



THE FOREIGN SERVICE
OF THE
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

5208 Glenwood Road
Bethesda, Maryland
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Dear Nancy,

While we were in Caracas we used to carry on a fitful correspondence with a very nice gentleman in Washington who had only one vice: he persisted in answering all our letters the very minute he received them, if not a little before hand. Now this is all very well and good, but can be carried too far, and I maintain that he carried it too far, for no sooner had we heaved a sigh, folded up the typewriter and said "There, I've finally answered that old letter of X's that's been hanging around so long"- than plop!- the answer to our answer to his letter had arrived, and there we were again, owing him a letter! It is not my intention to follow down the primrose path which X indicated, but I did so enjoy hearing from you this afternoon that I felt compelled to drag the typewriter out from among the brooms, mops, dustmops, overcoats, snowsuits, dust cloths, cloths baskets, overshoes, and umbrellas in the utility closet. I trust you will treat this letter as it deserves, and not answer it for months if at all.

As for amoebas, some of the Best People get them, as your case proves. Fate hasn't yet sent us amoebas, and we are biding our time with remarkable patience, but I'm sure I must have told you that we both contracted scabies, or the Seven Year Itch, from a highly respectable vice consul in Lagos. I take a perverse and masochistic pleasure in telling people about it, so I'm sure I must have told you. We only have two more years to run now, and we'll be interested to find out whether they really do cease on schedule. I was luckier than William, and only got short-term scabies. A year, and I was all over it. He is still finding them now and then, with, as I said, two more years to go. We read in Time that it has been quite definitely proved that scabies is aided and abetted, if not downright caused, by lack of soap. I thought of writing a letter to the editor of Time, but reconsidered after recalling that such a move would not tend to enhance the dignity of the Foreign Service nor of the Department itself.

Things are going a little easier now. I even have some time to read. And wonder of wonders, I made myself two dust ruffles to put under the mattresses of our beds. Laurence John immediately guessed their purpose as soon as he saw them: "They are to keep the squirrels out from under your bed, aren't they mamma?" Laurence John is adapting himself fairly well to the lack of attention resultant from life in the United States, and the cold weather is making his cheeks appley. William is happy in his new job, and dearly loves Shelly Mills, who is certainly worthy of affection. In my opinion they are both as kind as they can be (I mean William and Shelly) so they can't fail to get along splendidly together. I am finding that it is possible to do the work which I formerly thought was properly the work of at least three women. The giant monster, life in the U.S., has turned out to be not quite so huge nor so formidable as I thought, and in any case it's all making me feel so smug and virtuous that I must be some thing of a trial to live with. Have a nice trip to Texas, and give my best regards to your delightful sister.