

Nov. 8 [1939]

Dear Helen,

I hope this pen works till the end of the letter. Usually it folds up before then, however.

In spite of the dreadful (deservedly so!) scolding you give me in your letter I've reread it several times, because I realize that it must have taken a lot of impetus & an enormous amount of un-Helen-like thinking to have produced it. As you say, you wrote it 3 times. Well, my dear, I really did feel horribly contrite about hurting my darling father who never did it to me – as you must have imagined. And how you must have suffered to see him worry! I do so wish the whole thing could have been worked out in a normal, happy way, so that you two and Mama wouldn't have had to be unhappy. Not to change the subject, don't think, Helen my pet, that I am anything but conscience-stricken about your scolding me so roundly. I appreciate your motives & only wish I hadn't made you so unhappy! Daddy's letter, written about the same time, filled me with the same nasty black worms. You know how he scolds me – by omission. But it is quite effective, I always feel so low & ungrateful when he is displeased.

By this time you have read all my letters, and are aware of the chaotic & hellish month and a half the French government & various assorted other problems gave us. At last they are over, and we are very happy. May I share your sigh of relief that I escaped the clutches of José? James is sweet to me, we understand each other, & when we don't he is patient & tries to. Anyway, I love him, too. I was feeling pretty discouraged about everything for some time, & hated to tell daddy about it. Finally the Fr. Gov't. gave in, & all our troubles melted away one by one. But my mind was in a constant unhappy turmoil for a month there, and for some obscure reason I figured that I didn't want to write until I could say we were married & all was well. Heaven knows why I got that idea, it just left you completely at sea, and as you say, imagining mine to be a "fate worse than death". Poor you, poor daddy.

Jimmie has been composing letters to poppa for the past month or so. Perfection eludes him. He seems to have tried every angle, even has tried writing by hand instead of on the typewriter. I didn't find it very hard when I wrote to his family, but perhaps his situation is harder. I haven't been reminding him of the need for haste because I thought it would be better if spontaneous. Even now he is in the throes of composition, only stopping to shout in despair that what he is writing is terrible, academic, puerile, or some such adjective. Having no "days off" makes it difficult for him.

Could you suggest a recipe for an easy cookie – preferably oatmeal, that being a favorite of my love. Or anything else you might have in your personal bag of tricks. My cooking is making rapid strides, happily enough.

I hope you can read this. What a pen! Anyway, I always have to use a hieroglyphic key on your handwriting.

Give my love to Ruth Havey' & your mother. Write to me again soon, please, if it's only to scold me!! I need a proper scold, or just a letter, because I think all our troubles with the French Republic have made us sort of homesick.

Love,

L.P.

¹ Ruth Mildred Havey, 1899-1980. "Ruth Havey was born and educated in Massachusetts, where she studied at Smith College and the Cambridge School of Domestic Architecture and Landscape Architecture. ... her work spanning nearly forty years on a single project, the gardens at Dumbarton Oaks in Washington, D.C." *The Cultural Landscape Foundation*, "Ruth Mildred Havey". <http://tclf.org/pioneer/ruth-havey> Accessed 2014-06-29

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