

17 September 1966

Dear L.A.,

You write the GREATEST letters, as you probably know. Gee, you are certainly a morale-builder--and your letter arrived at a time when my morale needs some building. Penn doesn't have to worry about my opinion--one of the reasons why my regard for him is so high is that he is guided by his own intelligence and conviction, not by a need for approval. (If he needed that, he would have to join the JBS, where you folks are.) As for you yourself, L.A., your company was a real delight, and I am just sorry that there were so many phonecalls and distractions.

One thing you did get wrong--I didn't ask "Did Penn marry you for your money?" I asked, "Do you go around asking yourself did Penn marry you for your money?" and the only reason I asked that was that I was so astonished that you should play yourself down, and seem so conscious of your great luck in getting the husband you got, when you should be thinking how lucky you both were to get each other.

I loved all your compliments (being human, flattery will never fall on deaf ears with me) but you are wrong about one thing, L.A., and I don't say this with false modesty--I am not "extremely kind." I am sometimes kind; I am often unkind, bitchy, and irritable--even about people I like very warmly. I am no paragon; and I have lots of channeled and unchanneled hostility in me. I don't like myself when I am in a mean mood; but that doesn't make any difference--I stay mean until something comes along to make it evaporate. Right now, I am on bad terms with myself--although your warm friendly letter makes me feel better--and lucky, too, because I am lucky to have friends like the Penn Joneses, who see me through such nice rose-colored glasses.

The troubles with my friend continue. She is wearing all of us out. I am on her shitlist now, because I had the colossal nerve to call the mother of the patient to find out how he was, after no word for 10 days. I am supposed to hate Mama, because my friend hates her; so I am marked lousy for that, also, for refusing to call Mama a second time with a hurtful message as requested by ex-suiciding-friend (she now says she won't do it, it would give the enemy too much satisfaction). Yes--Bill O'Connell is a friend of mine--an acquaintance really, I never met him but he has called occasionally from Los Angeles and I liked him a lot. He is a very thoughtful and helpful person and, I agree, very modest, from what I know of him. So Mark is having a baby! I hope it will go well. Maybe you can call him "Big Daddy" now that Penn is "Famous Author"? I love you both! Write again real soon, L.A. I will try for after Xmas. But who knows where we will be tomorrow? Warm affection,