

Tues. Oct. 15,

1963

Dear Scott,

Have already started one letter but it was in hand writing and would take up too much weight for the photographs. I will not send this letter today because all of the photographs have not come in yet. First I want to tell you how proud I was when I read your last letter. I was happy not just because you were successful, that your teacher likes the etching, but that you are happy with it. Scott, I know you get scared when you think of the future, but boy, if you only knew what power stands within your grasp. You don't even realize your own powers and that makes you unhappy until by "accident" you turn out a masterpiece. I read your letter to Obrian who seems to think you are some kind of god. He has your water color of the woodchuck from Monterrey down in his room. He like me is dying to see your latest work. I want you to send down the etching as soon as you can. Please put it into a big brown envelope. I don't want it bent. Wait, if you want to, until the other etching is done and then send them. Scott, if you knew how much I wanted to ~~xxxx~~ see those etchings you would not delay.

Well, I am about twelve dollars nearer to the poor house but I am having three more rolls of color shots developed. Then the pictures will cease for a little while until I either get some more money or until I get another chance to take pictures. You will have by now received my post card from Opelouses. That trip had been my most successful to date. I got the best photographs that I have ever taken except for maybe those negroes on the front porch which was beginner's luck (and which really didn't have half the composition value as some of these you are now looking at..) I hope you like the old negro woman. These pictures were taken on a Sugar plantation not too far from Vacherie La. (where Oak Alley is). Thses cabins were at one time old slave cabins and the cane workers live in the ones that have not burned down. There is a whole row of chimneys sticking up near where this picture was taken. The old woman was in her late nineties. Her name was Pauline. She spoke English, but she also spoke that mysterious language that Faulkner's ~~Sutpen~~ Sutpen's slaves spoke. I got her to come out of the cabin to sit for these pictures. She was swatting knats on her face in a couple of ~~these~~ shots. She could barely walk and it was only by the greatest of effort that she was able to get out onto the porch. I did want to get

"Big Come
of heart"

out into the sunlight but she was too weak. She was also very senile, always asking if I had been married. I was very moved by her. She is an arrogant old girl with a natural aristocratic demeanor all her own, a look that could not be humbled by ninety years of hard work in a white dominated society. She was very friendly and she was always commenting on how nice Gundry and I were. The plantation was not far away and the sugar grew more than ten feet tall right behind this house. The roads were all dusty, the sun hot, the mood perfect. I think you can do a lot with this picture. Notice the colors, all very cool blues and greens with some faded reddish brown paint on the floor. Notice the green color of the door. Scott, there is down here a certain kind of algae or fuggii which lives on old wood and which turns it a strangely beautifully green color. When a door is painted blue and then is attacked by this algae, you get a color of unrivaled beauty.

The next two shots, ones I love, are the back of an old fallen down plantation house up West River Road. We went into the place in spite of the no trespassing signs and danger signs. The house was in terrible, hopless shape, but there was a terrific amount of fine furniture in the place. It was a shame to leave it. The view that you have is that of the back of the house. On one of these shots I ~~looked~~ balanced myself on the rim of sixty foot deep well so that I could line it up right. Personally I think either one of them, but especially the one with the stairs in it would make a wonderful water color painting. It looks very modern. Abstract yourself from the painting. Look at the lines and shapes, not just the objects. You could put a negro boy in this picture or you could leave it the way it is. Either way it would make a beautiful watercolor, one that I would like to see done, because this is one of my favorite photographs.

Then you have the graveyard ones as you have ordered. These pictures were taken downtown at that graveyard you used to comment on all the time. These came out good, but I leave it to you to pick the ones you think are best. I have some other graveyard pictures coming, one of a white wall etc. The best wall I could not take a picture of because the sun never touches it.

Scott, I want to tell you a bit about our trip. The houses that we saw, the settings were too lyrical to put into words. Cretian Point was one of the houses with the most feeling to it of the old South. In the big book that we have of the homes, the author says that no other Louisiana house captures and retains so much of the flavor of the old house as does Cretian Point. Scott, it is way out in the country around Opelouses and is absolutely hard as hell to find. We wound up making a twenty-five mile circuit, missing the right road two or three times before we finally got on the right track. The store owner whom we asked ^{what} directions from first said don't miss that road or you will wind up in Mow Mow land. We wound up in Mow Mow land alright. We got so back far in the sticks that the people did not speak English and that is a fact. They all spoke cajun. But to get back to the house - it is out far in the country where it is so still and dry and dusty, dusty dusty that you can't believe it. Oh it is very lyrical, even a bit depressing but wonderful just the same because it is like going back into history. The old house sits up on a hill, scarred by time, but still strong, standing red in the sun like a huge brick leviathan. The people who live in it are slobs, scum, the direct descendants of the original owners. There is a tremendous feeling of isolation about the house and the spectator never feels more like an intruder upon the past as he does, standing there looking at the house rise up into the peerless blue sky, the sublime sun. Scott, I will take you there to see it some time. It will move you. You will feel the past, the poetical heat and dust of the South. The place is still in operation, now as a "farm" instead of a plantation. It is very much like an old Texas ranch in the summertime out there. Cattle graze in the front yard. The people the house is decadent,

"Back stairs"

wonderfully decadent. It is the feeling that great books are made of. The slave cabins are gone but the overseer's house, a fine house in its own right is there. I got a picture of it and will send it to you.

The next house that I want to comment on is the loveliest house in Louisiana. It is Parlange. Scott, if ever I get rich as hell, I am going to build an exact copy of that house. The setting of course will take a couple of hundred years like it has with Parlange. Jim and I were absolutely broke but Mrs. Parlange, who is as old South, almost a caricature except that it is so genuine, she let us come into the house any way. She is well past seventy. She is an ex-high society bell from New Orleans who came up to New Roads La to the abandoned house of Parlange, to launch an ambitious plan to restore the old place. Scott, the beauty of this house with its rows of old cedars, the two pigeonholes out front, the wide galleries all around the house, is a work of art as beautiful in its own way as anything that Bernini or Michelangelo ever designed, perhaps even more beautiful because it is not so artificial. This house was built around 1750 and has been in the hands of its original owners for more than two hundred years. Can you imagine such a thing in Louisiana. I am going to send those pictures to you as soon as they get developed. You won't be able to believe how beautiful that house is. The old woman showed us through the old place and you never saw such furniture in your life, all of it original with the house. It was very junky in there and dark and rather gloomy but the possibilities of fixing up the interior are unlimited. The hand carved cornice work and other work, the moldings around the door, the ceilings etc are of unmatched perfection to have been made in a day when most other houses ~~are~~ were being made of mud. Parlange is also made of mud, at least the second level of the house is which is a typical early form of construction. The first floor is usually brick, the second floor is mud stuck in between boards and mixed with spanish moss. The columns are old and somewhat crude but well in keeping with the West Indian character of the house. It was really an experience to hear that old girl talk about the past as if it were yesterday. One of the interesting things that she showed us was the original brick molds to the house. I want you to see this house.

I have a ~~prop~~ proposal to make to you. If you decide to come home to have Thanksgiving you might come down to New Orleans. I could put you up for a couple of days and then we could go home via Parlange and Natchez. How would you like that? Tell me what you think about it. It might be smarter to do this during the Christmas holidays when we would have more time, time in which you could paint out in the open if you so wished. The weather would probably be fine. Think about it. Will send you some other pictures soon. Send me those etchings, I'm dying to see them.

Attu

Tues. Oct 15th
1943