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Hello Louise,

It is now over eight months since I sent you my letter of July 13 2003, comprehensively answering your previous one of November 8 2002. Since I took eight months to answer your letter I am in no position to complain about your tardiness. However at this point I think it is not inappropriate for me to remind you that I am still patiently awaiting your responses.

We all live very busy lives, and I understand that it can be hard to find time for things that are not immediately pressing. However, you have now had ample time in which to think about all the points I made, and formulate your responses, at least mentally.

We are now well into a new year, with the busy holiday season well behind us. Perhaps now might be a good time for you to put your answers down on paper.

Let me remind you of the current status of our debate.

Your friend Karen deliberately poisons living creatures. This is the ugly fact at the center of our debate. And well over a year after your crude apology was first offered to me, the abhorrent ugliness of this fact remains wholly undiminished.

Instead, you have responded to me, first verbally, and then in writing, by offering up a string of ill-conceived, miserably specious justifications, none of which stands up to the most elementary examination. *Every single one* of the statements in your responding letter has been fully addressed, and shown conclusively to be either fraudulent, irrelevant, unsupported, or vacuous.

You have introduced a secondary issue into our debate: that of my attitude, and the distress this has caused you. This too I have taken the time to answer comprehensively. I have demonstrated that this notion you have, of having been mistreated by me, is merely a second layer of wrongness on your part, based entirely upon the first. I have patiently and carefully spelled out to you the great insult you have subjected me to, by thrusting your moral and intellectual corruption into my face in the way you have. I have explicated to you in clear and precise terms the nature of your own liabilities. I have shown that my anger is entirely justified, and that the terms in which I have expressed it are fully commensurate with your own offenses against me.

But despite any inclination you may have to re-characterize the nature of our dispute, the central issue before us remains the morality of Karen's work. The dominoes fall one way or another based ultimately on this.

If my assertions about Karen's work are correct, then she is indulging in something unspeakably vile. In this case, she is a criminal, and you are an accessory. In this case, your spoken and written words to me are everything I say they are: intellectually incompetent, fraudulent, morally corrupt,

and a gross insult to me. In this case, my outrage is fully justified. In this case, my challenge to you emerges, not as a wildly inappropriate personal diatribe, but as a model of patient exposition in the face of intellectual fraudulence. In this case, your gripes about my attitude are completely wrong and irrelevant. In this case, your bringing this matter to book group, and the extremely non-transparent manner in which you did it, are highly questionable. In this case, my condemnation *in absentia* by certain book group members, though based on laudable instincts, was wrong and misguided. In this case, my effective banishment from the group, and your remaining in it, is shamefully unjust.

This is the direct, linear, logical thread through everything.

On the other hand, if you demonstrate that my fundamental assertion is false, then the dominoes fall in an altogether different direction. In this case, it will turn out that Karen is doing something truly good and worthwhile. In this case, it will turn out that the things that she does to her victims (though still unquestionably sickening) are a miserable burden that she takes upon herself, performed as a genuinely selfless act of self-sacrifice for the good of others. In this case I am simply not understanding the big picture; my viewpoint is short-sighted, simplistic and wrong. In this case your support for your vivisectionist friend is completely right and proper, and my attack on you is indeed wildly inappropriate. My anger is infantile and misdirected, and your indignation is fully justified. In this case, you are quite right to feel wronged, and book group was perfectly correct to banish me.

In this case I will be the one wearing the dunce cap. I will be the one compelled to face up to extremely difficult truths about myself. I will be the one obliged to make a mortifyingly embarrassing apology, not just to my immediate interlocutor, but also to book group, for having caused them to witness such unbelievably crass idiocy. If proven wrong, I stand ready to issue precisely this public apology. Do you, Louise? (Like all my questions to you this is non-rhetorical; having been posed in writing, it now requires an answer in writing.)

But the heart of the matter, the essential pivot around which everything else turns, is this: is your friend doing something good, or something bad? This is the crucial issue that will lead to vindication for one of us, and denunciation for the other. This is what must be resolved *first*, before we can determine who, really, deserves our condemnation.

Though people who are on the losing end of arguments may wish to muddy the waters, such resolution is really not hard to achieve. All we have to do is answer each other's challenges fully, and the truth of the matter will soon become clear enough.

But in order to reach this resolution, it is essential that we hear a coherent response from you.

I have done everything I can to make your task easy for you. I have presented my arguments to you with extraordinary clarity. They are in written form, and in plain English. They are well-organized, lucid, and easily comprehensible. There is no confusion or mystery about any of my points; in all cases my reasoning is completely transparent; fully exposed for your examination. To understand my arguments precisely, all you have to do is read them attentively. If there is any part of my letter that you find in the least bit opaque please let me know, and I will gladly provide you with swift clarification.

Furthermore, you enjoy overwhelming moral support on all sides. You have the comfort and validation of friends, family, colleagues, book group; all of whom support your position fully. If you should encounter difficulty in refuting any of my arguments, you have a wealth of resources available to assist you in finding the perfect, adroit rebuttal. If you wish you can easily bring a team of a dozen minds to bear upon my letter, all working hard to defeat it. In addition to this technical support, you also have an abundance of emotional validation, reassuring you that in your face-off with me, you are the blameless victim of an unprovoked and irrational attack.

Please note that on my side, I have none of these luxuries. I must constantly swim upstream, exhaustingly, against the vast current of societal attitude, on which you simply float complacently along. My position, like that of any person who speaks out against entrenched societal wrongdoing, requires integrity, commitment and courage. Your position requires only the simplest and easiest attribute of all: conformism.

If, in addition to all the other advantages you enjoy, you are also right on the basis of the fundamental issues, then it should be trivially easy for you to make your case.

You will forgive me if I have some doubts about your enthusiasm for this process.

You find yourself in a desperately embarrassing position. You are trying to defend a profoundly corrupt position against an intelligent, educated, articulate opponent. You are being forced into painful self-examination, bringing your grim culpability into increasingly sharp focus. I can well imagine that you really wish this could all just be quietly forgotten.

The typical behaviour of human beings in your position is to attempt to subvert the discussion on some pretext or other. "Look, I really don't have time for this," they might say, or, "There's no point, we're never going to agree." (Though they were quite willing to argue their case before it became hopeless.) Or they might attempt (as you already have) the more blustery, "What right do you have to take me to task?" And of course there is the always popular appeal to legality: "Look, I'm not breaking any laws, OK?"

Or something that I believe you may find tempting as a possible mode of avoidance: "Frankly, I find your attitude quite disagreeable." This can almost always be used by offenders when confronted directly by their plaintiffs, since plaintiffs tend to be disagreeably angry, as I am. No one wants to listen to that, least of all the offender herself. By means of this manoeuvre, the very fact of having caused injury to others, generates the pretext for avoiding responsibility for it.

Or some other such manoeuvre. There are many ways in which people try to slither away from genuine accountability. Those with a genuine grievance seek publicity, accountability, openness, discourse, clarity. Those at fault would much rather avoid all of those things. What is your preference, Louise?

In any event, I certainly hope you will not be attempting any of these shabby manoeuvres with me. Given all that has gone before, I think I may insist that you reply to me properly. On a point-by-point basis, you must either admit to me forthrightly that you are abjectly wrong; or you must give me a genuine, reasoned explanation of why you are right. I am demanding a proper response from you, and if your answers are in any way lacking in integrity, I will continue to challenge them.

I believe there is only one valid reason for continued delay or avoidance: a proper response takes time and energy. I acknowledge that it will require some work to address the totality of my challenges to you. But if this would make things any easier, I would be quite happy to receive your responses in installments. I have broken down your letter and presented my responses in the form of 16 major points, plus a number of sub-points, thereby making our debate quite amenable to this sort of piece-by-piece approach.

While answering everything may take some time, surely you could write a response to just one of my points in an hour or less. And this amount of time is required only for those points where you feel you have a valid rebuttal. For those points of yours which have been conclusively refuted, all you have to do is acknowledge this forthrightly. Humbling perhaps, but something that takes mere seconds to accomplish.

If you can take anything from a few seconds to an hour to answer just one of my points each week—something easily manageable—I could have your entire response in my hands by the summer.

Finally, allow me to remind you once again that you initiated this debate with me.

In response, I have given clear and complete answers to everything you have said. I have diligently addressed *every single one* of the points you have raised, and given a coherent and reasoned response to each.

I expect the kind of same diligence from you. If you have any pretensions at all to intellectual integrity, then I believe you are obligated to answer me with thoughtfulness and honesty. Please fulfil this obligation.

On three separate occasions you have let me know, in writing, that you would be responding to my arguments. I expect you to be as good as your word. Can you let me know when I can expect to receive a response from you, if only a first installment?

Thank you.