

9-10. Feb. 64

Dearest Diana, It's about 2 after midnight in Monday morning. I hope you can read my writing, because apart from it being illegible anyway, I am sitting in bed. I've just made myself a cup of tea after waking up from a drunken stupor. Am feeling cosy and comfortable in bed.

The last ten days or so have been strange. The Sunday after writing to you (I don't mean that short note) was dreadful. Suddenly I found myself in my room and a sudden long spasm of despair pierced me as it were, and made me long terribly for death. It even frightened me because once, when I was about sixteen, a similar mentally convulsive spasm made me ~~try~~ attempt suicide (a dreadful story this, particularly for poor Vicky who was summoned to the hospital at day-break with the news that I only had a few hours to ~~live~~ live. I was saved by an unbelievable fluke - a friend of mine, Rangi, got drunk (we were both studying medicine in Cairo) and decided to visit me at 2 in the morning. I was living in a 'pension' then and normally no one could get into the person of this impossible home. However someone came home at that hour (also drunk I suppose) left all doors open, and Rangi just walked in my room in time to call the ambulance.

It is funny about this last Sunday because then I was in a pub with Justinger and Wolfgang and Heinz. Most pubs have one of those simple automats, where you put ~~10 pence~~ (about 2d) and very rarely, you might get a shilling back. I put 2d in the automaton and a bob came out - then another 2d and another shilling came back - it happened 4 times, which hardly ever happens - and so the 'wit' (for the publican) then loose, said the equivalent of "qui gagne ne peut perd en amour". This depressed ^{me} at once and I left the pub. On my way home I went to two other pubs and each checked 2d in the automaton and every time a shilling came out. I decided that Edith was at that very moment having intercourse with her new lover. And I couldn't ~~have~~ it. I came home, my room in a terrible state - all dirt and everything dirty and books books and papers on the floor and a cup of tea ~~or~~ spilled over the carpet. It was still early in the afternoon and loneliness and love-sickness and despair made me long, as I told you, for death.

Monday I felt much better, and when I came home I received a package containing the duffle-coat, which cheered me up no end.

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Then next day I received another package with the 12 books and this also cheered me up a lot. Bless you ~ 1000 times. Heing (the one who paid Rembrandt £500) came, hugged me and danced about with me because of the books and so took me out to dinner with a bottle of champagne and I flattered a bit with a woman who was dining at the same restaurant and all this made life worth living again.

I have hardly been eating at all and have been taking too many sleeping tablets etc. and am beginning to look terribly worn-out and rather dreadful to look at. This Edith business is poisoning ^{me} completely and I have decided to take myself in hand. The whole business is so insignificant but the consequences, both mentally & physically seem to be taking a stupid turn to the tragic. I have accepted Heing's offer to go away with him and his girl friend for a week in the mountains. I've already told the major I have to take a week's holiday. It's a pity I couldn't meet you or come to London instead, but Heing is paying for the holiday, and anyway I don't want to meet you in that state I am in now. When I return, I shall look for another room.

This is Carnival time here and for three days women go about completely masked and unrecognisable and we had a 'bal Masque' at the Van der Weck's yesterday. Before going to the hall (I was dressed in a 1920 Zoot suit with a straw hat and parting in the middle) I went to Herk loose for a drink and 3 masked women came in and everybody offered them drinks and the women, as is customary, gave the men small pecks on the cheek or a kiss, and when my turn came, two of the women (all masked and unrecognisable) gave me a peck on the cheek, but when the third one came, her tongue suddenly darted into my mouth and everyone laughed because it was a real kiss - and then the women went out - and I suddenly recognised a pair of shoes - Edith's! But they were already away.

So I went to the party, also despairing, and drank a whole bottle of ~~wine~~ brandy, most, and danced and danced until seven o'clock this morning. It's funny how women recognise a man's despair. Because there were many girls being ran after

in that party, but somehow they all flirted with me only - they feel my lack of interest. Women are so strange.

Heinz drove me home because I wasn't in a fit state to drive.

It was eight o'clock in the morning. But again I couldn't sleep - so I went to loose (I had taken his daughter with me to the party) and continued drinking beer and schnapps up to 6 this evening, and then came to bed, and here I am, awake and sober, Monday morning at the office.

Bless you. Before I knew you all those stupid dreams used to remain unspoken and unventured. I can hardly wait until next week to be away -- away. It means losing a week's pay and all that, but it doesn't seem to matter at all related to my consuming desire to leave this place for a week. It's very strange this friendship with Heinz. He's always stood by me, financially and morally, and yet we hardly ever can sit and talk together for an hour or so. There is no real intimacy between us. But then, he paid Rowohlt \$500 to free me from that contract, and now, realising the state I am in, he's insisted I go with him and Margaret for whole week at his own expense.

But I used to mean to you, in my previous letters, of how boring life is for me here. And yet, objectively looking, those last 2 weeks have not been boring, and there is even a richness of life or rather of feeling and emotion, which is good for me, and to-day my humor has taken the ascendency again, and I can see that in essence all my heart-hauls and despairs are rather funny, or rather that the weight I give them, is funny and that an-foad I enjoy all those tribulations and getting drunk at losses because of a broken-heart is also enjoyable and I am glad I'm ending my letter in a more cheerful mood.

The Puffer-coat is just my size. I am delighted with it and it keeps me wonderfully warm. I used to hate getting out of the car to go shopping or window-shopping, but now I am all cozily wrapped. Funny, I haven't had an overcoat for 6 years! And yet on occasion I have bought ties for £4~~00~~! I am mad.

I wonder if, were you going through this thing I am going through now (I most sincerely hope it shall not happen to you) - if, as I said, you were going through this thing, whether you would have sent me letters of lamentations the way I do to you. I don't think you would. There is something very noble in not shedding your hardships on your friends. And, although you would have mentioned it, I don't think you would have been so absorbed in your letters with self and situation, the way I am. I am sorry, however, about being such a heel in so many ways.

You haven't written much about yourself in the last three letters. How I wish it was to you that I was coming next week - but you wouldn't like me, the way I am now. And I would have bored you stiff. No, if this Laffant business comes through, I'll take another couple of days for Easter and then will meet and I'll have got completely over the business of Edith. (I feel that I need another 3-4 days and I'm free of that bitch forever.)

Love and That's
Wagtail