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VANCOUVER 8, BRITISH COLUMBIA
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Dear Carolyn:

So term begins and the house fills up with winter works and worries, that is, all our houses. I'm glad yours is the kind with an attic room. I couldn't live in a house that didn't have space for unwed mothers, boys wanting to bolt for Mexico, old friends on holiday, kids. I grew up like that, allowed to bring home any stray I found as long as it was human, and I like the sense of people about, even when I'm working. I have to be careful that I don't clutter the place too much because of Helen's much more peopled day. She needs space and quiet when she gets home. She also claims at fifty-three that she should be required to have more grandmotherly than motherly concern by now, but, in fact, she brings home strays herself: a kid who's had a row with his father and needs a place to sleep until they all cool off, a kid who's had a bad time with drugs, a kid who is simply tired and in need of regular meals and some absent minded affection. At the moment we have only Alan, the boy who lives with us, and he is remarkably happy about his courses this year, full of stories about the day, of questions about the nature of tragedy, of faith, of love, very small bodied, bearded, full of laughter. I am very fond of him.

Yes, I'm tall. Six feet. Sometimes I am boney: just after long working, as now, but I'll probably begin to put on pounds as the winter progresses. I come from a family of giants and am the shortest of fourteen first cousins. My brother is six feet five. My sister won't say, but I look up to her. She has three girl children who promise to be between six five and six seven when they grow up since Lib, of course, married another giant. She is in despair, goes to clinics to deal with 'the disease' for her children. I don't say anything. I never felt as she does, always liking height, but then I never had any hankering to live in her kind of world, which is conservative and conventional. I like never having had to worry about discipline in a class room, not because I'm fierce but just because I stand as tall as I do. I like being able to see in a crowd. And, yes, I like the clothes very tall people can wear, though until recently there has always been a problem of having to have most of them made. I don't like the physical discomforts of lack of leg room in theatres and on planes, the concussion I invariably suffer in English cottages with their low doors, short beds. And I don't like the occasional random hostility height calls up in strangers. But, as my sister sometimes wryly points ~~xxx~~ out, I've always been an arrogant bastard, so why shouldn't I like it? And I like its comedies as well. My tag in the Canadian press is "the six-foot lady novelist".

If Mike suffers from recurring depression, something should be done about it. It isn't simply a matter of temperament though, of course, some people express trouble in one way, others in another, but depression is not a character trait; it's a symptom. Have you talked with him about it? I don't like the sound of your moving on then to talk about people who have killed themselves. Neither is that something only some people are capable of. No one, under enough pressure, avoids the temptation. It is simply the disease in its

fatal ~~ix~~ stage. You wouldn't let Mike walk around on two broken legs without urging him to do something not only to ease the pain but to heal the bones. Go too far without getting them set and you have a permanent cripple. Get him to go to a doctor. Get him to see a psychiatrist. It's important. And see that you don't both take the view that a sinking boat is better than a rocking one. It isn't so. You can learn balance and life in the one, nothing but despair in the other.

I am busy trying ~~xxxx~~ not to write. Didn't succeed this morning, but the pages were enough to test the notion that I shouldn't begin again until November. Nearly the whole week I lost myself in BLEAK HOUSE. I have found Dickens nearly impossible to read, but this time there were things I wanted to learn about the vast cast and detailed setting that made it interesting. I'm teaching, too, of course, but that won't be an absorbing interest until I get to know my students better. The questions they raise are always the same, and their first reactions are fairly predictable; the whole person never is. But it's an inbetween, ~~xxxxxxx~~ restless time for me, where I stay aloof from my own work and a bit from people, too. Before the rain began several days ago, I worked a lot in the garden, and, if it goes on much longer, I'll ignore it and go out to dig anyway. I've found all the bulbs I want to replace, but I want to dig them into the front bank when I get new ones for the picking beds. I've got to get to a printers' shop to get new border ornaments and ink before I ~~get~~ settle to the fall printing projects. So I hover, but I won't for long. It's not a comfortable state for me once the first exhaustion has past.

Good luck with your teaching. Do you deal with all subjects?

Jane