

HOTEL DORSET

30 WEST 54TH STREET
NEW YORK

February 27, 1942

Dear Brenda:

Late last evening, I finished reading, for the first time, your "Me." It's at once so exciting and so satisfying -- and quite different from any other book at all.

In it I do not so much learn about you as about myself. I say "Does some one else also have this sloth, this loneliness, this childish insistence that 'Today I won't drink so much coffee'? This sharp appreciation of a summer noon, or the April light on a tree trunk, that ceases to be just looking and becomes an experience, a tangible solidity?"

If some one as good as Brenda does all this, I think, reading, then perhaps I'm only 60 % crazy, instead of 100 %!

.....

I may come out to Minnesota for this summer; find a shack on some lake, and there work on the novel which I've been planning for months and on which I did a good deal, though somewhat abortively, last summer. Perhaps I'll see you and the Golden Gaby in late April or early May.

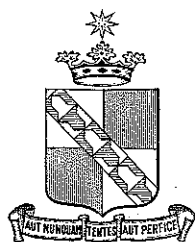
I've for years thought that I'd like really to live in Minnesota. I wish I had one small root in some one solid acre. I've been much worse than you have about drifting from acre to acre.....New York, London, Berlin, Vermont, Connecticut, California. Now that I'm fifty-seven (though only for 20 days have I been in that horribly advanced age) and practically grown-up, I ought to do something serious about this root business....I love the hills of Connecticut, and hate the grudging people; I love the gay people of New York City, and hate the steel and cement prison corridors that are called streets.

I think that some day, if I ever got settled down, I might become a novelist, and I am informed that that is a very fine and happy state of being!

I haven't your
minneapolis
address

Ever,

William Lewis



30 WEST 54TH STREET
NEW YORK

March 14, 1942

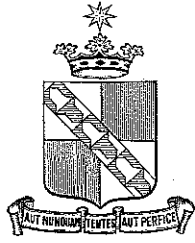
HOTEL DORSET

Dear Brenda:

Yes, I'll come out to Minnesota and spend the summer there -- maybe the fall, too. Your letter is so welcoming and encouraging. I'll get out there toward the end of April, by car, and stay in Minneapolis a while, with trips out to look for a cottage on a lake in very quiet country, maybe in the woods, for the summer. Maybe Gaby and you will come and stay with me for a week, a month; we'll work hard till 5 P.M. and then swim and loaf and talk.

I'll have two very good people with me -- Jim Hart and his wife, Gladys. He was for 17 years on the Journal, in Providence, R.I., then secretary to Governor Vanderbilt, then his wife and he spent a year in the Virgin Islands, just being human. He is my assistant, to this extent -- in the new novel, I use a lot of stuff about contemporary Uplift Societies, and such horrors, and Jim, a good pathologist, goes out and drags in the spiritual corpses. He has written a novel, too, and his wife has been a newspaperwoman. We'll keep them in Minnesota, shall we.

Shall I buy a country paper and become Governor?



HOTEL DORSET

30 WEST 54TH STREET
NEW YORK

Or shall I actually, through violence and Yoga, make
myself stick to the peculiar, improbable profession of
writing novels?

Love to Gaby and all cats.

Ever,

Sinclair Lewis

SINCLAIR LEWIS

The Dorset,
30 W 54, NYC

Sunday, March 22, 1942

Dear Brenda:

The present plan seems pretty fixed: Jim Hart and I start west on April 8 -- we decided to pick out a date arbitrarily -- by car, and drive to Minneapolis in a leisurely way, stopping now and then ~~on the way~~. Jim's wife, Gladys, will follow us by train, couple of weeks later. After we reach Minneapolis and have weighty conferences with you, Bill McNally, the Governor, and the Papal Nuncio, we'll find a couple houses on a lake for the summer -- whether in the Southern part of the state, mit hills, or in the northern forest silence, I don't know.

You suggest that I may be held back by the weight of many long novels, and that it might be well to uncouple them. I know so well what you mean, but it happens to be just the other way. They have been uncoupled, and too long. You see, while I was living with Dorothy, her very virtues, of courage and a passion to be a superior person, were rather overwhelming to any one in her orbit. It was impossible for me to devote myself to my peculiar world -- of Main Street and Babbitt and Arrowsmith. To keep alive, I got absorbed in the gay shallow world of the small theaters.

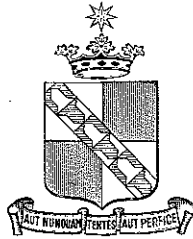
Now I want again to have the momentum ~~again~~ of those heavy novels pushing me on -- not, as you feared, holding me back. And the beginning is to be back in the Middle-west which has, to a strange extent, been the milieu of all the best things I have done -- even when they were written on Lago Pallanza or Jermyn Street or in the Vermont Hills.....Dodsworth in Berlin is still the Great Valley to which you and I were born.

I shall do six novels now, each so much more ponderous and earthy than its predecessor that the fifth will be in Norwegian and the sixth in Old Finnish.

Love to Gaby. She is to start her first novel, this summer, tell her.

Ever,

SL



30 WEST 54TH STREET
NEW YORK

March 31, 1942

HOTEL DORSET

Dear Brenda:

Your letters are exciting. But I don't think you'll tempt me to stay in Minneapolis, or even very near. I want to get out someplace -- perhaps on a Northern lake -- where I can absolutely devote myself to the novel, at least till late afternoon every day, and not see too many people in the evenings. The more likeable they are, after you have three or four, the more they wear you out. My idea of a perfect evening would be the ~~MMH~~ Harts and Gaby and you and I, on a porch looking out on a quiet lake, with deep pines behind us, and I hope I can lure you two to my place for several weeks in the summer. By day, with me hammering a typewriter like a reporter with a deadline, you can work, swim, read, sleep.

I'll be around Minneapolis for a week or two in April; then, maybe, I'll spend

a long time there in the fall. I
don't yet know when I'll get there.....
April 8th, 9th, 19th, 29th -- something
like that!

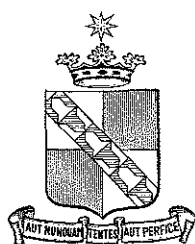
I'm reading Joe Beach's "The Twentieth
Century Novel" with great care and
great pleasure. He really gives one
glimpses into one's own world.

See you so soon!

Wigman Lewis

Brenda Ueland & Family Papers
Minnesota Historical Society

Joseph is colored.
I forgot to say that Joseph will drive their car out to God to see for me.



HOTEL DORSET

30 WEST 54TH STREET
NEW YORK

April 1, 1942

Dear Brenda:

I shall, I think, arrive in Minneapolis on Wednesday, April 8, a week from today! I'm coming out all the way by train. My car will be driven out by Joseph Hardrick, a gent with whom you will become well acquainted. He is my cook, butler, houseman, and chauffeur all in one; born in New Orleans, about 28 yrs old, a Devout Catholic -- but with a sense of humor; doesn't drink or smoke, but otherwise virtuous. He has been with me off and on for three years.

He'll reach Minneapolis three or four days after I do. Meantime I shall consult all the sages about places for the summer. I'll be staying at the Nicollet Hotel.

Do you think Gaby and you could have that evening free for dinner with me? I probably won't have time to get a letter back from you beforehand, but I'll call you when I get in.

Love, *Sam*