

Grahamstown

Monday, 18 November 1963

My darling, my Cocoon,

I should've written already, I *wanted* to, and yet everything was still so unsayable, too tender to touch with words. Especially because the return here was such a tumbling back into banal realities like marking exam scripts, making my way through piled-up work, and – so difficult – learning to adapt to a life without communication.

Darling, all that remains of our last, almost surreal night is a strange, unbelievable and vaguely terrifying vortex. Were *we* involved in that? Did we say all *that*? From where – and why – did everything come down on us like that?

And yet if I look at the week as a *whole*, then it remains one of revelation; we succeeded in seeing each other more deeply than ever before, despite – and through – all the surging passions. And I now feel more *attached* to you and more wholeheartedly in love with you than ever seemed possible before. “What a piece of work is a man ...”

I remember Gordon's Bay especially, our crystal ball of wonder and happiness and fulfilment. It *was* in fact what we believed it would be before the time: unalloyed togetherness such as we've never known before.

And the other things, darling, about which I can hardly speak, perhaps they were also necessary, in an irrational, cruel way, because it made us face up to each other in all our forlornness and importunity. About the unforgivable hurt that I inflicted upon you, I can say nothing and ask nothing that would be adequate. Only that it will remain a matter of acute conscience for me, always. Because I love you, and I'm devoted to you in my need, and cannot bear the thought of you being hurt.

The trip back was a nightmare of guilt and longing and yearning. And I was *tired* – still am, now. As if this wasn't enough, I was involved in a collision outside Knysna. Absurd, actually, and thank God only a slight mishap: I'd just begun accelerating from 35 m.p.h. when a scooter

on the far left of the road swerved in front of me to turn right. I swung the car round and the one mudguard knocked him over. I thought the man was stone dead. But when I stopped to get out, the old bugger was standing upright next to his (almost undamaged) scooter. He was through-and-through Afrikaans, but in his shock he spoke English. Just wanted to know, in broken English: “Joer not gouing toe meik trabbel fôr mie hei?” And when it appeared that he and his scooter were unscathed, and that only my car had suffered a dent, I got back inside to drive away. At that point he let out a shout and came running up to me, his hands stretched pathetically out before him, uttering the classic complaint: “Maai paaip ies brouken, mên.”

About that I laughed for the next 50 miles.

I arrived home at eleven, completely exhausted. Had exams on Saturday and went to Port Alfred to see Naas, who was there for the day, so I could give him his copy of *Die Ambassadeur*. Yesterday I lay around in a swoon all day. Today I'm working like mad.

Your lovely, dear letter had arrived in the meantime; it lay open, with all the details about our week there for all to see. Estelle said nothing specifically. Just let it be known that it had come as a “shock” to her. Presumably she did in fact read it. When will the embankment collapse? “Blow, wind! Come, wrack!” I am *tired*. I don't know what lies ahead. All I know is that I am impossibly in love with you, and that I've so foolishly hurt you.

Your parcel ended up at this address – ridiculous! I got it today (the slip arrived last week). The black-and-white set looks especially nice. The rest are more ordinary. I'll send them on to you. I would so love to see you in them, especially in the little bikini with the ribbons.

January?

“Lord, I am not worthy.”

The spirit is dark across the darkening water.

The stag calls out in the desert.

Creation is unborn and waits, yearning.

I say your name, Ingrid. Your tender, lovely, virginal name. I say it with love and painful tenderness. And I hail you with need and yearning.

Your short hair with sun, sea, smoke, and with hair's own fragrance,
and the little curl on your forehead;
your lovable ears that don't always listen,
that are so very sore, especially after car accidents;
and your brown eyes, happy or sore,
laughing and crying, quiet or cursing;
and your soft mouth, kissing and talking;
and your chin that teases and provokes;
and your fragrant, smooth, speckled shoulders;
your back, brown from the sun;
your white, round breasts, full and with milk,
with those lovable nipples – breasts that calmly move as you breathe
and read;
and your soft, labile little tummy;
your little arms with their beautiful hands,
the messy nails and the notch in your back;
and your legs, enticing twist of calf-muscles when you wear black
shoes;
and your loveliest feet with the leucodendron, walking across mountains,
refusing to take rides with strange men;
your white backside that turns sitting into an enchantment;
and your small, high hill, nestling confidentially under my hand
and deep and warm and soft the cocoon
my cocoon, eager and hungry, tender and passionate.
Everything. You. You.
Mine and also not mine.
Mine.
My darling I love you.

Appallingly yours,
André.

Castella

Saturday night, 23 November 1963

My dearest André,

A mad day yesterday, mad today, sand sun sea, and Simone and I wonderfully burnt; I have just fallen into her little bed. Dearest man, firstly, congratulations and once again congratulations on *Die Ambassadeur*, which only appeared today; and for which you had to drive all the way to PE; and now you're having a party; who's there? Since Guy [Butler] is in Cape Town, not him of course, but Rob and company and Frieda ... I hope you got my telegram yesterday; the dust cover I have not yet seen – definitely Monday; when our lost parcel will probably also arrive. W.E.G Louw's review is of course very favourable; but as a *review* it is not clear and not good enough; I read *Die Ambassadeur* again; quick this time, hey? and once again found it revelatory in every respect; my only objection remains that if the ambassador was in reality confronted with our situation, it would contribute to his fall. W.E.G.'s objection, therefore. But the human relations are fine, true, good, and the characters grow on one – even this Stephen; though not yet Gillian; but maybe personal – because this “conflict with God” is for me, personally, such an unthinkable situation.

It is exactly the objection that I have against Jack's new book, from the first page; the actual ms is lying here in front of me: Ag, child! I miss you – Antje, a Dutch woman who read the cutting about *Die Ambassadeur* with Uys today – says you look like me. For some stupid reason, this touched me. Are your shoulders better again and where did

you swim? The Caligenic is still on the window sill behind the yellow curtain. Mercilessly cruel words. Can anyone *hate* them more than a writer? Words instead of *your* hands, instead of your beautiful red head against my breast. I wish we could be together just once without feeling that we're bugging up other people and ourselves in the process, free and peaceful and responsible and *whole*.

I received the three Vasalis books from Mrs Bouws on Friday: *Parken en Woestijnen*, *De Vogel Phoenix* and *Vergezichten en Gezichten*. Do you know her? Apparently she was awarded the Reina Prinsen Geerligs Prize in 1957. Everyone loves me so much, as Jannie Gildenhuis says.

André, you must please not have an "acute conscience" about our clash or whatever. I see you as a *whole* person, and I love you as such. And don't be afraid. Fear is evil. I read your heartsore letter of Monday over and over again. I was damn insensitive as far as your distress is concerned. And about that I am *sorry*; but the pangs of conscience I feel about all that are positively subsumed in love, which heals everything. I want to exist in reality, and not be deadened by a dream. Lovely man, reddish longish hair, precious mouth, hands, lovely white moesie-body and cute little cock, protective force "that looks like me, that looks like everything I love" –

Yours in passion and longing and happiness and acceptance,
Your Cocoon.

ps: I'm meeting (hopefully) with Johan [Cilliers] on Monday and with Koos about *Die Ambassadeur*.

And come again soon, and tell me everything.
Your Ingrid Jonker.

pps: You do belong with me after all. Love *and* darling. IJ.

And more: Write, man! "Stage fright?" Had it too, but it's nonsense. Read [Adam] Small: good, hey? I.