

Bethesda, Tuesday July 18, 1949

Dear Laura,

We were glad to get your postcard, and while of course we couldn't figure out which of the blurred figures looked most like the blurred figure of your brother, the spirit was there anyway, and that's all that counts in a photograph in our opinion.

Laurence John has been staying with his grandmother for the past two weeks, one of which I also spent up there. Last week we had an invasion from Uruguay, of some people we used to know very well in Caracas. They and their two children lived here to avoid the high cost of hotels, but they had to move back, poor dears, when my NEW DISHWASHER arrived. Joy, joy, joy, freedom, freedom, freedom. As I said to your mamma, Come and bring your dirty dishes! I celebrated the event by painting my kitchen white as the driven snow, or thereabouts, and also by immediately calling up a large horde of people for what might be described as a dishwarming party. All this goes to show how if you save your pennies long enough you can collect enough for a downpayment on just about anything. But I hasten to add that U.S. Savings Bonds are really the best investment, and that what with paying for this dishwasher we will probably not have enough left over this week to pay for some beans to put on some plates to dirty them enough to wash in the machine.

We have been adopted by Patches, the Meleney dog. We don't feed him, we are nasty to him, we scream at him, we weren't even supposed to have anything to do with him when the Meleneys left on vacation, but he decided to move into our garage, so that's that. He takes his meals out, apparently, and returns immediately thereafter to stare up at us with his one big soulful black eye, and to follow us wherever we go. I have a theory that he is slightly masochistic, and misses the cruel treatment the Meleney children meted out to him. Our two childish guests took over when L.J. left, sitting on him, pulling his tail, tweaking his ear, and now L.J. is back to render those nasty little services, so the dog appears to be quite happy. If he only didn't howl mournfully at the ambulance sirens things would suit me better, but as it is the Hound of the Baskervilles is put in the shade by that ear-piercing screech of Patches.

I hope and trust you are being a good girl, bearing in mind that you have a long life ahead of you in which to regret every silly thing you do now. As an afterthought, I also hope you are having a good time. On that ominous, but, alack, experimentally truthful thought I'll close and go make some pea soup.

Affectionately,