

4 January 1972

Dear Rose,

I was genuinely sorry to receive your sad news. Despite your composure, I knew from experience how intense and lingering grief can be under the calm which follows the initial shock. As you may not know, I have lost every single member of my immediate family, my father having died four years ago this month, and now I have only my three nieces and their children. A further blow was the death two years ago, at the age of only 35, of the editor of my book, who had become a very close friend as a result of the unique intimacy that develops in such a professional relationship. Bob succumbed to leukemia, as I gather Howard also did. But the worst of all these blows, in some ways, was the death of my beloved cat, Allegra, last June, after she had been with me for eleven years, often as the greatest comfort and distraction from the grief of other losses.

To relieve my feeling of desolation, I immediately acquired a kitten, Mimi, who is becoming a delightful companion and above all spares me the ordeal of returning to an empty silent apartment. Unhappily, it is not so easy to replace a human partner as a housepet, and of course one's parents and brother can never be replaced, nor does the heartache ever really vanish completely.

You have my sincerely sympathy, Rose, and all my good wishes for the future. Do write again when you have the impulse.