

12/25/72

Dear Mary,

You are with us more this Xmas than you have any way of knowing. Your last-year's card, a golden angel, is on the tree. Lil saved it. And I've just made the last of a series of unsuccessful efforts to phone you.

Yup, a real extravagance. I plan to try to place one other call later in the day. I got one Xmas present, a check for \$20.00 from Jim Lesar. We appreciate it more than we can tell him. Having just been forced to borrow another \$1,000 to meet our obligations to the bank and for other things, and with Lil's work starting in 10 days we'll have fewer of the regular financial crises, so we decided we wanted to hear that you are o.k. because you have been silent for so long.

I've been wondering why you would not answer the day before Xmas, throughout the day, and Xmas morning at about 8:30 your time. I finally decided you had either taken a needed rest somewhere or had gone to see Buck, if he were still hospitalized. If this, we do hope he is coming along and is again becoming the kind of man I knew and got to like immediately.

Your burdens must be enormous. We have learned only too painfully that friends of means never use their excess means in genuine friendship, to lighten the burdens of those they pretend are friends. So, we regret there is nothing we can do to help you meet what must be staggering bills, unless you just do what I suppose you'll have to, just ignore them. I have no idea how or when we'll be able to repay what we just borrowed. The old friend from whom I borrowed it knows this and will not take interest when we do.

What makes this small gift from Jim more meaningful is the knowledge that the pittance Bud has been paying him recently, I think \$165.00 a month, he hasn't paid for last month and this. Instead Bud has flown off to the Barbados. What better way to spend Xmas with an important and in many ways possibly precedent case with motions due and with deadlines on answering them? As soon as Bud left Jim, unpaid, had to tackle two, not one. (We discussed both and I've written him with respect to one how to save Bud much money, believe it or not.)

I guess maybe too much of the Old Testament lingers in me for the modern world.

We know enough of your problems to know they are not easily solved, so we know that you have serious ones, as we do in other ways. There is nothing you or we can do about these. We called just to speak to you and in the hope of hearing from you that you are as well as one can be in your circumstances. Anything better would be an exceptional Xmas and realistically, even that little bit would probably be, too. We do hope things are at least this good, that as you have for all these many years, you are holding up.

A friend of 37 years is coming for dinner. He is our dentist. His wife has just clean<sup>ed</sup> him like an industrial vacuum, having spend five or ten years doing it to the trusting man in less conspicuous chunks. Here he is, a few years older than we, starting life all over again, beginning, as when first beginning, in debt but with this difference: although all his children are of age, several still need help with their educations, one because he has been and is ill and another because she was turned off of a corrupt society for some years and has just put her head together. I hate to think of how much we owe him. The one thing we can offer him we do, as we did Thanksgiving.

Mary, if you can get away, we would still like you to come, whenever and for however. Lil's work won't be pushing her the first couple of weeks of the new year. Howard will be here then and I think you'd like to meet him. There is room for both. He's the most unusual 19-year-old you'll ever meet. We'll talk, he'll go through my files, read what he wants, take what he wants to borrow, and unlike others will return everything, each piece marked with its proper file designation. If you can come but it is later, well, you'll have late suppers or you'll be the cook! (I guess my typing is worse than usual because I'm using fibbons that got to pale for Jim when he was doing Bud's work on the Ray petition and they ride up and I can't see what is being typed. Jim learned on his own that happiness for Happy Harold is not having to spend \$1.25 he doesn't have for a typewriter ribbon, as he has learned that little gestures of slight kindnesses like this are not offensive.) Mary, we wish you and yours well and hope things are as good as they can be. Our love and hopes,