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VON IPO

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Dear Carolyn:

What a lovely, long letter arrived today, and I want to answer it at once with the hope that it will reach you before you disappear into Germany.

I don't understand from my own experience the obsessiveness that is involved in your relationship with Marci. I simply have to hope that the energy it creates and the delight that must be involved outweigh the pain. I suspect I'll feel the same way about Mary's most recent involvement. She has certainly sounded happy about it until very recently when Marie Claire began to feel threatened. No doubt we will hear much more about it when she comes out for several days before the Women and Words conference the first week-end in July. Marian phoned a couple of days ago to say she'd like to come then, too, and I didn't have the heart to say no. I hope that isn't a hopeless combination. Peggy and co. are coming right after the meetings, and there wouldn't have been room for Marian then. When Mary is in full involvement, she doesn't usually mind a larger audience for her wonderings; so maybe it will work out. If not, I will have to distract Marian and give Mary and Helen ~~and~~ a chance to talk. I'm so glad Mary had a chance to talk with you.

We did meet Solange when we were last in Montreal, and I didn't take to her at all. She seemed to me oddly crude and willful, which maybe Marie Claire wanted as an extreme contrast to Mary. Of course, it's difficult not to be able to talk with her in her own language, for, though her English is very good, it doesn't give her a way to say as clearly as she might be able to in French. I hate the thought that Mary's new love is 'hard'. I'm glad you met Marie Claire on her own turf. She is delightful there, her most generous and winsome self. Out of her own element, she tends to be so neurotic that it's hard to deal with her, curled up in masses of blankets, unable to eat, full of dire predictions about herself and everyone else.

We had our first swim on the 21st of April, only two more since then because the weather has been grey a good deal. But today was lovely, and I did a leisurely 45 lengths while Ian swam a mile beside me. Then in the late spring light, I cut the lawn after dinner. Now the dogwoods glow in the last of the light, and I watch the eagles flying low to their nests. It will be hard to leave here on the 14th for my trek to New York, about which I feel virtuous and nervous. Even having to say only "a few words" fills me with apprehension. Last week the SPCA honored a cat in a cage at its annual fund raising dinner. I identify. I'm reading things about the new governor of New York, who sounds a rather splendid fellow, because he will be the real speaker of the evening, a rather fine political accomplishment for the 10th anniversary of the National Gay Task Force.

I'll spend the night of the 14th in Vancouver, catch a 7:15 a.m. flight to New York and get there in time to have dinner with my goddaughter and her father. The next day I'll have lunch with my agent, whom I've not met, tea with the college friend who introduced Helen and me and whom I've not seen for 30 years, and then go on to the banquet. I leave at the civilized hour of 10:40 a.m. the next day, and, if planes are on time, I should be on the night boat back to the island,

a basket case.

We go for a week to Winnipeg in mid June. Jean will pool and house sit for us while we're away. I'm involved with the annual Canadian Library Association meeting, talking about gay holdings in libraries, about publishing of gay books, etc. I'll do several writers' work shops. Helen is being provided with a car, and we have a couple of good friends there happy to keep her occupied while I'm working. I think I may even come home with several hundred dollars in my pocket after taking care of Helen's air fare. Then there's Women and Words, but that will take us off island for only a couple of days.

We don't yet have wall to wall house guests, and I hope we will have breaks as it now seems. Sandy Boucher, a writer whose work has interested me for some time, has written to ask if she might come to see us. When I answered inviting her, she asked if she could be Treelight, her lover, 'a true healer'. I wrote again, saying we drank, smoked, and ate red meat. She replied with tolerance; so they'll be here, probably for a long week-end in July. Helen's sister will be with us in early August, and we've got other guests dotted about but for shorter stays than usual. I need to make more than a few hundred dollars to pay the summer bills. With interest rates down, with a new gold crown in my head, I'm started with a lower bank account than I like. I'm hoping the money from the film of Desert will turn up early in the fall. But I don't like to spend eggs as if they were chickens.

My own work continues to be spotty, no book emerging. Mostly I content myself with short things and stay patient. Every now and then I feel restless, wondering if there isn't another book after all, but I've wondered that at least seven times before.

Hoppy's 89th wore us all down finally, and on the last day I had to tick her off; she was being bloody-minded and tyrannical, and, though she thinks age should finally excuse her life-long temptation to be sulky and rude, I disagree. She will be contrite for a while now, or at least take out her bad temper elsewhere. The show was the best party ever, including the birthday cake and a trumpet solo played by a young cousin. David Watmough's toast was a bit over elaborate, but everyone was in a festive mood. Not many pictures sold, a sign of the times I suspect, though Paul Yuang said at the beginning of her career in 1973 that she had ten years of sales ahead of her, enough to last out her life time. Fortunately, the gallery buys all of her paintings outright, and they do the framing; so she's not dependent on the whims of the particular market, and I think they feel sure of their investment, given her popularity and age.

Helen is busy with gardening this time of year, and we're both reading the mountains of books we bought in the south. Leaving Helen to browse for two hours in a book store while I do signings gives us a harvest to last for months.

I'm sorry for Joan and Pat (and for you to have to sit on top of the volcano!) I think it's probably a good thing to have them move apart, though very painful in process. Living out an old age in recrimination or bitter silence is nothing to look forward to. Is Joan really regretting her years of circumspection and blaming Pat for them? She's sexually a very restless creature.

Have a good trip. Keep in touch when you can.

Love,

