

The Fork
R.R. 1
Galiano, B.C. VON 1P0
September 14, 1978

Dear Carolyn:

This is to be the first of your thank-you-note of the month letters, not to be judged as the calibre of those yet to come since it's just tonight that I got on Toronto time, and, according to that, I should have been asleep for at least an hour. Helen is in the living room above my head with a dozen ravishing young women she's teaching to read Alice Munro's short stories, obviously with a good deal of pleasure as I hear the punctuating bursts of laughter. I'm glad I'm not trying to cope with that tonight.

I keep telling Helen about the three days we were away: they do seem like at least a week. "But I thought you said you saw Carolyn for breakfast," she says, trying to get it all straight. "Well, I did, but then we had dinner together..." "Yes, I know, on Sunday night." "Yes, but on Monday night, too..." "She took Grace home? I thought you said she took all of Hoppy's clan..." "Yes, well, she took everyone everywhere, back and forth, over and over." She's much quicker to sort out the Kathys, and she's very good at guessing the names of people I greeted and can't easily identify. By now, as she comments to other people, she says, "but they didn't have to worry about the transit strike; they didn't have to worry about anything: Carolyn was there."

I'm sure you really do know what a difference your coping with all that made to me, how much energy it gave me to deal with people rather than panics, how much ease to enjoy each part of the day, and I do thank you without clowning for doing what surely drained energy from all the other requirements of your life. It mattered a great deal to me not only because it solved a number of practical problems but because I felt really companioned in chores that would otherwise have felt negatively hard, like that dinner with Hoppy's clan.

I do hope you finally did get your car free and didn't simply crawl into the back seat because you couldn't face coming back up to the room again. I kept looking at the bed and thinking it was ~~prx~~ perfectly wide enough for all of us and very simple since no one had the energy left to even contemplate an orgy. I suppose your own crash pad was close enough to walk to if you had to.

It was also obvious to me how much your own inviting helped populate the opening with people who wanted it to be marvelous for Elizabeth. It was a perfect evening for her. On the way home she wasn't even talking, as she usually does, about it being unreal; she was just chirping happily about how well it went.

My 24 hours in London were very rich, the party successful in sales and good vibes for the bookshop. That is an extraordinary woman, that Marilyn Parris. She's been separated from her husband only five months though she's thought of leaving for years. First she saw him through a belated university career when he had felt cheated of as an Englishman who goofed the 11+. But she also had to hold the family together through tragedy I find hard to tolerate in my imagination. I knew she had two daughters, 15 and 17, because she wrote about them. On the way out to London she told me she also had a son who would be 20 the next day and had been, since he was 16, in an institution for the criminally insane, because he had killed a child.

The book signing party was for her and for Lillian a sort of personal landmark for them, a quiet coming out, which in the face ~~is~~ of what ~~she~~ Marilyn's had to deal with in that community seems almost ~~xxx~~ crazily brave. I felt very close to them both by the time they drove me to the airport the next morning. And I very much liked the people I met at the party, lawyers, psychologists, a pair who run a taxi and boarding service for pets, some young musicians, a real variety of people, and ~~xx~~ marvelous costumes.

Home now to a few too many social commitments for it to feel properly fall. I do need to find time to do some work to fill my own well, and I will next week.

I am glad to have met Kathy, to have seen Kathy again in her own place. Greet them both for me. It was also nice to have a minute to say hello to your husband. Thank you again for being such a very good friend.

Love,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Jane". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned below the word "Love,".

