

7/29/48

... And what is it to be young in years and suddenly wakened to the anguish, the urgency of life?

It is to be reached one day by the reverberations of those who do not follow, to stumble out of the jungle and fall into an abyss:

It is then to be blind to the faults of the rebellious, to yearn painfully, wholly, after all opposites of childhood's existence. It is impetuosity, wild enthusiasm, immediately submerged in a flood of self-deprecation. It is the cruel awareness of one's own presumption ...

It is humiliation with every slip-of-the-tongue, sleepless nights spent rehearsing tomorrow's conversation, and torturing oneself for yesterday's ... a bowed head held between one's hands ... it is "my god, my god" ... (in lower case, of course, because there is no god).

It is withdrawal of feeling toward one's family and all childhood idols ... It is lying ... and resentment, and then hate ...

It is the emergence of cynicism, a probing of every thought and word and action. ("Ah, to be perfectly, utterly sincere!") It is a bitter and relentless questioning of motives ...

It is to discover that the catalyst, the [Entry trails off at this point.]"

There's nothing more artificial than descriptions of young girls and the fanciful comparisons that go along with them. Lips like cherries, breasts like little roses; oh, if only it were enough to buy some fruit and flowers at the store! And if lips really did have the taste of cherries, who on earth would have the courage to be in love? Who on earth would be tempted by a caramel—that is, a sweet kiss?—But, hush, enough, it's a secret, taboo, let's not say too much about lips.—Alice's elbow, seen through the prism of the emotions, was at times a smooth white virginal point, passing into the warmer tones of the arm; at others, when her arm dangled passively, it was a sweet round dimple, a quiet little nook, a side alter of her body. Aside from this Alice resembled any other daughter of a retired major brought up by a loving mother in a suburban cottage. Like others, she occasionally stroked her elbow, lost in thought, and like others she learned early on to poke about in the sand with her slender foot.

Alice had become engaged four years ago, when she was still in her seventeenth spring—"Miss Alice," mumbled the young man, "will you permit this slim hand—to be mine?" "What do you mean?" she asked. "I'm asking for your hand, Miss Alice," stuttered the young paramour. "Surely sir, you don't expect me to cut off my hand," said the naïve girl, nevertheless flushing scarlet. "Then you do not wish to be my betrothed?" "Oh yes," she replied, "but on the condition that you give me your word you'll never importune me for any of my extremities; that's ridiculous!" "Wonderful!" he exclaimed. "You have no idea how enchanting you are. Intoxicating!" And he spent the entire evening roaming the streets and repeating: "She understood it literally; she thought that I...desired to take her hand the way a person takes a piece of cake. It makes one want to drop to one's knees!"

They made a handsome couple. Mrs. S. watched them gladly from the window as she embroidered a napkin. "You've changed," the young man