

Jan 7, 1955

My dearest Françoise:-

I'm so glad you wrote and identified yourself as the giver of Jenny's wonderful doll. Phil received a telephone call from a friend of Josie's who had brought the doll with her to New York and made arrangements for transferring the newborn to the Boyer hearth, where it arrived just in time for Christmas. Phil assured me that it was Josie who had given this present and I, not doubting your niece's generosity, was nevertheless convinced that the baby came from "Marraine". The baby's name is "Willie". This was Jenny's idea. She's had two "Willie"'s in her life, both female. One was a very pleasant (and rather disorderly) negro girl who worked for us a year or so ago, and the other the wife of Phil's Art and Layout man, a childless lady who spoils our own brood outrageously and treats Jenny as if she were the Empress of all the Indias. The newborn Willie has been Jenny's constant companion since Christmas morning. She came along to the family party at my brother's that day and has not been far from your god-daughter's sight since then.

Linda and David were here for three riotous weeks and left two days ago, trailing comets' tails of forgotten shoes and half written thank-you notes. My parents were in this country for Christmas, and Linda availed herself of their presence in New York to set up headquarters at their apartment and lead a gay life of dresses, dances, movies and gawky young men in ill-fitting evening suits. She seems terribly young, from the mathematical point-of-view, for this type of thing. My own spasmodic taste for it didn't develop until the age of 18 or 19 but I guess one should not make comparisons. She and my mother had a lovely time together, talking and giggling over their tea-cups and going ~~zags~~ on lengthy shopping tours. In between times Lindy would rush home for a day or so and counteract her life of frivolity with intensive house-keeping, furious vacuum-cleaning and polishing and great activity in the kitchen with the cook-book open at the most complicated recipes and much clattering of pans and sudden bursts of smoke from a balky oven. Even David got into the cooking act his last day here and made a cake which used up two dozen eggs (1 dozen in the cake and 1 dozen on the floor), all the sugar and butter and every pan in the house. I've spent the last two days resting!

David managed to bring to life a nightmare I've had ever since we moved to this house and its adjacent pond. He and his friend Artie Malsin went skating there one day just before Christmas. They'd been at it for an hour and I, sitting quietly up here with Jenny, suddenly felt compelled to jump up, put on coat, scarf, gloves, boots, etc., and walk down to the pond's edge (run, rather, for there seemed to be urgency). The boys were skating ~~XXXX~~ around peacefully when I arrived but within 10 seconds David had gone through, about 100 yards from shore. There was an old kayak on the bank and I thrust it at Artie and told him to push it out to David. Then I galloped up and got in the car and drove full tilt around by the road, through somebody's stable and over flower beds to the opposite edge of the pond. What I was afraid of was that Artie, in trying to help David, would fall in too -- I'm as scared of nice as I am of fire and ghosts. But just as I arrived on

the other side David was climbing out and I shouted at him to walk back to the house to keep warm, I meanwhile having got the car stuck in some mud. By the time I'd extricated myself, backed the car into a small birch tree, lurched

forward again and bounced the rest of the way with the emergency brake on, ~~the~~ the boys were approaching the house. We got David's clothes off so fast we practically took his skin too. He was haking badly by now and quite blue so we piled every blanket in the house on top of him. The kettle I put on to boil refuse to do anything -- merely because I'd neglected to light the stove -- so I filled him with brandy, made a roaring fire in his room, and then sat down, still with coat and boots on, to try and calm my nerves and to wish fervently for a little sang-froid instead of the reactions of the foolish mother hen. An hour later David was already out of bed and helping Artie to build an airplane. He had a little fever in the afternoon but nothing more, thank God.

I don't know why, exactly, I've burdened you with this idiotic tale. It comforts me, though, to tell you of my fear. The accident itself terrified me, but less even than my own silly behavior. Hadn't you heard always that the right course of action springs to you in the heat of emergency? It's disturbing to realize this isn't entirely true and that a supposedly intelligent woman can be reduced to an absurd figure galloping all over the landscape screaming like a peahen.

Let's change the subject. I wish you were here right now, with your more adequate knowledge of German, for I've received a card from Frau Bermann, covered entirely with Teutonic hieroglyphs. Every so often a word springs to life and reveals the thread of thought and then ich und das (or die?) deutsch part company and I don't know what she's talking about. I gather there's a slight dissertation on my "personlichkeit" and some conjecture as to what kind of children I may, given _____ and _____, have produced. And what does this mean: "Vor kurzen erhielt ich Ihre Einladung für die Ausstellung Ihrer U. Ihres Mannes Bilder"? Having written this down, I suddenly realize it might mean she received the announcement of the Philadelphia show, only she's got Phil in the role of co-artist instead of my brother. I may get the German-American farmer down the road to translate, although I'm a bit apprehensive as to what Frau Bermann remembers of my Personlichkeit. Gel?

Jenny has just returned from school and hurled herself into my arms with a force which caused the ink bottle to slop on the table behind me. Her favorite topic of conversation these days is what she terms "the new Jenny". The "new Jenny" came into existence the day after Christmas. When Phil asked her for a description all he got was "New Jenny's is not like Old Daddy's. New Jenny's play all day and Old Daddy's go to the office and fight with men". She's devised a game in which she is the mother and Phil is her baby. This goes on every evening. "Now baby," she says, inspecting Phil's hands, "let 's see if you washed properly" And so forth. She sings all the time, putting words of her own to tunes she's learned. One set of words is rather ghoulish. It comes from a prayer she says at night which ends, rather to my disapproval, with "if I should die before I wake, I pray Thee, Lord, my soul to take". For hours she'll sing "and if I die and when I die and if I didn't do die and I won't die and I will die". Then of course come the questions about "what is die, Mummy?" and I find them difficult to handle for the comprehension of one so young.

4457 Tel. Croton
"This is separate cover", as P. Boyer and I say sometimes in our stuffier business letters, I am sending you a photograph of your mother, which turned up myster-

Phillip Boyer Jr.