

Dear Scott,

I just looked at the postmark on your letter - it's been more than a month, and I'm so ashamed. It looks as if I had to come to Milledgeville to find time to write you. The last few weeks of school were more hectic than usual - after living in single blessedness for the first half of the term I was rotten spoiled and stayed disgruntled for

the remaining six weeks during which I roomed with Miss Dissipation 1963. The Original Sleepy Time Gal, turns night into day and all that. The most unappealing person I've ever met, with the possible exception of Pascal Burke (did you meet him in Milledgeville?) who is at least partially redeemed through his utter pitiableness (is that a word?). She, Al, the wretched roommate, was colored pallid and greenish and freckled and had indescribably ugly features and smoked three packs of cigarettes a day, all half-crushed out into one ashtray, slept all day then complained of insomnia all night if she wasn't guzzling rum and coke somewhere and if she was came in at two to wake me up ~~and~~ in time to hear about her sex life before she got sick in the wastebasket. A despicable piece of humanity. Who kept me in a rage for weeks, which is what I started out to say.

Just look what sitting down at my typewriter does for me! Had I completed that sentence in tedious longhand it would have said simply that I was grouchy and unable to study or concentrate or do anything like writing letters before school was out. Now you know about Al. And now I have two letters from you--I could have replied

a thousand times with the energy I've used worrying about not having written you. You do understand, I think, because you said "summer lethargy." That's my excuse for the time since I've been home. And the time I spent in Milledgeville, when I started this letter. It was silly, of course, to think that I could accomplish anything there, but my mornings were alone and each one was planned to write you. Jimmy was sleeping, Doug at work, Naomi on the golf course, the children somewhere and one of The Niggers and I at the lake house. I would watch the sun rise, go back to sleep, then sit on the dock in my pajamas and drink coffee until I saw the first boat on the lake. Before I could even find my pen in the bedlam of the Edwards' living, the idea of floating and bubbling and splashing in the lake proved irresistible, and I would swim until lunchtime. Afternoons were more rewarding--Doug would send some one to pick me up and I'd eat lunch with him then go to their town house with books and stationery and good intentions, then practice piano until Jimmy woke up. We were estranged before I was up there, in fact I went to win him back. And it's all so much more fun after you've hated a little. So I was counting minutes till I could see him each afternoon, and I've never before been eager to give up my lovely solitude, even for Jim. I can hardly remember now what we did together, except for an unfortunate expedition into the woods to look at a wonderful old rock-walled cemetery with Revolutionary War graves--and bugs and thorns and redbugs and poison ivy. We're both afflicted, although Jimmy has claimed that he's immune to such things. It was wonderful though, I was a nervous wreck at home, before I left I scraped through a three-day migraine headache and pain pills that made me so nervous I cried when anybody spoke to me--nothing but a week in Milledgeville could relax me so, unwind me. I'm sorry though that I couldn't have been there when you were. I would so love to meet Stuart and Owen. Josie, my little cousin, startled me one day when a lot of people were talking about a hundred different things when she suddenly said, "And he's got a brother that looks just like him and I can't even tell them apart, they're twins." She hadn't been talking and I thought she'd gone crazy, then I realized she meant you.

I do so envy you all for your travels this summer. My family very thoughtlessly spent the summer in North Carolina (we have a house about twenty miles from Asheville) and left me down here to fight the summer and sloth (which is what you said). I love the mountains so much, I miss them even. We spent every summer in North Carolina while I was home, but the last two I missed because I was working, and the summer before in California. My parents have bought twenty acres of land on a mountain and are as happy as kids planning a backyard circus. There's no road to their property, they bought it from an illiterate farmer who found it too steep and rocky for pasture, but it suits them fine. There are two waterfalls, huge trees~~x~~ and rocks, and beautiful dreams of rock bridges, Dutch doors, rustic this and Early American that--I'm as excited as they are. The place is near well, on a mountain, really, that Jimmy and I went up last fall. Jimmy wants to go again this year, but that licentious "extended weekend" was the precise reason why I couldn't go to Philadelphia, and since I'm trying for Europe this time, I don't want to push my luck. I suppose I'm pushing my luck, straining the law of averages as long as I go with dear Jim--by this time next year I may have to go to Europe. It's so maddening (not that--Europe) (well, it's maddening too. Perhaps I could clarify things by making a paragraph.)

Europe: Oh ho ho, Scott Gentling, just you wait! It's your fault! I wanted to go last year, the old umbilical cord was severed neatly, I was uninterested in school, I'd made no binding promises about finishing school--but you and Jim didn't think about going then, you've got to go now when I've said I'd stay in school until I graduate. Now, when I finally want to go to school! Oh, I have to admit I'm a terrible sport when I can't do something my friends are doing. I'm out and out jealous. Jim is the only thing in the world that has ever made me glad to be female. If I were a boy, why I'd go with you so fast but Jim has shown me the joys of being a woman, and those very joys prevent my "travelling alone" etc. If I don't like FSU I guess I'll scrounge up money and touch my granny and go anyway. But I think I'm going to like it. I went to Tallahassee during the summer and talked

with the head of the art department. I've never been so encouraged and happy. I cried great big awful tears when I talked to Dr. Bosch just because I was happy.

Now I've just been sitting here feeling sentimental about it all wondering if I could make it any more comprehensible to you than I did to Jim, and I guess I can't. I apologize for wandering all over the place. The real reason behind our most recent estrangement was that I loathed trying to write readable letters to Jim and I sensed that he was tiring of my trivial bantering so I quit writing. It's late now and I'm at the point where everything seems trivial if you think about it--

My sweet aunt (the one who writes, the one I wrote you some nasty things about I think) is dying and I really am sorry because she's the most intelligent relative I have and the most enjoyable despite certain of her innumerable idiosyncrasies--all that to show that I'm not completely materialistic--and is giving me many of her books. Which cover nearly every wall in several houses and are probably stuck away in closets and attics besides. And some paintings, one a perfect horror that my great grandmother did when she was in college. I went to Miami to see her last weekend, and came home with Heritage editions of Moon and Sixpence and van Loon Rembrandt (which she'd already given me in another edition) to match my Leonardo book and add to the others she gave me in the spring. They are beautiful, a huge Botticelli one, Rembrandt's paintings, a French collection of Virgin Marys from Cimabue through El Greco, and seven or eight others. I could have used your bedside manner--I just freeze, tense up around dying people so I won't go to pieces I guess. I can't bring myself to say little consoling half-truths so when I must speak I am too cheerful about things that are completely inconsequential. All I could think of to say to auntie was that I was happy about art and I'd slaved joyfully over water colors since I'd been home. Later my feeble uncle clutched my arm and almost cried that she'd wanted me to write. There's always been a little clash between her and my father, he painted and she wrote and

each wanted me to chose his art, and she'd been happy I guess when I quit drawing for so many years--so when I went back to the hospital I told her I'd made an A in my writing class and she promptly burst into tears and said she'd never finish her last book and it was the one she really loved and I simply could not bear it all so I left and she'll probably take me out of her will.

Dear Scott. Please, please, please send me pictures of your paintings. If you knew how much I wanted to see them you'd go to all sorts of trouble. Jimmy allowed me a glance at my portrait when I was at his house, and I wanted it so badly. But I especially want to see what you did this summer. I don't have an address at FSU yet, so write me at home and it will be forwarded. I think I have a lot more to say, but it will have to wait until tomorrow.

Now it's tomorrow and I have fifteen minutes to finish writing you and get uptown before the bank closes. I have an appointment at a new bank (Daddy closed out my account again when I overdrew at the old bank, then opened another one when he realized that it would be harder on him than me to send me an allowance) to learn how to read bank statements, fill in stubs, subtract and so on. When I got a notice with N. S. F. on the top I didn't know what it meant (it looked like Not For Sale) and ignored it, then left town and Daddy had to take care of the third bad check I'd written to the same place.

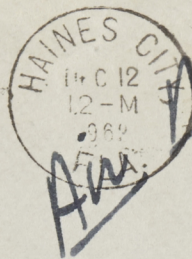
What of Vienna? Why I'm thrilled of course! Not only that you are going to Europe, but that you won't have to be in Philadelphia next year.

I would be so pleased if you would write me a little piano piece. It must be simple--I'm not as astounding as Jim would have you think. The only reason I was any better than the rest was that I practice faithfully and love every minute of it. If you hadn't told me about the Beethoven book for beginners I may not have stuck it out--I couldn't find Beethoven, but I got Bartok and Mozart and they present enough challenge to make struggling through John Thompson worthwhile.

I must hurry--please forgive me for neglecting you for so long. I'm much better in the winter, I promise. I hope this gets to you before you leave--I will be disappointed if you don't send me the pictures. Write me, at the latest when you're settled (what an frightening word!) in Vienna.

Sally

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