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Tuesday, November 26th W H D

Now it is time to get the wheels of life rolling again -- so Mr. West came out from the White House to The Elms this morning and we talked about moving three suites of furniture to occupy the rooms that will so soon be vacant -- that from my bedroom to go into Mrs. Kennedy's, from Lynda Bird's probably to go into Caroline's, and from Luci's to go into John'John's. We talked about how much could be stored at the White House and how much I would need to send to commercial or government storage warehouses. This is one of my first encounters with Mr. West, and I have the feeling that I will be seeing a lot more of him.

And then at 3:00 this afternoon came the most important event of the day. I went down to the White House to see Mrs. Kennedy and to discuss the housekeeping details which any woman moving out would talk over with any woman moving in. There was a lovely tea table spread, and we sat down together in the private sitting room -- the family sitting room called the West Hall.

She was orderly, composed, and radiating that peculiar sort of aliveness and charm and warmth. She is quite an indescribably fresh flower -- so I won't try to describe her except that there is a great element of steel and stamina somewhere within her to keep on going as she is. She told me that ~~the~~ two people in the house that I could always depend on were Mr. J. B. West, who knew more about it

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than anybody else, and Mr. Ketchum, the Curator.

She said, "Lady Bird, never tell a waiter if you don't like this particular type of cookie, that you would rather have a macaroon, because you will not see that butler again for two weeks. He'll be gone on vacation and there will be other off times. Just tell everything to Mr. West."

She told me she would like to ask a favor of me, and in light of the way she asked it, if it had been to chop off one's right hand one would have said "Sure" just that minute. What she wanted was to let the school continue on the third floor -- the area where Caroline and about 20 of her young playmates in the kindergarten and the first grade go to school. They plan to do something different after Christmas, but they thought it would not be a good idea to disrupt them right now. That was the easiest, most delightful thing to say "Yes" to.

She went on to say a lot of things like -- "Don't be frightened of this house -- some of the happiest years of my marriage have been spent here -- you will be happy here." In fact, she repeated that over and over, as though she were trying to reassure me. Then we got up and walked around from room to room, so that I could see how my furniture would fit into her bedroom (and it's going to do very nicely). And then we went into her sitting room (or rather I guess you should call it a dressing room) which is one of the most exquisite rooms I have ever

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seen -- with the closets all covered with ^ltrompe d'oeil -- little pictures of Profiles in Courage, Caroline at 2, and a yacht at Hyannisport -- all the things that mean something to her -- a stamp or trademark that will not be repeated by anybody for a long time. For me, so much work will have to come first that I expect it will turn into an office rather than a dressing room, and it will get short shrift, at least in the first few months.

We talked about the staff. She told me that the French chef, Rene, was absolutely divine, although everything he did for them was very rich. She used the words, "Jack never likes those rich things that he does." Neither one of us noticed the present tense -- or rather neither one of us evidenced in our manner that we had noticed it. She said Rene has absolutely no ¹¹temperament, which is divine in a Frenchman -- I am going to be very fortunate to have him.

We walked through the hall and she pointed out a bust by Houdon. The famous French sculptor had done it somewhere around 1795 or thereabouts. It is of the Chaplain in George Washington's Army. She told me of the absolutely incredible value that is put upon it. And it is an anonymous gift -- anonymous, I hope, to everybody except IRS! We went into the lovely Yellow Room where the Cezannes are and that, obviously, is what she likes best in the whole house -- or so I thought.

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And there on the table were the black boots -- the boots that were on the riderless horse in the funeral procession. There was also a folded flag.

Then we went into the two rooms that would be Lynda's and Luci's and are now Caroline's and John-John's. And such exquisite little gay confections of rooms -- Caroline's especially, pink and white sprigged delicate material on a canopy bed, and pictures, pictures, pictures everywhere -- some of them they themselves did, I think, and I believe there were one or two by Mrs. Kennedy. (There was a cot lying in the middle of the room that was occupied by President Kennedy. She said Stash has been here and he absolutely refuses to sleep in Jack's bed.) In fact, there were several Kennedy family members (sort of) running in and out of doors as we wended our very businesslike way through the halls.

Finally, close to 5:00, we went down to the East Room, where Lyndon was meeting with the Alliance for Progress Members to reassure them of our country's continued strength and interest in them. We took our seats very quietly behind him and sat and listened to his speech. It is doubtful that anyone else is a star when she is present -- but all the more my heart went out to the bravery of Lyndon who marches into this circumstance with so much determination and not all the preparation

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that one would have sought if one could have foreseen one's destiny at 16.

In the evening, I went home to dinner with the comfortable companionship at The Elms with June and Bill White, Nancy Hanschman Dickerson and her husband, Abe and Carol, the Thornberrys, and the Jack Brookses.