

Bethesda, July 14, 1950

Dear Pop and Putty,

I suppose Sigmund Freud would have said I was demonstrating an unconscious desire to escape into the past because I almost wrote "1590" instead of 1950. Well, T.S. Elliot or no T.S. Elliot, I still think there are advantages to the present as well as disadvantages.

In my last letter I forgot to tell you about the great Glorious Fifth in the Venezuelan Embassy. Last year Sr. Pocaterro elected to have a white tie reception, to the chagrin of all and sundry, but this year he must have perceived the error of his ways, for it was informal though splendid. A thousand people, more or less. Well, a good deal less, actually, but certainly thousands of bottles of champagne, thousands of orchids, thousands of yards of gold braid. They have acquired a social secretary, who made the terrible error of completely forgetting to invite Bain Davis, the Venezuelan desk officer and therefore one of the people who should be very high indeed on their list. They did the same thing last year, and had I been Bain I should have regretted a previous invitation on both occasions. Both this year and last they rushed over at the last moment on the very day of the affair with abject apologies and an invitation. Bah. The more we see of the Venezuelans, the more we appreciate the savoir faire of the other embassies. Well anyway, it was a grandiose affair indeed and though the Ambassador himself retired from the fray very early in the evening, his charming French-Canadian wife held the fort until most of the besiegers had retired to prearranged positions, and she was on hand to say good night to all the guests. I have been brooding about one incident a good deal since that evening, because I think maybe I managed to fool the Ambassador of Costa Rica into thinking I was a fellow latin-American - all unwittingly. It was this way; Sr. Moscoso of the Ecuadoran Embassy introduced me to him in Spanish, and then departed. This Costa Rican Ambassador, whom I had never met before, talked a good deal and I talked very little, except to haul out that old chestnut I use so gratefully every time I can't think what else to talk about with one of them, i.e. that Laurence was born in Venezuela, is a Venezuelan by their laws, and that therefore we are planning to make him president of Venezuela. "Ah yes, let him live down there, where the sun is warm, the art of life is cultivated, etc. etc." said the Ambassador, and he rambled on to the general effect that life in the United States is intolerable to high spirited characters like him and me. At the time it didn't occur to me that he might not have realized I was American, but since then I have come to half-believe he wouldn't have spoken so slightly of the dear old American Way of Life had he known whom he was addressing. As I mentioned, I managed to get so few words in edgeways it's possible I didn't have an opportunity to make any mistakes in grammar or pronunciation, and thus innocently foxed him. All is forgiven to the Ambassador of Costa Rica, however, if it's true he mistook me for a latina. It always makes me feel so clever, even as I realize it's only because I haven't said much.

Since that party we have been to none at all, nor had any ourselves. Jim Lobenstine came to supper one evening, as did Betsey and Coit's Daddy (the family is away) on another evening,

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but beyond that there has been a complete stoppage in our social whirl. And our sitter expenses, I'm happy to add. We have been spending unusually happy domestic evenings, though. William bought me a copy of Eleanor of Aquitaine and the Four Kings, and after the first few pages I realized it was too wonderful to read all by myself, so after Laurence is put to bed in the evenings we sit down to a delightful medieval feast. He reads while I sew, with the result that I've done up the hems of two dresses and put five patches on three pairs of blue jeans. We figure we have thus paid for the cost of the book, counting each hem at two dollars commercially, and each pair of blue jeans at about the same, new. Also we have been deliciously, wondrously entertained. We both have a gluttonous hunger for medieval history, and as the New Yorker's reviewer said of this book, it makes any historical novel seem like pap. It was written by a former Wellesley English professor named Amy Kelly, and I'm grateful to the dear woman. It's the kind of book I like to read as slowly as possible so I won't finish it any sooner than I can help.

Laurence had a spot of hoarseness, and one day complained of earache, but happily he seems to have recovered from both afflictions. Yesterday at table he was smiling to himself, and we asked what he was thinking about. "I'm thinking of two exciting things, one in front of me and one in back of me." We asked what the two things were, and he said "The one in back of me is when I rode on the cow-catcher of the switch engine in Newark Ohio, and the one in front of me is Putty and Abuelito's house in Long Island." I was surprised he didn't say "seeing New York", because I know how excited he is about that, but as you see, he appears to be equally excited about you and the beach.

I copied out Abuelito's instruction regarding the route from New York, and the boy was overjoyed to hear about the double decker buses and the tunnel we may go through. There is just one thing that is bothering me: do you think you could stand to have us arrive a day earlier? For one thing, I'd like to escape that weekend traffic out to Long Island, for another I know Laurence will be terribly anxious to arrive both in New York and in your house. Since money restrictions will keep us from going to New York from Flemington any sooner than the day before we are due at your place, I have the feeling Laurence will be restive at Grandmamma's if we stay there longer than he feels is an absolutely minimum. For a third thing, I should like to get there sooner so we can get back home sooner so William can go back to work. That sounds like a slave driver, I'm afraid, but it's this way, judge; the new head of the South American set up, Fletcher Warren, will be arriving during the latter part of William's vacation. I'd like William to be back as soon as possible to meet him and be in at the beginning, as it were. William would like to make "a good impression on his mind" by being au courant with events. I suppose the children will be leaving with John on Sunday the 30th of July. Will Putty have time to recover her "strenth" between Monday and Thursday? And while I'm on the subject, would you tell me how we might contact you quickly from New York or Flemington should there be some unavoidable last-minute change in our plans? I take it you have no telephone, since you didn't mention one. If you do have a telephone, would you please write me the number, to add to my data.

Love,