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November 12, 1936

Dear Walt;

I started to write yesterday, but some storm signal in my sub-consciousness warned against it, either that or enertia, it was timely at any rate. Perhaps I shouldn't worry you with railings of this nature, but that's what you let yourself in for when you are friendly with tempestuous, introspective people such as myself. This isn't a letter in the proper sense - as though I could produce one if I tried - but is rather an attempt at self-analysis wherein I shall try to clarify my reactions, attitudes, and rationalizations over the latest developments in my tentatively interesting life.

When I came down to live in the Village with Barthe I did so against my better judgement. I came knowing that our temperments were too much in opposition for euphoria, he with his unbelievable belief that this is the best of all possible worlds, and me with my willingness to face the obvious truth, my tendency to believe that the ugly, the unkind, the sinful, and the beautiful to be present, more or less, in every one. He with his weakness which leads him to cling to a worn out religion and other more mundane superstitions which he holds on to and commits the unpardonable sin of trying to force his ideas, or rather lack of ideas, on me who despite defeat will never give into to that which isn't up to my idea of intelligent, unemotional conduct. It was really a futile attempt to mix oil and water, and I was a fool for accepting. But then I was younger and thought that perhaps I was wrong for feeling as I did, and perhaps the nightmare of Tuskegee had warped my ideas of people and left me with too narrow a view.

I went down knowing in spite of my attempts to believe otherwise that he was rationalizing sex. I knew before he told me that he was homosexual, and yet for once I tried to tell myself that I was wrong and prejudiced because of past experiences. If I had not tried to overlook the truth so completely I would not have been so upset over the Abbie Mitchell incident and so I paid for my refusal to face the truth, even though all she said was not true. It is true in the conventional light of morals which would banish homosexuality into the void of god-knows-where, but the stories of the wild parties are lies, or at least this is true since I've been here. He put the thing on the basis of art, a willingness to help a younger person, because at one time he had been helped himself. The world had been very sweet to him, very kind; He had not had to suffer; I would not suffer because he owed it to others whom he couldn't repay to help some deserving, talented person, and I qualified. I would benefit by this magnificent obsession. I must come and live down with him and save what little money I was able to make, allowing him to take care of things. I protested that it wouldn't work out, that I wasn't an easy person to live with; perhaps he would not like it. Oh but I must come and try it, he was a little older; and he needed someone to be around; it was very lonesome living alone, and too, the arrange would be very helpful to me in the way of contacts. I went to live on 14th Street.

In a conversation meant to warn him of my objective attitude toward his sex I caused him to confess that he was identified with the same, an action which was one of the few manly ones of which I have known him to be capable, and he promised that he would not force his attentions on me. Well enough, but as time went on he made a few passes which were innocent enough on the surface but which I knew to be mere wishful gestures, and it was finally necessary that I tell him that even these were against my nature and would only end in unpleasantness for

both of us. He agreed to desist and then the demons of reality made their appearance. I was not trusting enough, I was insulting in that I refused to meet certain of his friends- of whom he thinks too much- and since he had only the salt of the earth, the creme of New York on his mailing list, I was acting totally without reason in my failure to glow with the heat of expectation. Let me here admitt that my reasons were not very logical, at least not so politely logical that I could give him reasons without hurting his feelings even more than I did. What he dosent seem to realize is that most of his friends are his friends because of the sex factor. He loves these people, most of t them, and has had affairs with them which I could have only with women. They are amazed themselves at some of the fairy tales he tell h himself about them, and some even envy him this excape. Sometimes he is conscious of his rationalization because he told me that I was attractive to people and that I must captalize on it. Disgusting advice for one of my particular attitude towards opportunism of that brand. That fact that he makes it a practist to "turn on the charm", as he p puts it, when visitors are here is another proof in point. I dont condemn him but something in me disdains the attitude, and I would be very dishonest if I embraced such practices. If ever I become an artist my work must stand alone, I wont sell myself, I'll give it gladly but anything else is taboo. This is first proof of my insight into the outcome of a situation, and though it is unpleasnt I must confess that I am rather pleased, that I did not take dogmatic action, that I tried and allowed the other side to present its case and yet was correct in my analysis of forthcoming events.

Barthe soon allowed the old maid in him to take the upper hand. He found fault with many of my habits, or rather lack of habits, and could not understand that so many of the things he found so important had not the least importance to me. He could not understand that I live in the larger outlines, and that I'm forced to do so because of economic and other factors which would make life impossible if I stoped to bother with unimportant details. Does it really matter if ones hair is uncombed? I laughingly gave in to many of his ideas just to please him, they being too trifiling for me to allow them to cause bad feeling between us. I allowed him to preach, and though I attempted to argue with him at at first I soon gave that up as useless. Logic has no hold over emotion and that was the cul-de- sac into which I ran him in each instance, where ^{was} he fortified himself with the illusions of mysticism and there I ^{was} helpless. The whole situation was amusing to me, but he insisted in jumping to the defensive each time there came echoes of a difference in opinion, and though he ^{or he was} thought to be a sort of parent to me, he only succeeded in creating one of those instances where the child is father to the man, with all the complications of such situations. Nature plays some of the damndest jokes, sometimes, here he is with more maternal instindt than many women and almost no opportunity ^{for} expression. This has been observed by another friend of ours who kidds him about his treatment of me. He worried about my predilection to buy books and other things he considers to be luxeries, about my tendency to avoid exercise, and people, im short he tried to remake me in his own image as he would some of his clay and finding me to be less pliable and of sterner stuff it made him unhappy. Perhaps I could stand much remaking and in his image, but am I not myself because I have the courage to be me? anyway as Claude McKay says too much sugar is unplesant and is worse than nonsugarlat all,

NEW YORK
JAN 15 1951
HARRIS

③

and sugar in the combination which is me is, I'm afraid, one of the minor qualities.

I watched the experience unfold itself very much as a patient observes his own operation, being as detached from it as possible so as to avoid possible pain. At first there were glowing plans for the trip to Africa, soon "ifs" were added, and soon no mention was made at all except when I made subtle references to it just to make him uncomfortable. After many recapitulations of the friendship theme I went to Harlem and met many people on my own hook, many of these he knew and a few whom it would be to his advantage to know. This hurt his pride strange as it seems and only helped to make matters worse, and doubly so because he is not honest enough to give vent to what he knew to be unworthy reactions. I like the people whom I've made my friends and I have the satisfaction of knowing them to like me for myself and not because I'm a friend of Barthes. And to those responding and aware of the sex element I am free, they don't have that association to fasten on to me, nor any of the unpleasantness which comes with it.

Last night came the climax of the whole business while we were enjoying dinner. The question of my usual shortage of money came up and I tried to avoid it until he annoyed me with his persistence to the point that I told him that since I suffered and did not annoy him for loans I could not see that he should be concerned. He informed me that I would have to make my money go further, in fact that I must find another place to live. It did not catch me unprepared and I'm not sure that aside of a faint bit of anger, I didn't feel relieved of a load. I coldly asked his reasons and was told that he found it necessary to give up his freedom with me in the studio. I asked why and was told that certain friends of his could not visit him nights with me there.

I knew, or at least I suspected that he was having affairs with these people, and had offered on my own accord to visit the Y when such occasions arose, and had done so on one occasion. Before I came it seems that they ran in at any time of night and had their Sexercises and departed. Sam Barlow, the composer has failed to visit more than once this summer, and I suspect that he and Barthe quarreled because I am here. He came in one morning about 3 and found me in the bed and taking no advantage of the pleasurable opportunities he might have enjoyed. His displeasure knew no bounds, and a long discussion went on over my supposedly sleeping head. Barthe went out to call him last week and returned looking very hurt and the air was filled with resentment. Others he claims he loves have been so inconvenienced, and out of fairness to him I can't see why he should give up his freedom for me. However I probed farther into this matter and it seems that I made his expenses higher, for instance, when he went on his vacation the light bill went on which would not have been true had I not been intruding. Nights when he went out and I stayed in reading (such unnecessary books too), the same was true. I soiled pillow cases while he slept without; I (though I warned him from the first that for three years all such articles had been sent me from home and I must be reminded to buy them in my turn) failed to buy as much soap and shaving cream as he did. But the last hurts most of all. When I first came down here I offered to pay my way, I had money and a job, when we went places I wanted to pay the bills I offered to give him presents of things I thought he would like, he would have none of it, I must keep my money in my pockets. Perhaps it was selfish of me to allow him to do so, I can't say, but I did.

When he reached for the check I gave way, why resist, he seemed to receive pleasure from the thing and I knew he was playing "mama and baby" with me in the latter role. Mind you, none of these elements arose until he lost hopes of a successful conquest. Had I been willing it would not have happened, many slaps would have passed his notice, such is the folly of those who seek youth. Every time he has tried to interest a young man in him he has failed, and will always fail. Just as he hides the bald spot in his head he hides from old age in trying to attract youth, and as a result he has no success with either.

But he says that anyway he has saved me four months
room rent and wants to help me if I stay in N.Y.
I don't know what I shall do. Don't that fear.

How ever if I do stay here I shall try to take
a few courses in music. He wants me to
study at the AB League, but just now
I'm sick of the whole idea. I'm trying to
escape again. The next person who tries to
propose to me will be lucky to get off
alive. It only makes trouble and I am not
the person my face says I am. If you want
of reading I'm tired of writing, even though
I've started to say all I might and as
well as I might. If I take another place

as soon as possible and will let you
know of any change of events or address.

I sent the picture today and I hope you
like it. Give my regards to Mrs Williams
C. Nelson

P.S. By the way I am not angry at the guy being
human and still a child, this was to be
expected of him.

P.S. Ran into Moore last night. He is boorman at
the 44th St Theater. Was with a party so could
not talk to him for more than 10 minutes.

C. Nelson

Russel was another case in ⁽⁴⁾ spirit. Most of his affairs
are with people as old as himself and much more
mature. He told me last night that he expected me to
pay my own way where we went out, and sometimes
to offer to repay some of the favors he had done me.
I suppose it is in some what like the case yourself
and Dr Roberts. He placed things on the plane of hospitality
and then backed down mentally, and failed to ward
me and allowed me to make him miserable. Last
week I invited Lorne down to dinner and when he
returned from his vacation he was told to say
proceeded to take the whole matter into hand as
though she was his guest and not mine. When I
went to pay the checks he insisted on grabbing it
saying that he had it. I thought it impudent but gave
him. Last night he mentioned the fact saying that
he expected me to repay him. I couldn't say a
word, what was there to say? It seems the friends
he has spots are crying aloud and now he fears
nothing else. I don't believe she believes many of
the reasons he gave and I think most of them to be
rationalizations. I suppose I am in the way. Perhaps
can give him contacts, sex and ~~sex~~ etc. I
am only interested in the sculpture. The only satisfaction
he might receive from our relation is to see me absorb all
of the technique he has to offer, and that would
be spoiled perhaps because I see beauty in a
different part of her than that she wears for him.
He is trying hard to be nice about the matter,
but I don't trust him. I know he knows I could
run him and several people ~~etc~~ and I'm not so

sure that he doubts that I would if I became
angry. He fears Hacking in the same way.