

Bethesda, June 26, 1950

Dear Pop and Putty,

A dark, murky pall of anti-climax hovers about the house. Abuelito is gone, Putty is gone, Leslyn is gone, Uncle John is gone, Peedee is gone, Betsey is gone, Coit is gone, even Suzy Straub has gone to California. I can only hope that Laurence doesn't feel the same melancholy as I do. I miss the charming hubbub of having Leslyn around particularly today. I really enjoyed having her here, although naturally there was a bit more work involved. But Laurence and she had such intensely happy times together, (and it must be admitted also some fairly intense squabbles,) that life seemed unusually vivid. Leslyn away from Peedee is a remarkably good child, well adjusted, independent, willing to share, able to give way with the natural minimum of protests. She reminded me of Betsey in all this, and you know I consider Betsey as good a child to have around as it is possible to find among five-year-olds. Leslyn is wonderfully, flatteringly affectionate, to add to her other virtues, and won William's heart in two shakes of a lamb's tail by the simple expedient of running out to him whenever he came home, shouting "Daddy! Daddy!" and showering him with kisses and hugs. Absolutely irresistible. She called me mother, and wormed her way into my affections by the same ingenuous wiles. Her grammar is quite poor, her vocabulary suffers in comparison with Laurence's, and she seems to be set on establishing bad eating habits such as Peedee has, but my, what a clever little thing for making you love her! John and Mrs. Cruikshank thinks she doesn't eat enough at meal times, and have been apparently feeding her too much (in my opinion) in between meals, with the result that she now asks for something to eat half an hour after breakfast. She eats just as well as Laurence does at meals, and while that isn't saying too much, neither does it say that she is starving herself at meals. I made it a practice to make her wait till ten thirty and three thirty, and then I would give them each milk and cookies or fruit. What she wants is candy right after breakfast and two or three times again before the next meal, but since she is fundamentally willing to do what you ask her to do, she settled for the milk, etc. I don't think she isn't getting enough to eat. John has a large appetite, Peedee has, and perhaps Mrs. Cruikshank and her children have, but I don't think Leslyn does, and that's why she appears to them not to be eating enough. She eats as much at mealtimes as Betsey does, for example, and is good about finishing what's on her plate with some prodding. The spectre of malnutrition has now entered her life, and will I hope influence her toward green vegetables. She was as good as gold all during the week she was here, and made Laurence look like a particularly ill-tempered and selfish little spoiled brat, but as soon as Peedee appeared on Saturday she changed into the same kind of whiney, quarrelsome, tenacious child that Laurence had occasionally been during the week. Happily for my peace of mind, Laurence did an about-face himself as soon as Peedee arrived, and was happily willing to take turns, give way, share, and not whine. I wish there were some way the two sisters could be apart more often. I spoke to John about having Leslyn come down here again in late August, after we get back from our vacation, and he was willing, but Leslyn said she didn't want to because she wanted to come back tomorrow instead. That's the sort of thing that gets under your skin!

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I'm afraid I may have made an awful mistake in regard to your trunk and the Railway Express. But I can explain everything, Judge! When the man came to collect, I was preparing lunch and the two children were in one of their less amiable moods, also I had a dollar fifty left in my purse, it was raining hard and looked as if it might all day (have you ever been in Feoria, in the rain?) and this man said he wanted sixteen dollars and something. He would take a check, but my check book was as thin as my purse, due to having had to buy that evening outfit the week before. I couldn't remember to save me what you had wanted done about the situation, so I finally said, as the kind man suggested, that he address you in care of Mrs. Lutnam, that being the only address I then had for you. I hope I haven't caused endless difficulties, and that you will forget my irresponsibility as well as forgiving it. I shall make a determined effort to do better in the future.

To my surprise and delight the Foreign Service Journal kindly published my "Well Stuffed Shirt", and now I am expecting a lovely check to arrive in the mail any day. Then I shall see about a mirror for the hall and a plastic swimming pool for Laurence.

Also to our surprise and delight all of William's salary increases were approved, and maybe we can start living within our income. We are awaiting hopefully the first fattened paycheck, still, but while there's life there's hope.

Dianetics was topic A, B, and Z over the weekend. John arrived by car with Peedee in the afternoon and there it began. I had told Virginia Davis about it, and with her great interest in things psychological, she was fascinated. He in turn had told her former analyst and great friend Elenid Kotchnig about it, and Elenid had said she would like to meet John, because a good friend and colleague of hers (this is really becoming involved!) had become so interested. He had gone up to Elizabeth to take the \$500 course for professional psychologists etc. So when Virginia called to tell me she would like to come and call Sunday along with Elenid, I invited them to dinner Saturday night instead. As usual on occasions when no one pays the slightest attention and it could have been canned Baked beans, my souffle was unusually upstanding and the molded salad satisfactory to a well-seasoned degree. John, Elenid, and Virginia had a fine discussion and stayed till one thirty in the morning, I think it was. I counted up to yawn number ten and then got my second wind. Since I have now finished Ron Hubbard's book "Dianetics" some of the conversation was necessarily repetitive as far as I was concerned, but it was interesting to hear John and a professional Jungian bat it about with each other. As far as Dianetics worrying Peedee and Leslyn, I should say it worries them about as much as a hailstorm worries a rock, and John doesn't try anything on them I would be afraid to have him try on Laurence John. When they fall or otherwise hurt themselves he has them repeat the incident over and over again until they are bored to death with it, but that just seems like fairly good sense to me. They don't mind except for getting bored at the end, and it gives them a chance to sit in their daddy's lap for a while with his entire attention. They both seem fond of Mrs. Cruikshank.

Much love,