

Chapter 11: TC more Shocking; Peggy
more Shocked

I would not mark 1975 on my callender as one of my better years.

I had three lumps under my right arm and two on the right breast. There was only one on the left breast. Everything twisted and burned and oozed. A small birthmark, that had been on my back since I first discovered that I had a back as well as a front, swelled up and cracked open. I wasn't going back to any doctor. I had already lost enough parts of myself. The only relief I had was when I packed myself with ice.

The vertigo returned, but I was home this time, and I immediately took Gerry's dosage of Erythrocin for the full three days. It worked! I have not had the vertigo since that time.

I couldn't do anything about the weight loss. I weighed ninety-three pounds, and I felt absolutely rotten. I couldn't stand the smell of myself. I had never used perfume before, but now I began to use it if only to ^{mask} ~~hide~~ the odor ^{of} ~~from~~ myself. I kept packing ice around all the parts that hurt and burned. In my mind there was no question about cancer. I had it.

Mother was coming to dinner on Thursdays again, and I did my best to make the dinner hours interesting for her. She was lonely and she would insist that we go out with her ~~one~~ or two nights a week. I tried but the hours were so long, and all I could think about were my ice-packs and the comparative security of bed. I sometimes took a cab home without eating dinner, and ^{had} ~~have~~ ~~some~~ Gerry stay with her. She wasn't happy about going home around midnight. She wanted to go out after dinner. I knew that, and I knew that she often went out after leaving our house, and after we took her home. I had heard about the bars she

wandered into alone.

"Soule, don't let her go out alone - go with her!"

"I know. I try, Peggy. But sometimes I sleep and don't hear. I will watch until she sleeps. I promise - don't worry. I try to take care."

But I did worry. I saw that woman being robbed and mugged, or worse. I packed myself in ice and alternately worried about her and me.

"I will get better," I told myself sternly. "'We shall overcome!'" I chanted the phrase. But sometimes it was hard to convince myself, and I felt like giving up. However, the ego is persistent and resists thought of oblivion.

I did manage to get myself to New York for the National Retail Jewelers Show, and Judy came to the hotel.

"You look terrible, Peggy. You're so thin!"

I thought I looked pretty good, considering how I felt.

Gerry and I told Judy and Ted about the fire, and that Gerry had rented a beautiful new place with a showroom. He told them that he was most optimistic about the way everything was coming together.

"It was terrible when it happened, but when I think it over, perhaps it is the best thing that ever happened to me - business-wise. I was in a rut before. I thought I had no place ~~any~~ further to go, but now I know where I'm going - I'm going to be right up there at the top!" I was proud of my almost fifty-nine year old husband.

"Did you ever think about who probably started that fire, Gerry?"

^{all} "We know who started the fires in the area, ^{Ted} There was never any real mystery about that."

"Do you think so? Do you really believe that? There is only one person who would be happy to see you ruined - and we all know who she is!"

"Oh, come on, Ted. Mother was on the ship with me. I know where she was every minute of the time."

"She didn't have to be present! Her Mafia friends could take care

of everything without her being around. I know who robbed us when we were in St. Thomas, and who stole Judy's jewelry from our apartment when we were away!"

"That's ridiculous, Ted." ~~My mother would do something like that.~~ Those islands are growing worse every year, and ^{the} New York ^{area} is notorious for the robberies and muggings."

"Well - just sit down and think about it! - Listen to me, Peggy - think about it!"

"I think Ted's right," Judy nodded her head. "It is something to think about."

"They're nuts!" was Gerry's profound statement after they left.

"No - they're not nuts, Gerry. They're only paranoid on the subject of Mother. I hope it's not catching." I had enough problems. I started to laugh - it hurt, but I laughed.

"You know something, Gerry? I believe Mother would be pleased to think that Ted and Judy would think her capable of something like that."

"You and your crazy family! - What's on television?"

"Never mind that! - Speaking of crazy families - why did you let Manny take up residence in your new shop? I thought you said you wouldn't let him ~~be~~ come back."

"Well — he's my brother. I didn't want him back, but he walked with his typewriter, and I ~~was~~ looked at him, and he just moved his stuff in. - What was I supposed to say? 'Get the hell out of here, Manny!'"

"You could told him there was no room for him."

"I thought about that but he'd already settled himself down and how could I say there's no room when there's so much?"

"Tell him to find someplace else."

"Yes - I know, Peggy. - You tell him."

"I will, if you want me to."

"You just take care of your crazy family and I'll take care of mine - What's on television? - Never mind now - it's too late - I'm going to sleep."

In spite of all the additional security that is provided when the jewelry shows are at the Hilton and Americana, there are always thefts in the showrooms and private rooms. And too frequently violence is used in the process. A jewelry show is naturally a particular attraction. The shows are covered by both television and newspaper articles.

-.-.-.-.-

The following night Judy and Gerry and I had dinner in our room. I wasn't up to dressing and going to a restaurant.

As usual, having finished his dinner, Gerry went to bed and sleep, while Judy and I sat and talked for a while. When Judy left, I locked the door, but my hands were shaking so, that I couldn't put the door chain in it's slot.

"Gerry! - You'll have to put the chain on. I can't do it." He mumbled something.

I walked and lay down and walked and lay down . Oh - why hadn't I thought to have an ice bucket sent to the room? The windows were greying with dawn when I finally fell into a doze.

"Gerry! Are you all right?" I thought I saw him moving swiftly from ~~his bed~~ his bed to the bathroom. He didn't answer and I went back to my dozing. Perhaps he hadn't heard me.

-.-.-.-.-

"Peggy! What did you do with my pants?"

"Pants? - Why would I touch your pants. ~~Where~~ They're wherever you put them."

"I put them on the back of this chair, and ~~they're~~ they're not there now, and they're not in the closet."

I got up and we both searched the room and closets. There were no favorite powder blue trousers.

"What did you have in the pockets, Gerry?"

"Five hundred dollars and two large signed travelers checks from my Hawaiian customer. - I don't even know how to contact him now. He

was going to make some stops on his way back to the west coast, before he went home."

"Call the manager's desk, Gerry."

"What good will that do? My pants ~~are~~^{already} gone."

"I don't know what good it will do, but you must report it. We must have some insurance for thievery on our house policy, and some coverage on your business policies." Thankfully, my purse and wallet were intact. Unless official reports ~~were~~^{are} made out, insurance companies ~~were~~^{are} reluctant to honor claims. ~~More~~ More reluctant than usual, that is.

"I know it doesn't help, but you weren't the only ones," the security man said. "Five other rooms on this floor were hit this morning."

That was hardly consolation. As horrible as I felt, I still wanted to know why the hotel was unable to offer more ~~any~~ protection for its "guests".

"Well, it's hard, and there are so many ways the thieves can get in. If you think about what happened on this floor; the thief can carry some clothes over his arm, and if someone ~~stops~~^{stops} him he can say that he's from the dry-cleaners. They usually just follow the morning cleaning crew and staff in."

"Don't they check the staff and cleaning crew - don't they have identification?"

"It's a big hotel, and that would be a lot of people to check."

"What about elevator operators? It might help if they put elevator operators back in the hotels. Operators could ask to see room keys, and visitors should ~~have~~^{be issued} passes when they go above the ground floors."

"That would be very expensive, and keys are easily obtained."

"That may be true, but it might be a deterrent. And it might improve the hotel's reputation, to say nothing about lowering its insurance premiums."

"I can't understand," Gerry was still mourning the loss of his pants, "my wife and I are such light sleepers."

That really woke me up. An elephant could sit on Gerry's chest

and trumpet in his ear, and he wouldn't stir if he was sleeping soundly and that was the only way Gerry slept. If I hadn't been feeling so rotten I would have realized that Gerry would never move so swiftly - not even to go to the bathroom.

I don't know the exact time during that year when Mother found her new "friend". I assume that I probably had met him before ~~the~~ Mother's Christmas party but I hadn't regarded him with any particular importance. I know Mother wasn't happy with Roland Smith, and it was all Jan's fault because Jan had introduced him to Mother.

~~The new "friend" introduced not only to his wife but also to Mother's~~
~~and Jan's~~

The new "friend" had a wife and was employed by a local police ~~precinct~~ precinct department. I do not know in what capacity. I believe he was a captain, but with every glowing phrase that dropped from Mother's tongue, he grew higher in the hierarchy. I believed her imagination quit when she reached the gates of INTERPOL. She probably would have included the FBI, but she detested that organization because it had been a pet of Roosevelt's.

I know I sat next to ^{Gibbon's} ~~Sammy's~~ pretty wife at the party. She introduced herself. She didn't seem very happy.

"That's my husband sitting over there - next to your mother." She waved her hand in that direction. There was a man on either side of Mother, and I had a choice. But I wasn't very interested. One more man in Mother's life was just that - one more man. Why should I attempt to remember either their faces or their names.

What was important to me was that we were going on the 1976 World Cruise in January. Three months absence from the new "friend" could change a lot of things - although Mother was very tenacious. At the moment I could only think about one thing at a time and I was concentrating on living long enough to be on the ocean again.

Christmas 1975

There would only be the three of us for dinner - Mother, Gerry, and I. There was no sense to having a turkey. Even the capon was large for the three of us. Mother was expected ~~about~~ about six-thirty. I had tried to persuade her to let Gerry pick her up and take her home, but she had refused.

"I'll drive my own car. It hardly gets any use anymore, and the batteries need charging."

"At quarter to seven Soula called:

"She says she's too tired to come, Peggy. She's going to bed. I'm sorry."

~~XXXX~~

---.---.---

"Gerry! - Get your ear out of the television set!"

"What's the matter now?"

"I don't know. I'm going to pack a basket and I want you to take it over to my Mother. She's not coming for dinner."

"You want me to go right this minute - at this crucial point in the game?"

"Yes, right now. There's a crucial point in your football games every two minutes."

"That's what makes the game so exciting."

I packed a basket of a small canned ham, a ~~carefully~~ carefully hoarded-against-emergencies jar of Beluga caviar, some cheeses and her Christmas present - and I wrote her a note. Since the dinner had been scheduled to accommodate Mother's eating habits, the capon wasn't ready yet.

After Gerry left I looked at the dining room table. A setting for three was small enough for a Christmas dinner party - but now there would only be two.

Since the streets were deserted ^{at this hour} on Christmas, Gerry made the round trip quickly.

"Did you see her, Gerry?"

"No. She was upstairs. I told Soula to take the basket up to her and I left. - Come on! We'll have a drink and enjoy Christmas dinner by ourselves for a change."

"Yes." It seemed to me that there should be a lot of people who would have enjoyed sharing Christmas dinner with us, but we had lost track of everyone. There wasn't time anymore for friends or even to play an occasional game of bridge.

Gerry was fixing the drinks when the telephone rang.

It was Mother:

"Peggy! - I'm coming right over. I'll be there in fifteen minutes."

"She's coming, Gerry!"

"There!" He gave me my drink. "Do you feel better now?"

"I guess so." I blew my nose.

---.---.---.---.---.---

"That Soula! She gets everything mixed up. Of course I was coming - Your Christmas present is in here somewhere. I didn't have time to wrap it." She was fishing through her purse, and brought out a nose-blowing type of tissue. It was her ^{amethyst} ~~amethyst~~ and diamond ring. She had it for many years, and to my taste it was one of her more attractive pieces of jewelry.

"Mother, I didn't invite you ~~me~~ for dinner so you'd bring me a Christmas present."

"Oh, don't be so touchy! I know you've always admired it and I want you to have it. - I like my Christmas present."

"We each have one, Mother." Gerry had asked me in October what I would like for Christmas and I had promptly answered:

"Diamonds by the yard." Gold chains with spaced, small graduated diamonds were "hot" with jewelers that year.

"All right! - How many yards do you want?"

"Oh - about twenty will do."

diamonds. They were very delicate looking.

My first really successful painting - in my own estimation - had been of the Rotterdam. I had not ~~not~~ painted it as a gala cruise ship. I had painted it from the view of a sad Dutch officer who was standing on the dock, with his gear at his feet. I watched ~~him as he walked away~~ ^{from my portholes as his} figure grew smaller ~~and~~ ^{when} we pulled back out to sea. But that is another story, and not really mine to tell. I was only an observer.

I know the painting was not well executed, but evidently there was something about it. Perhaps I had been able to convey some of the office feeling as well as my own. It hadn't impressed Gerry at first, but he kept returning to it, as ~~he~~ did the few people who came to our house these days.

"It's going to be worn out just by people looking at it," Gerry joked.

"I've been thinking about it, Gerry. I'd like to give it to Captain Lagaay. He said he'd be on the Rotterdam this year."

Gerry made a special case, with Captain Lagaay's initials on it, for the painting.

Mother went to New York with Roland Smith a few days before the January 20th embarkation.

Gerry took me to New York on the 19th, and we boarded the Rotterdam that day. Gerry would stay overnight and would return to Buffalo on the twentieth. I was glad that we left Buffalo early. There was the promise of a bad storm blowing across the plains from the west.

.....

I didn't have my ticket. Mother didn't believe in paying for ticket entirety in their ~~entirety~~ until the last ~~pos~~ possible moment. I knew that either #337 or #339 was to be my cabin. The cabins were reversed, but otherwise identical, although there was a spot on the rug of #337, so I took that cabin. As the afternoon progressed and I had accomplished most

of my unpacking, I was told that #339 was assigned to me, and I obediently moved.

---.---.---.---.---.---

Many familiar faces had boarded the ship early, and we had a pleasant evening and dinner, although the ship was very quiet.

I didn't find out until the next afternoon that Captain Lagaay would not be Master for the 1976 cruise. Captain van Herk had been assigned to the World Cruise. I didn't know him.

"Then you can take the painting back home, Gerry. I didn't really want to part with it anyway." But I was disappointed.

The Rotterdam wasn't leaving New York until 5:00 P.M. ~~and~~ We awakened to a grey sleeting morning. The ship was filled with confusion created by arriving passengers, luggage, bon voyage visitors, and harried Indonesian stewards.

~~After~~ After lunch Gerry and I went to the Front Desk. - It was no longer called the Purser's Desk. Some brilliant mind had decided that since the ship is literally a floating hotel, the hotel name should be used. The person responsible didn't realize that he was ^{removing} ~~losing~~ some of the unique ^{distinction} ~~distinction~~ of being on a ship, and that people preferred the time honored labels.

Mother's inefficient travel agent hadn't sent any luggage tags or mailing itinerary - in fact she hadn't sent anything but complaints because Mother was so late in paying for the tickets. I had no need now for the luggage tags, since I was already safely on the ship, but Gerry did want the mailing itinerary.

^{Lagaay}
Captain ~~Lagaay~~ was just leaving the Chief ~~Purser's~~ small ~~gl~~ ^{gl} ~~ed~~ in private cage.

^{Front}
"Peggy!" He came to the ~~Front~~ Desk, and I introduced him to Gerry.

"Aren't you going to give him the painting?" Gerry asked softly as Lagaay turned aside for a moment to answer a question.

pursers.

I hesitated.

"Well, all right. - Will you get it?" I gave Gerry my cabin key.

"I'm flying home tonight," Lagaay turned back to me. "Mary's waiting for me at home."

Yes - Mary. Mary is his British wife.

"I brought you a present," I said, as Gerry returned with the case.

"What is it?" Lagaay took the case.

"When you open it, you'll find out. - Have a good trip home. I took Gerry's arm and we left the crowded desk.

"Didn't you want to see his face when he looked at it?" Gerry asked.

"No.- Come on, we have to watch for Bill and Mother."

.....

Bill Barker was coming to have a bon voyage drink with us. I had seen so little of him through the years. This would be only another of our too brief meetings. He rarely came to Buffalo. He told us, that day that his mother had died. Mrs. Barker had been in her late eighties. I hadn't realized that she would be that old.

"I saw her before the end," Bill said. "I really only came because I found out that she was leaving all her money to charities and ~~foundations~~ foundations. I didn't care about myself, and Miriam could take care of herself, but Margery and Lucille have children. I told Mother that she had no right to leave them out of her will."

I was surprised that even her beloved only son had been able to change that pious, stubborn woman's ~~mind~~^{mind}, and I expressed some of the surprise.

"Oh, yes she did, Peggy," Bill said. "I called her lawyer and I stayed right beside her until the will was changed to my satisfaction."

There were noises in the next door cabin as Mother came aboard with Smith. She recognized Bill immediately, without an introduction. He's brought a paperback copy of one of her books for her to autograph for a friend, and a wrapped gift for her. I was a little hurt. He hadn't

"Your mother looks great, Peggy," Bill said.

"Aren't you coming to the party, Peggy?" Mother asked.

"What party, Mother?"

"_____ is giving a bonvoyage party."

Oh yes - the inefficent travel agent. I had no fondness for that saccharin woman. I assume it was a mutual antipathy.

"I waan't invited, Mother. And I wouldn't go if I had been," I shouted.

"Peggy doesn't change, does she?" Bill smiled to Gerry.

"Nope!" Gerry agreed. We took Bill on a tour of the Rotterdam.

"I don't think I would like it," Bill said. "It's too noisy and crowded."

"But this isn't the way the ship is, Bill. More than three-quarter of the people aboard now are only visitore. ~~By the time~~ By the time the final "All visitors ashore" is called, the ship will seem empty, whi everyone unpacks and all the sorting out is completed. It will be quiet - comparatively - until we reach Fort Lauderdale on the 22nd. Then the madness will be repeated as more passengers, luggage, and bon voyage visitors fill the ship again. The voyage doesn't really begin until we leave Everglades.

"He got old," Mother said with disapproval.

"Mother, you haven't seen Bill since he was twenty-three. He's fifty-nine now."

"Well, he shouldn't have gotten old!"

I couldn't ~~argu~~ argue with her logic, but I thought Bill looked wonderful. There had been a time when he was in his late ~~thirties~~ ^{thirties}, when I'd been unhappy about his appearance. He had put on some weight, ~~and~~ and in a certain light he reminded me of the photograph he'd shown me of the father he'd detested. But he'd lost that weight, and now he looked like Bill again. - A ~~lonelier~~ ^{lonelier}, quieter Bill. But then I never

305

an opportunity to talk to him alone. But even as ~~an almost twenty~~ year old, Bill had ~~been~~ been quiet - I'm afraid seventeen year old Peggy had done most of the talking.

The mood of the Rotterdam was different that year. I could feel it from the time we left Fort Lauderdale. Usually there is a growing sense of anticipation once the voyage has really begun. We were sailing eastward this time - across the Atlantic to Casablanca, through the Straits of Gibraltar, and into the Mediterranean Sea. I looked forward to seeing the European ports: Villefranche, Naples, Athens, ^{then} Alexandria, and Haifa; The birthplaces of western civilizations, and ancient cults and modern religions. But the mood was different as we crossed the Atlantic. I'm sure I wasn't the only one who felt it. Even pleasant old acquaintances were quiet and out of sorts. I spoke to Captain Wabake about that on the following year.

"Yes, I heard that. I think the weather had a lot to do with it. The Atlantic can be depressing in January, even when there are no storms. And there weren't any storms. There was just a dismal greyness that weighted the spirits - until Casablanca. Outside of Casablanca we encountered a tidal wave, having survived. ~~that~~ that everything had to look better in comparison.

when Gerry and I boarded,
On the first day, I spoke to Mr. Zeller about our table arrangement. "I arranged for your mother and you to sit at the same table as last year," he said.

"Dick! My mother comes ~~on~~ on the Rotterdam almost every year now. Why can't you find her a table with a few men."

"The tables are all filled."

"How about an officer's table."

"Impossible! - Those tables are reserved ^{far} far in advance, by special passengers."

"How far in advance, Dick? Her reservation was made over seven months ago. And how special are the passengers? Are they more special than Taylor Caldwell? I'm looking forward to meeting them."

"Sorry - the officer's tables are all filled."

"Thank you, Dick!" There was no question about Dick Zeller and I never becoming fast friends.

"Well - she can't hear," he said defensively.

"What has that to do with anything? ~~Some~~ One of your jobs is to see that the passengers are as amicably seated as possible - and neither she nor I are going to be happy at a table for two." His face was getting red again, and I was reaching a boiling point myself. I couldn't hit him, and he wouldn't dare hit me. We parted stiffly.- Stubborn Blank Dutchman!

I was determined to have more humor about Mother this year. She had a new and very annoying trick. When she was introduced to a man she would rise and make a deep curtsy. A sometimes alarming feat after she'd had a few bourbons. If we were in a restaurant she would try to persuade the ladies to remain standing until the gentlemen were seated.

"They are our masters," she would intone gravely. ~~Some~~ At first a few of the ladies followed her dictate, jokingly and to the men's amusement.

"Peggy!" she would frown, "^{ladies} stand in the presence of the masters!" She would make a rising gesture with her hand.

"They're not my masters, Mother. Stand if you ^{wish,} ~~want~~ but I'm quite comfortable, seated as I am." I only hoped that she didn't intend to pull that on the ship. I ~~thought~~ ^{think} that it was her own idea of a joke and she only wanted to see how far she could get ~~stupid~~ people to go along with it.- She is a fine actress, but on the other hand, she could have been deadly serious. Sometimes it was hard to tell the difference with Mother. She doesn't really have a discernible humor, and she hated to

appear ludicrous or foolish.

"Did I make a fool of myself?" she would ask.

"Depending on you to pick out a man for me this time," Mother said. "I'll trust your judgement."

Well - there just weren't any. The only men I would consider interesting had wives firmly attached to their arms, and they gave no appearance of being willingly detached. I was getting a lot of sour looks from the ladies, and comments of:

"She's on the prowl again," wafted around me.

I considered having a sign taped to my back:

"Only shopping for my mother."

Wives were no particular deterrent to Mother anyway. She had no compunction about propositioning a man in the presence of his indignant wife, if the wife was too ^{tenacious} ~~stubborn~~ to remove herself. Mother believed ~~that~~ in placing her cards face up on the table. Her theory was that "life is short, and time is fleeting" and why waste ^{it} ~~time~~ by being coy?

More than one irate wife came to me in protest.

"Look," I would say. "I have absolutely no control over what she says or does. If I yell at her, she tells me to mind my own damn business and butt out of her life."

"But she's so brazen about it!"

"I know. I can only suggest that you look at it with some humor - and try to consider what it does for your husband's ego!"

"My husband's ego doesn't need any more inflating," one woman said sourly.

For a brief time, I toyed with the idea of slipping one of the "Dancing Boys" some money to squire Mother around ^{during the cocktail hour} ~~before~~ dinner, but I discarded the thought. I had a distaste for the men who were provided with a ~~free~~ free world cruise as dancing partners for the overabundance of unescorted ladies. Some were over-the-hill entertainers

of vaguely reminiscent fame. They usually performed their function with some eclat but it would be such an obvious ruse. I was sure that even Mother would see through it. All I could do was keep looking, may¹ something ~~more~~ acceptable would appear.

While we were dressing for the Captain's Party (the formal introduction to the ship's officers and heads of the various parts of the hotel staff) Mother wandered into my cabin.

"Pegs - will you fasten this for me? - You know -" she continued, "all my husbands tried to inhibit and repress me."

"Ho! Mother!"

"Yes they did, Peggy."

I fastened her brazziere.

"They ^{may} have tried, Mother, but I don't think they ever hoped to accomplish much more than to try to persuade you to restrain yourself a little."

"Same thing," she examined herself closely in my dressing table mirror. "Don't I look dreadful?"

"No, Mother. - And none of your husbands ever succeeded in the slightest degree."

"Oh - I don't know. I always felt inhibited. - What are you wearing tonight?"

I pointed to the simple two-piece French blue gown I had bought to wear with the amethyst ring and the amethyst and gold earrings Gerry had bought for me.

"No jewelry? It's so plain."

"I'm wearing your ring." I held out my hand with the amethyst and diamond ring. She always said that I rarely wore the jewelry she gave me.

"Where did you get that? - I've been looking all over for it. I even accused Soula of misplacing it." 'Misplacing' was the word she used

but it might have been a different word that she used to Soula.

"Don't you remember, Mother? - You gave it to me when you came for Christmas ~~dinner~~ dinner. - Here, take it back.

"No - no. - Are you sure I gave it to you? It's always been one of my favorite rings." She looked troubled.

"I know that, Mother. That's why I didn't want to accept it. - Here, please ^{take} ~~take~~ it back."

"No. If I gave it to you it was because I wanted you to have it. It would be yours eventually anyway." She went back to her cabin.

Was she disturbed by her impulsively given gift, or by her forgetfulness. Or worse - had she accused Soula of stealing it.

When I finished dressing I went into her cabin. She was smoking a cigarette and looking unhappy.

"I don't want to go to the Captain's cocktail party," she said. Let's go to the Ambassador instead. I don't feel like standing in line, and I hate champagne."

"Whatever you want, Mother. But you don't have to drink champagne. The stewards will bring you bourbon, or anything you want."

"No - let's go to the Ambassador."

Mother took an instant dislike to the pretty American woman, who sat with her husband at the table next to us in the Odyssey dining room. Her comments grew progressively louder and more disagreeable each night, as they politely smiled ~~and~~ and attempted to ignore her rudeness. I won't repeat her remarks - it is enough to say that they were extremely personal and insulting. I tried to distract her attention away from them, but I rarely succeeded. I gave our table steward ^{instructions} ~~instructions~~ to bring her next course as quickly as she finished the previous course.

"Leave them alone, Mother!" I wrote on my ever-present pad. "They are on the ship to enjoy themselves - not to be entertained by your insults."

"Enjoy! - What is there to enjoy? I don't enjoy anything. - And why are they drinking wine? Don't they know that wine is only fit for to drink?" She raised her voice to make certain that her words of wisdom were clearly understood.

"They haven't asked what you drank before dinner, Mother. Maybe they ^{would} consider two double bourbons barbaric, or perhaps they don't like hard liquor."

~~like her~~ and the effect it has on some people. And they ^{also} didn't ~~like~~ have vodka with their caviar."

"But I'm civilized, and civilized people drink civilized drinks - that ~~is~~ ^{pap} that's only fit for swine."

"Mother, your soup is getting cold." She hated cold soup, and always stuck her finger in it before tasting it, to make sure it was at the proper boiling temperature. She did that once when she heated oil to make some french fried potatoes for herself. It took some time ^{for her} to recover from that painful burn.

-.--.-.-.-.-.-.-.-.-

"What a pity that such a great mind is gone."

I had stopped on the Lido Deck for a moment. It was too cold and damp to stay ^{out} on deck. I didn't recognize the woman in her ~~sun~~ sun attire covered with a heavy robe.

"What great mind, and where did it go?" I was not being facetious. I had not yet met any great minds aboard, but I was always hopeful."

"I mean your mother."

"Oh!" -Now I recognized her. "Please don't let Mother ruin your dinner. - Listen - she can't help being annoyed and angry at the sight of a pretty woman, with an attentive husband. Don't take it personally - she's just jealous. If you can manage to do it, just nod at her and smile every evening, and try to turn your ears off when she makes comment. When she sees that she's not upsetting you, she'll find someone else to pick on - that will be me. But I'm getting more used to it every day," and believe me, she's been my mother for a lot of years. If I live long enough, some day I may even find some humor in the things she says."

"You mean she's always been like that - she's not senile? - What about all those beautiful sensitive books she's written."

"She's always been pretty much the same. - And as for the books - I don't think there is much relationship between what an author writes and what they're really like. Writing is a lonely occupation, and an

active writer doesn't have much time for mingling with real people in a real world."

"But I thought they wrote from their own experiences."

"Perhaps factual reporters do, and even then -" I shrugged, "just think for a moment - if there were two witnesses to our conversation, do you think they would give identical reports, and which one would be ~~the~~ more accurate?"

~~But, remember, just smile at Mother and say "Good evening."~~ She'll be irritated at first, but she'll turn her attention elsewhere and find some one else to make her noises at; that will be me, because there's no one else within her line of vision."

The dinners were more pleasant for our neighbors after that.

-.--.-.-.-.-.-.-.-.-.-

Because of the tidal wave, we never did get to Casablanca. The Rotterdam limped into Villefranche a day early and had to sit in the ~~bus~~ harbor until there was room for her to berth .

At Villefranche our next-table mates left. Our new next-table mates were an older French couple.

"What happened to those delightful people who sat at that table?" Mother demanded, glaring at the French intruders.

"They were only on a part cruise, Mother, and they left."

Fortunately the new couple's knowledge of English was not extensive. But they needed no understanding to recognize Mother's glares and antagonism. They did try to have ^{their} ~~their~~ table changed, but like Mother and me, they were stuck. At least Dick Zeller wasn't showing any favoritism.

There was no sun to sparkle the Mediterranean, and so, to me it was a disappointment. It looked like the grey winter Atlantic we had left behind. I looked at the ports from my portholes and the deck of the ship.

"I've seen those cities many times," Mother said. "What's the use of looking at them again?" And she slept all day.

At least the Rotterdam was quiet, with all the passengers ashore touring and shopping.

I can't say that the atmosphere on the Rotterdam greatly improved as the cruise progressed, but that was probably partially due to my own inability to accept 'happy' noisy groups. Ear-piercing pointless laughter, dirty jokes, and people who demand instant friendship chill me. I am able to tolerate my own companionship, and there was more than one pleasant new face on board. Helen Hughes had traveled most of her life and we enjoyed exchanging experiences and ideas. She seemed to have relatives and friends in every port. And, of course, ~~there~~ the majority of the faces were familiar ones. It was the loud voices of the "new kids on the block" that I couldn't stand.

"Why do people shout and scream simultaneously at each other? They don't even bother to listen to any voice other than their own." I was speaking to Mother.

"Watch it, baby! That's the first sign of deafness. I remember when I couldn't stand the sound of people's voices - and my mother told me that she had the same problem. Yes," ^{she} ~~and~~ nodded sagaciously, "you'd better have your ears examined. But of course," she added, "nothing can help our kind of nerve deafness. - Poor Peggy. I hate to see you going through the same thing I have gone through. You'd better mark down the date so that you can warn Drina when to expect it." She managed to look both sad and pleased at the same time.

"There is nothing wrong with my hearing, Mother! And Grandma didn't have your kind of deafness. You damaged your own ears. Even when I first came to live with you and Reback you were digging in your ears with long wooden kitchen matches."

"Well - they itched."

"Yeah! And whatever itches, you scratch. - And you never washed your hair properly, no wonder your ears itched and you had such dandruff. You just used that ~~volatile~~ volatile bleach and dye, and scratched. It's a wonder you have any hair at all."

"I ~~don't~~ don't have a grey hair on my head," she said irrelevantly.

"I guess not - that reminds me, Mother: the hairdresser called my cabing this morning. You have a root touch-up job tomorrow at ~~two~~ ^{two} on thirty. That means you'll have to get up early."

"Oh God! Has it been two weeks already?" I don't know why she bothered. She had at least four wigs, and she never appeared without one.

Mother had a new addition to her tale of the Reback jewelry-robbery attempt: Reback had been pistol-whipped and suffered brain damage. He had been in a coma ~~for~~ for four years before dying. I couldn't stand it any more.

"Mother, that's enough of that ridiculous story."

"Well - he never was the same afterwards."

"You know very well that his physical health had begun to deteriorate years before that!"

"He was always falling apart," she grudgingly admitted, "but he was worse after that happened."

"And he was getting older too, Mother."

Mother was angry because I wasn't attending to my daughterly duty of finding her a companion, and she found the disgusting loud group all

by herself.

"Why haven't you introduced me to those delightful people before this? You're supposed to introduce me to the other passengers. There are all kinds of gay parties going on, and I didn't know anything about them. If Jan was on board I would have met them a month ago!"

Yes - they were indeed gay.

"I can assure you, Mother, that Jan would never have introduced you to such people - not even as a joke."

"Well, at least they're lively. The rest of the ship is like a morgue in comparison." We went to parties every night, but it is true that the hosts and guests at those parties did not laugh and scream in shrill hysteria over every word that was uttered - nor did they quarrel and break up into small pouting sullen groups.

"It's too bad that you can't hear their voices and the things they say, Mother. Then you'd know why no one else speaks to them. But go ahead. Find out for yourself!"

She did, and her love affair with the "new kids" was short lived.

Feb 7th, 1976

Pegs dear - You really are a lamb ~~me~~ chop even if you are as temperamental as I & just as stubborn & with too-keen perceptions. (That makes us artists. Who would be like everyone else, God forbid.) The trouble with you is that you have never exploited your talents - which are many & superior. And when you want to, you are charming & kind - except ^{to} me, you think you should take care of me & I do the wrong things. Pisses people are not pushers - except with their families. Well, anyway.

I am ~~giving~~ giving you a \$200 credit for your birthday - - buy pretty things for yourself. You have such taste.

Would you wake me at 1:30? I am giving you a key to my cabin so you can come in anytime -- or I will authorize Widodo" (Our mutual room steward) "to let you in. Either, you want?"

When you wake me up with furious pounding I will have a bloody Mary with you quick & a little lunch then keep my appointment at 2:30, at the hairdresser. (I think I have animated dandruff.) I have been so ~~me~~ tired completing a book, etc. that my sole desire was to sleep for a long time.

[sic] I must see Alexander~~is~~, Egypt but I have been warned not to go alone in a taxi. If you refuse to go with me for 2 hours in the afternoon I will be forced to go alone - & maybe never come back. Thieves & murderers.

Anyway, knock me up at 1:30 today for lunch & my appointment. - Would you also make enquiries where the hell our mail is?

(I need to see Alexander~~is~~ for professional information on a book I will be writing with Jess - if my nose ever stops running.

I did manage to wake her up, but she told me to go away -she was too tired and sick.

"Cancel~~l~~^l my appointment with the hairdresser!" she screamed after me. Mother ~~wasn't~~^{didn't} get to see "Alexander" - at least not that year.

Alexandria - February 8th, 1976

The terrain surrounding the vast harbor is flat, although pyramids are visible from the upper decks.

Ships from every nation filled the berths, and ^{more} were anchored in the harbor awaiting their turn at berths. The hammer and sickle flag was prominently displayed over the flags of many eastern European nations.

Rotterdam passengers and ship's staff and crew were warned not to take any photographs or make any sketches of the harbor, and cameras would be confiscated. Stern faced young uniformed Egyptians paraded through the corridors and public rooms. They looked well fed and alert, which contrasted sharply with the lethargic civilians on the ~~quay~~ pier. It wasn't as bad as India, where armed guards prevented the local populous

from entering the dock area. And there were no stacked decaying, and rodent defecated torn bags of grain and other food ^{gifts.} ~~and~~

American citizens of Jewish faith were forbidden to fly directly to Israel, although they could fly to Athens, and from there to Israel for their short tours in that tiny country and rejoin the Rotterdam at the port of Haifa. The Rotterdam had been scheduled for two days in Haifa, but was delayed overnight at Alexandria. The reason given was that pilots were not available to guide the ship out of the busy harbor except during daylight hours. That was unfortunate for those passengers who had chosen to eschew Alexandria and fly directly from Athens to Israel ~~for~~ for their tours of the Holy Land. - Unfortunate, that is, if they decided to return to the Rotterdam on the first day of her arrival in Haifa, because the Rotterdam hadn't yet arrived. The small hotel overlooking the harbor was jammed with weary Rotterdam passengers, seeking food and lodging. The Hotel did it's best. There were chairs in the ~~lounge~~ lounge, some cots, and food if one wasn't too piggish - and after this was the Holy Land. Those weary who were still awake had a fine view of the Rotterdam as she sailed into harbor in the early hours of the morning of February 13th.

Gerry's niece had taken a day from her ~~job~~ job to drive to Haifa on the 12th. I had planned to have Karen stay overnight in my cabin. I had warned her to keep in touch with the ship's agents, because we might be behind in our schedule. She had done that, but evidently their information was faulty, and Karen's three ~~hour~~ and a half hour drive was in vain. That was too bad. I am fond of Karen, and I had looked forward to showing her my Rotterdam.

The Suez is only a water path from one large body of water ~~to~~ to another. It has none of the beauty of the Panama or Welland, or even the Erie Barge Canal. I watched from my portholes as the Rotterdam's ^{brown} quieted motors navigated the yellow-~~ish~~ ^{brown} waters. A few desert peoples

~~silently)~~
stood on the sandy banks to watch as our leviathon passed.

Djibouti is a poor country. It can hardly feed it's small population and it has little to ~~attract~~ ^{attract} ~~wealthy~~ tourists. There are some beautiful natural beaches, but no glamorous hotels - there are only flies and poverty in Djibouti. Even the flies hurried aboard the Rotterdam in an attempt to leave.

Mother took a taxi in Bombay to buy herself another bauble, and screamed at me because I couldn't go with her. For the first time I blessed the Indians and their fear that I might decimate their population.

"I talked to ~~Simon~~ ^{van Kooten} (the Chief Purser) and he said there was no reason you couldn't go ashore. It's dangerous for me to go alone!" There was no sense in asking her why she was going then -. After all, which was more important - her life or another bauble. And she hadn't talked to Simon. I showed her the ~~note~~ ^{note} that had been slipped under my cabin door. I was not to leave the ship and the Indian shore doctor wanted to see me in the Ship's doctor's office at 6:15.

"You're impossible! I don't know why I paid your fare for this trip!"

"Yes, Mother. Don't spend too much money."

Some dinners were more difficult than others, and a point is reached on a long cruise when many people turn sour and say they wished they had never signed up for such a long cruise, but they are the ~~same~~ ^{same} people who cry when the cruise is over and the first to sign up for the following year. I have even known some of the cryers to stay on the ship for the short Caribbean cruise that follows the World Cruise.

Singapore

Oscar Kolb of the New York Holland America staff had rejoined the ship in Singapore. We had a drink together at the Lido Bar before lunch.

"Come out on deck for a minute, Peggy. You can see our Princendam

The small red motorship with the familiar Holland America Logo on her smoke stack was clearly visible, and it was an idealic afternoon.

"Come on - it's only a few minutes walk - let's go over and see her. We'll be back in less than an hour." He knew I never left my mother on the ship. I was always within call. "Come on - your mother won't be up for hours."

~~She~~ Oh - why not? It would be the first time I'd set foot on land since we'd ^{left} ~~left~~ New York almost two months ago.

The Princendam is a beautiful ship of 9,000 tons. When you think ~~that~~ ^{the} the combined tonnage of all three of Columbus's ships added up to less than half of that, the Princendam would appear to be a Goliath, but in comparison to the Rotterdam she was a tiny ship.

"How do you like her?" Oscar's pride could have been no greater if he'd built her himself. I'd brought along my camera and he had taken pictures ~~of~~ of her.

"She's lovely." She was bright and modern, and I think only three years old at the time. Her cabins were tiny, but each was an outside cabin day-brightened by the row of ^{small} portholes that ~~spread~~ spread across the width of the outside wall.

"Do you think you'd like to sail on her?" Oscar asked.

"Well- if I liked flying, and touring, Oscar, it would make a nice break to take a cruise on her through the Indonesian islands and to Hong Kong - but it's a long way to come just to take a short cruise." Some of the Rotterdam passengers were sailing on the Princendam that afternoon and would re-join the Rotterdam in Hong Kong.

~~Sat. Jan. 20 - February 28 - 1976~~
Bangkok March 9th 1976

I hadn't read the daily bulletin.

I knew the Thai merchants would come aboard and set up ~~their~~ ^{their} booths as usual in the Club Room. I planned on buying Judy a ring similar to my sapphire and diamond that I had purchased in 1975.

Mother was up and at my door just as I was leaving my cabin at 1:00 P.M. It was hair-washing and setting day for me, and I was a little late.

"Wait for me!" she said. "We'll have a drink at the Lido and lunch ^{then} and go shopping together!" But the Lido Bar and Cafe were closed. Carpeing was being replaced and cleaned. By the time we reached Prom deck it was after two o'clock and the dining rooms were also closed. Well, we could always call Room Service for sandwiches and whatever. I got Mother back as far as my cabin.

"I want to have a drink first, and then we'll have lunch. Let's go to the Ocean Bar."

"Mother, let's order lunch from Room Service and we'll have a drink in my cabin while we're waiting. - Room Service takes forever anyway."

"I want to go to the Ocean Bar. If you don't come with me I'll go by myself." I didn't want to go there but I didn't want her to sit in the Ocean Bar by herself.

"All right, Mother, but only one drink and then we'll have lunch. We want to shop this afternoon."

"Don't worry, we will."

There weren't many people in the Ocean Bar at that hour of the afternoon, and there was only one person at the bar - a non-passenger male of undetermined origin. Mother planted herself beside him on a bar stool.

"Two single bourbons - no ice. A glass of water - no ice." Mother didn't have to give instructions. Every bartender on the ship knew what she drank, although they rarely saw her at such an early hour. They also knew my ^{single} Old Fitzgerald on the rocks with ice water on the side

I was still trying to put aside a lingering anger at Mother from the previous night. I hadn't been present, but I had heard that she was telling anyone who would listen that she gave ^{me} an annual allowance of \$48,000- a mysterious sum that she had plucked somewhere from her devious mind. She did pay for the cruises that I accompanied her on, but the tickets were no where near that amount. Perhaps she was thinking about what Judy could have been ~~receiving~~ ^{drawing} from her father's estate, if Mother would give her consent. Outside of the tickets I paid my own expenses and tips on the ship. If she bought cocktails one evening, I paid for them on the next evening.

The man was talking across Mother to me. ~~He~~ He said he had a home on shore and that he was an engineer. He also said he was part Aztec and part Argentinean, and that he came aboard when ships came into port to assist the captains with local problems.

"You must visit my home tomorrow," he said. "We'll have lunch together."

"Yes," the Indonesian bartender joined in. Beside their linguistic ability the Indonesians have a sharp sense of humor. "Everyone on the ship has been invited. I must think whether to bring my gold or silver bikini. I don't think I will be able to sleep for the thinking."

"That is a grave problem," I agreed. "Well, I'm going in to see what the Thai merchants have that's interesting."

"~~Their~~ ^{Their} prices are too high," the bartender said. "If I can get off I can do much better on shore."

"I'm not going ashore, so I'll have to settle for what they have on board. - Mother! - Are you coming?" I shouted.

"No, not right now - you go on ahead. I'll be along later."

"How about lunch?"

"Not now. I have serious things to think about - far more important things than shopping."

I left Mother to her serious thinking and drinking and I went ~~to~~ in

the club room.

Helen Hughes had gone ashore for some niello ware - that silver and enameled jewelry that the Siamese were so famous for. But Helen had asked me to see if the merchants had a ring similar to mine. I told her that I would look. I didn't have enough money to buy one for her and one for Judy, although of course, Helen would ^{re-imburse} ~~send me~~ me. I still had more than eight hundred dollars, but Hong Kong was ^{yet} ~~not~~ to come. If I was severely strapped Gerry would send me more, but I hated to ask him.

The merchants had only one ring that resembled mine. The design wasn't as nice, and there were fewer and smaller sapphires but it was the best they had, and it was still a beautiful ring. Rosemarie Cutino bargained for me again. I hoped Helen wouldn't like it. I would ^{prefer} ~~like~~ to give it to Judy. Judy had more expensive and attractive jewelry, but this would be from me.

I thought I could entice Mother from the bar by showing ~~it~~ it to her.

"Oh, it's lovely," she said. "I must go in and look." There were two new single bourbons before her, and a single was sitting beside my unfinished drink.

"I don't want that," I told the bartender. "Come on, Mother."

"I'll be right back - don't touch my drinks!"

She shopped quickly, without frowning and making the complaints that she had learned from Stancell, about prices and ~~shoddy~~ inferior goods. There was no bargaining. She paid quickly for her purchases and headed back to the bar.

"Why don't you go and have some tea, dear. I know how much you like your tea." Yes, I did dearly love my tea. I had one cup a day - with my breakfast, and I rarely finished that. I did take a cookie from the rapidly being removed tray as I passed the Lounge Room, and I went to my cabin.

Mother was headed for two cases of the uglies today. I hoped she have enough sense to ^{go} ~~come~~ to her cabin and order something to eat and

and then sleep for a while before starting for the bar again. One set of uglies a day was more than I could stand.

I removed the uncomfortable curlers from my hair, wrapped a scarf around my head, and lay on my bunk. Since we were in port, there would be no formal dressing tonight.

I heard Mother's door open and close again. Good! She had come back to her cabin. Considering ~~the~~ everything, she ^{should} ~~would~~ probably sleep for about two hours. That would mean that ^{she would} ~~she would~~ wake just in time for one pre-dinner cocktail, and then be ready to go back to bed again after dinner. It would be a long night, because she would be ready for more food about midnight, but I'd face that problem as it presented itself.

There was a tap on my cabin door.

An Indonesian steward had a tray in his hand. It didn't look appetizing to me: rolls, butter, sliced tomatoes and a glass of milk.

"Is this what your mother wanted?" he asked.

"I suppose so. I didn't order it. Just knock on her door - wait a minute and then go in and put it on her cocktail table. She's probably sleeping, and she can't hear you anyway." On the other hand, I should go in and see how she was after all those hours at the bar - I followed the steward into the cabin as he put the tray down.

"Oh, pardon me!" I heard him say, and he turned back to see me.

"Mother!" I called.

"No - Madam - no!"

But it was too late. I had already seen those two naked bodies in Mother's bunk.

I backed into my cabin.

"Madam - I am sorry - I tried to stop you. Can I do something for you?"

"No - thank you - you're very kind. I'll be all right." He left, but he was disturbed for me.

Oh - I knew Mother hadn't been playing tiddly-winks all through the

years, but the visual reality was shocking.

I couldn't stay in such close proximity to her. I told myself to stop shaking and I walked and walked all over the ship. There weren't many passengers aboard and my far-sighted vision (my affliction, as Mother called it) enabled me to avoid any approaching familiar faces, and ^{to} seem~~ed~~ to be absorbed in the view of the lighting shore and the evening sea.

I didn't go to dinner that night. I don't know if she and her new found companion did either.

Mother knocked on my cabin door the following morning.

"Oh, Peggy - you embarrassed my poor friend so! The poor man was so upset that I had to console him over and over again all night long."

I closed my door without speaking to her. I wish I had a photograph of her face to show her what she looked like. I didn't have any humor left - but now I wonder if she ever bothered to ask him his name.

Since I was her daughter, and in a sense responsible for ~~her~~ ^{her} ~~that~~ I was told that she had asked that the companion be permitted to continue the cruise back to New York in her cabin, and she also wanted an inside bolt affixed to her cabin door. Both requests were politely but firmly denied. There could be no inside ~~bolts~~ bolts attached to the fire-proof metal doors. Entry to the cabins must always be available to the ship's personnel in case of emergency. I don't know if they were into a detailed explanation for denying her other request.

We sailed that afternoon for ^{Hong Kong} ~~Singapore~~. A note slid under my door just after our departure:

"I should like to join you & any friends in the Ocean Bar or anywhere else you meet before dinner, tomorrow ~~at~~ night." ('Tonight' had been her first choice, but it had been crossed out. I imagine she was tired.)
 "I am sorry if I offended you last night but in a way you provoked it after I had asked a small amount of Tolerance from you. I have had

a hard & gloomy & work-filled life, as only you know, for you were there. If, for the first time I am having a little sunset fun & a little gayety, you should be happy, no matter the companion. In fact, you should indeed be grateful. A shipboard romance is just that - a shipboard romance. Without it, I'd have ~~be~~ been very lonely & sad ~~and~~ indeed. And suicidal. Time is running out for me. Don't object to a ~~small~~ small amount of final music in my life."

In a way it was a sad note. It reminded me of our daughter, Drina. Every day since she had been fourteen she had announced ^{that the new da} ~~that she was her~~ ^{was her} last ~~day~~ to have fun. Drina and Mother had a lot in common.

I didn't have cocktails with Mother, but I did pick her up at the Ambassador when the dinner chimes sounded, and I sat opposite her while she had dinner. I still had almost five weeks ~~of~~ of these nights to go through, and there was her ^{big} ~~big~~ party in the Ritz Carlton. The guest list for that was almost complete. The Food and Beverage Manager would take care of the rest. I avoided talking to Mr. Zeller, though we nodded politely to each other if we happened to pass.

However, at the moment, I couldn't speak to Mother, and I didn't want her to touch me.

I talked to myself: "She can't help being the kind of person she is. I said over and over again, but I wasn't really able to convince myself."

Note from Mother:

"I have to keep a daily diary of people you are supposed to introduce to me, for my records. You always did that before - but not this year. Why? I see you only at cocktail parties & dinner - and then you can't sit still for 5 minutes. This has been commented on by others. Rep^{hah}~~er~~ asked me tonight where you were, & I had no answer except ~~irritation~~ irritation.

The man I was talking to tonight asked me where you were, too, & I burst out in exasperation that I'd like to know, too!! Your neglect of me is causing talk, which is another source of irritation. I know you are cooped up in Buffalo, & and that now you are roving, & I understand in a measure. I don't usually give a damn about people's gossip, but this is now humiliating to me - having people talk about how you avoid me and "is all over the ship, from bar to bar."

O.K. It is your life & I understand. But pretend, once in a while

that you have some concern for me.

I will not discuss this matter further."

A few ~~hours~~^{hours} later a ~~rustling~~^{rustling} of paper announced the express delivery of a late bulletin.

"I waited for you in the Ocean Bar from 4:30 to 6:15. Now the worm has turned. I reject all of you. I am going to get married & leave my entire estate to my husband. You have shown the same hostility to me that Judy did, a few months before she set her confused husband on me. I don't blame Goodman.

Unfortunately, my hearing prevents communication. I can no longer, anyway, communicate with you. Your own father told me, when you were a toddler, "That's a mean orn'ry young 'un. Watch out." I thought he was dreadful. Now I am not so sure. Marcus told me in 1962 - "My ~~daughter~~ daughter is no good. I am afraid to die & leave you at her mercy." I was horrified. Now I found out he was right. I was betrayed by love.

I never had to arrange for a party myself, before. You are here to take care of details. If you are unwilling, you are at liberty to leave the ship. Just wire Gerry for the jet. I am no longer interested.

Do not speak to me at dinner except casually. I know you can't sit still for more than 5 minutes. For appearances, smile at me pleasantly - do not gesture. Then you may run. Appearances are all. Your running around is causing comment. I do not care. You should."

Each dinner hour was more impossible than the last. Mother's face grew more sullen. I knew she was talking about her ungrateful daughter and how ~~much~~ she had struggled alone through poverty to raise her. She spoke about how her parents had beaten her and thrown her out into the street when she was only a child of ~~eight~~ eight years. - Sometimes she forgot to whom she told the story before and said she was fifteen years old.

I sat at the dinner table with her, but otherwise I avoided her as much as possible. The notes from her slid under my door every night:

"Peggy - It is useless for me to talk to you. So I have to write this. You have caused me to have a nervous breakdown & ulcers on this trip, so I am under doctor's constant care. I had an ulcer hemorrhage today. You humiliated me in '72 & again in '75, & now. You were supposed to be my ears & help me. But I never see you. People asked me tonight - as they do every day - "Where is Peggy?", I have to tell them I don't know. One man said tonight, "Peggy should get married." I told him you had a very ~~much~~ adequate husband & four children, & he was astonished. If I "talk" about you it is to complain of your neglect of me, & your constant disappearances. You never go ashore with me, I asked the doctor if you could not, explaining your allergies, & he said that was "foolish" & no reason for you not to go ashore. I can't go all alone in a taxi. I am dangerous. So I am a prisoner on the ship & very depressed & miserable. If I "complain" I have reason to complain - I will never go on a trip with you again. I have never been so distressed for years as I am now, both physically & emotionally, & this is terrible at my age.

I want you to help on the party. When I discuss things with you, you make all kinds of gestures. I am "allergic" to gestures & detest them & don't understand them. I want a big buffet as I had last year & the year before. You waved your hands & arms ~~me~~ & confused me. I didn't know what the hell you meant. - I don't like the " ". They never invite anyone, but they show up at every party. I've heard complaints about the party from others.

No more discussion, please. I need peace. Let's get (together?) tomorrow at the Ocean Bar at 4:30 & go over things together about the party.
No " !!"

I had told her the day that I had arranged for the date of the party that everything was set. Only the final ^{guest} ~~guest~~ list had to be supplied to Dick Zeller within three days before the party, so that the invitations could be distributed. We had gone through the going ashore business too many times in the past to bother discussing that again.

I felt sorry for her again, but I would not meet her for drinks in the afternoon. I told her that I would meet her at the Ambassador for one drink before dinner - only one drink.

"All right. - I'll go ahead and wait for you near the Purser's Desk. I know how ^{ugly} ~~ugly~~ I can be when I drink too much."

Perhaps some progress was being made when she made that acknowledgment.

I left my cabin about twenty to eight and walked down the corridor toward the Front Office. Louis Winer was waving at me from the distance and I waved back. I didn't realize that he was gesturing for me to stay away. It was too late. - I could hear Mother's voice as I approached, but only the last few sentences were clear:

" - Lesbian. Her poor husband comes over to my house and cries on my shoulder constantly!"

"I can't help what she is, Janet - I love her so much."

"No, Mr. Kingsley, don't let that innocent little face fool you! I know her. - There's a wicked, vacant woman behind that face! — Oh, hello dear - there you are!"

I had reached her side. She was sitting in a chair before the elevators, talking to Lewis Kingsley.

"I've been waiting for you." She looked up at me brightly. "Shall we have our cocktails in the Ambassador, or would you prefer going to the Ocean Bar?"

"I don't care where you have your cocktails - but they won't be with me! - - Now don't tell me you can't hear me, I'm talking very loudly. Don't you ever mention my husband's name or my name again. Don't ever speak about us - not to anyone - not at any time! Remember that, Mother! We don't exist as far as you're concerned." I walked back to my cabin.

"Lesbian!" I wondered if this was the first time she had decided to give me that label. It had probably only just occurred to her since I had shown no empathy for her newest escapade.

I was determined to never have anything to do with her again. I should have severed that umbilical cord years ago. I was familiar with the lies she told about all her Buffalo "friends" and I'm sure they were, too. Gerry and I had pretended to find the things she said about us humorous instead of confronting her - although what she said was far from amusing. Gerry's family had been correct in their indignance and insisted that Gerry silence her with the threat of suits, if she didn't retract her statements about Gerry attempting to murder and rob her. Because she was my mother, he ~~was~~ didn't do anything. But he was wrong and I was wrong. We should have stopped her every time she opened her mouth, and so should have Ed and Jan Robinson. The only way to frighten her was to threaten her pocketbook. She believed that her lies were accepted as the truth just because everyone was too polite to call her on them. We had all been too indulgent of her "excentricities" - and we had all been stupid. A few expensive lessons might have taught her to think before she made up her "interesting" fabrications. - Gerry and I only laughed disinterestedly and changed the subject when other people told us that she said that she owned our house and would have us thrown out on the street if ever we angered her! - And Gerry laughed when she said that she bought him ~~some~~ an expensive new car every other year - she had the receipt to show for them, she said. She never bought us as much as a used bicycle tire. She should have confronted her every time ~~one~~ one of her statements came to our attention. Many people would have been delighted to stand in witness to her statements for us. All these lies should have been brought out in the open, and not hidden under a facade of ~~tolerant~~ tolerant amusement. It is true that a public protest would be an embarrassment, it would be like exposing a family ~~scene~~ obscenity to strangers' eyes, but it would have stopped her, and perhaps have made another woman of her. And she sa

that she owned Gerry's business and that her bankers were advising her to take it over because of Gerry's incompetence and mis-management. But those were foolish things that no one really believed - at least no one important to us. She had asked Gerry many times to let her become a silent partner in his business.

"Thank you, Janet. That's one thing you could never be - 'silent'. I don't need your money. Keep it in the bank and watch the interest grow. That makes you feel good."

How many times had she asked us to move into her house; Gerry to be her confidante, butler, and chauffeur, and me to be her housekeeper, cook, and personal maid?

"You can have your own quarters," she offered generously.

Even in her own mind I can't imagine what satisfaction she obtained when she chanted her maligning fiction about the people - predominantly woman - who were closest to her. Perhaps she thought she was garnering pity for herself - poor defenceless woman, pitted against an envious, cruel world.

— . — . — . — . —

Note from Mother:

"Eavesdroppers hear no good of themselves, & sightseers get shocked

Knock ~~next~~ time & don't come ⁱⁿ with the crew. You ruined a wonderful interlude for me & embarrassed the hell out of me, not to mention the gentleman. I never walk in on you without ~~knocking~~ calling or knocking, first. ~~Please~~ PLEASE, dear. Life is short - make it sweet. I learned that three years ago. I am not as "isolated" as you think I am. Nor as "pure." (Never interrupt the primal act. Cruel."

I couldn't sit at the dinner table with her again. I found a table in the other dining room with some old friends. But I couldn't stop those ~~poisonous~~^{venomous} notes from sliding under my door. At first I tore them up, and then I said to myself: "No - every time I feel sorry for her I'll take one out and read it." I put them in a drawer. The one note I did tear up was the one in which she said that I was jealous because that creature in Bangkok had chosen her to go to bed with, rather than me. I can't understand how she could persuade herself to believe the things she said. But she did - she believed every word she said. Sometimes it took her days of repetition and meditation, but eventually the fiction ~~was~~ firmed up in her mind as documented fact.

She kept on with her talking, and when people would start to tell me what she was saying, I would only say: "Please - if you consider yourself a friend, don't tell me what she said. I don't want to hear"

My nice little Rephah would yell:

"I've listened to Janet's lies about Peggy for years. Anyone who knows Peggy and her nice husband would spit in Janet's face. - Do Alex and I have to invite her to your birthday party, Peggy?"

Rephah and Alex were giving a small birthday party for me in the Ambassador. I wasn't in a mood for celebrating my fifty-sixth birthday but they insisted.

A ship is a small closed town, and on a three month cruise, gossip ripples through the air-conditioning. Rephah and I decided that it was better to invite Mother than to cause more talk.

Putting it mildly, after ^{hastily downed} two double bourbons at the bar, and another at the party, Mother was not an asset.

It was time for me to slip a note under Mother's door. It was brief:

"Please - no more missives." Actually they were more like missiles than "missives".

Return note from Mother:

"Peg dear - I really am getting angrier by the moment. If anyone "repeats" to you what I "say", mark them off as your enemies. A friend would never hurt you. Moreover, I don't speak of you except to talk of your apparent health & accomplishments. I talk sometimes of Drina and Mike's children, & I am fond of them. In fact, I am in the midst of ~~outlining my~~ ^{outlining my} final will & dividing my estate between the four of you - equally - equally, provided none of you do anything to anger me - My ~~co~~ anger can be very terrible, and final. It will be noted in my will that my heirs must be in my good graces at the time of my death to inherit, & they must prove it. _ As for Gerry, the only time I ever mentioned him was when I was asked what he "did", & I explained that he was a very successful manufacturer of jewelry displays.

I don't know why I incur enmity in others, God knows I carefully avoid hurting anyone's feelings as much as possible. Moreover my lack of hearing prevents me from "communicating" much with anyone. I am far more tolerant of people than you are, & far slower to condemn. Yet, I make ~~vicious~~ ^{virulent} enemies. Why? Envy? Why? I don't think it is envy - I made vicious enemies when I was a little girl at school, which used to puzzle Margaret, who always said I was "such a shy nice little girl," & never attacked or gossiped about anyone. Maybe - thank God - it is because I am NOT like other people. I think that is it.

The Robinsons ~~have~~ became my enemies for no reason at all, & I did so much for the whole family that it embarrasses me to remember it, & it makes me bitter. You said I didn't "know" my friends. What friends? I have four good men friends, & that is all. No women friends except Margaret. What did I ever do to Judy to make her hate ~~me~~ & injure me? How would you feel if Drina did that to you? - Don't think you have friends on this ship, either. But I wouldn't repeat what malicious people say of you, although I've heard ~~plenty~~ plenty second-hand. - People terrify me & that is why I've avoided them even when I could hear. I know far more about people than you suspect. — By the way, you have been hostile to me ever since this trip started. Why? I do love you, remember, though our personalities have never been compatible.

No more "missives."

On the Rotterdam World Cruises, passengers in groups of about twenty-five are invited for a cocktail party, with dinner following in the Captain's dining room. It is a very formal, and usually stuffy affair. I only recall one that I enjoyed. The Maitre d' arranges the seating of the group from the pre-selected pattern of tables in the Odyssey and La Fontaine dining rooms. But the formal was not necessarily rigid, and changes could be made. That was the Maitre d's job. This maitre d' was new to me, and frankly inept. His mind obviously was elsewhere. Mother and I were the only people present with the handicap of speaking no language other than English - and we weren't talking to each other. Mother, as always, should have been seated next to the Captain, but she was seated ~~next~~ between two women, which was a personal affront to her. The gentlemen to my right and left were ~~possibly~~ possibly charming, intelligent, and witty, but I will never know. Neither of them spoke a word of English. They didn't even speak each other's secondary languages. Mother would not have objected to sitting between them since she didn't care what was spoken as long as she was sitting next to men. But there were English speaking people at the table, whom I knew, but rarely had an opportunity to talk to. Mother picked herself up and sailed out when soup was served. - It was an eye-brow raising rudeness.

"Your mother says she's not feeling well, Peggy." Ruth Wendell excused herself and spoke down the table to me. She had been seated ~~next~~ at Mother's left. Ruth had known Mother since 1972 - through the Stancell ^{interested} romance, and other of Mother's aborted passions, and she had been ^{an observer} ~~an observer~~ at the Ocean Bar on the afternoon of the Bangkok escapade. To my knowledge she was a discrete and aware woman. We spoke cordially when we met, but we never discussed Mother.

-.--.-.-.-.-.-.-

Note from Mother:

Peggy - I have tried to be friends with you & forgive a lot of things, though Sam Yochelson told me over & over that you were born with no ~~conscience~~ conscience and are unable to feel guilt & be sorry & try to make amends.

329

You just have no feelings. Sam told me that & he told me you are incapable of relating to anyone but yourself. Your children have told me so, about you, & they are distressed. No matter. I have no reproaches. You were born that way & I know there is no appeal to your conscience because you were born without one. ~~But I am not~~ Still, when I was so ill with ulcers at the Captain's dinner & had to leave, you did not inquire ~~me~~ about me in my cabin. No reproaches. You are incapable of any natural emotions, except yourself, & so your children have told me. But remember this: On this cruise & others you would be nobody without me. This is the last time you will ever travel with me. I am so sick & disappointed over you. But as you cannot relate to others, you will not understand, poor Peggy. It is like being born blind. I pity you.

I should like to ask you a question. If Manny Fried had tried to kill his mother, would Gerry now have anything to do with him? Of course not. No decent person would. Yet, you write & talk to the Goodman woman who set her husband on to me to kill me! Have you no shame? But, as Sam Yochelson told me, you are incapable of ethical judgment & balance. I am beginning to wonder if you & the Goodman woman are preparing to injure me. She tried to injure you terribly in 1949 when you went out to meet Bill Barker, & never told me & let me suffer & worry. I have never forgiven either of you for that. And, I am preparing to rectify my softness.

-.-.-.-.-

Some of Mother's slithered- under-the-door notes may ^{sound} ~~seem~~ as though they are part of a continuing conversation with me. They are not. Any conversation she was ^{conducting} ~~continuing~~ was strictly ^{with} ~~between~~ herself. I didn't speak to her any more, and I avoided parties where I knew she would be present. I had always arranged an autographing afternoon tea party for her - but not this year.

I don't think Mother was aware of the reason why Yochelson hadn't practiced in New York state for years. She might not have been so ready to quote him.

Writing paper on the ship was in short supply. The Hirsh's had given me a writing pad in Kobe. ~~The paper was covered with distracting rosebuds. Mother suffered with the back of the daily bulletin, and whatever other scraps of paper she could locate in her messy cabin. One note is written on paper that resembles lacquered toilet paper. There are ~~some~~ short-hand notes and figures on the reverse side. Evidently it is intended to prove that she was working on her will. I shall not attempt to reproduce those hieroglyphics:~~ The paper was covered with distracting rosebuds. Mother suffered with the back of the daily bulletin, and whatever other scraps of paper she could locate in her messy cabin. One note is written on paper that resembles ^{lacquered} ~~lacquered~~ toilet paper. There are ~~some~~ short-hand notes and figures on the reverse side. Evidently it is intended to prove that she was working on her will. I shall not attempt to reproduce those hieroglyphics:

"Peg -

Yes, I am jealous of you. You are all I have. You have a husband at least two adequate children. What have I? So I resent times you spend with others. Just give me a little."

-.-.-.-.-

I was just finishing that note and beginning to weaken again, when

"You forget that I am "prestige" people on this trip, If the invitation have already been received by the _____, I will greet them courteously.

I am a lady as well as a "prestige people". I have greeted _____ several times on the ship & he has only looked sullenly at me. They are famous for being sponges. If they come they will be greeted ~~politely~~ politely by me. I am not a boor."

.....

~~It~~ It was a petty thing to pick at. The couple were Dutch and had been on many cruises at the same time as Mother. There were rarely invited to parties, and never came without an invitation. I wasn't greatly enamored of them, but they had asked me to have cocktails with them once. Since there would be over two hundred and fifty guests at Mother's party, two more hardly seemed important. But I had already invited them and there was no polite way to rescind the invitation. At this point I had no intention of going to Mother's party anyway, and didn't care who came, although I had completed the ~~guest~~ guest list and the invitations had all been sent out. All Mother had to do was shake hands with the guests as they entered, and pay the bill and the tips.

I had told the inefficient ~~travel~~ travel agent that she would have to stand at Mother's side to greet the arriving guests. Mother couldn't stand there alone.

"I don't get paid for that kind of work," Inefficent said.

Since I was already in an explosive mood, this was an ideal person to explode at. We were in a public room, and it had been she who had approached me about inviting her group.

"I've been thinking about - just what do you get paid for? - I've forgotten - what is your commission? - Is it ten or fifteen percent? If it's only ten percent, then you received over three thousand dollars - for what? For having Holland America fill out a ticket~~s~~ for my Mother ^{and me} and for mailing Mother tags for her luggage?"

"Sh - everyone can hear you!"

"Good! What do you think I'll speaking so loudly and clearly for?
- And tell me - ~~how~~ exactly how many other foolish souls were stupid
enough to sign up with ^{your} inefficient service? - Was it thirty-five or

forty? I have the list in my cabin, but I can't quite remember. I'm not even speaking about your gratuitous World Cruise and outside double cabin. How much, at your percentage, does it add up to a minute for you to stand in that greeting line with my mother for an hour and a half - From six-forty-five to eight-fifteen? You can compute it while you stand in the greeting line with my mother." I turned my back. I knew I was playing right into that phoney woman's hands, I was giving her an unsolicited golden opportunity. She was notorious for crashing parties and hassling guests about signing up with her agency for their cruise travels. People kept coming to me and complaining about her - but I wasn't part of the hotel staff. If they objected to her crashing their parties, I told them to ~~go~~ make their complaints to Mr. Adriaansen the Hotel Manager. I thought I had carefully preserved her slinger - but I can't find it, that's a pity because it reads much better than my memory ^{of it.} In it, she promises ~~me~~ her "people" that they will be invited to all the "gala" shipboard parties, and that they will be part of the exciting "swinging" crowd. They would ^{associate} ~~associate~~ with "world famous" people and take part in fascinating conversations with them. I had told her that none of her ^{group} ~~group~~ was to be invited to Mother's party, ~~because~~ we had a little set-to about that and she sulked. ^{But} Then I met some of her group and I felt sorry for them. Oh well, Mother did like her parties to be crowded. She felt ^{unpopular} ~~neglected~~ if there was any breathing space.

"She made everything sound so exciting, Mrs. Fried, but once we paid for our tickets she had no further use for us." Well - she had had a short "welcome aboard" cocktail party in the crowded Lounge before sail time. It must have been very confusing and noisy for those older people who had little experience with traveling, and who were uncertain about both their accommodations and ~~the~~ proper attire. The Captain, of course stopped by. That was one of his duties. Captains must treat travel agents - even such as Inefficient - with regard. They do bring business to the Line. But Mother hadn't had to sign up with Inefficient. There were plenty of good travel agents in Buffalo. I believe that Inefficient and Stancell were old buddies.

The date of the Taylor Caldwell party was March 22nd - while we were transiting the Pacific Ocean between Japan and Honolulu. I received an under-the-door- note on March 21st, when I returned to my room for the night:

"Roland is coming aboard in Honolulu, if the ship can give him a small inside stateroom. We have many business matters to discuss before reaching L.A. & meeting the press, movie - TV people & agents. I have talked to the desk about getting him a cabin. They will "try." I will hear from them today. If there is no cabin available for him you will have to leave my cabin 339, & I will pay your fare - tourist - to N.Y. from Honolulu, so Roland can have that cabin. After all, I paid for it, if you remember. Roland has a lot of work to do for me which you were supposed to have done, & did not. This is purely a business matter & not personal. Please consult the desk, yourself, before noon. Then I will call Roland."

I talked silently to the adjoining wall:

"What kind of business, Mother? Well - ho-ho-ho to you! I'm not leaving this time, Mother. Since this is the last World Cruise I will be taking until I can afford to ~~pay~~ pay for my own, I'm going all the way back to New York on the Rotterdam!" I knew enough about hotel rooms and possession of them, and my ticket was in my name.

A half hour later another note called it's attention to me as it slid under the door:

"Peggy, it is O.K. for you to stay - They have a room for Roland. See you at my party."

Since it was two o'clock in the morning, and she hadn't left her cabin, she must have been having psychic communications with ~~that~~ that hitherto insentient piece of furniture known as "The Desk".

-.--.-.-.-.-.-.-.-.-

We had been having a few other communication problems - Mother and I. I had told our mutual room steward, Weedodo, to put my mail on the dresser in ~~my~~ my cabin, and not under the door where it's presence was ~~detectable~~ detectable from the corridor. But evidently he didn't understand, and my Mother and I would have a tug-of-war ~~xx~~ under the door for my mail. I had to be very fast, but sometimes she got there first. As fast as Weedodo slipped my letters under the door, they would slip back again. One letter from Ferry had been too obviously ~~pattled~~ pattled over. It had been

ripped open and it was useless for her to attempt to conceal the fact she wrote a note on the front of the envelope:

"Sorry! This was under my door, & I opened it without looking at the return address. I thought it was for me. ~~Sorry again.~~
Sorry again."

She had referred several times to my receiving letters from Judy but I had never received any.

I'm afraid Gerry's letter was a disappointment to her. Gerry knew enough to write a letter that could be read by the entire world. He was well aware of Mother's penchant for ~~reading~~ ^{reading} other people's mail.

There was no place I could go on the ship without comparative strangers stopping me to ask who the man was that my mother was going to marry, and to inquire ~~solicitously~~ ^{solicitously} about her mental and physical state. Both Smith and Gibbons - to my knowledge - were firmly ~~committed~~ committed to their wives.

"My mother's health is fine, and as to any personal questions about the future - I'm ~~afraid~~ afraid you must get that information from her."

It seemed easier to spend most of my time in my cabin. I caught up with my laundry. My cabin was festooned with drying lingerie and wash and wear blouses.

Oh how I dreaded the thought of going to that party.

I heard Mother leave her cabin at twenty to seven. If I waited until shortly before eight, I thought, the greeting ~~line~~ ^{line} should be over and I could walk in without having to pass Mother. She should have joined guests by that time.

"All right!" I said to myself, "Let's go! In a half hour it ~~will~~ ^{will} all be over."

Since the early diners were finishing their dining, and the late diners were either at Mother's party or having cocktails in the Ocean Bar or the Ambassador, the elevators were free, and the first button

I pressed produced^{an} uninviting open door and lifted me to Upper Prom Deck. My feet took me as far as the Smoking Room and then balked. The Ritz Carlton and Mother were beyond the Smoking Room.

"Miss Peggy, you look lovely. May I have the honor of escorting you to the party?"

"Oh - Willem! - No, I don't think I'm going there." Willem Dansbeek was one of the Hotel Staff officers.

"Of course you are. Take my arm - we'll walk in together. Come!"

I took his arm and we walked through the corridor into the Ritz Carlton.

"How nice of you to come, Peggy!" Inefficient had a bright smirk on her face.

"My name is Mrs. Fried, to you," I hissed.

"Good!" Willem smiled. "Now just one more difficulty, and it will be over."

I never saw such a look of hatred on my mother's face. I began to shake. If I'd been alone I would have fled from the room.

"No!" Willem said sharply. "Hold your head up high, and ignore her. Fine. - Now I'll take you over to Mr. Adriaansens and Mr. van Kooten they are talking to Mrs. ~~Bratt~~ Bratt and Mrs. Hughes, ^{and I'll} get you a drink."

I was well into the noisy, crowded room now, and I thanked Willem.

"I would never have made it without you, Willem."

"Oh, I'm sure you would have," he smiled. "I only offered you my arm for support. - Everyone needs an arm sometimes."

"I certainly needed one tonight. - I wish you could have a drink with me."

"You know I can't, Miss ~~Rx~~ Peggy. I am not permitted to mingle with the guests. " He added thoughtfully, "I have seen paintings all over the world - paintings of hatred and evil, but I have never seen such an expression as I just saw on your mother's face. I hope never to see such a look again. - Ah, here's your drink. I will see you later ~~later~~"

I am sure."

"If I survive, Willem. Are you sure there's no arsenic in my drink?"

"Positive. I gave it my personal attention." That was a kind of joke. One of the top officers used that expression and between the "atten" and "tion" the only thing one could be certain of was that he had dropped the entire subject from his mind. But he did say it with ~~a ring of~~ such conviction that he instilled confidence in the listener.

The final moments of Mother's party wouldn't have been too bad if a strange woman hadn't pulled me aside to tell me that she intended to do everything possible to help me make amends to my "poor" mother. She told me that I shouldn't ~~be~~ saying such dreadful things about her and that I should be behaving ~~my~~ myself on the ship, after all - the things I was doing ~~were~~ a reflection on my mother's reputation.

"And what things are those?" I asked.

Well - it appeared that my mother had told her all about my misconduct.

"I am afraid I don't know what you're talking about - I'm sure ~~you~~ you've ~~made~~ mistaken me for someone else."

"Oh, no! Please let me ~~spend~~ ^{and my husband} the final days of the trip helping you. We've helped many people before."

"I suggest that you don't waste your efforts on me - help my mother. She does need help - I don't, I can assure you." I pulled my arm away from her's and turned back to Helen. I had never even seen that woman before. Had I invited her? Perhaps she was an insertion of Inefficiency.

"I didn't want to interfere, Peggy, but do you know that rude woman?"

"Oh, she meant well, Helen. She's was a bit misguided by my ~~mother's~~ mother's stories. - No, I never saw her before."

"Well, I could have told her a few things, and I would have if I realized that you didn't know her. Of all the nerve!"

I noticed that Adriaansens and van Kooten had made a hasty retreat. That pair of uniformed chickens did not intend to ~~be~~ be witnesses to

even the most remote possibility of an altercation between passengers. Well, they were employees of Holland America Cruises and it was part of their duties to keep things on an even keel. To them, the simplest way to accomplish that was to pretend not to see or hear anything. They were masters at the art of disappearing at the slightest ^{whisper} ~~sign~~ of trouble. Not that this fell into that category, but it was safer to take no chance.

"Come on, Peggy, let's have another drink before dinner."

"But I haven't had this ^{one} ~~one~~ yet, Helen."

"That's all water now. You'll have a double, and I'll have a single - on your mother."

Oh well - I wasn't going to leave the Ritz Carlton until my mother was well away from the entrance of the Ritz Carlton, anyway.

I didn't return to my cabin until the early morning hours. I would ^{be} ~~have~~ been surprised if there wasn't a note under my door:

Don't be silly, Love. I have a lot on my mind which must be resolved by the time I get home - one is, "Should I marry him or not? that is the very least. There is also your sister's lawsuit against me, & her harassment. There is also the book I am to do with Jess Stearn. And a new housekeeper. And other problems coming up. This makes me on edge & gives me ulcers. I am not a "lady of Leisure," you know. I have much work & many serious problems, some enormous.

But I do not like to hear from the people on the ship that you are "homesick" for Gervy" (Mother often spelled ~~Gervy~~ or pronounced Gerry's name that way - in an effort to irritate. Neither she nor I have a speech defect.) & the only reason you remain is to take "care" of me! I didn't want to go on this cruise. I wanted to go to Palm Beach to my house. I took the cruise because you wanted it - not I! As for "care" I see you only for cocktails. I took care of myself since I was fifteen - & still can. I also took care of you since I was 19, with no help from anyone. - Try to understand what I feel, for once.

"Did you know that your Mother is having her lawyer come aboard just to change her will?" That was the newest question I was asked, although people were learning that I was not responsive to their avid statements or questions. But it was interesting to know that Smith had been upgraded to ~~my~~ lawyer status.

Note:

Darling Peg - though you have rejected me as your mother, telling

tales about me on the ship, to my despair, I am still

Your loving Mama

It occurs to me - People gossip & lie. Maybe we have been victim

I am tired of those notes and I have put the rest away. I don't know what she hoped to accomplish by them, ~~except~~ ^{except} to drive me further from her. If only she and Judy would reconcile. Judy was her amusing darling, and I, her stern disciplinarian. Between us, we could manage to keep Mother somewhat occupied - not entirely, but to a degree. At the moment, it seemed hopeless.

I forgave van Kooten his chicken-heartedness and invited him and Rephah and Alex to the Royal Hawaiian for cocktails and lunch. That afternoon was the one bright spot of the cruise.

With Smith's arrival, Mother now had an escort and someone to sit opposite her at the dinner table.

Mother's habits didn't change; she still slept all day, while Smith played afternoon bridge and hit golf balls. He had a strong drive. The force ~~of~~ with which he hit the golf ~~balls~~ ^{balls} sounded like a rifle shot on Lower Prom deck.

I doubt that Mother told him the truth of why I would have nothing to do with her, any more than she'd told anyone. I was only one of two ungrateful daughters to whom she had devoted her life.

Smith and I met a few times on the ship, and we acknowledged each other's presence.

I will say that when Smith was asked by a particularly nosy woman as to why my mother and I weren't talking, he merely said that sometimes mothers and daughters quarreled.

New York - April 16th, 1976

S I waited until Smith picked up Mother and they both left the

ship to go through customs.

I didn't have much to declare. Helen hadn't liked the ~~sapphire~~ ^{diamond and} ring as much as she'd liked mine, and I was pleased to have a gift for Judy. I had bought some unframed oil paintings at Ocean Terminal for Gerry's new office and some ~~small~~ gifts for his secretaries and one for my ^{weekly} clean woman, Lydia, and a few other small gifts for our grandchildren. Altogether, my purchases came to a little over six hundred dollars. There was a five hundred deductible allowance, and the paintings - as works of art were duty free. But it didn't make any difference to the customs man. His ~~new~~ X-ray vision relieved my wallet of all but a dollar and ~~and~~ eighty cents. It's possible that he'd had a quarrel with his wife the night before ~~and as a result hated all women today.~~ It was a good thing that Gerry was waiting for me on the pier, because I was in no mood to protest - but one day, I promise that I will be, and on that day - American customs, watch out! I will have some choice words as well as patience. I have a good memory and many stories besides my own to tell.

I didn't even have enough money left to tip the porter, but Gerry, after a kiss of greeting, relieved me of that obligation.

My tulips were popping up, and earlier bulbs were exposing the colors of their still closed blossoms.

Unpacking - readjusting to ^{the} wifely household chores of cooking, bed-making and ~~washing~~ ^{washing} and ironing - the mindless ~~daily~~ tasks - the routine of daily living that occupies the body - solitary nothingness. I was determined not to permit a vacancy again. I had made some sketches on the ship and began to put them down on canvass. I would never be an artist - it was much too late for someone as impatient as I to master the ~~simple~~ simple techniques that should be learned in the early years, but I thought I was improving.

Gerry called my attention to an article in the Buffalo Courier Express

CATHOLIC INSTITUTIONS TO GET BEQUESTS OF TAYLOR CALDWELL

By RITA SMITH

Buffalo's internationally best-selling author, Taylor Caldwell,

says she is leaving most of her sizable estate to a variety of Catholic charities here," Miss Caldwell announced during an interview in her home about why she prefers to live in Buffalo.

"I think Catholic charities here in Buffalo do a good job of helping those who need it," she commented.

~~Miss Caldwell said that she had made very specific bequests to the poor who cannot help themselves, the blind, the deaf, the old.~~
"I've made very specific bequests," Miss Caldwell said. "For the poor who cannot help themselves, the blind, the deaf, the old."

She cited among her beneficiaries the Brothers of Mercy Nursing Home in Clarence and Nazareth Nursing Home, 291 North St.

Her estate also is to be ~~used~~ used to benefit Catholic parochial schools in the Diocese of Buffalo. "They are in a bad way financially and I want to help them," she said.

'A GOOD JOB'

"From what I've seen they are doing a good job of educating young people in Buffalo," added Miss Caldwell. She has long been an outspoken critic of modern public education.

She pointed out she has set up three continuing scholarship funds at D'Youville and Canisius Colleges and Calasanz School For Gifted Children. These scholarships, she emphasized, "are being given solely the basis of academic achievement and worth, regardless of parental or individual income."

She also has given scholarships in the past to Niagara University and Marquette University in Milwaukee.

'CAPTAINS and the KINGS'

Miss Caldwell has won fame and fortune through her writing. She has published 31 books in 38 years. Most of them have been bestsellers, not only in America but in Europe and other parts of the world. Her publisher, Doubleday & Co. in New York, says she is one of their top moneymakers.

She sold television rights for an undisclosed amount to her novel, "Captains and the Kings" which was on the New York Times bestseller list for eight months. The television serialization cost \$5.5 million to produce. It currently is running on NBC-TV at 9 Thursday nights.

She recently sold two more of her top-selling novels for TV adaptation. They are "Testimony of Two Men" published in 1968 and "The Sound of Thunder" written in 1957.

Plans are under way for her to travel to China in the spring to do research on another book about the dowager empress of China.

One of the world's most prolific writers, she says she will not retire soon. "What for?" she asked indignantly. "I'd die if I didn't write. I've got five books boiling inside my head right now."

That was nice. I only hoped the charities she'd named weren't already making plans for the money. ~~Miss Caldwell said that she had made very specific bequests to the poor who cannot help themselves, the blind, the deaf, the old.~~

~~Miss Caldwell said that she had made very specific bequests to the poor who cannot help themselves, the blind, the deaf, the old.~~ Mother was a great promiser, and also one of the best will-changers in captivity. The Catholic charities ~~had better be prepared to do a lot of bowing and scraping.~~

I was keeping myself occupied, and if I thought about it - I assumed that I would have no difficulty in avoiding Mother. I only go out one time a week, and that is for dinner on Saturday evening. Mother won't go to a restaurant before ten, and by that time I am home again. ~~Unfortunately~~ Unfortunately, we do have a common preference in our choice of restaurants, and I suppose a meeting was ~~an~~ inevitable, although not so soon. It was only the third week in May when we were in the same place at the same time.

We had gone out with Jerry and Rhoda and had just ordered, when my mother and Soula walked in and were seated.

"We're going to have to go over and say 'Hello', Peggy," Gerry said.

"Yes. I suppose so." I hadn't ~~even~~ looked at her face since that evening at the party in the Ritz Carlton. I wondered briefly if I would see that look again ^{now}. If I did, I would turn my back and walk away. I ~~was~~ still had nightmares about it and I did not want them heightened with a Buffalo background.

"Well - come on," Gerry said. "Let's get it over with."

Mother's unhappy face brightened when she recognized us, and Gerry kissed her cheek.

"Won't you join me?" she asked.

"We can't, Janet. We're with other people," Gerry shouted.

"At least have a drink with me."

"We have drinks at our table, but I'll bring Peggy's over."

"Thanks, Gerry - that's very kind of you." I didn't want to sit there; just coming to the table had been difficult.

"My pleasure," he smiled. He knew how much I detested that expression, and he had used it with deliberate sarcasm.

Soula was happy to see me.

"It bad, Peggy. She is very sad." That was obvious. Mother's sadness for herself was always intense, and of ~~a~~ depth beyond ^{human} other.

comprehension. Things weren't going according to her script again. I recognized the signs and I resisted the ~~feeling~~^{urge} of pity.

"I can't help her, Soula. I feel sad for her too."

"I know, Peggy, I know. I try to help - but it's hard."

"I'm sure you do, Soula."

"And that bad mans." Soula's English was improving, but I didn't know if she meant one or ~~two~~ "bad" mans, though she most probably meant both Smith and Gibbons. Soula was very protective of Mother and suspicious of her men friends.

"When am I going to see you?" Mother grasped my hand with her strong hand. I don't think I'm weak, but it always seems that people are trying to scrunch my bones when they touch me - and Mother has a very strong hand for a woman. If I pulled my hand away, she would think I was rejecting her again, so I suffered while my ring and her rings cut into me.

"We're going to a jewelry show next week," I said, through clenched jaws.

"You know I can't hear you, Peggy."

I had an excuse to pull my hand away and write on the menu: "We're going to Florida for a jewelry show next week." I left a trail of blood on the menu.

"Did I do that to you?" ~~She'd~~^{She'd} noticed.

"It's nothing, Mother." I waved it away.

"When will you be back?"

"Sometime during the first week in June." I stood up. "I'll see you, Mother," she nodded. "Soula - take care of her."

"Yes, Peggy. I try." Soula looked depressed.

We stopped again to say "goodnight" as we left the restaurant.

When we returned from Florida there was an invitation to Mother's annual June party. I showed it to Gerry without comment.

"Well - she's your mother, Peggy. I think we should go."

"I know she's my mother, Gerry. - I've known that for over fifty-si

years. ~~That~~ ^{That} doesn't look like it's ever going to change." And he'd been my husband for close to thirty-seven years. Why did he have to be so irritating sometimes? It seemed to me that a time should come when just understanding was sufficient, and words should not be necessary. Of course we had to go. Avoiding a party on a ship, where Mother would be present, was very different from ignoring her invitation in Buffalo a place where I'd been born and ~~where~~ where she'd spent almost all of her years.

It could have been a beautiful party. It should have been a great party. Whoever of Mother's "friends" made the arrangements, did a good job, but money alone does not make a ~~successful~~ party.

The day was damp, but not rainy. Two protective three-sided tents had been arranged side-by-side in the large garden. Hot and cold hors d'oeuvres and a large bar were in one tent, and the adjoining tent had a small orchestra and dance floor.

Oh Mother! - One look at her face -

"She's loaded," Gerry told me.

"I know that, Gerry - she must have started early. See what you can do about watering down that bourbon."

"I can't do that - she doesn't trust me any more, and she won't let go of her glass."

"Well, you'll have to try. Talk to her, and while she's not looking add some water. There are people here from Sri Lanka and from the ship and New York. Someone has to play hostess, and it looks like it will have to be me. Try to get her to eat something - you know how fast that can turn things around. Do whatever you can about her, Gerry!"

The ~~Ceylonese~~ ^{Ceylonese} were rather bewildered as to why they'd made the long expensive trip. ~~Eustace's~~ ^{Eustace's} wife had arrived with an abscessed tooth, and their beautiful daughter had made the arrangements from Switzerland where she attended school. They had no money for such a trip, and they ~~were~~

were reluctant to release the only familiar face, beside Mother's, ~~and~~
 I couldn't ask them why they'd come - that would have been rude, but
 I suppose that Mother had been making promises again. As an "important
 woman she could promise anything, and her intent was genuinely honest ~~at~~
~~the moment~~ she made the golden promises. Sometimes she fulfilled them, but
~~too~~ often she lost interest and became angry if she was reminded:

"Everyone wants something from me. It's 'do this for me, do that
 for me'. No ~~one~~ ever does anything for me!" And then they would come
 to me because they had depended on her promises. I had no money to ext
 for proffered scholarships, nor to rescue faltering mortgages. I could
 only offer sympathy, and silently be ~~grateful~~ ^{grateful} that our own children ha
 never had to depend on ~~any~~ ^{her for} part of their education, ~~or anything~~ or anything
 else ~~for that matter~~. ^{Eustace}

~~Eustace~~ asked Gerry if he would re-imburse him for the ~~three~~
 three round-trip plane tickets. Gerry told him to speak to Mother in t
 morning. They were Mother's house-guests and part of Stancell's "famil

To all the world, every American is wealthy. Americans only work
 when they choose, and there are no poor people in the United States. It
 was a long, ~~and expensive~~ ^{flight an} weekend ~~for them~~.

Other guests were trying to talk to me, and I was grateful when th
 clang-clang of the two rubber-tired decorated trolleys announced their
 arrival to take the guests to the restaurant for dinner. Mother danced
 a final, sad jig. She should go to bed for a while, but I knew she'd
 be angry if she wasn't at her dinner party - even though she wouldn't
 remember most of it.

Gerry and I took her to the restaurant in our car.

July - August, 1976: Jewelry Show

Gerry's secretary, Betty West, worked in the booth with Gerry now
 She knew more about the business than I - and she did get paid for it.
 I only came to New York to see ~~and~~ Judy.

Judy said she loved her ring. She had come in early from Great
 Neck and we had lunch in our room. Helen joined us ~~later~~ ^{there} in the ~~the~~
 afternoon. We would all have ~~cocktails~~ cocktails and dinner together, when

Gerry and Betty finished their daily session.

I had looked forward to seeing Helen again. To me she was unique. She'd been born in New York, and her home had always been there. Though she'd traveled all over the world, New York owned her heart.

"How can you live in this filthy, crime-ridden, ^(crowded) cesspool, Helen?"

"Oh come on, Peggy! You know there's crime and filth wherever you go in the world."

"But not in the United States, There is no excuse for such an overwhelming, massive stench of corrosion," as there is in New York."

"Well, there are more people here - but then look at the other side of the street," she said. "New York literally has everything anyone could want - theaters, music, ballet, galleries and the finest restaurants ~~and~~ in the world. ~~Sadly,~~ ^{Cultural} it has no rival," she defended.

"And the prices are horrendous, and the New Yorker's faces are frozen in protective vacuity. They can't even see another human when they hurry down the streets. They could walk over a body and not even notice, or stop to see if there was still some life in it." I remembered feeling Helen's way when I was sixteen and seventeen, but New York, as well as my perspective, had changed. Helen still ^{had (blind)} ~~took~~ a childlike delight in the fantasy that had been New York thirty and thirty-five years ago and even then I wondered how closely she'd looked at it. Of course there are worse cities in the world, but those cities don't have the benefit of the vast, ~~new~~ wealth that offers education to all citizens, ^{while} and there is still sub-standard living and comparative poverty, but there is no need to starve or go unclothed. Help is available to those who ask for it. I still maintain that the human mentality cannot survive ~~in such sardine-packed proximity~~ in such sardine-packed proximity. Sooner or later there are varying degrees of mental breakdown, in even the most stable personality.

SECRET

"It's amazing!" Helen said, looking from Judy and back to me. "You two girls don't look at all alike, and yet you both resemble your mother."

"That was certainly the wrong thing to say," Judy said.

"Yes," I agreed. "Not only do Judy and I have no features in common, we have none with Mother either." Besides that, Judy had dyed her dark brown hair bronze. If I wasn't allergic to such things, I would have tried green, or even magenta - anything to lessen the resemblance. But I was stuck with my genetic coloring. Time was gradually adding some grey, but it seemed to take forever.

I had brought my three new paintings to show Helen and Judy. Judy had never seen any of my artistic attempts before - nor had Helen. I had found some scraps of wood in the basement. Gerry had brought them home from the shop years ago for use as kindling in the fireplace. We only ~~used~~ ^{used} the fireplace in the late spring or early fall. It was fine for moving a slight chill from the air, but in cold weather it threw the thermostat off and the rest of the house became a refrigerator. The cleaned and sanded wood scraps made fine "canvasses", and I liked the ease and results of working on the wood surface. Helen and Judy were kindly enthusiastic. Frankly, I thought the results were great. I particularly liked the bridge at Kobe. The Rotterdam berthed beyond the bridge for one day before leaving for the Yokohama-Tokyo port, and I had sketched the bridge from the Kido Deck. It had been cold and ~~windy~~ ^{windy} on that day - March 20th - and my painting brought the day back to me. The two small panels of Hong Kong harbor were satisfactory in themselves, but they were only intended to be preliminary paintings for the panoramic harbor scene. I planned to put on a large canvass, or perhaps two - that depended on how I would be able to handle something so large and heavy. What I needed was a vast, bare wall. I didn't have one - although there were concrete walls in the basement that offered possibilities. - Something to think about. Concrete basements walls are not portable if one decides to move, though that possibility was remote. Gerry still had dark recollections of our move into the house when the children were in varying stages of chicken pox. ~~Twenty-~~ ^{Twenty-}four years had not dimmed those memories.

346

("Ah - Hong Kong!" my mother said, when she saw the only completed large canvass on my dining room wall, "but I prefer it with flashing lights")
"So do I, Mother, but I don't know how to paint flashing lights? ")

- - - - -

Judy looked closer to being happy than I'd seen her for a long time. And we talked. She said that she'd spent far too much money on lawyers, with no results to show for it.

"It's cost a fortune, Peggy." It was about time that she realized that, and also that Mother's supply of money for such expenditures was far greater than her's. Only the lawyers were making a profit on this continuing battle. The great and tragic loss was the emotional debilitation to both my mother and Judy - and here, again, Judy was bound to be the loser. Mother was easily the stronger woman, and she was capable of diversifying her expenditures of energy and emotions. Judy did not have that ability. She was forty-four now, and it was time to turn her mind to other things. I hoped she was no longer practicing medicine without a licence. She had been trying that, and I was ~~was~~ afraid for her - to say nothing of the potential patients she might misguide. Legitimate doctors did enough of that without Judy joining their ranks illegally - although Judy called herself only a "referral consultant" - whatever doubtful status that might give her. I did not inquire - sometimes "ignorance" might be "bliss".

The depositions from Mother and Judy were still in the offing. No matter how they came out, Judy assured me that she would drop the subject from her mind. I hoped she meant that. She had inherited both of her parent's tenacity. It was Judy's strongest characteristic. In her anger I believe that, to some degree, she had persuaded herself to believe that Reback had given some small assistance in the authoring of the Taylor Caldwell books - that despite the fact that new Taylor Caldwell books were still being published with some biennial regularity. The Reback and Reback copywrite was still in effect for those years of the partnership agreement, and I supposed that ~~that~~ residuals were being deposited to Reback's estate, and that would eventually come to Judy. Meanwhile, she had been wasting her life in her desire for the estate, and her anger at both of her parents.

- - - - -

"I wish I was twenty-one again," Judy said wistfully.

"My God! - Whatever for, Judy? Do you really believe you could change anything?"

"I could try!"

"Yes - and what if you had to watch yourself do the same things all over again, and be powerless to change anything? The past is frozen - it can't be changed, and tomorrow it will be even further away. Think about your tomorrows. All that's important about the past is what you might have learned to guide your future."

and stability that were so essential to her. And it would have kept Judy close to Mother. Ted and Judy lived very well - there was no poverty in their lives. They had a large, beautiful apartment in an upper middle-class area, and they entertained and they traveled. But Judy's obsession went beyond that - and it was an obsession in the true sense.

I knew Judy wouldn't come to Buffalo, and I gave up.

"Helen, you come and celebrate our anniversary with us!"

"On Labor Day week-end! You must be out of your mind! The Tall Ships are coming in that week-end. I'm going to spend the entire week-end at my friend's house, sipping martinis and watching as the sailing ships pass right by her terrace. I wouldn't miss that for anything!"

I didn't blame her.

"Maybe I can come in October," Helen offered as solice. "I have things I must straighten out with my accountant. Let me see."

Helen's main occupation seemed to be involved in straightening things out with her accountant - it was an endless chore.

"I think you both stink," I smiled sourly, at both Judy and Helen. "All right. We don't need either of you - Gerry and I will celebrate our anniversary by ourselves."

We found a pair of old bridge-playing friends to celebrate our anniversary with: Millie and Fred Bellinger. We had a nice week-end

Robin was attending Yale now - on a full scholarship. We were proud of our grammar school drop-out.

At the age of ninety-six, Gerry's mother's hearing was understandably not acute. ~~When~~ When Gerry told her about Robin, she mis-heard.

"Jail!" she said in alarm. "Why is Robin in jail?" She was recalling some of Robin's childhood escapades.

"Not 'jail', Mother! - Yale! - the university."

"Oh!" Her relief was great, but it took a few minutes for her to adjust to Robin's change in status.

My mother wasn't greatly impressed. I think she would have preferred that Robin had fulfilled her dire predictions for him.

"Gerry! - We're going on the Rotterdam for the Bridge Cruise on January 3rd!" It was still October, but I was getting cruise "fever"

"We are? Who said so?"

"I did. You've never sailed on the Rotterdam."

I was surprised. He hardly made a token protest. A thirteen day Caribbean cruise was better than none at all, to me. And it was the only kind of vacation that would really take Gerry away from business. I will not pretend that my concern was entirely for Gerry's relaxation and well-being. - It wasn't. But if he expected me to suffer through those dreary jewelry-business shows, one time a year he could take what I considered to be an interesting vacation. I didn't have to depend on anyone but myself to take me from one part of the ship to another, and I could talk, or not, to whomever I pleased. Gerry enjoyed playing bridge and if he couldn't find a satisfactory partner, I was reluctantly available. He disliked the formal dressing, but once he was assembled, he did admire the result - and he liked the parties. Most of all he appreciated the glances that women threw his way.

"How come you don't look at me like that?"

"Gerry, may I use the mirror for a moment? - Between your admiration for yourself, and the single women's adoration, your head will burst. - May I use the mirror? - I can't see through you."

"How do I look?"

"You're magnificent, Gerry - absolutely dazzling!"

"Yes, I know - but how do I look?"

Helen hadn't come to visit in October - the theater and ballet ~~season~~ was at the height of the fall season, though her accountant had been temporarily placated. I called her:

"Gerry and I are going on the Rotterdam for the Caribbean Cruise on January 3rd, Helen. Why don't you come, too?"

"The Rotterdam again! - There are other cruise ships, Peggy."

"I know, Helen. I've been on some of them. - I like the Rotterdam and Gerry's never sailed on her. Come with us!"

"What's the itinerary?"

"I don't know, Helen! You know I don't go on a ship to visit the ports. You can take Gerry touring."

"Thanks for the offer, but I don't think I can go -. I'll see how things go. But I will come down and see you off."

I called Judy:

"Judy, why don't you and Ted take the Bridge Cruise with us on the Rotterdam on January 3rd."

"It's only October, Peggy. Why are you talking about January?"

"It's a ~~very~~ popular cruise, Judy, and it is ~~always~~ always fully booked very early. I had problems even this early in getting the cabin I wanted."

"'Madam' will be there!"

"Oh, Judy! - You know Mother would never take a two-week cruise. A her plans for the winter are already made. She has other things to do and other things to think about." (She certainly did.)

"Are you sure?"

"Positive, Judy! Come on! We'll have fun, and if your bridge has improved, we'll let you play on our team game. I'll even let you play with Gerry, and I'll play with Ted."

"Are you sure 'Madam' won't be there?"

~~Madam~~

"Judy! - I will say it one last time - she will NOT be there! - You see Mother behind every bush."

"Well - I get all these strange telephone calls and threats -"

"From Mother?"

"They must be - who else would do that?"

"That's nonsense! - She's almost totally deaf now. She can't even hear the telephone ring, and even with a booster she can't hear when someone is on the other end of the line. Everyone who has a telephone eventually gets calls from lonely freaks. You remember in 1955, when Gerry and I went through over three months of harassment: truck-loads of lumber were sent to our house, a nun called to ask for specification for for the shroud for Gerry's corpse, catered funeral breakfasts and lunches were sent to the house, and funeral directors came to make final arrangements. Neither the police or telephone company could do anything about it. We finally had to have an unlisted telephone number, which hurt Gerry business-wise. - And even then it took a long time before the harassment stopped."

"I'm sure that was one of 'Madam's' tricks."

"You're being ridiculous, Judy. How many times do I have to tell you to put Mother out of your mind? - Forget her!"

"I can't, Peggy. I tried, but I can't."

"All right, ~~Madam~~ Judy." It was hopeless.

"I'll let you know about the cruise. I'll talk to Ted."

"Yes, Judy. I'll call you again soon."

In the fall we were invited to the Robinson's new house-warming. Mother was also present. She gave me an imperious, distant nod. I was still on her hate list. She didn't look very happy - but that had nothing to do with her anger at me. She had more important things to be unhappy about.

She spoke to Jan about her plans, in a voice that was intended to reach my ears: she was going to spend the winter with close friends in California.

"No cruise this year, Janet?" Jan asked.

"No." Mother glanced coldly at me from across the room.

"Well - we'll all see you at the Doubleday party. - You and Gerry are coming, aren't you, Peggy?" She was aware that Gerry and I hadn't been invited, but -

"We haven't been invited, Jan. - Let it go - please!"

But Jan wouldn't let it go: "Janet, aren't Gerry and Peggy coming to the Doubleday party?" she shouted.

"No!" Mother glared at me, and looked away. She left early. She had no time for partying, she said. She had "important business matters to tend to". ~~She~~ Evidently she had a later date with Gibbons.

The Robinson's party was very pleasant. Their three-bedroom, one floor house was spacious, and brightly and tastefully decorated. I didn't care much about having a swimming pool - the expense, and Buffalo's short summer season hardly warranted it, and neither Gerry nor I went out in the sun. But it was a beautiful house, well designed for gracious entertaining.

- - - - -

"Why don't we have a place like the Robinson's, Gerry - without the swimming pool, of course."

"What for? I like it where we are. We have a nice house."

"Gerry, we built that house to raise four children in. They don't ~~live~~ live with us any more, thank God - and we have no need for four bedrooms for just the two of us, nor that additional wasted space upstairs. I wanted larger rooms, but not so many of them and I wanted a one storey house."

"I don't want to move. I like our house."

"You liked North Park, too."

"Yeah. It was nice there, and it didn't cost much. We could have fixed it up."

"That falling-down old place could never have been fixed up. It would have had to be torn down and rebuilt - beginning with the crumbling basement. And even if we finally had a presentable solid house, we still would have been living in the decaying neighborhood."

"There's nothing the matter with that neighborhood. My mother lives there, and people are remodeling the old houses. It's not so bad."

"Would you want to move back there again?" It wasn't a question, I knew he didn't - it was more of an objection to his unreasonableness.

"No - you know I wouldn't. But you know that if we're ever going to get anywhere, we can't afford to waste money on something we don't need. We have a nice house. Why do we have to prove anything to anyone

"It isn't that, and you know it. We don't even entertain anymore. Ah, he was right, I supposed. It was a well constructed house, and every year we spent a substantial sum to make certain that it ~~was~~ stayed that way - but one of these days, he might return from a business trip and find a note on the side door, informing him of the address of our new residence. I knew I'd never get him to move voluntarily.

"It wasn't much of a party," Jan called me.

I had to think for a moment, ~~and~~ I put my brush down. - Oh! - She was talking about the Doubleday party.

"Your mother invited that travel agent" (Inefficient), "and that

woman stood around trying to sign up the guests for her cruises. She's unreal!"

I still couldn't stand Inefficient, but I'd ^{tempered} ~~my dislike~~ my dislike for her, slightly. She had her passion for the Never-Never Land of ~~the~~ the cruise world, and her achievement of that goal, year after year, could only be earned by her dogged pursuit of new passengers. I had some empathy for that - but I had no tolerance for that false, serene facade she wore. And her inefficiency was self-defeating. She was far from being a young woman, and no one expected her ~~to~~ to exhibit youthful zeal and vigor, but a little more attention to the details of her job and concern for her clients, would have repaid her many times over with repeat clientele. I ^{hadn't started} ~~wasn't~~ out disliking her, I just ended up that way, and she did it herself.

Mother began to stop in again when ^{she} went to "our" dentist. Sometimes she only stayed for a drink, but sometimes she stayed for dinner, too.

If only she would stop crying out in public about "marrying the MAN she loved," as soon as he was free! The local newspapers were gentle when she said it during interviews, but they did quote her, and instead of being embarrassed when she saw it in print, she only became more vociferous.

"That shameless woman!" she said angrily. "You'd think she'd let him go - that shameless hussy!"

Who is shameless, Mother? - You, or that greedy man to whom you promise so much, and who encourages you to believe that he will divorce his wife to marry you? And what about that ~~shameless~~ wife of his who is so much younger than you - why is she so helpless against your promises to her husband? Shameless and greedy - all of you! But the other weren't my responsibility, not that there was anything I could do about controlling that wayward latent delinquent, though I kept trying.

"I sure have made one hell of a mess of my life," Mother said sadly.

"You sure have, Janet," Gerry patted her wig consolingly.

"Hey! Don't mess up my ^{hair} ~~hair~~ - I have a date! - Let's have another bourbon and then eat, I have to leave shortly."

Michael and Dorothy had parted. My concern was for Carlotta and Jennifer. Remembering the need I'd felt for my father, I spoke to him and wrote to him. He must keep in contact with his daughters. He assured me that he had no intention of ignoring them, ever.