

11/26/68

Dear Steve,

What has happened to the young man once so dependable, so principled, thorough and conscientious he was a joy for an older man to be with; the young man in whom one could have such confidence?

You were to have returned my manuscript a month ago. It has not arrived. You should not have had to be reminded, but I did and I am confident others did. Because you did not, I did not have it for a British publisher who was in the U.S. and wanted it.

You were to have loaned me your device until you could replace it. You did not. I needed it urgently, in both New Orleans and Dallas, and did not have it. It is now more than two weeks since you told me by phone, when you were speaking to Louis, that you'd dispatch one immediately. It has not arrived. If you have not yet sent it, please do, fully insured, c/o Louis, for I return to New Orleans next week. I will again need it. It should be there Monday, when I may need it. You will eventually learn why.

You were to have returned my rifle more than eight months ago. Others as well as I have needed it.

I spare you a lengthier roll call

Having been your age, I can anticipate some of the perplexities it brings, like learning the importance of money and developing a fascination with its acquisition, or finding there is more than an academic wonder in girls, god and man bless them.

This knowledge does not explain your breaches of trust, your failure to keep the word on which others depend. The changes in you are no improvement. For your own sake, for your future, I hope you learn to cope with yourself.

Only the high regard I once had for you, the great potential I once saw in you, impels me to take the time to write. What I saw of you this last trip tells me I waste the time. You were then a self-important character with the perspective of an upstart.

I urge you to self-analysis. If the high praises of your elders went to you head, if you could not be content to earn and justify them, could not live and grow without being corrupted by them, then a share of the responsibility is mine. The change I observe and your peers talk about is not a good one, not growth, not health, not a favorable portent.

Meanwhile, will you please, immediately, do those things you said you would, without compounding the unnecessary hurt brought about by your failures? When you again speak to Hemming, tell him I have not forgotten my promise, but my trip was extended by a third and I have not yet caught up on the more pressing accumulations, the newly-developed problems requiring immediate attention, and will again be forced to leave before I will have been able to

do what I said I would. assure him I will as soon as I can, for I will. It is simply that there have been emergencies. I have not yet been able to type the notes of a month's trip that was in some ways the most fruitful yet, especially in Dallas. If I have not yet been able to type notes of these interviews, I think you can understand that what takes my time is quite important. There have been some emergencies in New Orleans, temporarily met but not solved. Last night I was again asked when I will return. I expect it will be 12/1, 12/4 at the latest. I may stay as much as two weeks.

Let me remind you also that when I wrote you in advance and told you certain people I wanted to see you interposed your own judgement without consultation. I did not argue with you, though perhaps I should have. Time will tell us who was right. However, I would like you to ponder the consequences of blind following, which amounts to sycophancy. Do you go out and seek to gather only what Jim wants, without warning of error, without testing? Are you feeding back only what he wants, not giving him what he needs, proof he is wrong when he, alas, too often is? Too many are. I hope you are not one. To do this is not genuine friendship with him and not the proper discharge of mature responsibility, to him, self or country and principle. Disaster can be the consequence. Let us not be our own worst enemies.

He needs not adulation, which all men love, not unquestioning agreement, which is pleasant to receive. Not yes-men but devils-advocates. Remember the Warren Commission! Be his friend, as I seek to be, but by Socrates' counsel.

This is not an unfriendly letter by intent, Steve. You have come to mid-channel early in life. I would like you to make a safe crossing. I hope you understand, at least think it through as dispassionately as one can when things are so personal.

In any event, please do those things you said you would have done long ago, and immediately.

Sincerely,

Harold Weisberg