

April 2, 1968

Dear Marge:

No news except the good news of receiving your letter from Via Taormina, and the bombshell of Johnson's announcement which I have to trickle first through the Italian raddio, then the papes and finally the belated Herald from Paris. I don't really know what to make of it. On the surface it is all trembly good but how wrong it makes our past seem somehow; and I don't believe nations, like people, should make such swift turns without first sticking out their hands. We have what seems like a generous and compassionate and noble gesture but there is weakness there too - and so the ticket is paid for. I rationalize it by saying our help was never really wanted in the sense that South V. pushed its own shoulder to the wheel. Today I notice Thieu calling for mobilization of the people, there must be no hesitation; my God after all these bleak years. I do feel, on top of my sense of moral loss, that there is a limit to what one must pay for anything in this world. The lives and the debacle of the dollar and the hatred all seemed, in the end to become greater verities than the need to hold back the red tide, as they say, or fulfill our obligations, whatever they were, and are, and how come we're the only ones to feel this obligation. Our British friends here, say buck up stout fell, you are only doing the thankless hateful job we British did for so long. But I don't know. They didn't have instant communications in those days and instant communications makes for instant hatred somehow. End of polemic.

After about a week of sun, we now enter into a half sunny, half cloudy ~~sun~~ siroccoish time when happiness ebbs a bit, as it must; but the wisteria is flamboyant and one walks through layers of perfume on the road and there is the eternal wonderfulness of the small green leaves on those ~~many many many many~~ shrubs that have had the good sense to drop their leaves during the wintertime..... We have just elected a Dane president of the club since our president, An American, Clarina Overgaard, aged 76, is leaving for six months. She is a descendant of Nancy Hanks and has a mind like that steel trap and she is quick to use the word Kulture to describe interest in a foreign language or love of the opera on the part of a bartender. Married to a nice little Dane who is the wife but doesn't know it.....I have been not throwing away stamps since you said there was a sprig in your house who was interested. Shake this letter well after opening. All the best to you and your daughter,
Love,