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4504 WEST SECOND AVENUE
VANCOUVER 8, BRITISH COLUMBIA
October 15, 1969

Dear Carolyn:

I hope Catherine brought back a good report of Vancouver and surrounding skiing possibilities. She should have had some good weather while she was here. If you do decide to come out in mid March, you must let me know and stop off here for at least an evening on your way or on your way back. If we don't have too much snow, the daffodils should be beginning at that time.

I have been unaccountably busy.. that is, I'm always baffled at putting in long days when I am not really writing, as I am not now. There's been a lot of busy work and will continue to be over publishing of books. I still have no word on a contract for the new one, but I suppose it will turn up eventually. REDBOOK offered tentatively \$7500 for magazine rights for the new one, if they could cut it to a third and use it for their monthly back of the mag novel. I took real pleasure in refusing. What I want is the shabbily ~~xxxx~~ respectable advance for the hardback, and I think I'll get it. But I'll have to send off some stories to ~~xxxxx~~ REDBOOK before the end of the year ~~k~~ to placate them. I mustn't bite the only hand that really feeds me all that often. And I've been reading a lot and finally getting out into the garden in ~~a~~ crimp, ~~xxx~~ clear days, really too cold for my thin blood, but most of the new bulbs are in. ~~xx~~ And teaching and listening to kids. My God, some of them pack around a weight of sorrows. I have one youngster whose mother died slowly of cancer three years ago, whose father has now taken to drink, and she knows, for her own sake, she ought simply to get out, but there's a younger brother, and anyway her father seems past caring for himself. There isn't anything to do but listen. They have a young toughness, too, and they help each other. By now I always have friends of friends in my class, and I can feel the web of kid connection all over the city. It's a time in their lives when most of them don't seem to be able to get or take help from their parents, but they are still very young for coping with everything that comes their way. The other night Helen and I went to have dinner with a boy I nearly threw out of the house last spring. He came in shambles at the end of a bad LSD trip, and I was really fed up with him. Now, he has a fairly good job and is sharing a little house with a friend. The place is neat and comfortable and inventive. They have a kitten, and this 19 year old cooked us a real dinner of chicken and potatoes and asparagus and carrots. He even put half a canned peach, sprinkled with ~~xx~~ spices on the plate. He's put on 25 pounds and is learning to ~~k~~ ski.. as dangerous, he says, as drugs, but a better high. So it looks as if he's going to be all right, though he should have stayed at the university. He's very bright.

Week-end before last we went over to Salt Spring Island to visit friends who have taken a cottage over there for the year to stay out of Vancouver social life while they both get on with writing, Lee at articles on Conrad, Lori at poems. Their two kids seem to be ~~xxx~~ happy with the island school, and they've collected two dogs and ~~xxx~~ four puppies, two cats and a kitten so far. Their front yard

extends into a huge oyster bed, and they are surrounded by handsome trees. They'll be very cold before the winter's over, since it really is a summer place, but the rent is cheap, and they all like roughing it and fighting the elements. When it gets really bad, they'll probably come to us to ~~thaw~~ out for a week-end. I've said we could take the whole human population but the animal population will have to find some other shelter.

My parents arrive next Monday for two weeks, and so over this week-end, I'll have to do some planning and preparing. We also seem to be having a dinner party for Robert Duncan, a San Francisco poet and old friend, who is to be in town for the week-end. I'm out of practice with entertaining since we got home, but I don't suppose it will take long to get my hand back again. Friends of my parents from the east will come out for the last three days they are here, and then they'll drive south together. Once my hermit self retreats, I'll enjoy their visit. They're really very easy people, always with lots of projects of their own, ~~kindly~~ kindly and amusing with anyone they meet, appreciative of anything that is offered to them. And we have enough overlapping interests to make for real sharing often. Only because they are my parents, I am never entirely easy about their visits. I don't feel free to shut the door in my study for a couple of hours a day as I do when house guests are not relatives.

I haven't really got into printing again. I've run the first color of some Christmas note paper and some book plates for a brother about to be 40. Once Mother and Dad have gone, I'll have to settle to a Christmas schedule. Yes, I set all the type. Helen, trifocal^{ed}, can't cope with that. She does the larger jobs often, like inking and cleaning. We both feed. So far the wine down there is good only for cooking. We've been doing a lot of chicken, therefore.

I read your description of your relationship with Mike, and I can see why you stay, but I wonder why he does.. I don't mean that rudely. I mean, if the kind of world you need is so threatening to him and if you haven't really much respect or sympathy for his circumstance, can at best only humor him, what is it that keeps him there? Is he very much involved with the kids? Or does he simply think he couldn't afford a divorce? Or is he too despairing to imagine he might have a better life with a better relationship? I don't suppose there has to be conflict in a complex of relationships. Some parents, for instance, use their children to make each other jealous. Others don't. Some adults manage to maintain intense friendships which not only don't threaten but enrich their marriages, but that seems to take a kind of generosity in all people involved that is rare.

When Catherine marries, what will it be like for you? Why is she marrying?

Probably impertinent questions. Ignore them.

People are very important to me, but I am ruthless about any kind of relationship that turns into negative contest, and I guess I'll always grieve when I see other people unable to get out because it seems to me such a terrifying waste of energy in so very short a life. I could not live the way you do and survive. But that's a silly thing to say. The life I lead would drive most other people insane. We accept the strains and use the protections we have to have, given our own temperaments, I guess.

I am trying to cut down from 40 to 10 cigarettes a day. Have been at it five days now. I wish I thought it were in preparation for ~~quitting~~ quitting altogether instead of a temporary recession. Then I see Helen reading the same article I've just glanced at about new studies in liver deterioration. I watch her earnestly finding her place with those incredible glasses of hers until she looks up. We both laugh. Lungs, liver, heart, kidneys: we're hard on them all, and they probably will wear out early. Trouble is that Helen has a sixteen year head start; so I argue that it makes more sense for me to take care of her than for me to take care of myself.

-- Mail's just come and here's a Dutch magazine with a story of mine in it, and I can't read it. Comic.

I must get to dealing with the business that's come in. Sorry this is a raw edged letter. Lack of nicotine.

Yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "James".