

Dec. 4, 1949

Dear Father,

In honor of a bright new typewriter ribbon, and the reappearance of the letter J in my private alphabet, here's a letter for you. William had this thing repaired last Saturday, and what a blessing we finally got around to it!

Well, let's see. A rather quiet social week. We had Shelley and Francesca Mills over Friday night, and were going to have our friends Boice Hart and his mother, except that she got sick and they couldn't show up. Nancy Mann kindly came as a substitute. Tom Mann is away on a trip through his new territory now- Mexico and the Carribean. Heavens, I mean Carribean. Last night Mrs. Roswe came over from next door and offered to stay here with L.J. if we wanted to go out. We had enough money to go to see "Hamlet", first time at popular prices, so we thanked her profusely and went down to see it. Most beautifully done, but really harrowing. I had no idea so much stirring life and real, living tragedy could be breathed into the Bard. It was completely different from "Henry Fifth", which was stylized and deliberately, beautifully antiqued. This was nothing that could very well happen now as it happened in its period, but given the circumstances, which the audience accepts, it's possible to believe in it and be moved by it. It was exiting. I'm positive that Shakespeare comes out far better in the movies than he ever could on the stage. Ophelia was splendidly done, and so was the Queen. Too bad William Shakespeare didn't live to see it!

On Thursday we attended the interment of Allan Dawson in Arlington Cemetery. There was a military escort and a military band. He was a graduate of West Point. Jane made it, but Mrs. Dawson, Allan's mother, didn't feel capable of coming. There were about a hundred people. It was cold and sunny. I remained inaudible.

We are having the usual biannual Foreign Service Ladies luncheon on Tuesday, and I have managed to get a sitter for it because you know how tremendously fond of that sort of thing I am. This week is going to be packed with fun for me, because on Thursday I am invited to a tea party at Mrs. Tillie Cowles house. She has no children and apparently feels that teas are the perfect answer to her entertaining problems. She has asked me to several which I couldn't attend due to the real impossibility of finding sitters for the tea-time hours. This time I found one, so I am committed to going. I am appalled (or is it apalled I am?) (No.) by the thought that until William retires it will be my duty to continue to go to tea parties at regular intervals for years and years. I honestly hope I shall gradually come to like them, since I must live with them. The trouble is that I am frightened of strange ladies, bothered with either tongue-tiedness or excessive, witless volubility, and afraid at every moment that the conversation will degenerate into gossip. None of these things have ever really happened. I've usually managed to stay either quietly in a corner or peacefully talking a modicum of what passes for sense at a tea party. I don't remember being caught in a maelstrom of gossip on any occasion, but the thought still obsesses me. And also, I really am timid of strange ladies, no doubt about that. Strange men don't bother me so much at all. The worst of this particular occasion

-2-

is that I am rather complexy about Tillie Cowles. She is a most efficient person, who runs everyhing beautifully and is always first on peoples' lists for organizing committees, charities, club work, etc. she ran the Embassy Messhall while they were in Oslo, and undoubtedly ran it perfectly. She has never been able to understand why I can't find sitters in the daytime. She knows and I know that in my position, she would have had the problem neatly solved long ago. Oh deary me! She called up the other day to congratulate me on my article, "But of course I didn't agree with everything, honey!" On being asked what she disagreed with, she replied "Well, you know, I really don't think your'e quite so perfect now as you make yourself out to be, are you?" Now I'M worried for fear everyone may have misunderstood the darned article. As if that weren't enough to give me a full-fledged complex on the subject of Tillie, she also called up a few days after Allan's death to ask me what I thought about it and instead of saying anything I just boo-hoed hysterically into the telephone and then hung up with a few words of apology. However, I called her back half an hour later and tried to make up for it. In any case, as you see the lady has me buffalced, lassoed, tied, and falling all over my feet by this time. AND THAT IS THE REASON, friends, that while teas always frighten me, Tillie's teas have it all over the rest. If you don't hear from me for a couple of weeks, please understand that it's because I'm convalescing.

One of the ladies for whom this tea is being given is my friend Pepa Rewinckel, a very good and pretty girl whom I have described to you. She is the Bulgarian Beauty whom Milt Rewinckel managed to get from out behind the Iron Curtain in the nick of time. I approve of her wholeheartedly. She and her husband will be in Madrid soon, for they have been transferred. First they are going out to California on leave, however. I hope that you may be able to meet them before you leave Madrid, because they are such nice young people. Pepa, in additon to being amiable, interesting and sweet, is also a joy to just sit and look at.

I have completed the Well Stuffed Shirt, once more, and sent him to Shelley to be looked over. He has been given the New Look, and will be more acceptable, I hope. He would not interest people outside the Foreign Service, and in any case I wouldn't think of submitting him elsewhere if the F.S. Journal couldn't print him. I couldn't for another thing, because the State Department is entitled to look over anything which its employees or their wives and children write, in order to censor anything it doesn't approve of. I can say more to the F.S. Journal than I could to any other publication, but that's not saying such a lot. However, I am rather fond of the Well Stuffed Shirt's New Look, and I hope that Shelley will be also; I can always change him some more if Shellyy thinks he needs it. I certainly had fun with him.

It's time, and past time, to wake up the boy. He now seems to be able to write most of the letters in the alphabet, by the way. All in capitals, of course. His teacher at Lady Isabel scolded me roundly but politely when I told her he could write some. "Why don't you ask your mother to let you draw pictures, Laurence?" Let you, indeed! He does what he thinks fit, nothing more and nothing less. He won't draw pictures for me. He says he wants to write them, instead. He still doesn't want to learn to read yet. "I'm too little."

Love,