

SIDE SIXTEEN

FAIRMONT

How do you like this: A love letter. "I've loved you all of my life...even though I just met you yesterday."

LILY

You shouldn't read the neighbor's mail.

FAIRMONT

I like to stay informed.

LILY

You're liable to end up in jail.

FAIRMONT

That's what's wrong with the penal system. It punishes self-improvement. Listen to this bit: "When I was a young child, all of my friends dreamed of becoming firemen or ballerinas or astronauts. I dreamed of passing eternity in your arms."

LILY

Must you read that?

FAIRMONT

Too soppy for you?

LILY

More like the ramblings of a borderline personality.

FAIRMONT

Do you mean that when you were a child, you never dreamt of passing eternity in my arms?

LILY

Eternity is an awfully long time.

FAIRMONT

A lifetime, then.

LILY

A lifetime is an awfully long time.

FAIRMONT

My kingdom for a direct answer! When you were a child, did you ever dream of falling in love someday?

LILY

I knew it would happen eventually. Everybody manages to fall in love....It's practically pandemic.

FAIRMONT

But did you fantasize about it? Did you aspire to it?

LILY

Since when did you get so sentimental?

FAIRMONT

I'm not being sentimental. I'm being highly practical. If I'm going to spend the rest of my life with you, it seems to me that I'd want to know the exact circumstances under which this turn of events came to pass.

LILY

You were single. I was single. There weren't any trees available....What else is there to say?

FAIRMONT

That's it. "There weren't any trees available"

LILY

I wasn't the sort of child who daydreamed about romance....You have to remember what my house was like growing up. What's that song from *Damn Yankees* about the baseball season— You know, how their marriage falls apart from April to September. Well, with my parents it was August through November. Election season.

FAIRMONT

The old C-O-O-T was like that even when you were a kid?

LILY

It got worse every year. My parents married for looks—and then their looks faded....Winters were fine, but things started heating up during primary season....By Election Day, they were at each other's throats....What makes it even more ridiculous was that they didn't disagree about very much. My father was a very liberal Republican. My mother was a very conservative Democrat. But it wasn't about substance for them....it was more about bragging rights—like rooting for a sporting team. Election Day was like the Super Bowl and the World Series and the Indianapolis 500 all rolled into one. Politics was the symptom, not the disease. They could just as easily have battled over whether to starve a cold or a fever.

FAIRMONT

Did you have any dreams at all when you were a child?

LILY

Only one.

FAIRMONT

Progress! A straight answer....Well? Are you going to tell me?

LILY

You promise you won't laugh.

FAIRMONT

I won't laugh.

LILY

Promise.

FAIRMONT

I swear.

LILY

On Dame Lucretia's grave.

FAIRMONT

Jesus Christ!

LILY

Fine. You know what I wanted to be when I grew up?....Not a doctor.

FAIRMONT

Not a doctor.

LILY

That's right. *Not* a doctor. And especially not a head-shrinker....It drove my father crazy. He dressed us up as doctors every year for Halloween—and I cried and cried and refused to go trick-or-treating. Finally, we compromised. Laurel went as a doctor and I went as a patient....But it worked out okay because everybody thought I was a mummy and she was a mad scientist.

FAIRMONT

So when did you change your mind?

LILY

I didn't—Not consciously. It just happened....Reality set in.

FAIRMONT

Are you saying you don't like being a psychiatrist?

LILY

Oh, no. I like it just fine....But when I was a girl, it was my worst nightmare....It's amazing how adulthood does that to you. It transforms your worst nightmares into your vision of the

good life....Whoever would have though it? Lily Gage—A psychiatrist. I always thought I'd grow up to be the opposite of a psychiatrist....That I'd spend my life driving sane people crazy.

FAIRMONT

I'm not going to say it.

LILY

Good. Don't

FAIRMONT

I'm going to think it, but I'm not going to say it.

LILY

When you're done thinking it, let me know.

FAIRMONT

Okay, I'm done. But I am curious why didn't you want to be a doctor.

LILY

It's so damn bourgeoisAnd what's more bourgeois than being a psychiatrist....? Listening to other bourgeois people complain about how bourgeois their lives are....And then they go home to their bourgeois spouses whom they've complained about all afternoon and complain about paying so much fucking money to their goddam bourgeois psychiatrist.

FAIRMONT

Do you think *I'm* bourgeois?

LILY

Of course, but at least you don't complain. You're contentedly bourgeois. Like Madame Bovary's husband.

FAIRMONT

Thanks.

LILY

Don't mention it.