives become involved. Each of us must keep a tight rein on himself all the time. Some of us just don't. Sometimes things turn on the slightest aspects of existence, sometimes on major events. In regard to yourself, for instance, I know that I came very close to falling in love with you. A curious thing. It was manifest at the outset that I preferred you, but I always held myself in. Actually, it turned on a variety of factors -- talk about you and Hugh H., a certain violent defensiveness in your attitude which prevented me from "seeing" either you or into you -- but when the moment came, it turned, as I recall it now, on so little a thing as a kiss. It happened one day when we were over the hills, waiting for Pipsie to come, at which time you were to go to work. I remember kissing you



iii.

-- but your response was so casual, so blasé, even a little cool that I never stopped to think it might be defensive, too, but found myself held off, and -- you know how abnormally sensitive I am even though I put up a good front -- afraid of being hurt, I retreated -- as it was, straight to Myra, who came afterward, and who threw herself into her kisses as she threw herself into everything she did when in fact nothing was demanded of her she was unwilling to give. And to such good effect that, indeed, even today I am never long with Myra before the old fire is raging within as if it had never died, which is perfectly ludicrous, considering the japes and ironies of time, and the solid circumstances which have separated us forever. But that afternoon represented a turning point beyond which no attempt at recovery was ever made. So you see sensitivity, impulsiveness, carelessness, willful or helpless blindness -- all conspire together to lead us astray and confound our purposes and our hopes and dreams.

So I do realize fully that Sandy will not be a woman for some years to come, that she has so much to learn of co-operation and living with someone that I am appalled by the prospect before me. Yet I am convinced that if nothing is ventured, nothing is gained. I lost two or three girls I wanted, solely because I was afraid to venture; I am not going to make that mistake again. And, in final analysis, surely it's better to make a positive mistake than a negative one -- I've made too many negative ones in my relationships with others. Now if I had to look back and point to the one mellowing factor which had the greatest effect on me, I would say it was what happened between Myra and myself, and that, in turn, wouldn't really have happened if it hadn't been for my affection for Froly, whom I didn't want to hurt, with the abysmal result that I managed by this to hurt all three of us grievously -- by making love to Myra as a substitute for Froly (which he knew) and not letting her know I loved her myself, by letting her slip away because Froly would not stay if Myra came to live here, and so on, compounding error just because I didn't want to hurt anyone I loved. So I succeeded only in protracting anguish, out of hurt and wounded pride, and out of fear what people would say -- ironically, they said it anyway, and half the town still believes Myra's first baby was mine -- and the kind of stupidity of which only a genuinely intellectual man is capable!

And I do appreciate your interest which impells you to write so, which only duplicates what other close friends have tried to tell me. In the long run, though, can it matter? Dear Mary, I have lived so long with loneliness and a kind of anguish that I could hardly do worse. I much doubt that in the long run it will affect my writing; that is surely by

iv.

now ingrained, bred in the bone, and I must write to save myself, and nothing is likely to stop that process until I die or become so senile I shall want to die. Oh, yes, I know what marriage is, and I know Sandy does not, because her mother still doesn't. One could not say it better, in analysis, than you have said it when you wrote "wisdom consists partially in living those truths." Indeed it does. Out of experience for many people alone comes wisdom, no amount of teaching, reading, or the experiences of others can help. And those of us who do not profit by experience, who insist on driving their own way in the face of wisdom, must surely be diminished in time by such willfulness.

I don't know whether Sandy is running from something or not. I suspect she is, running from an insecure home to me as security. She is not yet capable of love, only possessiveness. No one needs to tell me that. But I do know she is steadily growing more mature, more sure of herself; now that she is working in Madison, she learns something of budgetting her income. If I had to answer all your questions now, I would have to answer them in regard to Sandy in the negative. But is this fair to her? Would they not have had to be answered in the same way when applied to you at 17? Surely they would. And would that not have been unfair to you? Yet I never had much doubt about your eventual maturity, I always had about Myra, and surely I was right in both cases. I am too close to Sandy to judge fairly now. She tries, but she is the victim of her environment and background, and these factors simply must be taken into account if any justice to her is done. I know you see that. I know too that you are really, honestly, sincerely concerned for my happiness as few, very few of my friends are, and I am humbly grateful for that. So of course I must admit you are right in large part -- you need not challenge me to do so.

What you say of Myra is perfectly true, and it is only because I am the victim of a kind of madness whose roots I know not -- unless they lie in a conviction of personal guilt, for sexually Myra was never particularly satisfactory until quite some time after her marriage -- that I find myself still fond of her, still infected with a kind of nostalgia for her which, if it isn't love, wears its face, madness, certainly, in the light of my certain knowledge of her shortcomings and of Sandy's superiority, age for age, to her. It is my good fortune, indeed, I know, that Myra lacks any real drive, any ambition, that she is just what Sandy says she is, "wishy-washy" and incapable of fighting for any goal; because if she were not, Myra could make my existence a genuine purgatory in which certainly I would expiate every sin I ever committed.

v.

I used to say, never knowing how true it was, that Myra had saved herself from me and me from her, at nothing more than sacrificing each of us. We could so easily have destroyed each other. It would have been a holocaust awesome to behold -- but only from within; it would have been only sordid from outside.

No, worry is always futile and destructive. Foolish, too, since Myra will go her own way, and never notice that the world falls in ruins about her. She says sometimes: "Surely there must be more to life than I've got." And, of course, there is. But she will probably neither know nor believe that in order to find more in life, you must put more into it.

So much for that subject, which has already run overlong in these pages. Of news here, there is very little. Jack Bachhuber and Joan Young were married last Friday in Illinois; she had made no secret of being pregnant. But this sort of thing is hardly any longer news; they had been going together over three years, and neither of them is a bargain. I told them it could not have happened to two people who deserved it more, but I do wish them well, and know if they try they'll make a go of it.

I've filed your telephone number, and if I come round that way I'll telephone in advance to find out whether you'll be home.

All best to you and Bib, always.

Affectionately,

A handwritten signature, possibly "L. H. T.", is written above a circular stamp. The stamp contains a stylized, illegible design, possibly a logo or a decorative element.

October 29, 1952

Dear Aug,

Just sent the girls into the great outdoors to run off a portion of their energy, settled the boys and a neighborhood lady, stuck a few pins in this smug's coat of mine - could hardly do it fast enough before I literally spit up the stars. I like it, wonders how long it'll be before he gets the usual South City 1-2, how well I remember. In any event

Thanks so much for sending the first edition, already have acknowledged - the dollar deal, but missed, he'll need them, hope he gets off a few well placed editorial sticks. No sound bites, guess I never really realized what I was missing till now mouse here. Let wouldn't be fair not to admit that just reading the paper gave me a slight case of

Missing from the pages of the star were many names, some of them because of the eternal struggles, however, can't truthfully say I noticed many new names, a new name is rarely seen accepted is it. Had to see the nice dissertation on A. Wendell - about time they gave you some credit.

Shows the love life, still think you're damn good, I

a little ageing really helps the product,  
it's none of my business anyway.

See you were on T.V., missed the program  
but Bib saw you and thought you came  
thro in great shape. T.V. is all election  
now, won't comment any further as  
I already know the words you are using  
to describe the principals involved.

I could blate on and on, haven't touched  
many subjects I'd like to but must at  
least pretend to be a house-frau, that's  
all it is but no use fighting it or  
lying about it. It's my opinion that  
there are too many things of greater  
importance and too little time as it is.

Do stop in any time, our door is  
always open to friends and it would  
be nice to see you. Soon I shall chalk  
up the quarter century <sup>(or again)</sup> mark, where down  
the years disappear to, I sure have a  
heck of a time keeping tabs on mine,  
wasn't it yesterday we first ~~met~~  
locked horns.

Thought I'd send this school business  
supposed to be one of the most beautiful  
in the state, consider it a privilege  
to send Barbara - Best to you,  
Always,  
Mary.

31 October 1952

Dear Mary,

I was glad to have your good letter of the 29th this morning, and to see those pictures of the school Barbara is attending -- I'm sending the folder back now, under separate cover, with a couple of postcards which have just been put on the card-stands down town for the tourists (who actually buy them by the hundreds, I am told!). And to know that the tea reached you in good order (I wish now that when it begins to run out you would just drop me a card to let me know so that I can send you more; I am sorry, I am so bound up in so many obligations, many very trivial but some important, that these little things I want very much to do just slip my mind). I sent some tea also to Pipsie and to Aunt Elizabeth, with whom I had a good long visit a week ago yesterday, and whom I hope to see again before she and Ben go west for the winter.

The Star is going well here. His subscription list is mounting toward 500 after but one issue. The second is out today and it's just as lively as the first. Honestly, it's the first paper out of these two towns I have actually taken time out to read. This second issue has Darleth spread all over it, too -- no doing of mine. The editor asked me for a public statement regarding the 94-author indictment of the partiality of the press, and I gave it to him. Gore says some people kicked about Darleth being so much in the last issue, but Gore simply told them that they'd have to realize that some people made news and others didn't, and Darleth was news even if he never said anything, just by being and living in Sauk City. Which I suppose, from the newspaperman's point-of-view, is exactly true. Anyway, the paper was the subject of lively comment all week, and will continue to be. I knew you had subscribed, or someone had subscribed for you, because I went around two days ago to send you six months of it, and you were already down on the list. This week he ribs me a little editorially, which, since you know me, you know I don't mind at all.

I can understand your nostalgia. You never know until you go away who or what you are going to miss. I think of you so often, as I do of Myra -- far more than I do of the rest of that crowd, Red and Broderick and that bunch, of whom basically I never thought as much as I did of you two -- and I miss just seeing you occasionally, because it seems to me as I grow older that there are so pitifully few genuine people around, and I grow so terribly weary and tired of all the pretenders and the envious and the greedy people who inhabit this corner -- and all corners, I suppose -- of the earth.

ii.

By all means do drive out if you come over in your car. If you can drop me a line before you'll be in Hank, I'll try to manage to be here that day.

I was quite happy when I visited Aunt Elizabeth and Uncle Ben (whose Paget's (sp?) disease will ultimately prove fatal, though it's a slow and often painful process) to find them both looking so well, and especially to discover that, after all this time, Aunt Elizabeth had come to realize that I was right about Mary and Myra. I remember how often you told me she was prejudiced, as everyone was, in Myra's favor; so I undertook a series of long letters -- in 1948 or 1949, I think; I've already forgotten, but I think the former -- in which I simply and patiently took you two girls apart, piecemeal, and in which, though it must have been obvious to any discerning reader, that I was in love with Myra, I consistently took your side of the argument. The other day Aunt Elizabeth said, "I used to say to Ben, 'August doesn't understand Myra!' but so many times since then I've had to admit that you were the only one who really did understand the girls." She spoke so highly of you, of Bib, of your family, and it warmed and delighted me to hear her -- not that it represented any defection of my own, because you know and I know that I will probably never quite get over Myra, though I do know now I think what is the matter with Myra, and I can't any longer deny it -- she is wholly amoral and she simply doesn't have a soul.

I remember your saying to me when Myra was having the trouble with Bud, when he was away from her for six weeks or so, that I ought to marry Myra. Well, I did try. I tried it in 1946, when she was pregnant; I wanted her to go to the Cradle, offered to pay her expenses, and come back after giving up the baby and marry me. I even offered to adopt the baby later. She would not. Then, in 1948, I wrote her a long letter in which I reviewed what had happened, and it was a moving letter indeed, one of the best I ever wrote, and asked her, if she felt sure that her happiness could live with me, to leave Bud and marry me -- a dangerous letter, too, for it could have been the basis for a suit for alienation of affections. At the moment, though, nothing seemed to matter -- least of all my reason and intelligence. I think it was because when Myra left here, something inside me just curled up and died, and I thought I could bring it to life again.

I can understand why you would naturally think I'm a damned fool in my love life. Perhaps. You know, the most ideal woman I could have created would have been a synthesis of Myra and yourself; if she had had something of your firmness and general intelligence, and if you had had something of her affectionate spirit -- warmth you always had, and passion -- with all that went with those alterations in per-

111.

sonality, could there have been created -- from my perspective -- a more perfect woman? I doubt it. Sandy actually is, just as you said, a sort of copy of Myra, but thankfully not in all ways. She is not amoral, she has ambition and purpose, she isn't afraid to learn or to work, and in any duel between Sandy and Myra, Sandy would be bound to emerge as the winner, because she is more shrewd, more alert, more intelligent. But she lacks utterly that elusive comfortableness of Myra, whom I always think of as as comfortable as a kitten to have around, and so she was and is. Indeed, with Sandy and Myra, I have the horrible feeling so often that they are but two faces of the same woman, and often when I am with Sandy, I never miss Myra so much; yet I know that were I often with Myra, I would never miss Sandy so much! This is a paradox truthfully to fill a man with rage, though at the moment I am being far more sensible -- I am trying to put it all into fiction, not alone the old novel of which you know (and which is again under way), but other things, because I have for so long been filled with anger against myself and unshed tears of rage and idiotic self-pity that I must vent these frustrated emotions somewhere, and how better than in fiction?

As I have said, I saw Pipsie recently. First, by chance in Madison, where I separated her from her girl friends and took her to the Chocolate Shop for lunch, where we had three hours to talk, and a lot to say, since it's been three years since I last saw her. Of my projected marriage next June she said only she didn't "want" me to get married, and added everything you might expect would go with that. I told Sandy, of course, but Sandy just flashed her diamond and said, "I'm insured." Sandy never worried about any other woman, just Myra; but now, after having met Myra and observed her silence, she said Myra didn't worry her any longer, "She's too wishy-washy ever to do anything about anyone or anything," which is perceptive and truthful. A week ago Alice and I went to Pendarvia at Bob Neal's invitation for lunch, the same day I saw Aunt Elizabeth and Uncle Ben, and I asked Myra to join us, since she'd never had party there; and she did for an hour, after which we had to take off again. I told her then that Jim Johnson and his girl, Myrna Albert, and I, and perhaps Sandy, were coming for party this past Tuesday evening, and she -- and Bud, if he were home -- might join us if they liked, but she should let me know first. However, there was no word. After we had begun to eat, Sandy saw that I was somewhat troubled at not having heard, and since she herself insisted on wanting to see my "old flame" again (as she put it), I finally sent her with Jim to see her and bring her back if she cared to come, as well as her husband, were he at home. They came, sans Bud; Myra had been ill with the flu, though she did



iv.

not look it. She sat down next to me, and Sandy proceeded to watch us with singular attention, as inscrutable as a sphinx -- as indeed she would be. We were together less than forty-five minutes, I think, and then we took her back to the little shack in which she lives. On the way back to Madison Sandy showed how much she had seen. She said that if a man could be said to be in love with two women, I was, but that I was in love with the Myra of almost ten years ago, not the Myra of today -- and what a pity, she went on, that so beautiful a woman didn't have the mind and backbone to go with that beauty -- and she wished I could somehow arrange to spend a month with Myra -- "She'd bore you to death, and that would get her out of your system once and for all." You must admit that Sandy is far more perceptive at 17 than Myra ever was, with her eternal "I didn't think I dared to aim so high," and "I didn't think I could live up to being your wife." Of these two attitudes, I am sure you must agree, whatever your prejudices, that Sandy's is the more mature and the infinitely preferable.

But I am doing here what you did not do in your letter -- blatting on and on. I have lawn to rake, leaves to burn, my new short novel to get on with, the revision of my fourth boys' historical novel to do, and so on, endlessly. I hope to stop in some day and see you blooming at 25! a quarter of a century -- but then my dear, I am 43. First thing Pipsie said when she saw me was -- "You haven't changed a bit!" But since that time I've lost 15 more lbs., and am steadily dropping. I have a thousand things to plague me, I often simply have no appetite for work and concern, and if this keeps up I should get back down to a tidy 200, at which weight I look fairly presentable and not like an overfed hog. If you have a telephone, why not give me the number so that, if I'm ever likely to be in that vicinity, I can stop by?

Best to you and Bib, always,

It had a familiar ~~sound~~ cord  
you struck with Myra's words.  
"There must be something better  
in life, etc." How often I have  
thought in a most familiar  
view, I have a most definite  
urge to create, a strong feeling  
that there is something in  
me to be expressed. I realize  
a great many fools have this  
urge but I shall wait, perhaps  
it will ripen into something  
given time. It has been my  
opinion for some time now  
that very few of us can, in  
all honesty, feel that we have  
done our best, we keep  
feeling we can do better, that  
there is something greater in  
us.

The news of Joan Young  
and Jack B. was not surprising  
but news never-the-less.

Joan who's external beauty  
is so great but what's inside,  
I hope our girls are far  
from good looking so they'll  
be forced to make something  
of their inner selves. Beauty  
is so often a handicap, isn't it?

Dear Aug.

I find myself once more, in  
the position, long known to  
you, the well meaning friend.  
None of my previous letters was  
meant to hurt, only to give  
you a few of the many reasons  
I'm concerned. I most surely  
agree that to gain one must  
venture but as you so clearly  
stated, your time to accomplish  
your growing older is not equal  
to ours, isn't that all the  
more reason one should be  
sure. I have talked to you  
most bluntly and I know  
you understand, now I shall  
wish you the very best, did  
you not used to say 'the proof  
of the pudding is in the eating'.  
May your's be most wonderful.  
So Sandy, I wish also the best.  
She shall miss a great deal,  
her gain will also be great if  
she can summon the inner  
strength to evaluate fairly.  
I must stress, at this point,  
the fact that this job is hers  
alone, no one can help her, a  
toast to her success.

It continues to surprise me to hear you speak of 1942-43-44, etc., numerically speaking it seems some time past, yet really it is but yesterday, isn't it. I often think back to those days, they can never be forgotten but are to be treasured as the experiences that have helped to make me what I am. I shall live with them always and be thankful the good were so nice and that the bad were no worse, no longer is there any sorrow or lamenting about if's - if things would have been this way, - if one had done this or that. Today is here and tomorrow is yet to come, that only will I think about. No doubt you have read between the lines August, you must know then how much time has taught me, in ways I have become much softer, in many others I am much harder, the sands of time, etc., -

How I have ranted to you in these last few letters. I must again get at the work, my thoughts are with you most often ~~and~~ <sup>as</sup> are my sincere hopes for your happiness. Say hello to the old gang, I have not forgotten them, nor shall I ever.

May I venture one more bit - yesterday is gone and can only be wisely relived in fiction, today is here, and on today tomorrow's happiness is built, think on this and you'll find peace.

Always,  
Mary.

8 November 1952

Dear Mary,

Yours of yesterday is just in, and I hasten to answer it before going to Madison for lunch. I was over last night to listen to the Homecoming show -- Stan Kenton, (too noisy and brassy), Sarah Vaughan, (much, much over-rated; only a 5th rate singer who throws her sex around, but is now getting hippy), and Nat (King) Cole, who was very good. I especially like his new platter, "The Ruby and the Pearl," which, somewhat to my disappointment, he didn't do in last night's three-hour show.

I appreciate anew your good wishes -- but I knew I always had them. If Sandy and I go ahead and get married, the first year will turn out to be the hardest; if we survive five years, I think we'll stick it out, though I shall hope to have children, without which it would be even more difficult for Sandy. As for "missing" things -- yes, I suppose she will. I don't quite know what she'll miss; when she was in high school she was in just everything, from cheer-leading to class play; she ran around with the kids, dated younger fellows at my insistence, and so on; she's already seen or heard a good half of the world's greatest artists of the concert stage, danced to at least as great a percentage of the leading bands, and so on. Once married, we expect to travel a little -- not too much, for I can't afford that and still pay off on my house. I think she knows that the task facing her is not an easy one; there are times when she is in distinct rebellion, but at other times just as eager to get on with it. After all, we are now in the fourth year of going together, and there seems no valid reason why this marriage shouldn't work out if we both put our shoulders to the wheel. Actually, there are only two factors I fear -- first, that Sandy may not understand I have to work hard for my income, and money isn't inexhaustible; second, that she may not understand my need for relative peace from bickering in order that I may do my writing. In this I'm not nearly so difficult to live with as most writers I know, and what I mean primarily is that Sandy will have to discipline herself to keep from quarreling if things don't please her, and to realize that we can't be on the go all the time. Even now, running back and forth into Madison, is a serious and aggravating drain on my writing time, though in sheer wordage I'm not too far behind my recent annual average.

I think, in reference to that familiar chord, we must all overcome that "grass is greener on the other side of the fence" feeling. No matter what course most of us take, we tend to think things might have

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been better if we had chosen another. That is invariably true, and we have to struggle noticeably to keep ourselves from that "if only" feeling, because, as you say, it is today we live, not yesterday or tomorrow. In regard to Myra, surely, confusion of mind or not, she more than many of us did make her bed; she exercised a conscious choice, no matter what nebulous fears impelled her away from the better choice; and one cannot really feel sorry for her. In fact, I cannot recall that I ever did; I felt much troubled, because I didn't like to think of her being abused -- but I always felt, and she later admitted, that she was not without blame. If I felt anything strongly about her, apart from missing her companionship which could be delightful (in small doses -- I never had to undertake a large one), it was a sense of guilt because I was not honest enough with her in regard to my own feelings; but even this might not have been legitimate, because I cannot help but feel that Pipsie did know I wasn't cheap, I didn't have "affairs" with women unless I really loved them; and perhaps it is the feeling that my failure with Pipsie, regardless of the complications which made it perhaps inevitable, was so outstanding a failure that I cannot quite forget it and it looms forever like a spectre on the horizon of the present and the future, too, to some extent.

No, Joan Young was no extraordinary beauty. An attractive girl, yes, but not one whose beauty could be called "great" -- no. Your own girls have certainly started out attractive enough; you could hardly fail to see that. But they are already so well disciplined that they have a good start on their future already, which far too many people don't have in these troublous times.

As for your urge to create -- well, my dear, by all means yield to it if you have it. I know of one housewife, also with four children, no maid, who ultimately won a \$10,000 prize for a novel she wrote. So if you do ever give in to the urge, you know you can count on me to help you as much as I can.

As for peace -- my dear, I'll never have that. If I did, I rather think I'd stagnate if I had peace. Discontent is the goad -- just as the grain of sand in the oyster ends up a pearl; so discontent and trouble and inner conflict ends up in created work. In peace I simply vegetate, enjoy the sun and the wind and the good earth. No, my dear, not peace -- occasional contentment, yes, I'll take that with gratitude, but lasting peace is utterly beyond me.

All my best always,



COPY

Sauk City, Wis.  
26 February, 1948

Dear Helen Reed,

Do you remember what Emerson says in one of his essays? Do right or what is right, rather, for yourself, and you can never be in error. That is, of course, assuming that you are a normal human being. The only kind of wrong is that which a) does yourself harm; b) harms others. Practically everyone knows what harms others, but not everyone knows what harms himself. Over-eating, over-drinking, excesses of any kind, are entirely likely to harm everyone. But sexual indulgence, presuming always physical cleanliness, and at least some degree of mutual liking, which is always desirable, is not likely to harm anyone, is in fact entirely likely to be healthy and good for one rather than the opposite.

There is only one deterrent or one negative side to that: that exists when the participating individual is bound by shibboleths and beliefs drummed in by ministers, priests, inept doctors, parents, and the like set up an anxiety neurosis or a guilt complex. The question you have to ask yourself is this: do you feel in error because of having given yourself to a man you love per se, or because, on thinking it over, you feel that you ought to since you have done something you have been told or instructed to believe is wrong? If the former -- i. e., if you feel having given yourself per se is wrong, then of course you must cease doing so. If the latter, then you must take hold of yourself and determine which is right for you: adherence to the old standards, or making your own way as judged by your physiological and psychological needs.

One must face the fact that there is nothing per se wrong in sexual relations, but the wrong done one's self by worry and guilt complexes is sometimes too great to be risked. No one can decide this for you, but yourself. It is just one of those problems in adjustment you must solve for yourself. But in order to do so, you must discover for yourself, whether your conscience troubles you because you believe you are doing something wrong, or whether it is because you are supposed to believe it.

If I had to guess, I should say that the key is in happiness. If it leaves you unhappy to have sexual relations, then I think you really believe you are doing something wrong, and ought to make some sort of readjustment to meet the situation, which would not necessarily mean making a break, for if he is made of such poor stuff that he likes you only sexually, it is surely better to discover that now than before it is too late. Men are often perverse creatures -- some of them do like women better after women have given themselves to men; but others, however mightily they strive for sexual relations, tend to self-doubt, and from there proceed to doubt of the ladies, with the result that they soon rationalize themselves "out of love" by convincing themselves that the woman will give herself to another man as readily. I need hardly say that women are equally as perverse in other ways, but manifestly these perversities develop as a result of hundreds of experiences from the dawn of consciousness, and are the end product of any one person's hopes, frustrations, loves, hurts, excitations, and so on, and do not readily yield to alteration.

The same thing may be true of your conscience. The sense of what is right and what is wrong is usually a product of personal experience; it sifts out of teaching and experience together, and you must live with it. Certainly you want a home and children and security; so does everyone. But many people are afraid of major responsibilities, very often out of a fear of being incapable of carrying them, and you must discover

ii.

COPY

for yourself whether your young man, who has already divorced one wife married while he was in service, belongs to that company or not. And you must find out for yourself too whether you are happier with or without sexual relations. If I were to tell you an answer to your problem, I would have to say, weighing all things, that you should follow that course which leaves you happiest.

Sincerely yours,

August Derleth

Miss Helen Reed  
1415 Melrose Avenue  
Waukegan, Illinois

68 TAMALPAIS ROAD • BERKELEY, CALIFORNIA • 94708  
January 31, 1970

Dear Aug:

I was very glad to get your postcard yesterday, and I was on the verge of writing you much the same kind of little epistle. For days I've been reading John Unterecker's endless biography of Hart Crane, Voyager, and I was amazed to learn that H. P. Lovecraft used to see Crane occasionally, and would speculate about him. Two more opposed temperaments it would be hard to conceive of. Anyway, the voyage is over today. I shouldn't talk, I suppose, but really, this biography is too long -- so repetitious. Though certainly instructive and much of it moving.

I was glad to have your card chiefly because it suggests that you are well and functioning in something like your old routines. I hope so. As to your question about Leavis -- I find his manner often insufferably dogmatic and many of his judgments questionable. DHL can do no wrong, nearly, for example, and E. M. Forster can't be taken seriously. Leavis's students over the years became a tribe, of fervent apostles, worshipful and imitative in their own writing, and it's chiefly those ex-students who find him without flaw. As for Harry, I don't suppose he is the most discriminating of critics, but I'm grateful to him for all the helpful work he did on DHL over the years and it doesn't seem to me such a crime to name the real people who did at least suggest the characters that L. developed from them. Naturally, the characters are different from their human prototypes -- we hardly need Leavis to point that out. If Harry's Letters has a limitation, the great one is its incompleteness, but that's because Viking-Heinemann confined him to two volumes whereas if they were going to replace Huxley, they should have given him four, for all known letters.



I'm making a tour of nine southeastern universities in the first half of March, giving the same lecture on L. over and over. By the end, I'll be vomiting at the sound of my own voice. I don't know why I agreed, but when the thing was proposed, about a year ago, it seemed so far off as hardly to be real. But now, with the reality of Wallace, Kirk, Carswell, and all the rest of them, one really shouldn't put foot into that part of the world at all. However .. I'm on leave without salary during the Spring quarter, and this two week stint will almost make up for that — my only justification.

Do be temperate and keep well. Karl says that you have dropped a good deal of weight, which is probably as it should be, isn't it?

All best --

Mark

P.S. In London I grew a moustache. To be less conspicuous, and so far I've kept it in this almost equally hairy world. Ruth does not care for it.

31 January 1971

Dear Kay and Greg,

I thought of you yesterday morning, setting out for Madison in the bitter cold, when I got up at six. I stuck to my desk yesterday until I was sure that the plough had cleared a way -- and I didn't know that until I got out the car, started it, and then walked down to the gate to look up the road, so I could go into town for the mail. Before they could make a way wide enough for two cars -- and that pretty scant -- the village had to get two ploughs out here, and the drifts there are now higher than the car -- and in some places on the way to Madison, I saw today, ten feet and more high! What a winter! You could hardly have chosen a better time to go to Hawaii!

I send along a review of the Leontyne Price concert from Saturday night's Capital Times.

I've been busier than a pack-rat this weekend -- yesterday whipped together the manuscript of DARK THINGS, got on the telephone to Don Wandrei to urge him to send in his story for that book, so I could get it to the printer -- today wrote my entire lecture, 5,000 wds. ("The Writer's Use of His Materials") and two poems, brought my journal up to date, and still took time to go to West Towne Mall to look at the art exhibit there (Dennis Mack driving; he had come out to work) -- an impressive show, I thought, impressive enough to distract my attention from the ice cream vendors! Now it's almost bedtime, and I'm rounding out the day, listening to a new opera I bought at Victor today.

The mercury actually got to a high of -4° today! The wind kept right on blowing both Saturday and Sunday. I had to have my north driveway cleared both days, and the road north of the cemetery is almost drifted shut again. Coming back from dinner at the Firehouse tonight it took me both care and caution to negotiate the snow piled into the narrow cut the snow ploughs had made there. The highways were clear today, however -- we went over on 12, came back on 14 and 78.

Edna Meudt telephoned today, said she had wanted to call you before she left, will probably write. I gave her your initial address there, said you'd be there until the 8th. ... George was out last night. He and Stanley got turned back off 12 at Middleton, timidly got a motel and stayed there, instead of trying 14. Cars were still in the ditches a good share of Saturday all along 12 north and sw of town.

1 February 1971

Too tired to go on this morning. Cold again -12°, and sun dogs in the eastern sky at sunrise. I got up, saw Rick off to Milwaukee, whipped through two columns of book reviews, did another poem, and took on the heavy morning mail. Dieting vigorously (& rigorously!) today, and without having my personal furnace stoked up I feel the cold more. Once again a strong west wind is blowing; I had to have the north drive ploughed out last night, and it will have to be done again today sometime; the road's had to be done too -- they were out this morning. You ought to enjoy the warmth there twice as much knowing what it's like back here! -- And before you start back, eat enough oranges to save off the colds you're likely to get when you set down in Wisconsin again in three weeks or so.

All the best, affectionately,

C. Wright

July 17, 1970

Dear August,

I feel that a letter is in order following our conversation of two weeks ago. My conversation with you provided me with a good deal more insight into the situation I am confronted with and has helped me in my attempts to make an adjustment to that situation.

I did confront Sandra with the facts learned in my conversation with you, i. e. her lies about the pregnancy, your conduct as a husband, and her extra-marital affairs during her marriage to you. Her reaction was anger at both of us for talking about her in this manner. "I am sure both of you had a good time talking about me," etc. However, as I continued to ask her why - for what purpose - she had lied to me about you, she began - for the first time - to show signs of real emotional distress. Sometime later, she let down her guard more and told me that her father had had relations with her when she was about 12 years old - in Ohio - and that was the reason for her mother taking her to Wisconsin. She said her mother blamed not only her father but also her for

the episode and she was punished for it. She relates that after Millard had joined the family in Wisconsin she began masturbating while listening to her father and mother having sex relations at night.

### Shades of Sigmund Freud!

Here is the incest impulse translated into reality. Her description of the episode and its aftermath was - again unusually - accompanied by probably the first real demonstration of honest emotion and guilt which I have ever observed in her. The circumstances were such that she simply couldn't be lying.

However, I have further proof that the incest took place and the extent to which it has influenced her subsequent life. I thought about this disclosure for a while - did some advanced reading - and one night (properly ported with drink) made my experiment. While having intercourse in the rear entry position, I began hitting Sandra on the butt with my belt. The results were astonishing. She begged me to hit her harder, she actually began to scream in ecstasy and told me that she experienced deep orgasm after orgasm as I continued to strike her rear and

her back. The next day she would experience sexual thrills by looking at her considerable bruises in the mirror.

Needless to say I am astonished at the results of my endeavor and considerably frightened as well. I can't describe the frenzy she was in.

Now, how much of her subsequent conduct with you and with me can be attributed to her desire to be punished? How much of the humiliation she has brought upon both of us can be traced to her desire to be "found out" and punished? Can it be that there has been a compulsive, ~~so~~ unconscious quality to her acts of unfaithfulness so that she is morally blameless?

Of course, the question of psychiatric help is moot. I simply cannot afford to undertake it financially. Arizona is rather backward in its approach to free mental health clinics, and the prospect of treatment is too long range to be practical, even if there was a possibility of its being effective.

I am afraid too that I have done more harm than good in bringing these matters to the surface. I am still reluctant to go on with Sandra as my wife. I am

afraid that I am not broad-minded enough to overlook her adulterous conduct with me and go on from there. However, I do have 4 - count 'em 4 small girls to consider. I find it hard to leave them for they mean everything to me. And then too financially we are simply not in a position to maintain two households even if we were both to work as much as possible. I have about decided to retain the status quo and hope that some kind of an adjustment is possible. Or, perhaps, something good will happen which should make life more bearable.

I certainly appreciate your taking to me. I know that you will be interested in the developments described in this letter.

Best regards,

Art Kising

1 August 1970

Dear Art,

Yours of the 17th was on my desk when I returned last night from a fortnight of teaching upstate. I read it with interest, though it contained nothing that really surprised me.

I don't think, in regard to Sandy's conduct, that "morality" enters into the problem at all. In this she is amoral. I never thought of what she did as immoral -- of course, society in the large would consider it so from religious or legal positions -- but as something totally unrelated to any "normal" code of conduct. The traumatic experience of incest at such an early age is certainly the determining factor. It would be interesting, too, to determine whether she and her father were caught in the act, and whether a beating was immediately administered, for if this were the case, then we face one trauma on top of another, and the pathological pattern is fixated, with physical punishment firmly associated with sexual pleasure. These early experiences invariably set some kind of mark on the child and that is carried over into adult behavior patterns. I once had an affair with a woman whose first experience in sex was rape; the trauma that was in her life, even though she was 20 when the rape took place, was such as to build up in her an active hatred of the male and also at the same time a penis-antipathy; but she found herself able to climax violently and with deep pleasure and repeatedly when I used a combination of tongue and finger on her -- the tongue replaced the masturbatory experience of her early adolescence, the position of the male -- an inferior one between her legs, diminished her hatred of the male, and presently she was able to fellate me and to accept normal positions, and a very pleasant relationship developed and carried on for some years -- indeed, had she divorced her husband, who was totally inadequate for her, I would have married her, but in the end the threat to her child's happiness and the potential loss of her fine new home and her husband's income, at least twice my own, were determining factors.

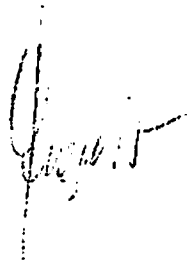
No, answering your question, I don't think it was harmful to bring all this out into the open. It should in the end prove a relief to Sandy to take it out of the dark closet of her mind. Moreover, if you can carry on with sexual intercourse in a similar fashion -- that is, with a degree of sadism as punishment therapy -- you may find that she will so firmly identify extreme sexual pleasure with you that she will lose the compulsion to seek other companions; for it seems evident to me that what she has been seeking all these years is punishment associated with sexual climaxes.

Just the same, if you mean to continue the status quo -- and you have four very potent reasons for doing so in those lovely little girls -- would it not really be better if Sandy did have a hysterectomy? I should think it would. I am not convinced that direct psychiatric therapy can be counted on; it would do no more, actually, than bring to the surface what you have already brought out, with perhaps some further revelations related to that traumatic experience, and these you can draw out yourself without expense as time goes on and you continue with her. Some women go into a sexual frenzy without any traumatic experience. I've been clawed down my back, and I've had at least one woman, with my entire 200+ lb. weight on her, throw herself all around that big bed of mine, ending up at the foot of it. This frenzied response may be vitally necessary to Sandy's well-being.

The problem of the girls is the troubling one. You know yourself, Art, that you can't find it readily possible to leave them in Sandy's care. Look at what has been done to Sandy by having been raised by an incestuous father and a paranoid mother. Roberta has always believed that every hand has been raised against her, and if it is not, her own conduct assures her eventually, it will be, for she actively inspires dislike and hatred by her conduct. How much this is due to a poor family relationship of her own, scarring her childhood (her fatuous foster-mother invariably threatened her, as punishment for any trivial misdeed, with a return to the orphanage from which the Alexanders got her), can't perhaps be precisely determined now; but the fact is that the fruits of that experience were brought to bear on the three Winters children. Moreover, the only really "normal" (I hate this word) person in the entire family relationship was Sandy's grandfather, Guy Alexander; Coralyn had been such a hot number at 16 that she had herself "cut" so that she would never have any children; the adoption was a concession to Guy. Furthermore, Millard not only molested his daughter; he pestered his mother-in-law and got into her without too much difficulty, as she herself told me. Small wonder that Roberta was in a constant mental turmoil!

So you face the same dilemma as I did. I couldn't bear to think of my children being raised either by Sandy or her parents, knowing what I knew about them all. But I was fortunate enough to have my parents standing by, and both willing to help -- they sold their home and moved in with me to share the responsibility of raising them. You don't seem to me to have much alternative but to keep to the status quo for the sake of the children; it won't be easy, but I really cannot see any workable alternative. I faced it readily because I had help, and I was so relieved to be free of Sandy so that I could work again that all else was subordinated to that fact. It was, clearly, for the sake of the children that I continued relatively amicable relations with Sandy; had it not been for them, I would certainly never have seen her again in any circumstances. You will understand why I felt so.

Best wishes -- and good luck!





Sept. 25

Dear August:

I received your letter quite some time ago. It was quite a letter August. Everything you said was exactly the way that I felt for years. It isn't good for anyone to hate like I did. That will make a person very old when they're really young in years.

At thirty-two I feel younger than I did at twenty-two. It

sounds very funny but  
that's the lucky it is.

August you said I  
should try to marry  
a man ten yrs. older  
than myself. I've  
been going with one  
who is just ten yrs.  
older. You said he  
should have had <sup>lots of</sup> experience  
with women. This  
man is divorced and  
his Russian which isn't  
good. I think some  
men have had too  
much experience which  
could apply to this  
one. This a well  
educated and a wealthy

man. I think he's  
a handsome man but  
that doesn't make  
a woman happy.

You said that you  
knew that I'd been  
engaged more than once.  
August I was engaged  
three yrs. ago. Lately  
he's been coming over.  
(I mean the <sup>very</sup> fellow Red.)

He wants to get married  
so I'm very sure he's  
the one I'll marry  
August. You said  
unhappy people attract  
each other so it seems  
I always go back to  
"Red." so I think in  
the very near future

will settle down.

August I wanted to tell you that most people think Mom is ten yrs. younger than she is. Isn't that good? I guess she doesn't worry like she used to. She said to say "hello" to you.

Thanks again for the nice letter August.

Sincerely,

Eleanor A.

I won't back out of marriage again. You can't run from it forever.

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Perhaps your one-time fiance is your best bet. If you always go back to him, it would seem to me that he is on your mind. If he has not married elsewhere since your engagement was broken, it would suggest that he still favors you above all others. And all these factors, granting that you are otherwise compatible, would suggest that your marriage could be a successful one. Yet it cannot be denied that a woman of 32, however young in heart, being married for the first time, would tend to find it somewhat difficult to adjust herself at first, and would have to be far more patient than a younger woman.

No, one cannot run from what seems to be one's destiny forever. One might as well give in to it, and yet all of us tend to try to escape what seems meant to be.

I am glad to know your mother is looking younger. Give her my best wishes, as always.

I have to rush this letter a little, for I have quite a schedule today -- I must a) finish a 5,000 word article and revise it; b) revise four poems; c) do an editorial for the local newspaper; d) shower and shave so that I can deliver a funeral address this afternoon (I bury people, you see, just like the priests!); and finally get ready to take my 15-year old to a concert in Madison tonight.

All best always,



29 July, 1948

Dear Elizabeth,

Many thanks for your good long letter of the 26th, which reached me only this morning. I was interested in all you wrote, as always, and especially about the abstract problems of morality which were raised in my last letter. Let me hasten to assure you that I did not intend by that letter to suggest that you must yourself alter your standards even in limbo, but only that the fact that altered standards exist today makes it necessary for us to alter our judgment of today's human beings, since their conduct is not predicated upon precisely the same values as existed some decades ago.

I am convinced that, as you say, Myra is content to drift. But in point of fact, hasn't Verl rather drifted ever since his wife died? It would seem to me he has. Consider that now he works part of the time, and part of the time he simply sits around -- in the local bar-ber-shop, in the taverns, outside at the park bench at the bridge, and so on; he is willing to work, but cannot get all types of work, and is not, apparently, interested in trying too hard, though that may be unfair to say, since I do not know all the circumstances attending. This is part of Myra Lee's heritage, certainly, and one cannot overlook it. It is a kind of shiftlessness, a kind of irresponsibility which to a certain extent each girl reflects.

I think you are right in making no move concerning Myra which can be construed as interfering or influencing her. She is now in her 22nd year and will be completing it soon; she is amply old enough to make her own decisions now. If she does not learn to do so now, it will be too late, and she will always lean on someone. I can readily understand that she is on your mind and heart; I think of her often, too. But I do know that it is impossible to do anything with anyone if the subject does not try, too; and Myra is just not trying -- she stays with a man who will mistreat her and be unfaithful to her whenever it next suits his mood to be so, and turns down a chance to go to Detroit where the influence would be of the best, and so would her physical comfort. There are these manifest contradictions in her nature which one cannot account for; certainly I cannot, except to establish them as a conflict between ambition and impulsive desire.

I think what you say about Aunt Jane and the possibility of the girls' inheriting substantially is correct; I knew of this some time ago, in fact, before Jane died. On the occasion when Myra Lee lied to me and said that she had to go down to Point to show Jane her new clothes,

when infact Bud had telephoned her to come back down, she said ingenuously that she could not refuse to go because Aunt Jane had done so much for her and was leaving her so much money, she could not jeopardize that. Both the girls have had visions of inheriting money from their Aunt Jane. I asked Mary at one time point-blank what she thought she would inherit; she guessed the sum as "between two and three thousand". I told both girls at that time that they should not count on any inheritance, that if anything were coming to them, it would doubtless pass through other hands first, as the case was.

Mary Lou, I think, was the victim of badly needed affection; it was the lack of this which turned her away from education. I remember talking about this with her quite often; she did certainly have dramatic talent, and in her own way was as likable as Myra Lee, though of course my preference for Myra Lee is too well known to discount. She was determined to have "a home of my own," and a family. After her engagement and approaching wedding were announced, she came but one night to tell me that her marriage was necessary, but that she was not sorry except in the matter of good taste, since she loved Eib and he loved her. As a matter of fact, Verl himself did not know that Mary's marriage was necessary until well after the event. Nor did Myra, for Myra learned it from me after the wedding.

Myra made a pretense of being interested in education because she thought she "could get more" that way. It is not necessary to judge the child by this naivete, for doubtless it was the atmosphere of her home, such as it was. Actually, she did not want to go on to school; she wanted to stay here; when at last she went to Point, she went under duress from her father and sister, who wanted her to visit you and Jane because you had asked her to come down and talk about Platteville. I did not want her to go, but did not interpose any objection. She did not seem to want to go on to school until it became apparent that she might have "a good time" there; then she was eager for it, and every weekend she came home she brought some of her work out here in an effort to persuade me to help her with it. I seldom had time to do so, but I did on occasion help. She was not the only student who did so, of course, I need hardly say.

That Myra calculates in a limited way is undeniable to me, I am sorry to say. The fact is that the girl sees her way sometimes a little ahead, but has no ability to think things through. When she went with Jack here, she could not wait to be engaged and so feel secure with him. But she was no sooner engaged than she felt held down, hampered, and quite soon it was evident that she began to think of herself as in an even better position. I cannot believe, as some of her friends here have told me, that she began to maneuver to make herself my wife, but it cannot be denied that she did everything in her power to make herself indispensable to me, even to the extent of voluntarily cleaning my house, washing dishes, and the like. Certainly she almost succeeded in whichever attempt she was making; sometimes I am frankly sorry she did not succeed. The problem would still be there, but

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its facts would be different. I don't think that I would ever say Myra was malicious; she thought of herself first always; she still does, though it is in conflict now with the challenge to her pride, the fear of being proved wrong, terribly wrong, publicly if a divorce were to result.

Yes, it is true, Mary Lou wants money. She has even herself worked here on several occasions when it was possible for her to help down town, taking the babies to someone else to care for. As a matter of fact, however, Bib has now quit his bartending job, and intends to get some other kind of work. The fact is, too, with two children they do need money. Bib is still looking for a job; he quit about a week ago, I think, and he does not want to go back to bar-tending, though a job has been offered him. He is today in Madison looking for a job, and I understand that a friend is going to try to work him into Oscar Mayers, though there is nothing definite about that. Meanwhile, Myra Lee has at last written to Mary. She wrote first to thank her father for \$10 he sent her, though her letter was written about a month after the money was sent. Then she wrote to borrow Mary's maternity dress, but Mary had already lent it to a local friend who had lent her a maternity dress when Mary had none. Then she wrote for her white hat, which Mary is sending, and for Mary's beach coat, which Mary uses herself; so that is not being sent. She wrote Mary that she and Bud were getting along beautifully -- the same thing she said when he was beating her -- and that they had had a "vacation" in Ashland.

No, there is nothing one can say or do to alter the course on which the two girls have embarked. Mary's ambition is now for her family, which is good. Myra's is more difficult to assess, since Myra has deliberately thrown overboard more than one opportunity to better her position; yet she has told me herself on her last visit that "security" now meant everything to her. Does it, I wonder? One finds it very difficult to say. If so, then her actions speak otherwise.

I hope to be in Dodgeville next Thursday, the 5th. I am there to see my old friends, Jack and Maude Brooks, and to assist a photographer to take pictures of their performance, "Adrift in New York," which will be put on there that night. I will probably come down in the afternoon, late, and perhaps I may have opportunity to call on you at your home on the way in to the city. We shall see.

Meanwhile, every good wish to yourself and Ben, always.

Cordially,

A handwritten signature, possibly 'J. Lee', written in dark ink.



Dear Pipsie,

I am glad to know that everything at least is "fair" with you, and I hope for your sake that things will improve. I understood that your uncle and aunt from Detroit were visiting in Mineral Point, and that you would get to see them; I hope you did so, and that you had a good talk with them. It seemed to me that what they had to offer was perhaps the best thing all around for you, but of course, only you could decide that. If things should get worse for you, I think maybe it would be wise to visit them in Detroit and stay there for long enough till things get settled in your mind.

Yes, Aunt Elizabeth was up. I sent down for her and took her home again. I took her out to lunch that day and we had a long talk. She also saw Mary for two hours or so. I think Aunt Elizabeth is deeply attached to both of you girls, just as I always suspected; but she is also deeply hurt to realize at last that both of you girls have wrong values, that somehow you missed understanding the really important things in life. She still hopes, however, and certainly she wishes both of you the best of everything, including luck. If I were you, I would make every effort to see Aunt Elizabeth from time to time, because someone who has your best interests at heart ought to be kept close by every means. There are all too many people who just pretend to be friendly, and who cannot wait until they can get out and about with your troubles. Aunt Elizabeth is not at all like that; your troubles sincerely disturb her, and that is something to be appreciated. I will see her one of these days, again, when I am down in Point. I had occasion to talk to her on the telephone recently, too; I had to disappoint her, for she expected me to call on her when I spent one evening at Dodgeville, where I attended a Brooks show. There were pictures of the show in the Capital Times last week Tuesday, as I remember, though the show was almost a month ago, not quite, three weeks, I think; but I was too busy to start out early enough to permit my calling on her; so I had to put it off, and will see her some other time.

Glad to know you are ~~well~~ <sup>back</sup>. I was somewhat concerned when I heard at one time that you were not too well, but I did associate it with pregnancy. I hope all goes well with that, too. .... Yes, the kids still come out at night. Not so often as before. Zona's mother has been quite sick; Red has been helping now and then at the stand across the river; we go out riding quite a bit, but Carol comes out, and a slough of younger kids are beginning to show up -- Ken Dederich (who drives for me now and then when Froly wants to go to a game), Dave Bachhuber, and that crowd. .... I have so many new records that I have scarcely any room for them. Just at the moment, I have even the floor covered around the phonograph to the corners. .... Nothing much else is new, except that we are putting a porch on the northwest corner of the house, over the entrances there. .... I think Froly is getting Louise a ring soon, and the marriage will be next year.

Your asking about Cassandra is a coincidence. For one thing, I am just getting back to my Redbook novel of that name; I must finish that this month, and then get on with my Point novel. I keep thinking of Cassandra every now and then; it is pathetic, it is aggravating, it is almost unhealthy, but I have the devil of a time keeping her out of my mind. Something ~~always~~ <sup>haunts</sup> me, understandably. I think of that wretched girl who tossed overboard the things which would have meant most to her for a life that is little short of torture; then I comfort myself by telling myself, as I know, that she never really loved me at all, but yet was drawn toward me as I was toward her. I blame myself, too; a long time ago, when she was still only 15, I could have taken her for my own; but would my conscience then have permitted me any rest? For that matter, it has its day every now and then even as it is.

The other night I dreamed of her again. We were both younger once more, we were walking down into the marshes hand in hand, we were sitting at a haystack and she was asking about life, and I was telling her --- but what did I tell her then that she took the path she did? Did I betray her? What happened inside her? In a moment the scene collapsed, the dream faded, I awoke to the moonlit room and lay there, my heart filled with tears that could never be shed. Does anyone I wonder ever fully understand what love is? I don't know. My mother always says that love falls where it will, and if it falls on a dungpile. And it is true, I think. If even I cannot condition it, if even I can still in my heart love a woman who betrayed me, there is certainly no controlling that emotion. I know something more: I have been hurt so much and so often by love that I am afraid of it now, looking the other way even when it is offered to me. And it is that, often. And every time I think, Will I be hurt again like this? Because, hurt as I was by Maris and Marcia and Lona, it was Cassandra who hurt me most. I suppose because, deep down, even though I kept it crushed and hidden, I loved her most; and I suppose, because it was my pride that prevented me from being absolutely honest with her, I deserved what I had coming. I had got used to a little private heaven all my own, when Cassandra used to come to where I was and put her arms around me and make me feel necessary to her, as she was for so long to me. And I suppose I had no right to expect even that. But who can tell what goes on in any human heart?

Only this morning I was putting together a new book of poems, and I came upon a little group of them written for Cassandra this year. Most of them I turned down for the book, but one of them I kept. I remember that it was written on a late Spring night when I walked home along the Lower Mill Road in the darkness; it was a lovely night, it was the kind of night I had sometimes walked there with Cassandra, and that night I could not get her out of my mind or thoughts; I kept thinking I would only have to look around and find her there; I kept fancying I held her hand in mine, I heard her voice whispering in the wind about my ears. I missed her so much I could not believe it myself. Perhaps our essential loneliness betrays us all now and then. But, coming home, I wrote Walking Home Late, which goes like this:

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I walked home so late  
that winter had climbed up sky,  
though it was summer where I went,  
and night was host to a late lark's cry.

There were lips back there,  
where I had come away,  
almost too much for me to bear,  
less far behind than day,

and that was already pale in heaven;  
something so intimate and fair  
it seemed just out of reach,  
no farther than a cricket's chur in quiet air.

But it was something left behind,  
and what was here before  
I could not tell -- a home, a bed,  
another day -- what more?

Certainly no moment ever is the same  
as any other, and a lover's kiss  
alters in so little a time as night,  
between that moment gone and this.

Ten steps away or twenty days  
are all the same as one --  
something left behind  
is something done.

As I remember it, I had seen Cassandra twenty days before, hence the reference to "twenty days". That one I thought I would keep in the book for the time being; I want it to be a good book, of course, for I've not had any poems but juvenile poems published for some time.

But there it is. Perhaps that answers your question about Cassandra. By the way, did I ever tell you that Marcia finally gave up and married someone else this summer? In May or June, I think. I heard it from Katherine, of course, who cut out the clipping and sent it to me as much as to say, that's one less. She keeps on making aside remarks about Cassandra. About Cassandra, yes, until I don't know where I am or what I am about. Tell me, my dear, do you too think my instincts are all wrong? I know this about Cassandra -- she is afraid she cannot ever measure up to what I expect of her; I know this, too -- no one can if no attempt is made. She may be right.

But enough of Cassandra. I've been out recently with Barbara Brooks, and with no one else, save Virginia Zastrow earlier this summer. Too busy, for one thing. No inclination, for another. I've lost 20 lbs., with 31 more to go before I get to where I want to be. At least I've a start, and I mean to keep it.

always affectionately,

3 September, 1948

Dear Elizabeth,

Late yesterday afternoon one of Myra's girl friends here handed me a note from her; she had smuggled it out in a letter to her friend, trusting her to get it to me. She wrote:

"Just a note to let you know that everything is fair."

and then:

"Life is sure one hell of a mess as far as I'm concerned. It can't be like this forever, though."

It could, of course, but I suppose you have to live through it to find that out. Thereafter she wrote, "I would like so much to hear from you, but don't think it wise."

I have nevertheless written her a letter I have enclosed herewith. Her friend will tell her that you have it, but she must make arrangements to get it if she wants it; that is her problem, but in any event, if she comes for it, you will have opportunity to talk with her without Bud being along, for Bud will hardly come along if she can manage to visit you at the farm or at the office. She writes also as follows:

"Am living at Uncle Slick's farm now; so will have to have Bud mail this. Decided to write to Red and mail this with it. She won't mind giving it to you. Aunt Elizabeth was up to see you. Right? Haven't seen her for quite some time. They don't go too much and of course I haven't been out there. The way Bud and Aunt Elizabeth feel toward each other isn't what you would call love, so don't want to ask him to take me out."

In my letter I have advised her to think seriously of visiting her aunt and uncle in Detroit in order to give her perspective and time to think things over. I have also strongly implied that she ought to make every effort to see you and keep you informed of how things are with her. Her letter is ambiguous. I am constrained to think there is something she wants, but I do not yet know what it may be. That may come out in time. We shall see.

Meanwhile, it does contain the above news, for what that is worth.

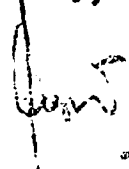
I hope to see you in the not too distant future. I am at last back to my Redbook novel, and following it, I will get back to my Mineral

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Point novel. This will make visits to Point necessary, and I will manage to call on you on one or more such occasions, when it is mutually convenient.

My best wishes, as always, to yourself and Ben.

Cordially,

A handwritten signature, possibly "L. S.", written in dark ink. The signature is somewhat stylized and appears to be written over a vertical line.