

Bethesda, Maryland

Friday, Nov. 26

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Dear Daddy and Helen,

William has been busy all this week with his revolution. The telephone rings as soon as he leaves the office, and from then on until he arrives there in the morning again. He is not pleased with the state of affairs, and neither are most people. It is a saddening thing to see the first popularly elected president in Venezuela forced to hand things over to what has been described vividly by "an influential figure in oil company circles" as a group of strutting, petty-minded, self-created Napoleons. Not that The Accion Democratica people were without sin. I daresay there was as much graft and inefficiency in their government toward the end as there always has been in all Venezuelan governments, but at least they were popularly supported in as free an election as is possible down there in this day and age. The Army officers who didn't hesitate to threaten force will certainly not be any less free of graft and inefficiency ~~xx~~ their predecessors, and they will probably have a good deal of trouble with the labor unions. It really is too bad that such a thing could have occurred with so much success and so little opposition. But it is always hard for unarmed civilians to oppose a united army. In any case, it has kept William very busy for the last week, and we are still awaiting many details to fit into the incomplete picture. Ambassador Donnelly says that all the Americans are safe, and that the Embassy staff has emergency food supplies on hand from which to take what may be needed in case of prolonged trouble. There appears to have been very little bloodshed at all in the first phase at least, although a late report confused us by saying that there was a good deal of gunfire last night.

William had to go to the office yesterday morning of course, and just returned in time to take Laurence John and me over to the Bob Parke's house for Thanksgiving dinner. Helen Parke cooked a magnificent bird (I hope you and Helen were able to have a nice dinner too, my dears;) and all the trimmings were on hand, including some very delicious wild strawberry jam which she made this summer. I contributed the dessert and some sugar cookies, plus a bottle of our good French white wine. Laurence John was so thrilled at being invited out to dinner! He wept bitterly early in the morning when he first got up, on learning that it was Thanksgiving but that he wasn't to be allowed to dash right over to the Parkes and have his dinner immediately on arising. All last week he had been asking "Is it today that I am going to a cocktail party? Am I going this to a dinner party?" All invitations are general to him, and most parties seem to be cocktail parties. He behaved wonderfully in spite of missing his nap due to over-eagerness to be gone. He tackled his grapefruit manfully, refusing all assistance, and then set to earnestly on the turkey, dressing, and sweet potatoes. He ignored the peas and the dessert, but accepted several sugar cookies. When he left he gave his hand to all concerned and said "Thanks SO much, it was SIMPLY delicious!" in a very polite manner. He and the two Parke boys (who are eight and ten) enjoyed playing together. At one point the younger

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Parke boy had to admit that he was afraid of going upstairs by himself, having recently read "Tom Sawyer" on the subject of haunted houses. Laurence John was interested in the subject of ghosts, and whimpered that he wanted to see a ghost, too. In short order we heard him upstairs shouting "I'm a big daddy ghost, Davdd!" so we judged that he hadn't caught the point at all. Last Sunday while we were out riding we turned on the radio and L.J. listened for a moment or two in his usual abstracted way. The next Tuesday at lunch he asked "Remember the joke about the turkey, mamma?" I said that I really didn't remember any joke about turkeys. "Well, you cook it for long hours and hours, then you take it out of the oven and throw away the turkey and EAT THE STOVE! Ha ha ha!" It was only then that I remember having heard it on Sunday, but ever since then L.J. has been telling us that joke once or more a day, always with the same triumphant laughter. He insisted on telling Mr. and Mrs. Parke his joke, too. Right now he is looking forward with great joy to a visit from his "Gammamma", of whom he is very fond, and he tells me he is going to tell her the joke, too. Poor Grandmamma!

We are giving the Dawsons and Jesse Knox in for supper tonight, so I had better be brief and set about the preparations. I am going to attempt a soufflé, with the thought that they are people whom we know well, and if the soufflé sinks to earth ahead of time, they will understand and forgive. We often have soufflé ourselves for dinner, for it is the best way I know of for using left-overs, but I haven't tried it at a party so far because of the narrow time-limit it imposes. They will simply have to drink their drinks up as fast as they can, and run to the table in order to see it before it collapses! Jesse says that poor Charley Knox is really not at all well physically (he has one collapsed lung already, and has to watch his health) and that the strain of living and working in Tel Aviv is sapping his moral strength, as well. He wants to leave there as soon as possible, although he hasn't been there six months yet. It must be a most nerve-wracking experience, even for the healthiest man.

I spent yesterday evening putting my letters from Paris and Lisbon in chronological order. Every time I look into them I am more appalled at the heartless and thoughtless way I behaved, and more grateful to you and mother for your magnificently kind and understanding attitude. I am at a loss to know how you were able to see anything but selfish ingratitude in my whole character, and how you were able to maintain so much affectionate loving-kindness. I am belatedly grateful to you all, and to Helen, who once wrote me a much, much deserved scolding letter which momentarily seemed to do me a little good, judging only from my answer to it. I obviously need a lot more of the same correction. Well, I can only say that I loved you then and love now, only I'll try to prove it in some more concrete way in the future. I hope your grandchildren aren't as silly and thoughtless as your daughter. Perhaps they will be more like you, and their ever-thoughtful, ever kind father.

The soufflé is so far only a figment of my imagination, as is the apple tapioca pudding, so I'll say good-bye to you for the present.

Lovingly,