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4504 WEST SECOND AVENUE
VANCOUVER 8, BRITISH COLUMBIA
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Dear Carolyn:

The place of home is always good, even in the first days of sorting out. There is not the same sort of bafflement there is elsewhere, or there is a comfortable space for bafflement. I like the requirement of what is ordinarily foreign: someone else's kitchen, someone else's green grocer, car, family, friends. I like the attention it takes to live in terms of that newness. England is not exactly that for me. It is, but it's much more because there is also so much that is familiar, expected by and of me, a dozen or so people on whom my life very undramatically depends. And I know how to live lightly among things, what to spend time understanding and what to ignore. But combining that with working very hard is tiring at a level that several nights of sleep at home won't cure. I did not want to leave, and I am very glad to be here where I don't have to think so much, can let my feet carry me to fern cutting or type setting or seeing how the kids in the garden are, their so recently grown long arms and legs left as casually about as their books and empty beer bottles. A clutter I can rest in as I need to.

But of course term is beginning. This week registration, next week, only a week-end away now, classes. Helen has been out all week since she runs a course made up of 37 sections with as many staff members, a lot new this year, and they are all coming for ~~drinking~~ drinks today. Yes, she's in English, though she took a degree in Italian and cared most for philosophy, through which she came at language and so is involved in linguistics in a way. The nature of the language interests her, whether she's teaching foreign students or history of the language or theories of transformational grammar or contemporary poetry. She is a teacher, with that gift, which is why, the minute we get home, the garden is full of kids. Oddly, she doesn't pay much attention to them outside the class room, except to say to me, ~~z~~ "If Gray comes by, show him the fossils from Dorset," or "Tell Bob about the new Bach," or "Give Mark all those postcards of the late Turners." And when the books arrive, carloads of them from our summer shopping, she will remember which boy would like to borrow which book. And so they come back, in the good weather staying in the garden to talk with each other, catch sight of her as she goes in and out, trail her around if she's gardening, in the winter gathered in the press room. They bring presents, fish off the boats they've been working on, pailsful of melons, and this time we find 500 bottles of good home made wine for us under the basement steps, 'for the gang'. Sometimes we feed some of them, but mostly not. Some are more friends of Alan, the boy who lives with us, and he takes them all on anyway, though he, too, can drift off to his own space.

I'll meet students here at the house on Monday and Wednesday evenings, vaguely from eight to ten, which means, as term goes on, seven thirty to eleven. I'll have the days to myself. I must rest in them for a while. I mustn't write until after the 1st of November, which is difficult with the working rhythm of a book still in me though

the book is done. Alan looks at me and says back what I say to him, "Cool slowly so as not to crack." I am always boney and fanatic at the end of long work.

I should hear from editors soon about the book sold just before I left. Now I'm only getting letters from offices of various sorts, asking for 8 x 10 glossies as if I carried them traveling with me in my briefcase. A photographer friend came last Saturday and took thousands of pictures of my faintly alarming, exhausted face, which should do well for THIS IS NOT FOR YOU. So preoccupied with the new book, I haven't turned my attention to the fact of this publication. Perhaps as well. I don't enjoy a book coming out, though I am glad to have it happen. I am more interested in what reactions there will be to the new one. Both London and New York agents are enthusiastic, but that is what they are supposed to be.

More foreign rights selling for short stories. REDBOOK will publish the last of their small ~~xxx~~ stock pile in October. There was one in the August REDBOOK, too. And I'll have to send them more, now, because they'll be in a ~~b~~ mood to buy again with book publication somewhere a year away.

No, the amount of change I lived through as a kid didn't make me flexible. It made me wary, alert, very susceptible to culture shock. Not at the time, I suppose, but rather when I was old enough to choose my own patterns. I hate traveling. I am neurotic about crowds, but my life is irrevocably scattered across a dozen landscapes, and, to give it some continuity, some wholeness, I must keep going back or toward, keep gathering it up into the present.

Why should you regret not going back to university? If you can do the work you enjoy, then there is no ~~yo~~ problem. I was lucky in college. It was the first time I had a sense of being able to gather up fragments into shapes, and I was young, just sixteen, so that still being in school wasn't irksome. Since my family thought that spending money on higher education for a girl was a comic extravagance, being there was, I suppose, something of a rebellious gesture. Oh, nobody really minded. My mother did say she thought education was basically unhealthy (she's probably right in a simple sense), and my father made references to my brain as if it were some kind of exotic parrot to give amused house room to. But they were very young, too, and grew in their own fashion. I had excellent, patient teachers who pressed me to go on for a PhD, but I ~~g~~ could use my parents' attitude to protect me from that. I got as much as I needed and stopped sitting at feet and began the real process of learning for myself. And surely the sooner that ~~k~~ can begin the better. I would not have lasted a term at UBC, which is maybe why I don't mind the litter of kids on the grass, in the press room. So many of my teachers gave me house and heart room for growing, and I needed it. They do, too. If there isn't that, there isn't much in lecture hall and library to compensate for the cage of one age group, the ritual sacrifices of papers and exams, the endless lectures.

-- Helen came in unexpectedly for lunch. Now the cleaning woman has finished and gone. I must do some tidying of garden and set up for drinks and guests. And change. I'm being willful about clothes, nothing but trousers or floor length dresses from now on. There is no way of my avoiding scaring hell out of new staff and students on first meeting. My unexpected size, my glow-in-the-dark nervous system can't be helped; so I think I might as well be comfortable to make them gradually so.

Welcome back to work. It is a good thing to be doing.

Jane