John H. Griffin

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Christmas Day -

Dear, beloved Nell and Chris,

This is a quiet moment in early afternoon before the "dinner rush" starts (while the children nap and Piedy prepares salads to take to the country this afternoon.) We listened to your glorious tape last night and again this morning. We listened to the marvel of Midnight Mass on your tape and then went to the most abominable celebration, where the whole Mass was a penance suffered to reach the moment of communion, and nothing better could be said for it. And then we returned here and opened the presents, the beautiful, ravishing shells that have absolutely fascinated Susan, the marvelous Wyeth for Gregory that he now has on his bed with him, the lovely book for Johnny. How precious these things are to us; and the exquisite little music box for Amanda that has already had full wear in these past 14 hours.

And then your beautiful tape again this morning, and Piedy and I laughing when you said you could smell the breakfast cooking. Well, I had cooked it, something special for friends. I idiotically tried the Mere Poulard way of scrambling eggs that Jacques taught me, and burned them on the bottom, so the smell of breakfast was really that of burned eggs!

Yours were the most moving of the gifts, the most cherishable of all for us with the exception of a poor little quilt Clyde Kennard's elderly, nearly blind mother made for Amanda.

Now I must tell you some of the things you mention in your tape. Penn indeed received Chris's beautiful pictures and had them marvelously framed in a heavy silver framing, with glass on front and back, so that the songs show. They are superb. He brought them by from the framers on Friday for us to see and he absolutely cherishes them and is putting them up at his hideaway out in the country, where he keeps his great collection of paintings and his library and a few of our photographs. So he got them, but poor man has been going day and night and he asked me if I would write and tell you he had received them - asked me some weeks ago and I did not remember to do it until he brought them by on Friday.

About the surgeries, last night was my first attempt out and I could not make it. There will be many, many surgeries to come so you should just expect that and pay no attention to it and feel no distress about it. This disease keeps spreading and the only specific is endless surgery. So it is such a natural and "normal" part of our existence that it makes no impression on us (except for planning them) and indeed I feel bad because it hurts my friends far more than it bothers me...which is always the way, I suppose; but I do not want it to be that way. It has been going on for two years now and it will have to go on for many more, but there is some good healing from the surgery and I can take some steps and will be able to take more, and it is just part of it and means nothing, really nothing. It does not preoccupy us any more, really.

Great love to both of you. Will write better soon.

John

We hope you will tell us more about Chris's photography. That part of your tape really perked Gregory into the most intense interest.

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