

4504 West Second Avenue  
Vancouver 8, British Columbia

April 21, 1971

Dear Carolyn:

Both Helen and I so much enjoyed the evening with you and Kath that we wish there weren't such miles between us most of the time. I wish we could take a layover in Toronto on our way, but we're booked on a direct flight, a charter, the only way we could manage to go this year, not having budgeted for a trip at all.

We were a bit dazed after Rick and Deb finally left on Easter Sunday, a process which took some hanging around the airport, but they did get on the afternoon plane as they had hoped, and Deb's parents were meeting them and taking them out to dinner. I watched Rick being edgy and responsible about tickets and customs and had that ~~funny~~ funny twinge one always has with young relatives whose nervous systems are like one's own. He and my sister's middle girl are 'my' kids. I don't mean favorites exactly. They simply feel particularly related to me, which is sometimes good and sometimes too bad. I dote on them all, and I delight in the prospect of having Rick in the neighborhood for some years. Debbie says we share a 'crazy' gene. I say, no, just the same sort of funny bone. We do a lot of clowning, something that started rather purposefully years ago because Rick's mother is an earnest sort and never knew what to do with Rick's sense of humor. She and Helen would retire gratefully out of range, not having to be slow audience to our jokes. But my chief business with Rick has always been to let him know that, no matter what ever happens, I'm there. He's sometimes been a troubled and troubling kid. Since my brother deserted them when Rick was not more than about eight or nine months old and has seen Rick rarely since, Rick has had to sort that out. Because my brother was a very unstable character, each time Rick racketed into trouble, his mother saw his father in him and felt both guilty and repelled. Then the skull fracture when he was twelve and the watching to see if there was permanent brain damage made a further unease. When Rick was fifteen, he was very withdrawn and tough and bitter. He turned up here with a cousin in late summer without having said he was coming. When I phoned his mother to check to be sure she knew where he was, she was full of stories about drugs and was wondering about turning him over to the police. I told her that, if that was her intention, I'd simply keep him here. It was the next year that Rick met Debbie and found the excuse he needed to turn in his villain's hat for a football helmet. He's been doing very well in school ever since. Now his mother worries that he'll marry Debbie too soon and make a mess of marriage. My own view is that people eighteen years old need to be left alone to sort out what they'll do. They have a remarkably good relationship for

both of them. And I see my job still as simply being 'there'. When Rick asks what I think about something, I always level with him, but, whether I agree with his decisions then or not, he knows that he won't lose me ever, for any reason. It's the sort of loving insurance my parents gave me and still do, and it seems to me more important, particularly for some one Rick's age, than interfering responsibility. Well, we'll see how good I am at it when he's around.

I'm sorry the book hadn't arrived, but I think it still may. I haven't got the books I ordered for myself at the same time. If it hasn't arrived in the next couple of weeks, I'll mail you one of my own, if they arrive! ~~Skx~~ Stock for the stores here came in only last Friday. It's all very much slow motion. And now that the editor who looked after me so well is gone, I have no one to check in with as personally. Actually the woman in charge now has been very civil, but it isn't the same. My agent has just this week received the contract with Doubleday which I ~~was~~ supposed to have seen some time in December, and the statement of sales for THIS IS NOT FOR YOU came with so many errors that it wasn't possible to deal with it at all. They'd even figured on a retail price of \$5.95, when the book sells in the states for \$6.95. None of this is unexpected, just ~~wiarisome~~.

Helen is still busy with university though classes are over. Her exams come in on Friday, and next week looks pretty cluttered with meetings and reports, but after that she should have some real time to relax. We're having a few sunny days, but the wind is off the mountains, and it's cold. We're both longing to get out into the garden for work and sun.

And I'm doing the last details of getting the trip arranged. Applying for a new passport is certainly more elaborate since the fellow who killed Martin Luther King made off with a Canadian passport. I suppose it's a good thing, but I feel rather comic asking the bank manager to sign my photograph. That's the errand this afternoon as soon as Helen gets home.

I just had a letter from Margaret Laurence saying that she'd pitched eight month's work on a book she shouldn't be writing. Seems it's been that kind of winter for a lot of us. She'll be at her shack outside Toronto all summer; so we won't meet in England as I'd hoped we might. But Margaret is not one I ever lose touch with.

Hope going back to work wasn't too much a shock to your system.

Affectionately,

