

2/16/72

Dear Jerry,

This has been a day of more than the usual number of futilities. It is now after 2 and I have just gotten to the mail. I find in it your thoughtful gift of a package of carbon paper, or your not too subtle hint. So, I will attempt another I hope not permanent futility immediately, trying to use this if it is a hint to give you a better understand of me.

I have so much new carbon paper I gave Pearl a package and would have given her more if she would have taken it. It happens to be pale. It is tough, holds up well, but apparently was a bad batch. It is not that I lack carbon paper. Nor is it that, with this package of what I presume is good stuff, when I send you carbons you will get better one. I will try and explain why. Perhaps you will try and understand.

Long ago I learned that things do not happen overnight, not good things and not if they are assayed by people without influence. Although in my younger day I was less patient than any of the younger people I know today, I have come to have patience. I do things in haste because there is so much I am trying to do, not because I am impatient.

I will use your good carbon paper immediately—with the first important letter I write and then for my file copies or where it is, in my opinion, important enough for others to have permanent file copies. Where I am just informing others, aware as I am of the discomfort and disagreeableness of trying to read pale copies, I will not use this good stuff for that. The reason is simple: I have no way of replaing that good stuff, and I have learned to conserve what I have for its most urgent or important use. Once it is gone, I will be back with paler permanent copies in my own files. That is, in my view, the most important place for the clearest copies. My judgement may be wrong, but this is my judgement.

You have not really projected yourself into our position. I think, in fact, that especially recently, for reasons I do not know, you have done the opposite. We are getting along in years and have undertaken a job of the character and magnitude few people of means would ever consider. Our first consideration, therefore, becomes survival, for without that achieving anything becomes impossible. I do not know the actual figures as of this moment, but we are now about \$35,000 in debt. We have as a regular income what will make this time of the year. She is exhausting herself, and I hate it! She worked until 10:30 last night, and it is aggravating work, and she wanted me to have her in her office at 7 this a.m. I let her sleep a little longer, and she was there at 7:15. What she makes is not really enough for us to live on if she could go at this pace for the entire year and had the employment that long. Not counting property taxes, insurance and things like that, not counting what it takes to live and work, let me give you but two examples of our overhead of which I am aware. It takes \$2,750 just to service my debt annually (and I am \$800 behind on last year's) and about \$650 annually for our medical insurance alone, not counting medicines. We do have taxes on two properties, in one of which a man with a large family is living free. Where we live the house has needed painting for three years, as you must have noticed. You know the rugs are threadbare. My car, which I can't see myself able to replace, has long needed a paint job for its preservation. You must have noticed it. It has almost 100,000 miles on it. I have in mechanical ways takes excellent care of it, but I have to regard paint as a luxury. We never go out to eat, unless Liliis so beat when I pick her up that she can't think of facing the kitchen. Not knowing when she will be free, and I have waited for her as much as an hour and a half this year, I can't have supper waiting for her. In extremity, we stop off at McDonald's and get a 20¢ hamburger for each of us, and if we are hungry, a 20¢ package of french fries, neither of which are taste good. I could go on and on. But this is the context in which we, not you, must measure everything we do and do not do. We are 2 1/2 times your age. Given this alone, and none of the other and serious problems of which you have no real knowledge, how well do you think you would cope with our realities? And how calmly would you take such a hint as you have just given me, that you can't read the carbons I send you? You see, I do not always explode, but in the context of our lives, in even the simplified version above, I could take deep offense at what you

did. But I do not and I did not. And there are other things you could have sent that would have done more good.

Let me carry the explanation I have made a bit further. We put off every expenditure until there is no choice. Lil is bringing work home, as I told you. Her adding machine, older than you are, needs a ribbon badly. I was in town so early this morning that I would have had to wait 45 minutes for a store to open. And this was after she was at work, while you were still asleep. I decided instead, with what I had to do, to postpone that until tonight, when I pick her up. I also have to measure my minutes. I have many fewer than a man of 25. So, I'll leave here just in time to get to the store before it closes (and I'll also get some paper, for I'm almost out of this kind-but have several years supply of heavy paper that I do not use in writing often because I have to measure even my postage stamps), then I'll mail what I think should get out tonight, then I'll go to Lil's office. She will not get relieved until six, and she may have to stay an hour or two longer, depending on the nature of the tax on which she is working when I get there. If the weather is good, I'll spend some of the time exercising, walking in that shopping center. If it is bitter, I'll have a book with me. But these little chickenshit things we have to keep in mind all the time. It is beyond your experience, but you have been here often enough to have detected enough of it. It is not a life-style I can recommend. And it is inevitable that it will continue indefinitely, probably as long as we live, for I am under no illusions about my prospects and can't conceive that a happy future, in the usual sense, is within possibility.

So, you sent me a package of carbon paper, even though you knew I have an abundant supply. I told you the story I have repeated before this. Now, long ago, when you learned I use and need lots of file folders, and they cost me about 2 1/2 each, you were going to supply some. You could have sent them parcel post, once you forgot them, for the price of first-class postage on the packet of carbons that I do not require. You have not yet sent me the copy of Esquire that Sylvia gave you to copy and send around. Who the hell of us was going to have to use that Esquire but me. Bjt everyone has better judgement than I do. Let me digress on precisely this point. You missed very much in that piece. If Sylvia, with all her really great brilliance, began to understand it, there is no excusing her not phoning me. Or, at the very least, sending the piece to me and asking me to return it to you for copying. I'll spell one thing only out for you: that piece says Ray is going to sing, that he is holding out for the highest price, but if he doesn't get paid he'll sing anyway. This could not be more completely false. Yet it quotes his won brother as authority. Of the people, few as they are, whose judgement counts in such matters, how do you think the will take it? How would you in their place? So, what happens? Ray sees it and he makes another stupid attempt to escape, one that could not possibly succeed, one that as its third step required that he survive a jump of 20 feet. I have written him a seven-page letter, trying to convert this into a plus. It may rupture our relations. But the situation is that deperate. Now, if I had had that piece when Sylvia first had it, I would have written him immediately. You will find that when I saw it I recognized its potential. My letter might not have gotten there in time. Or it might not have done any good. But I would have tried. So, he didn't get shot or he didn't get out and then get killed. But taking a restrictive view, what impact do you think this can have on a jury, if he lives to get in front of one? Or on the judges who have for so long delayed any decision on his appeal for a trial? Suppose, for example, they were worried about the impact of a decision against him when the law is all his way, could they have a better p.r. cover for an adverse decision than that to which he has been driven or enticed? You should understand that these efforts of his require a fair number of accomplices, inside and outside. In the present case, at least the guy who gave him the saw.

I advise you never to mention your joke about sending me a packet of carbon paper to Lil. She is at least as fond of you as you think. But she would be unforgiving at such a cruel joke, cruel in the context of ~~our~~ our lives, not yours. I will not tell her. The carbon is in my desk, your envelope is deep inside the old newspaper so she will not see it by accident.

Now why, when I have had such a messed-up day already and when, as I think you can see, I am not angry at all, do I take the time for all of this? To tell you how deperate our

situations? No, there is nothing in that. You persist, in every way, in an effort to make us live the way you think people should live, to think and react as you do, when all are impossible. You are, in fact, remarkably intolerant. And for one of the generation whose most consistent complaint is that their elders will not let them do their thing their way, it is remarkably inappropriate.

My carbon paper, by the way, is not news in the critical community, Sylvia commented on it and its need somewhere— but when I had no money to spend for documents at the Archives at 20¢ a page, she still sent her money to Thornley, enough for me to have bought a whole thousand pages at the Archives.

I just can't be right. Unless I live with your standard of values and importances, I live the wrong way. And if I tell you to think for yourself and reach your own conclusions and not until then discuss them with me, I'm playing games.

Is it not past time for you to open your eyes and your mind a bit? Can't you see other than what you want to?

I know you think I boil low, but, aside from this Ray thing that took me until 2 to try and address and not through him only, let me tell you the realities beyond your ken that I also had to cope with, so you can see how easily I do not boil over. The county raised the level of the road at the end of our lane. It constitutes a dam. In bad weather, water backs up as much as 50 feet. There is no question of liability, but a self-annointed big-shot bureaucrat got mad once when I called to remind him of his promises after 6 months of this and decided he would just not undo the harm he had done. As you know, I can't think of hiring a lawyer. But can you imagine what the case would be were Lil to slip in those large puddles? She can't avoid treacherous ground in bad weather, for the lawn also is then wet and slippery. So, I decided, when all else failed, to have a contractor fix it, even though this is the worst time of the year to try—there isn't even an open blacktop plant in the entire county for months. He was due here at 10 a.m. He did not come and he did not call. Number 1. Number 2, we had a fire at our old place last spring. The insurance company is trying to beat me out of at least \$3,000 on it. I got a contractor to give me an estimate. He is busy. He has not responded when the insurance company wrote him. I got him to agree to be where he was supposed to work at 11:30 today. That place is near here, where the tomatoes you liked so much came from. The insurance people drive all the way up from where Paul lives, we go there, and he is not there. We find out where he went, without letting me know, we go all the way there, and he has left, leaving no word where he is going. We return. He has not. So, the hour I killed is the least of it. What it does vis-a-vis the claims man can mean much \$\$\$, may even mean I'll have to settle for a fraction of go to court, as my own lawyer, and jeopardize all of it. So, whether it would have been for you or not, this has been a rough day for me. To this moment, everything I have done since long before daylight, except take Lil to work, has been a complete and total waste. If SM has gotten off her throne long enough to have sent me the Esquire piece immediately when I am the only one of us working on that, it might have avoided a bit of the waste and might have avoided what is hurtful and could have ended in a catastrophe. Anyway, you know me well enough to know that I am not mad and that I have not really taken offense. But with each such thing that can be such bitter medicine for Lil if she finds out, I recognize how I can react, and I don't want to be tempted, to worry, or to take this kind of shit in stride. Happily, today I could. Not all days are that way.

But hear me well: don't you ever do anything remotely like this again. It is bad enough to have to live the way we do, bad enough to get no help from all those with big mouths when they can without feeling it help, bad enough to have to spend an enormous amount of time undoing the crazy things mothers do and frustrating or coping with the consequences, and you have no idea of what this alone has cost, without having a poor joke like this that most people would take as an insult. Cut up, and joke all you want. That is good when it is not offensive. But with anything that rightly or wrongly we can take as a reflection on our poverty, believe me, the next time will be the last. Sincerely,