

December 16, 1979

Dear Carolyn:

Just home from Jean's . What fun to be there when you were checking in, a deep pleasure to Jean to feel called back there now as she gets ready to go with some sadness about giving up the island for a time. You have been just good friends to her. We all wickedly chuckled about Sylvia Spring and began irresponsible plots about setting up rumors on the island that she is pregnant. Your call contributed to the silly tone of much of the evening.

I'm so glad Cathy (why can't I remember whether it's C or K? Is there some kind of string you could tie around my finger?) joined you in Ottawa. I hated to think of you in that empty hotel room. I hate them, too, and inviting strangers in is no solution. I once set up a cheese and cracker dispenser for late arrivals in Ottawa just to pass the time until I could arrive at my Vancouver bedtime. That was funny but not funny enough, and my telephone bill is always embarrassing. Phyllis Webb was on David Watmough's Arts Lib program this morning, saying "I live most of my life in silence", and "I can be a social being in context" of teaching, public appearance. I understand her, but only out of a leap of imagination. I can be silent in context of work, that is all.

It rains and rains. We go out and take inches of water off the pool, have hung a Christmas wreath on the far railing to remind us that this is our Christmas present to each other and everyone else we know for several years! Helen puts cards up on the fireplace, and packages arrive-- a bottle of sherry from southern California labeled mouth wash! 20 pounds of dates. And we walk into the local liquor store to find Monica has sent a cheque and instructions for those ladies to pick out a present. I ask them to our Dec. 23rd sherry party. "We don't drink sherry." I am chagrined and at the same time wonder at my power to terrify.

The Globe and Mail phoned to say I could review Audrey's new book. I hope it gets in next week-end. I am totally fed up with David Robinson for again delaying his best Christmas offering to the point where he'll miss the year's sales. But I've done what I could. It's an outrageous and fine book.

I'm glad your work went so well. I am dawdling. Avis has just finished typing the new collection of stories and essays I want to send out right after the new year, and I wait for the cheque from Harcourt Brace which will finally convince me that they are going to publish the new novel next September. I may really have begun a new novel, but I ignore it for now.

Newsletter from the Writers Union makes me more reluctant than ever to attend the meeting, though it underlines the necessity for doing so. I do wish people wouldn't spend time in so much hostile nonsense. We will go to it together, yes? I have a sense that my Toronto time may be pulled in all kinds of directions. I may need to see Don Bailey, whose wife may be dead of cancer by then. I will need to see ~~xxxx~~ Rache Dickson, who is sounding mortal himself. And my primary attention will have to be with Elisabeth for as long as she is there (God willing she says). But there will be time for us. We'll plan closer to it.

Happy season to you both.

Love,



