

Tuesday, January 5

Dear Rob,

This is my trusty little pocketbook letter - I carry two sheets in my pocketbook to add to whenever I have a moment and inspiration during corridor duty, study hall, etc. Sometimes, as you may have noticed, it becomes a bit battered - but as long as it is legible, it should be acceptable - right?

Eckie called Mrs. Dondan last night - he was leaving at 11:00 last night. I think that having my free period when she has her coffee break may help her - I think she wants and needs to talk about him, and it is easier to bring the whole thing up with me just as a matter of exchanging news. I'll try to avoid having to do work then so that if she wants to talk I am free. She is still quiet and contained - but she looks old.

I gave John The Supper of The Lamb yesterday - and he seemed pleased. I hope he reads it soon - it's such a totally different thing from anything having to do with school - and the whole style and joy of living in it are great. Do you think he will sit down to get acquainted with an onion? What do you think his family will say if he does? Bed and Board and An Offering of Unlocks are in paperback now, too - I thought the first, and Paperback Bookcutter will set aside the other when it comes in. Should you like any of them sent?

It has been raining since yesterday. All the snow is slushing away drearily. Then we are supposed to have cold weather again by the end of the week. I know what I kept saying about enjoying weather this summer - but it is rather hard to find any enjoyment in this - except the contrast when you don't have to go out in it and can sit by the fire. I think that half cord of wood is going to be consumed quite soon.

When the Holborn book arrives, would you like it sent to you? It consists of essays and might therefore be readable in the small ~~book~~ boxes you can afford.

The Clark quote is up - but I haven't heard any comments or noticed anyone particularly

reading it yet. Probably the day after I take it down kids will say "why did you take it down? I was going to read it today."

Wednesday

Would you like us to send you Jergens Complexion Bars? or can you get them at the PX - or do you prefer to be grumpy and pimply?

After all the rain we had clearing skies for a spectacularly changing sunned yesterday and sun and wispy clouds today. They're hoping for a snow day Friday, but the chances are diminishing, according to the N.S. Weather Service (that's what it's called now - not the Weather Bureau. Weather Service sounds as if you ought to be able to call them up and ask them to repair it or something like that.)

Mama was commenting tonight on how warm I felt in my pink teddy bear robe, though my room is quite cold. I told her what you said about having a zipper across the bottom - so she started wondering if she could buy this kind of material and make one for you - in blue - with a zipper across the bottom - Merry Christmas for next year?

The copies of the Inferno finally came - also copies of a new book we talked the kids into buying - It could make a whole semester course itself - one of those Mentor bargains (95¢ - 76¢ with discount) - The Series of the French Theater - including Moliere - "Le Malade Imaginaire" Racine - "Andromache" Beaumarchais - "The Barber of Seville" Hugo - "Hernani" (I read a few lines - hysterically melodramatic - no wonder Verdi made an opera of it) Dostand - "The Idiot" Giraudoux - "Song of Songs"

Known - "The Lark"

others - and numerous essays, old and modern, on the individual plays and authors, on French drama, Classicism, farce, Comedy, etc. - about 575 pages in all! One of my kids dropped out after the books were ordered, so I have an extra copy and will send it to you. It probably won't survive long - monsters are notorious - but don't worry about it.

Picky gave his mother a cassette recorder for Christmas - and he has one too - so she'll be getting cassette letters too. I'll buy one for Mom and Dad for their anniversary - and learn to use it for school too, if I can - it would be good to be able to record portions of records so that I don't have to fumble in class.

I have 22 caps knitted for next Christmas! I'm really determined to do as much as possible throughout the year so that we can really enjoy next Christmas without fuss or fuss about shopping - and I do enjoy making things. The caps are fun because I can make up the patterns and because they don't take long to finish.

~~Th~~ Thursday

I keep trying to imagine you as being in a place - but I can't. The only way to see you in my mind's eye is to see you on the dining room chair, tipping backward, or in the green chair in a yellow shirt, jeans, and the blue corduroy shirt - gesturing with your pipe to make a point - and I think I like that picture better anyway. I'll be very glad when we have an address for you, however - both so that I can start sending off letters and so that it feels as

if you are in a place - not in Limbo. (Both Lewis and Capon make a point of the importance of a sense of place. Capon never mentions Lewis, but I think he must know Lewis's writings - and should like them. Mama was saying that we should try to go to hear Capon preach some time.)

Monday

I was correcting compositions and found a sentence to put with Lincoln's book review ("For people who like this kind of book, this is the kind of book they'll like.") - "Books are interesting to people who find something interesting about them." Help! I have two whole sets of compositions few of which rise above that level - and from my 2 10th grade classes, which amazed me at the beginning of the year with their ability to write descriptions. They have troubles with ideas, however, both their own and others!

Capon does mention Lewis in Bed and Board - when he mentions Teatrig and suggests Meltemis and Lewis (Allegory of Love) as the best way to understand Dante's vision of Beatrice. He also writes about moving "further up and further in" - and there are other things that sound like an echo of Lewis. I'm burning the candle at both ends again - reading and (sort of) doing school work.

Dad has read Out of the Silent Planet and is almost finished with Perelandra. Should I tell him to read the Durand series. the Britannica?

I went to the Cooney Saturday to ask Kevin about packages to you - and he had some helpful suggestions. Most of the time, however, Mrs. Cooney was there and was telling what they had sent him - it was funny to watch Kevin's face and try to interpret what had been a good idea and what had not. He said he'll tell John if he thinks of anything else.

Tuesday, January 12

I've been reading your book - Boccaccio's Life of Dante is priceless. If you cut out all the exclamations, I think it would be less than  $\frac{2}{3}$  the length. I prop it up on my book stand and knit. Last night I went to Rockville Centre to borrow Williams' Figure of Beatrice - for the second time - and Sayers' Introductory Papers on Dante - for the umpteenth time. Do you think I'll be able to read them this time? Plus The Inferno, assignments for 10's and 11 NR's, assorted compositions and exams, Capon, and the comic strips. I thought I had more to write about, but they have fled - I'll go back to work for a while.

I do have opera tickets for the spring season - 2 subscriptions this time. Mine was reduced from 4 to 3 performances, only one of which I particularly care to see, but I didn't want to lose the seats because they are good and Saturday matinees are convenient. The other has 4, all of which I want to see. You will probably receive lengthy descriptions, okay? Shall I also sing parts onto a tape for you? The dates and operas are:

Wed. evening Feb 24 - Trifolice (Hooray!)

Fri. evening, March 5 - La Boheme (always cry somewhere)

Interested with culture { Fri. evening March 19 - La Cenerentola - Rossini - Cinderella - and pretty  
? Sat. matinee March 20 - Louise - Charpentier - early 20th c. - melodic - ordinary (as far as I know - have heard only a bit)

Can I take it? { Sat. matinee April 10 - The Turn of the Screw - Benjamin Britten  
Sat. evening April 10 - Un Ballo in Maschera - Verdi

Sat. matinee April 24 - La Traviata - familiar but lovely

Among Leo's suggestions were - the Sunday N.Y. Times Magazine + Week in Review (we're saving

them + the Book Review), Time or Two weeks if you can't get it there, Cheeses and canned salmon, etc., white socks - lots, food spray, - no baked things (they arrive soggy and/or broken) no chocolate. I'll tell me more as he thinks of it and I'll check with him. Tobacco, too.

Mama came in this afternoon - very late because Tom, John, and I had been collecting exams - Mama just pointed to the table and said "Look!" - Then while I picked up your letter, she hugged John, who had come in to borrow a book. I read it to him - and later reread it myself. I wish you could see what it has done for Mom and Dad - and for me. It will be still better when we do have an address - and can write to you and send you books that you can read and then redistribute as subversive education.

Poor Mama! Poor John! She just told me that he skunked in a bit when she first hugged him - and I remembered that he has evidently a cracked or broken rib from skiing!

I must do some work now and try to get to bed by midnight - only 45 minutes away - before I turn into a pumpkin.

Thursday

Lovely snow fell last night - and turned to rain this morning. See what you are being spared from?

Instead of rereading my marked-up Aardi for the 4th year in a row - I'm reading the assignments (and the unsigned cantos as well) in Dorothy Sayers' translation. It really is better - I don't know if the translation is actually better, but the Aardi had, I suppose, become a bit too familiar, and all the underlining and notes were a distraction. I do think Dorothy Sayers does more with sound than Aardi does - and that is fun. I think reading a different translation also helps one remember that it is a translation. And the work

itself. (Like realizing that St. Paul did not write in Elizabethan English.) Dorothy Sayers often seems more vivid too - or perhaps it is just that it seems fresher to me. I'll try to find time to go on to the Purgatorio and Paradiso, too. I haven't read them since my junior year in college - and in a translation that employed archaisms and "poetic" phraseology. Seriously - do you think you would like them when you are settled? It really is, like the title of her essay in Essays Presented to Charles Williams, "as if Dante were someone <sup>sitting</sup> in an easy chair on the other side of the fireplace" ... and telling you a story." Try lending that out or giving it away. Actually you wouldn't have to lie about The Inferno - just be selective about what you mention of the contents.)

Friday I'm not of the sure spelling.  
Mrs. Douden had a letter from Ricky yesterday - he's to be sent out from ~~then to~~ today to his assignment - He said the food is absolutely revolting there - please have a package ready to send as soon as possible - but Mrs. Douden looked much better. Letters are very important for us, too.

I was talking to both Jane and Craig on the phone - they can record cassettes for you from records and will be happy to. Blank tapes - hour long - can be found on sale for about \$1. So - send your orders for what you would like. Jane said they love the records I gave them for Christmas, so that may be one of the first.

Saturday  
I told John about the Cooney Cassette Fund - He approved, but he felt we really should give 3 C's into the name - so he renamed it the Cooney Cassette Cause. I bought some blank tapes today and ordered a recorder - they didn't

have it in stock. If any tapes come from you before it arrives, however, we can borrow Jane and Craig's.

Levin is definitely going to Hawaii - next Monday, probably. It's going to be hard on John - and may be hard on Ker, too, since the airlines (he's going to work for United) have been laying people off and living in Hawaii is supposed to be quite expensive. It would be nice if things so worked out that he had his taste of it and, without anything drastic happening, decided that he'd come home again. Jan is going to be married July 5 - and that will leave John, who needs, wants, and deserves to be independent, the only child at home. But maybe things will resolve themselves properly - and there isn't much I can do but listen, sympathize, and encourage.

Spelling note on your letter - Yes, there are three o's in mammoth & but no u.

Dad has finished the Lewis trilogy - His only comment was that Lewis must have been taking LSD to imagine all that. He's reading The Man Who Was Thursday now.

I have a rather pleasant, quiet - and vacant - boy in my world Lit. class who is doing quite poorly. He came in Friday for two purposes - to ask whether I thought he should transfer to English 12 and to have his preliminary term paper conference. The topic he had chosen is the use of myth in the space trilogy. After the conference he decided to stay - staying with world Lit. a bit longer - mostly, I think, for the sake of the term paper.

The temperature has been about 11°

today - with brilliant sunshine to take the edge off - and a breeze to put it back on. The rain the other day left some of the snow and put a glaze on it. I took 3 pictures at the pond, trying to finish off the roll so that we can have it developed next week and take it to the Moorns to see on their screen when we go there next Sunday.

Monday

I'll finish this off today, stuff it into an envelope, and begin another. Mrs. Douden is going to duplicate the folder of mailing directions Licky sent her and give it to me.

Last night I went to Jane + Craig's - John was supposed to go too, but when they found that Helen is definitely leaving at the end of ~~next~~ this week or the beginning of next his elder sister decided to have them all for dinner - quite understandable. There was another couple there the same age as all of us - he was a graduate of Swarthmore + had been there with Craig and she is the daughter of the head of the physics dept. at Adelphi. He is a college English teacher and they had just returned with their two little boys from 15 months chiefly in London where he directed a Gifts Program - so it was fun and interesting. Lois is marvelous - even prettier and showing interest in things - she squeaks and makes other noises. I held her a long time and put her to sleep - by rubbing her head - in circles of course. It seems incredible, looking at that tiny creature, that she is really a person and will some day be as big as I - and eventually as old (not at the same time - I know that, silly!) - and that only 7 ~~more~~ weeks ago she wasn't apart from Jane.

I know you are likely to be busy - although it is also quite possible that you

were he unoccupied and bored - and that there are quite a few people you want to write to - but if you can find the time, - would you write once or twice to John? I think it would very much surprise and please him (no - he has never said anything about it - he would never assume that much) - I think it just would be, in several ways, very good for him - and if he answered, as I'm sure he would, you would probably receive some very entertaining letters. Funny ones, anyway. He is still my good, sweet Joan, but he needs reassurance and strengthening - and it often makes me rather weary. I know he doesn't realize it and he also makes me smile - but I'll be glad when this school year - and then this whole year - is over.

I have a gorgeous cyclamen I bought at Field's to bring to school - rosy red. They were having a special - \$2.50, which is amazing - on smallish ones. It is full of double, ruffled flowers and more buds, and the whole thing - flowers and leaves - is strong, vivid, crisp, and alive looking. Dad is still plowing through your books - The Man Who Was Thursday and now Good Soldier Schweik. Mama has started making another jumper for me - and the uncles, Datty, and all will have Sunday dinner at Centerport this weekend.

Be good. Take care of yourself. Write as often as you can.

Love,  
Lois

Ecce quam bonum et iocundum  
vivere fratres in unum.