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Thursday, June 3rd WHD

I woke at the reasonable but not self-indulgent hour of 8:30, had breakfast, and looked forward to five delicious free hours before time for the harness of hairdo and corset and gloves and off for the Commencement address.

There is a long slope down to a perfect little horseshoe of white sandy beach, like lava rock to the left, and straight in front the blue and green Caribbean, changing color with the depth, brilliant in the sunshine, mountains on the other side. I lay on the sand, swam far enough out to get good and tired, swam back and tried snorkeling. Getting in and out one had to watch for the sea urchins, myriads of them, black balls varying from the size of a lemon to a cantelope, long black spine sticking upwards in all directions.

Bess and Tony and I got our snorkeling masks and into a motorboat with a Negro life guard named Randolph, whose English might as well have been Portugese for all I could understand. The coastline is dotted with these lovely little perfect horseshoes of white sand. At the second one up was a promontory of craggy rock, and off it Randolph said there was some good snorkeling. First I tried the allover mask and the fins. It was one of life's best experiences -- a new world. Sea fans, fragile as lace, grey and purple and green, waving gently in the current. Coral, some as big as an elephant's side and perfectly round, exactly the

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convolutions of the human brain -- thousands of years in the making, they tell me.

The tall plants called gorgonian stretched upward some 8 or 10 feet, as well as I could judge, beneath the water, and it is probably deceptive -- long finger-like tubes, 20 or more of them, swaying in the current, for all the world like those plants you see in horror movies at a cannibalistic feast, wrapping themselves around the victim if he comes too close and devouring him. I swam through millions of little tiny silver fish -- I don't know what happened to them because I didn't feel them, but there they were.

Tube sponge, like hollow purple fingers sticking upward, and some coral that was orange in color and much that was yellow, and every now and then a bit of red.

I thought the fish were the wonderful things. Lots of little bright yellow fish, young bluetang, they called them -- as they grow up they change color. Rock beauties, yellow about half way back and yellow tails, and the rest of them brown. Four odd butterfly fish -- oval, almost round, bright black spots surrounded with a white wing close to its tail, one on each side, for all the world like an extra pair of eyes.

But the most beautiful were the Queen Angelfish -- yellow

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and blue-green, variegated, so bright you could almost hang it up and use it for an electric light. The banded butterfly fish -- grey-white with precise bands. Each time I saw a new one, I wished I could tell somebody about it, it was so exciting, so wonderful. Most of them are quite thin, although some seemed as long as two feet.

Perhaps most startling of all was one whose every scale stood out -- you could almost count them -- shades of yellow, orange, amber, brown, some black, and underneath, pinky red! It was later that I found he was called the red-bellied angelfish.

It was a wondrous world and I love it. But my reason for coming waited for me. First the hairdo, then my prettiest new dress, white, cool-looking, with the blue-green beads at the sleeves, and on the boat for St. Thomas.

Governor and Mrs. Paiwonsky took us up the hill to the College of the Virgin Islands, and if you ask five people how many the student body is, you will get five different answers. I finally decided it was about 275 full-time students, 11 graduates, and a number of night students and parttime students. They are very

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sensibly geared, teaching them the occupations they can make a living out of on the islands. Hotel administration, construction, business administration, engineering.

First I met and congratulated the eleven graduates. One was white, one Spanish (judging by the name), the rest Negro. To the tune of pomp and circumstance, played by the Christiansted honor band of St. Croix, slow as a funeral dirge, we marched up the high hill, faculty, the graduates, the trustees, and I, by this time in my long black gown with the white band of my degree from the University of Texas.

It was probably the most glorious view I will ever see a commencement ceremony in. We stood on the top of the high hill, with the sea stretched before us and mountains on the other side. There was an excitement in being present at the first commencement of a new institution.

There were several brief speeches, one which startled me a little bit -- Senator Madura of the Virgin Islands Legislature requested that I take back to the President the hope of the islands that they could elect their own Governor and participate in National elections.

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And then Governor Pafwonsky introduced me. My brief message was that I was glad that they were preparing to keep their brains and talent at home -- their best people, by training them at home, so that they could give the islands the leadership it would need in the expanding decades ahead. The best line in it, I thought, was: "The winds of change, certain as the Trade Wind, are speaking over these lush lands and shimmering waters. The changes will be wise in proportion as they are directed by a trained generation which really cares. That is what we all hope this college will produce."

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And then the really important event of the day. The President of the college, Dr. Laurence Womners, introduced Mr. Henry Reichholt, who announced a gift of a hundred thousand dollars to the College of the Virgin Islands. This is the second portion of a gift that will total one million. Mr. Reichholt has chemical plants, it seems, on the island, and also a hotel called Bluebeard's Castle. He was quiet and shy and had little to say. But not so the other benefactor of the Virgin Islands College -- Neill Harvey, who had given a seventy thousand dollar check to build a student center. I pulled the ribbon on a plaque dedicating it, and he made a very delightful, but really rather lengthy speech.

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There was a reception. I stood in line with the Governor and Mrs. Paiwonsky, various University officials took turns introducing me. And here I got the surprise of my life, because I would have sworn the crowd before us did not number more than two or three hundred. I stood in line for an hour and a half, and I do believe two thousand people filed past. No great feat, but I did feel like I was earning my vacation!

The interesting, the thoroughly delightful thing to me about it was the great variety of the people -- some well-dressed, sophisticated, even elegant; some quite modestly dressed, poor in fact, but equally dignified, equally at home, poised and sure of themselves. There were a good many Danish names left over from the days of Danish dominion, but most of the population, it seemed to me more than four-fifths, were Negroes.

Finally the last guest filed past, hasty goodbyes all around, and back to the boat and three days' freedom!

My thoughts went to Luci. Just as I was getting my hair done I had a breathless call from her. "Oh, Mother, the most wonderful thing in my life has happened. Daddy wants me to go to Chicago with

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him and play First Lady." And I said, "That's just wonderful," but I was a little surprised that she was so delighted to play First Lady. And then she went on to say, "Oh, no, that's not it at all, Mother. Beth is here, and she is going back to Marquette and they're having a big college weekend -- they're having dances and all sorts of parties, and she brought down a boy with her and he's just tons, Mother -- he's a tough kid." "Tough" means great, wonderful, nice, attractive.

So she wanted to spend the night in Chicago after her Daddy's speech was over with friends of Beth's and then go on to Milwaukee and spend the weekend with the Felsteins, who had had one of the barbecues during the campaign for Young Democrats. She had stayed with them; she had travelled with them, she said. They had been very fond of her. "It was very nice, Mother, very reliable." Actually I remembered they had been to the White House and I had had several nice letters from them, so I didn't feel too averse to calling them and asking them if it would be convenient to have a little girl spend the weekend with them. The problem was, Daddy was leaving in an hour, I had to do it right now. That is the way Luci's life goes.

I called the Felsteins, nobody answered. Then Luci called back frantically and said that one of her Agents, Jim Goodenough I believe it was, who had left her detail, had gone to settle in Milwaukee,

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he and his wife. She'd ADORE to stay with them, and she KNEW it wouldn't trouble them in the least. So I tried to reach him, or, rather, his wife. To no avail. Her number didn't answer.

I was getting frantic, too. Then I got Jerry to help me. He found Agent Goodenough, the Agent said yes, indeed, Luci could stay with them, but he thought that he could locate the Fel^dsteins -- perhaps she'd enjoy it more with them, they'd have more room. Sure enough he did, talked to Mr. and Mrs. Fel^dstein, they did sound delighted. I phoned Luci back and she got off in the nick of time -- the greatest weekend of her life!

Back at the ^hBeautiful ^hHaven cottage number seven, Tony and Matiana and Bess and I sat out on the terrace for a drink -- this time not the exotic rum punch, but the more conservative rum tonic. I remembered the advice of my dear Senator Dick Russell, who said, "Always choose the wine of the country. You'll get the best that way." But the sweet, fruit-filled rum punches of the night before were a little too young and gay for me.

Bess went to bed rather early, and Tony and Matiana and I talked comfortably and happily about Belle Pattil^o Tippet and Elaine

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and Bernice and Edwina and their possible visits to Washington this summer. And the visit that I did have and enjoyed so much with Winston. And, not quite so happily, about Sarah and Susan, whose lives are filled with shadows these days, and about Tony's friends in Santa Fe, the McKinneys, the Newmans. We even talked about the Brick House and its probable future -- I think a very frail phantasm of a future, and its Tennessee Williams-William Faulkner present.

This is part of what I came for -- quiet and peace.