

Nov. 27, 1974

Dear Marge:

I keep wondering how you are. -I think of you quite constantly, actually. I have always thought of you as something extra special and it has been a matter of pride with me that we seemed to get along, even in this long range way, and that -I seemed of some importance to you. If this sounds maudlin, I'm sorry, but it's just a matter of speaking the truth, particularly now that you are having self doubts. Of course your self doubt, may be doubtier than mine, but I doubt it. At times I am really quite bewildered and depressed. I used to blame this on the weather or something unhappy that had happened, but as I have grown older I find the depression somehow uncorrelated with actual happenings, and I have had to conclude that these feelings are of a kind of chemical rhythmic nature. While this is a doleful conclusion, it has at least allowed me to bank on the fact that crests always follow, however laggardly, nodes or troughs; so this is something to look forward to. Oh of course I worry about slumps; even ballplayers like Mickey Mantel wonder if they will ever pull out of a slump or whether they are in the abyss forever, but this is literally never true if for no other reason than that life is rather obstinate about moving in a straight line. Of course it is depressing to know that crests are followed by nodes but this has been making philosophers dizzy ever since the beginning and since there is little that man can do about it, there seems little sense in weeping about it. Fitzgerald said show me a Hero; and I'll write you a tragedy. But of course there is nothing profound about this. Life ends always, sometimes quickly, sometimes slowly, and this is natural. One of the consolations of my own depressions is my awareness that the more sensitive and imaginative you are the likelier it is that you are due for inevitable black moods. I was reading that terribly filthy book the other day, FEAR OF FLYING, by a lady named Jong, and in it, along with all her disgusting language she drops long lists of civilization's geniuses who have gone into one kind of melancholy or another. It seems to me that this is the fate of all who are guilty of thinking. -I remember laughing one time at a Lucille Laverne line: "The trouble with you son is you think too much. It ain't good for you." But the truth is that thinking really isn't good for you -- in one way at least. I put that proviso on the end because one has to conclude that those who don't think and who do not suffer from depression do not realize this and do not appreciate it and therefore do not enjoy any real advantage over the thinker. In other words it seems to me that we are going to get it one way or another. Knowing this, and knowing how unhappy people have been because they have tried so hard to understand life, it seems to me we ought to simply coast a bit and not worry and just sort of vegetate at times. I remember the rich man that Hem disliked so, seemed to have the answer. His name, you will remember was Gerald Murphy and for a good many years before he gave up and went back to run Mark Cross for his family, he diletanted around France with Hem and the others. He had a saying which was later made the title of a book about him: "Living well is the Best Revenge. somehow the Puritan ethic has conspired to make moaners of us all, I think. Murphy had the right idea, but of course he had to give it up in the end. His two little boys died and I suppose that drove him home. -Oh I don't know why I maunder along this way but it is my disorganized way of saying I understand how you feel and something of what you are going through. I really wish, I really wish, but words are such treacherous things; that's why writers and people with superior minds like yours shy away from them at times. Well, in any case, I wanted to know that I am thinking about you and that I do care very much..... We finally got our snow so now the innkeepers can be happy. We're heating our entire 1st floor with a stove this winter and it's simply wonderful. I love you,