

## One Year To Live

Cindy's sup

September

Two days now, and I still can't force my brain to think about it. Got to concentrate! Say it aloud, no that doesn't help. I can hardly keep from laughing. It is all so ludicrous. Die—what does it mean? Can't think about it! Not really think. But it's always there, that subtle gem of knowledge, "Little one, your big sister is ill and will go away soon to be with God." Hell, I'm seventeen years old. Can't they just say rotten, lousy cancer is eating her insides and she's going to die the slow death. God! Can't think about it!

December

She's back from the big amazing hospital that did a total of nothing towards effecting a cure. Think about it all the time now. We all flutter around her but don't really talk to her. We avoid controversy, upsets, and heart-to-heart communication. She looks terrible. Lost twenty pounds. But she's really proud of being slim and talks about all the swell clothes she's going to buy. She doesn't know. We think about it night and day and try not to show it. We're very brave but we sneak tears. Christmas is hard. God—where is he? What is it all about? Why *me*? In the end it's always selfish.

February

Routine's set in and the situation is deteriorating. The bravery dissolved soon after Christmas and we're at each others throats. Mother has adopted her usual "Onward Christian Soldiers" attitude. She girds up her loins every morning and marches off to work (where, no doubt, she wallows in the pity of her friends). But she doesn't quit and stay home with her. But her "Christ on the cross" face does a "Mr. Hyde" when she gets home. I don't know what's happening to me, maybe it is my fault. I just don't know what to do. Always selfish.

Aunt Marge died today. We shouldn't tell her, Mom said. We agreed. An hour later tears, screams, hysterics. Mom told her.

April

Long winter, early spring, warm days. She knows now. It's an anti-climax. We're used to "it" now. My friends wonder at my cool. My brain is frozen. Concentrate on fun and getting by. Laugh it up a lot. It seems to help for awhile. She's tucked tucked away in the

## MANUSCRIPTS

back room, eating pills and painting pink and blue scenes. I avoid "that" room like the plague. Maybe it is catching. What do I know? The jerky doctors gave up last year. Her friends stay away in droves. Tried to get her to move upstairs so I could relax and be with her but she refused. Do this, do that. What am I—her maid? I HATE MYSELF. Tears, floods, and streams of tears. She just loves us and wants to be near us. And she just can't want to be alone if and when "it" happens. "If"—listen to me. After all this time and I still can't face it. Can't do enough for her now, making up for lost time and saving my immortal soul. It's always selfish.

June

She's back in the hospital and we're breathing easier around here. Hospitals are sensible places for sick people, not in the home where they might mess up the lives of the innocent victims of tragedy, their relatives. I'm getting so bitter I don't even talk anymore. I float and mumble in a dali-esque dream sequence. Someone else's words and actions? I've mutated into a living, breathing, non-reaction machine. If only someone would make words for my head to hear. But the doctors aren't interested in my head, they help the living—not the living dead.

July

She's been back a couple of weeks complaining of swelling, and staring. Pain isn't gone. But of course it is—the doctors said so. Unfortunately there's a quality of pain the good M.D.'s never dreamed of in their scientific philosophies. The pain may be gone, but the disease is still there and that's the biggest pain of all. Friends still come over and she seems to pick up. Can't blame her; we must be as depressing as a Camus novel, struggling to find ourselves and our souls at her expense. Mom barks at her one minute and canonizes her the next. We all hit each other the wrong way.

July 7th

"The owl whose night-bound eyes are blind unto the day, cannot unveil the mystery of light."

She's dead. It's over. It's done. Mute shock sits in. We didn't live this past year; we weren't prepared. Tears, friends, arrangements, more tears and the black earth shutting her in and locking me out. What was it? Oh, yes, I love you. Did I tell you how much of a pal you always were? Did I tell you I didn't mind your bossing? Really I was proud. What do I do now? How do I live without your smiling face? In the end it's always selfish.