

Dear Mary,

9/27/72

After writing the note to you last night I returned to the living room, where Lil was knitting, and told her what I'd written. She said, "Good! I wish I thought she could come. I would like very much to see her." These are approximate but faithful words.

Subconsciously she was saying more. I say it consciously.

As a result of the kind of life we have had forced upon us, beginning with the intrusions of helicopters and sonic booms into our bucolic tranquility, and perhaps more, by the way people have treated us, Lil has tended more and more to want less and less to do with people. I can't and don't say her feelings are unjustified, for they are. Of the recent things you know enough, if not all. So, we see too few people. It isn't good. I see more because I get around more. It is a very rare thing when she wants to visit anyone, and the infrequent occasions are generally on my initiative.

There are few people in whom she has any interest, few she really trusts or likes.

You are one of these few. It is that simple. I guess she just took to you right off the bat.

So, what I am also saying is that this invitation is not as unselfish as it may seem. I do indeed think it would be good for you to get away, and that here would be good for you. But I am quite selfish in saying it would also be good for us, particularly for Lil.

And I would hope you might do it for more than a weekend. For all of us, the three.

Unless there is something of which I do not know, I believe it would be good for your family, too. You are too strong, too dependable, too always-there, too available. That you have had to be is one thing. But it can't continue forever, and they all have to learn to be more self-reliant, to stand alone as, ultimately, all will have to.

Right now there are more than the usual problems. Among these is the failure of our lawyer to do even the minimum in our damage suit against the government, and it is, inevitably, depressing for her and fortifies her distrust of people.

A couple of weeks ago the local papers had a party in a beautiful spot near which we used to live. It was for those who had been the subject of columns by one who for these papers passes as a columnist. She really didn't want to go. Gentle I eased her into agreement to go. Actually, she enjoyed it. She met for the first time the wife of one of the junior editors. They also hit it right off. She told me as we left that she liked that woman. And this woman had quite openly said pretty much the same thing, not privately, and suggested that we get together. Lil has done nothing toward this end, not even the one time I suggested it.

Yesterday, when we returned from DC, where she had her annual checkup (o.k.), I went to the post office, which is across the street from the papers' offices. She couldn't see me from where I parked. I went in and spoke to this editor about our getting together. He told me that his wife also had taken to Lil immediately, and we will be engineering something soon, with or without the overt leadership of the women. But unfortunately, this is the only way it can or will happen.

You have only a slight notion of how bad our situation is. This gives you a glimpse of something other than the financial acuteness. And that is so bad that even when we have taken the settlement for dire damage to our Hyattstown property and put it on immediate and pressing obligations, Lil doesn't see how we can make it to the first of the year, when she has short-term and low-paid employment. Naturally, the financial situation adds to the oppressiveness she feels I think much more than I. (And as a result our H'town property is entirely uninsured-uninsurable because we haven't the money to make these repairs.)

We have to leave shortly for a brief period, so with the fragment of time, I add this explanation to the invitation. I do hope you can make it. And I think MA goes to all the DC area airports. If there is a better flight to Friendship, the difference for me is minutes only. It and Dulles might be better for you in that there is greater likelihood of non-stops from where you'd originate. However, when Shirley was here, she had a non-stop from St. Louis to National.

Soaking of Shirley, when I was in St. L in May to confront Gerold Frank, she and Sam met me at the airport. We had a drink and supper together. I carried my "spy" camera and took a couple of snapshots of them. Came out great. Considering everything, both look great.

Best to you in your own unenviable situation.

Sincerely,