

Feb. 12, 1940

Dear Mama,

Guess why I am writing a special letter to you! Because this morning as I came up the elevator I heard a canary singing madly to the tune of the squeaky carpet sweeper, and that reminded me of the Emperor and the Countess, the Victorian parlor and the Franklin Stove, and coming home at Christmas and spring vacations. The lady who has the other apartment on the roof, with us, is the owner of this inspirational canary. It is a very noisy and happy canary, to judge from what penetrates the walls. It's odd the way all canaries, regardless of nationality, are wildly excited by vacuum cleaners and their ilk, and always go noisily mad when they hear them.

Isn't today Lincoln's birthday? Anyway it is a Monday and 2:30 in the afternoon, so Jimmie is still sleeping peacefully because he didn't get in until 8 A.M. I hate Sunday nights, because I have to come home all alone with no James around. But Sundays at noon and at dinner time we have meals in some restaurant or other, alone or with some of the correspondents, which is always fun. I go to the office at noon and stay there during the afternoon typing or reading the papers. They take the Herald Tribune and the "Nerk" [Newark, New Jersey] News. I have been reading a lot for months, so someday I may be an educated woman! I've read eleven volumes of Jules Romain's Men of Goodwill since I came to France, and I find it very interesting. Lots of Dos Passos and Maugarn. One of the most moving books so far was The Well of Loneliness, which is a sensitive, well written story of a lesbian, by one of them. There is nothing obscene or scandalous in it, it is real tragedy. You couldn't lose by reading it, if you haven't already.

A nice letter just came from Aunt Jondie and Susan, which I promptly answered in kind. Susan would like to be in Paris now, and I must say there would be no reason why she shouldn't. People keep naming dates when "things are going to break", but so far there has been no outcome to their pessimistic prophecies. Life is very calm and ordinary, we haven't had an "alerte" (air raid warning) in 2 months. Prices continue to rise, however, probably not because of real scarcity (except in coffee) but because France must be exporting food in exchange for credit to buy armaments. "Guns instead of butter" is a fine theory for those who have enough money to buy luxuries in any case, but it is very hard on the people who need "butter" most - the great masses of people who have to give up essentials when the prices go up even a little.

Today is a meatless one. I am going to have an omelette "fines herbes", parched rice, carrots, pudding, & Jimmie will have his daily Yoghurt, also. He loves them, but so far I haven't acquired the taste. Daddy will remember his experience with Yoghurt at the Turkish restaurant at the Fair. Jimmie now says I am a good cook, but I am proceeding very carefully, so there are many unexplored fields still.

We are quite certain we shall have the Apartment till the end of March now, but M. Dadeschkéliani, the Georgian international lawyer to whom we pay the rent, said that the owner might want to sell the place soon thereafter. Gosh, I hope not. Dadeschkéliani is a very interesting man. He is about 45, was a sergeant in the last war, is in the 2^{ième} Bureau now. He was telling us that he has seen our absent landlord's brother a few days ago in his restful concentration camp. He has lived in Paris for years, and until 1932 was Ambassador from the nonexistent State of Georgia. France refused to recognize the annexation thereof to the Soviets until the time of the Franco-Soviet pact, so Dadeschkéliani profited by being allowed diplomatic privileges for years. It is a great help

when one drives a car or gets a carte d'identité, even though there is no salary attached. The police are always polite, said he.

Having been interrupted by the awakening of Jimmie, it is now 5:20, time to pull the curtains together for the night. James goes to work at five on Mondays, making the day shorter than usual. We are very restless these days, longing more than ever for a good restful vacation in the sun and warm. Or even just a day of rest every week. It really does tell on one, not to have that to look forward to during the week and to interrupt the course of things. We hardly see each other more than five hours a day sometimes, for another thing, and we are more in love than ever, which complicates the whole matter.

Glad you like Mrs. Jones, Sr. Jimmie hates to write letters, so it is usually I who do the honors in that score, writing to her about once every three weeks. She likes that, because she now hears about the progress of Jimmie much more frequently than previously.

Jimmie just announced that there is a copy of Astounding Stories at the office waiting for me, which sounds very exotic and enticing. Apropos, I have just finished re-typing my own masterpiece, which I am now going to send off to an agent that Sam Dashiell at the office has recommended to us. I do hope something comes of it.

I must now go down to the stores and buy the vegetables.

Lovingly,

Me

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