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VANCOUVER 8, BRITISH COLUMBIA

December 6, 1970

Dear Carolyn:

An easier routine is obviously not going to sort itself out for a while yet. Helen has been increasingly tired over the last ten days, and this week-end she's come down with 'flu of some kind, a bit of bad luck to hit just as the last week of classes comes up. She mutters about going out to lecture anyway, and I don't argue. Tomorrow I just tie her into bed if she tries to get up. I don't think she'll feel well enough to make the attempt. Like all good teachers, she makes a shape of her teaching and hates to miss even one day, in fact rarely does.

The article did come, second time of sending. I haven't had time since to get out to the UBC gallery, but some time within the next two weeks I will to see if they might be interested in a show. The best gallery in town for graphics as far as selling is concerned has just folded. It is hard in times of tight money for places like that, marginally successful at the best of times, to survive. My own notion ~~xxx~~ is that any show will create a market for them. I hope it's all right for me to keep the copies for a while longer. Now that we're getting into Christmas mailing, it's probably better, if you have no urgency about getting them back, for me to wait until January to return them.

This week looks crowded. I have two evening meetings, and then on Thursday from 6 to 8 there's a party at the Arts Club for Audrey Thomas whose novel, MRS. BLOOD, has just gone on sale. Because she dreads it even more than most, I've promised to be there surely to help because I do know a number of the publicity people in town, and, if I'm not supposed to be beating my own drum which I hate and do very badly, I'm happy enough to cope. Because these things are always tiring and then a let down, I've arranged a small dinner party at a nearby restaurant afterwards. I do hope Helen's well enough to deal with that, but, if she isn't, I can manage on my own. I've just read MRS. BLOOD, and it depressed me. Audrey is a very gifted writer, was one ~~xxx~~ of the Atlantic first short story writers and has a collection of stories out called TEN GREEN BOTTLES. The structure and method of MRS. BLOOD are often uncertain, the texture of style very impressive, the vision hideous. It is a study of a woman who is slowly miscarrying her third child in a hospital in Africa, and one would expect the introspection and negativity that come with that sort of long suffering, but her reflections on all her relationships are so hideously masochistic that I finally feel a kind of fury at anyone who would let living be like that. It is pure Freud, alas. I'll have some difficulty talking with Audrey about it. I admire her as a writer, but I have very little in common with her otherwise, find her so defensive and critical and nervy that it's not comfortable for me to be with her often. Still, I have a bone loyalty to any writer going through

a book's coming out, and I hope she gets the admiring reviews the style of the book deserves, never mind it isn't my sort of thing.

I am guarding us against going into a round of holiday parties, either of our own concoction or of other people's. Helen badly needs rest, and I need open time. We will see good friends casually. We'll probably have something of a crowd for Christmas dinner, though I'm not sure. Most of the people we invite tend to be those who might go away, home, for Christmas if they are pressured.

What is simply a tired time for us seems for too many other people a time of upheaval. I spent two long evenings last week with friends who are, I think only temporarily, determined to change their lives entirely by dramatic means. I tend to mistrust grand gestures as solutions to complex problems. I wonder why it is so painful to see the patterns we repeat. It should be helpful for us in understanding what we do, but we usually don't accept the obvious.

Well, when things are sorted out a bit, I'll write to you and tell you what I've discovered at UBC.

Affectionately,

Jane