

2 March 1969

Dear Ruth,

I was very glad to received your letter of the 26th February, and to know that you understood and did not blame me for the things that have transpired since you left. I had started to write, and had actually written, many letters, with the thought of sparing you shock. But I did not dare to mail them until I could be sure that no one but you would receive and read any letter I sent.

When I finally did write you, I knew of only one "change." Before I received your letter of the 26th, I knew of a second change. M. Had phoned to make arrangements to have the last TMO materials picked up. He had a reservation, he said, for Monday the 24th (as I recall). The next day he called again, telling me that he had cancelled the reservation, and saying that I should wait for further instructions. Then on Saturday the 22nd he called to ask if he could pick up the remaining materials (5 cartons of books and 1 carton of jiffy-bags) that day or the next day. I said I would speak to the porter and see if he could take the cartons down to await pick-up and offered to call him back within a half-hour. He said he was just leaving Passaic and would call me when he got to the city, an hour later.

I dropped what I was doing, got hold of the porter, and between the two of us we loaded everything on the freight elevator. I waited for M's call, one hour, two hours, delaying my marketing and other chores, but he did not call until the next day, and then never even explained why he had not called back the day before. I didn't bring it up either, but merely told him everything was awaiting pick-up, the name of the porter (whom he was to tip), etc. Then, realizing that this was to be our final conversation, and out of the concern one feels for any human being, even a stranger, who seems about to go over Niagra Falls in a barrel, I tried to say something to the effect that he should get help, try to stop his rush towards self-destruction, personally and professionally. As I might have known, he tried immediately to convert the conversation into a discussion of my lack of capacity for friendship, the injustice I was doing him, etc. I was just too weary to continue, so I brought the conversation to a close, and I guess that is that. I don't know whether he is still here, or back with you in Israel, but I guess I will learn that from your next letter.

As mentioned above, I knew of two changes before I received your letter; and though nothing should surprise me any longer, I was really incredulous to read about your taking Varda out of school, getting vaccinated, etc., only to have everything called off still again. I cannot imagine how you can sustain any equilibrium after these many months of strain and dislocation—you must be made of iron. I am so glad that you found your friend Naomi and can at least talk things out, which is one of the best forms of catharsis and inner clarification. It seems to me that M. is much more disturbed than one would have suspected and that he badly needs to start work again, just as you outlined, and also to get some kind of psychiatric help. I think that Mme. X is just one of many symptoms and that your friend is entirely right about each of them trying to get reassurance of being still attractive to the opposite sex. At this stage, location is not of such decisive importance as is the need for M. to straighten himself out and to regain some perspective—whether he does that here or in Israel. It is a terrible quality in him that, sick or well, here or there, he simply cannot accept blame or acknowledge shortcomings in himself. He will admit to only those "faults" that are really praiseworthy—that he tried too hard and too long to keep TMO going, and other "noble" errors.

As for the affair of the bank slips, I find it impossible to believe him. When he said that the money belonged to A., I asked what would happen if he suddenly dropped dead, or if A. did, what arrangements had been made; and he said that he did not know. I just can't believe that someone would deposit money under such arrangements without making quite sure that certain specific steps would be taken on the death of any of the parties or in case of other contingencies. And there are many other facts that are inconsistent with his explanation—some of which he does not know that I know.

I did not want to bring up anything that you had told me or written me, so that he would have no reason to reprimand you, and therefore did not challenge certain things that he said which I could have challenged. He volunteered that A. was paying for, or had paid for, phonecalls from Israel to the U.S. This was during a phonecall made some days after he had changed the forwarding address for TMO mail and I was no longer receiving letters other than those addressed to me. But the next day, opening my mail (without bothering to check any longer to make sure it was directed to me), there was a phone-bill for over \$500, for transatlantic calls. I could believe that A. let M. use his facilities, but not that A. will actually pay a bill made out to M. I then noticed that the bill was addressed "c/o Magher" by the phonecompany, not by the post office, which is why it came to me after TMO mail had been redirected. I did not do anything with the bill, as I did not know M's address and I was sure that they would re-bill him anyhow. If the bill comes to me again, I will send it to M. c/o A. in Tel Aviv.

Another inconsistency is the way in which A. ranted about Terry and made you feel unwelcome in his house. That certainly does not hang together with M's story about the money. But even if it was A's money, I would still feel thoroughly disillusioned with and hostile toward M., for the cruelty of his behavior toward you. I could not tell him how large a part of my wish to be done with him resulted from things you had told me---about that tape, or his decision that he and Mme. X would keep Varda, etc. ---as I did not want him to know that you had told me, and then take it out on you.

Ruth, dear, I wish I could see some light at the end of the tunnel, for all of you but especially for you. I did not take lightly the step of ending my friendship with M at a time when he was so agitated and unstable. I did realize that it would be an added cause for turbulence and anything but helpful to his state of mind. But truly I found it just impossible to overcome my own feelings or my own trauma, which was considerable (as I may have written you). The shock of seeing those bank slips really threw me---for about two weeks I was unable to think or function, and I felt that if I did not disengage myself decisively and surgically I would fall apart too.

Even with the best and quickest recovery by M, I fear he has already made other people pay such a terrible price that some of his relationships will be permanently affected. I do not think that Varda will ever be able to forget how much you suffered, or how much she herself was buffeted about, all because of M's colossal egotism and selfishness and because of a train of events triggered by his involvement with Mme. X. That he is "sick" does not automatically justify or excuse anything or everything, for one shows the same qualities when sick as when well, only in different proportions and with different provocations.

I will hope for encouraging news in your next letter. Believe me, my thoughts are with you, and all my hopes for a quick end to your troubles and anxieties. All my love,