

Bethesda, Sept. 8, 1950

Dear father,

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Thought I'd better take advantage of one of my rare moments of feeling all right to write the latest nasty news, because I never know from one moment to the next what's going to happen to me.

The Thing took a turn for the worst last Saturday, Sept. 2, and became acute the next two days. They gave me sedatives which made it possible to keep something on my stomach once in a while, and since then it has been a little better. Dr. Norton holds out no particular hope, for which I'm grateful because I'd rather know what the story is than suffer hope continually deferred. I take mild sedatives continuously through the day, which while it doesn't stop the nausea, inhibits some of the vomiting. I don't know whether I'm in favor of that or not, since most of the time I'd rather get it over with. On the other hand continuous vomiting isn't pleasant either. At this stage I feel like vomiting most of the time, but the sedatives keep it down. As I say, I don't know which is preferable. In any case, each new day holds a prospect of more of the same torture. I think I'm as able as most to bear pain with my share of courage, but this has pain beat a mile for sapping every modicum of courage and hope. The thought that a good three-quarters of each day from now on til God only knows when is going to be spent in abject and animal-like abysses of misery drains me of every spark of courage. I think I'd feel the same way if I knew it would end in a week, but I have no reason to hope for such a short duration. The feelings come and go at their own will, and no medicine nor sedative had had any substantial effect other than that of inhibiting vomiting and generally calming me down. - Except in the region where I most need calming. In the intervals when I feel all right I have the time to think, and this usually has a bad effect.

Everyone has been very, very kind, William above all, of course. He stayed home the day after Labor Day to take care of me and to meet mother, whom he had called to come and get Laurence, since I am unable to care for him. She very kindly cancelled a trip she was going to take to Atlantic City with Aunt Queenie to come and get the boy. As she has been housebound most of the summer due to her teeth, I appreciate her sacrifice. She and Laurence left on Wednesday morning. On Tuesday William also called on the principal of the Bethesda Elementary School, who kindly said that Laurence was definitely accepted and that he would excuse his not coming to school for as long a period as I was sick. The Browns fed and cared for Laurence most of the weekend, and also brought William's meals over on a tray. I don't mind being alone here all day, because I feel like a sick dog anyway, and can care for my self in the periods when I feel better. I don't want to see anyone except William. I have my up days and my down days, just as I have my up hours and my down hours, but the refined torture comes in not knowing when the brief spells of feeling all right are going to end, but knowing for sure they soon will. It's the "drop that other shoe" sort of thing, except that the shoe always gets dropped, and the horrible nausea always returns. I can't drink, smoke, nor eat most things, needless

to say. I have so far managed to get my present light housework done in the morning after breakfast and the usual upchuckings, when I feel at my best and am glad to be able to do something useful. Eating constantly would be the best medicine if I could manage it, but unfortunately almost everything in the food line makes me gag before it can exert its therapeutic value. . I never thought it would be so very easy to quit smoking. I can't ride in cars, either.

I'm afraid I'm both incoherent and nauseating. This is merely a true reflection of the state of my mind, which is incoherent and nauseated. At least we can thank God there hasn't been the slightest tendency towards a miscarriage, which Dr. Norton says very often accompanies such toxic pregnancies. By the way, William's arithmetic was all wrong and this baby is due toward the end of April. Since it will be a Caesarean, he says the surgeon would probably make it around the 10th of April. I can't think beyond tomorrow, however, so I hope you and the rest of my friends will really pray for me to be given my usual strength of will back again, and for this nightmare to end, if only partially. I really need help, because I don't know how long I can stand it.

Love,

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