

February 2, 1968

Dear Sylvia--the age a person dies has no real bearing on how much another person misses him. Your father was as dear to you as Vickie was to me and you miss his voice, his smile, the conversations you had, just as much as I miss Vickie's participation in my life. Truthfully, it has to be some comfort that he lived to a good age; more important, however, did he have a good life without too much emotional pain. Sometimes I realize that Vickie will be spared all the pain of growing old, all the inevitable loneliness. Oh, Sylvia, the more I see of it the more convinced I am that life is hell. I used to get comfort from the church, but since Vickie died that has all gone. So I find myself a bankrupt religious--the worst kind.

Is there any point to it? Has Vickie just vanished forever? Is your father really gone, so that you'll never have another moment of his time--even in some other dimension? Can we hope ~~for~~ "those dear, dead faces that we loved so long ago"? to see

My grief isn't vanishing. I'm not crying like I used to--which must mean progress, but I find myself remembering all the things I did wrong, the mean, selfish things, the horrible self-indulgence that didn't spare even a small child. Vickie was so remarkable, Sylvia, such an unusual person--everyone commented on it before she died and, of course, afterwards. She literally didn't know how to be mean or selfish--aside from minor household irritations like "what is that dog doing in my bed?" I am so lucky to have Teresa. The boys have moved down into an apartment with Mark. They were hard to handle and Teresa and I felt we needed a rest period. Now I worry about Teresa all the time. I used to have two daughters; now just one. So I do understand how you feel--that you're depressed. Please Sylvia however much you have to stretch your imagination, will you ~~px~~ consider me and Teresa part of your family? If you are sick or in need of help, call on us. If you need a place to stay for any length of time, come to us. I do mean it with all my heart. I need your friendship so much. This isn't to say we'd never fight. We would. Vickie and I fought. Teresa and I fight. Vickie and Teresafought. But I don't believe any real relationship can be spun out of cotton candy. When there are deep ties, great need and loneliness nothing can destroy a rapport.

By the way, I wrote a note to Arnoni telling him how much

I appreciate him and get such a nice reply. After Vickie died, I realized I didn't want anger between me and anyone-- he was generous to respond. Tell him thank you.

I may be in NY in June. I'm not positive at this moment but the possibility exists. The first thing I'll do is come to see you for as much time as you have to spare.

The news from Saigon is encouraging from my point of view. I am sick and distressed by the death of anyone, our boys, their boys, civilians, etc., but I am so tired of our military being so damned ruthless.

A beautiful country sunset tonight. The rain has let up and although it's cold, everything is very clear and sparkling. The stars will shine tonight. Almost there is a hint of spring in the air, which means new beginnings-- for both of us, I hope. My little dogs are running around under my feet, so anxious for affection. I've been selfish and harsh to them the last few months, shouting at them when my nerves are raw. But they never stop loving me. The priests are always shouting that dogs have no immortal soul, but since in my philosophy, nothing is wasted, I'm sure their energy is re-used as much as anyone's.

You must think I'm stark raving mad tonight. But I sit here sneaking, shedding tears and wondering what to say to make you feel better. There is nothing we can say to make one another feel better. But at least we can share our lives even by letter.

Mike Lester is burning the garbage. This is the most excitement we have. He runs everyday and works everyday. I think he likes his job a great deal. He is very smart and talented, a characteristic of the Jewish race, which I tell him to appreciate his having derived from.

What is there to say about Garrison? The new Julia Ann Mercer story sounds so wild, but perhaps he will make something of it if the trail ever starts. I see that Shaw's attorneys are asking for change of venue. Maybe the whole thing will just bore us all away!

Nothing new from any other quarter. I owe Harold Weisberg a letter, but since I have so little to say, I hesitate to burden anyone with the chore of having to reply. How is Lillian? Is she over the immediate grief of her husband's death? Do you hear from Maggie? Got a kind note from David Lifton and another from Mama O. who had each just heard of Vickie's death. Got a letter from Tom Buchanan wondering why I hadn't written since August, so I must at least write and tell him about Vickie. Sylvia, did I send you a picture of her? I'll enclose one here and if it is a repeat, send it on back when you write. Otherwise, please keep it.

Write soon, Sylvia. I love you, S.