

**ДЖИН
УЭБСТЕР**

DADDY

LONG-LEGS

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Daddy Long-Legs

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Jean Webster
Daddy Long-Legs: A Comedy in Four Acts
TO YOU

“BLUE WEDNESDAY”

THE first Wednesday in every month was a Perfectly Awful Day—a day to be awaited with dread, endured with courage and forgotten with haste. Every floor must be spotless, every chair dustless, and every bed without a wrinkle. Ninety-seven squirming little orphans must be scrubbed and combed and buttoned into freshly starched gingham; and all ninety-seven reminded of their manners, and told to say, “Yes, sir,” “No, sir,” whenever a Trustee spoke.

It was a distressing time; and poor Jerusha Abbott, being the oldest orphan, had to bear the brunt of it. But this particular first Wednesday, like its predecessors, finally dragged itself to a close. Jerusha escaped from the pantry where she had been making sandwiches for the asylum’s guests, and turned upstairs to accomplish her regular work. Her special care was room F, where eleven little tots, from four to seven, occupied eleven little cots set in a row. Jerusha assembled her charges, straightened their rumpled frocks, wiped their noses, and started them in an orderly and willing line toward the dining-room to engage themselves for a blessed half hour with bread and milk and prune pudding.

Then she dropped down on the window seat and leaned throbbing temples against the cool glass. She had been on her feet since five that morning, doing everybody’s bidding, scolded and hurried by a nervous matron. Mrs. Lippett, behind the scenes, did not always maintain that calm and pompous dignity with which she faced an audience of Trustees and lady visitors. Jerusha gazed out across a broad stretch of frozen lawn, beyond the tall iron paling that marked the confines of the asylum, down undulating ridges sprinkled with country estates, to the spires of the village rising from the midst of bare trees.

The day was ended—quite successfully, so far as she knew. The Trustees and the visiting committee had made their rounds, and read their reports, and drunk their tea, and now were hurrying home to their own cheerful firesides, to forget their bothersome little charges for another month. Jerusha leaned forward watching with curiosity—and a touch of wistfulness—the stream of carriages and automobiles that rolled out of the asylum gates. In imagination she followed first one equipage then another to the big houses dotted along the hillside. She pictured herself in a fur coat and a velvet hat trimmed with feathers leaning back in the seat and nonchalantly murmuring “Home” to the driver. But on the door-sill of her home the picture grew blurred.

Jerusha had an imagination—an imagination, Mrs. Lippett told her, that would get her into trouble if she did n’t take care—but keen as it was, it could not carry her beyond the front porch of the houses she would enter. Poor, eager, adventurous little Jerusha, in all her seventeen years, had never stepped inside an ordinary house; she could not picture the daily routine of those other human beings who carried on their lives undiscommoed by orphans.

Je-ru-sha Ab-bott
You are wan-ted
In the of-fice,
And I think you ’d
Better hurry up!

Tommy Dillon who had joined the choir, came singing up the stairs and down the corridor, his chant growing louder as he approached room F. Jerusha wrenched herself from the window and refaced the troubles of life.

“Who wants me?” she cut into Tommy’s chant with a note of sharp anxiety.

Mrs. Lippett in the office,
And I think she ’s mad.

Ah-a-men!

Tommy piously intoned, but his accent was not entirely malicious. Even the most hardened little orphan felt sympathy for an erring sister who was summoned to the office to face an annoyed matron; and Tommy liked Jerusha even if she did sometimes jerk him by the arm and nearly scrub his nose off.

Jerusha went without comment, but with two parallel lines on her brow. What could have gone wrong, she wondered. Were the sandwiches not thin enough? Were there shells in the nut cakes? Had a lady visitor seen the hole in Susie Hawthorn's stocking? Had—O horrors!—one of the cherubic little babes in her own room F "sassed" a Trustee?

The long lower hall had not been lighted, and as she came downstairs, a last Trustee stood, on the point of departure, in the open door that led to the porte-cochère. Jerusha caught only a fleeting impression of the man—and the impression consisted entirely of tallness. He was waving his arm toward an automobile waiting in the curved drive. As it sprang into motion and approached, head on for an instant, the glaring headlights threw his shadow sharply against the wall inside. The shadow pictured grotesquely elongated legs and arms that ran along the floor and up the wall of the corridor. It looked, for all the world, like a huge, wavering daddy-long-legs.

Jerusha's anxious frown gave place to quick laughter. She was by nature a sunny soul, and had always snatched the tiniest excuse to be amused. If one could derive any sort of entertainment out of the oppressive fact of a Trustee, it was something unexpected to the good. She advanced to the office quite cheered by the tiny episode, and presented a smiling face to Mrs. Lippett. To her surprise the matron was also, if not exactly smiling, at least appreciably affable; she wore an expression almost as pleasant as the one she donned for visitors.

"Sit down, Jerusha, I have something to say to you."

Jerusha dropped into the nearest chair and waited with a touch of breathlessness. An automobile flashed past the window; Mrs. Lippett glanced after it.

"Did you notice the gentleman who has just gone?"

"I saw his back."

"He is one of our most affluent Trustees, and has given large sums of money toward the asylum's support. I am not at liberty to mention his name; he expressly stipulated that he was to remain unknown."

Jerusha's eyes widened slightly; she was not accustomed to being summoned to the office to discuss the eccentricities of Trustees with the matron.

"This gentleman has taken an interest in several of our boys. You remember Charles Benton and Henry Freize? They were both sent through college by Mr.—er—this Trustee, and both have repaid with hard work and success the money that was so generously expended. Other payment the gentleman does not wish. Heretofore his philanthropies have been directed solely toward the boys; I have never been able to interest him in the slightest degree in any of the girls in the institution, no matter how deserving. He does not, I may tell you, care for girls."

"No, ma'am," Jerusha murmured, since some reply seemed to be expected at this point.

"To-day at the regular meeting, the question of your future was brought up."

Mrs. Lippett allowed a moment of silence to fall, then resumed in a slow, placid manner extremely trying to her hearer's suddenly tightened nerves.

"Usually, as you know, the children are not kept after they are sixteen, but an exception was made in your case. You had finished our school at fourteen, and having done so well in your studies—not always, I must say, in your conduct—it was determined to let you go on in the village high school. Now you are finishing that, and of course the asylum cannot be responsible any longer for your support. As it is, you have had two years more than most."

Mrs. Lippett overlooked the fact that Jerusha had worked hard for her board during those two years, that the convenience of the asylum had come first and her education second; that on days like the present she was kept at home to scrub.

“As I say, the question of your future was brought up and your record was discussed—thoroughly discussed.”

Mrs. Lippett brought accusing eyes to bear upon the prisoner in the dock, and the prisoner looked guilty because it seemed to be expected—not because she could remember any strikingly black pages in her record.

“Of course the usual disposition of one in your place would be to put you in a position where you could begin to work, but you have done well in school in certain branches; it seems that your work in English has even been brilliant. Miss Pritchard who is on our visiting committee is also on the school board; she has been talking with your rhetoric teacher, and made a speech in your favor. She also read aloud an essay that you had written entitled, ‘Blue Wednesday.’”

Jerusha’s guilty expression this time was not assumed.

“It seemed to me that you showed little gratitude in holding up to ridicule the institution that has done so much for you. Had you not managed to be funny I doubt if you would have been forgiven. But fortunately for you, Mr. —, that is, the gentleman who has just gone—appears to have an immoderate sense of humor. On the strength of that impertinent paper, he has offered to send you to college.”

“To college?” Jerusha’s eyes grew big.

Mrs. Lippett nodded.

“He wanted to discuss the terms with me. They are unusual. The gentleman, I may say, is erratic. He believes that you have originality, and he is planning to educate you to become a writer.”

“A writer?” Jerusha’s mind was numbed. She could only repeat Mrs. Lippett’s words.

“That is his wish. Whether anything will come of it, the future will show. He is giving you a very liberal allowance, almost, for a girl who has never had any experience in taking care of money, too liberal. But he planned the matter in detail, and I did not feel free to make any suggestions. You are to remain here through the summer, and Miss Pritchard has kindly offered to superintend your outfit. Your board and tuition will be paid directly to the college, and you will receive in addition during the four years you are there, an allowance of thirty-five dollars a month. This will enable you to enter on the same standing as the other students. The money will be sent to you by the gentleman’s private secretary once a month, and in return, you will write a letter of acknowledgment once a month. That is—you are not to thank him for the money; he does n’t care to have that mentioned, but you are to write a letter telling of the progress in your studies and the details of your daily life. Just such a letter as you would write to your parents if they were living.

“These letters will be addressed to Mr. John Smith and will be sent in care of the secretary. The gentleman’s name is not John Smith, but he prefers to remain unknown. To you he will never be anything but John Smith. His reason in requiring the letters is that he thinks nothing so fosters facility in literary expression as letter-writing. Since you have no family with whom to correspond, he desires you to write in this way; also, he wishes to keep track of your progress. He will never answer your letters, nor in the slightest particular take any notice of them. He detests letter-writing, and does not wish you to become a burden. If any point should ever arise where an answer would seem to be imperative—such as in the event of your being expelled, which I trust will not occur—you may correspond with Mr. Griggs, his secretary. These monthly letters are absolutely obligatory on your part; they are the only payment that Mr. Smith requires, so you must be as punctilious in sending them as though it were a bill that you were paying. I hope that they will always be respectful in tone and will reflect credit on your training. You must remember that you are writing to a Trustee of the John Grier Home.”

Jerusha's eyes longingly sought the door. Her head was in a whirl of excitement, and she wished only to escape from Mrs. Lippett's platitudes, and think. She rose and took a tentative step backwards. Mrs. Lippett detained her with a gesture; it was an oratorical opportunity not to be slighted.

"I trust that you are properly grateful for this very rare good fortune that has befallen you? Not many girls in your position ever have such an opportunity to rise in the world. You must always remember—"

"I—yes, ma'am, thank you. I think, if that 's all, I must go and sew a patch on Freddie Perkins's trousers."

The door closed behind her, and Mrs. Lippett watched it with dropped jaw, her peroration in mid-air.

THE LETTERS OF MISS JERUSHA ABBOTT to MR. DADDY-LONG-LEGS SMITH

*215 Fergusson Hall,
September 24th.*

Dear Kind-Trustee-Who-Sends-Orphans-to-College,

Here I am! I traveled yesterday for four hours in a train. It 's a funny sensation is n't it? I never rode in one before.

College is the biggest, most bewildering place—I get lost whenever I leave my room. I will write you a description later when I 'm feeling less muddled; also I will tell you about my lessons. Classes don't begin until Monday morning, and this is Saturday night. But I wanted to write a letter first just to get acquainted.

It seems queer to be writing letters to somebody you don't know. It seems queer for me to be writing letters at all—I 've never written more than three or four in my life, so please overlook it if these are not a model kind.

Before leaving yesterday morning, Mrs. Lippett and I had a very serious talk. She told me how to behave all the rest of my life, and especially how to behave toward the kind gentleman who is doing so much for me. I must take care to be Very Respectful.

But how can one be very respectful to a person who wishes to be called John Smith? Why could n't you have picked out a name with a little personality? I might as well write letters to Dear Hitching-Post or Dear Clothes-Pole.

I have been thinking about you a great deal this summer; having somebody take an interest in me after all these years, makes me feel as though I had found a sort of family. It seems as though I belonged to somebody now, and it 's a very comfortable sensation. I must say, however, that when I think about you, my imagination has very little to work upon. There are just three things that I know:

- I. You are tall.
- II. You are rich.
- III. You hate girls.

I suppose I might call you Dear Mr. Girl-Hater. Only that 's sort of insulting to me. Or Dear Mr. Rich-Man, but that 's insulting to you, as though money were the only important thing about you. Besides, being rich is such a very external quality. Maybe you won't stay rich all your life; lots of very clever men get smashed up in Wall Street. But at least you will stay tall all your life! So I 've decided to call you Dear Daddy-Long-Legs. I hope you won't mind. It 's just a private pet name—we won't tell Mrs. Lippett.

The ten o'clock bell is going to ring in two minutes. Our day is divided into sections by bells. We eat and sleep and study by bells. It 's very enlivening; I feel like a fire horse all of the time. There it goes! Lights out. Good night.

Observe with what precision I obey rules—due to my training in the John Grier Home.

*Yours most respectfully,
Jerusha Abbott.*

To Mr. Daddy-Long-Legs Smith.

October 1st.

Dear Daddy-Long-Legs,

I love college and I love you for sending me—I 'm very, *very* happy, and so excited every moment of the time that I can scarcely sleep. You can't imagine how different it is from the John Grier Home. I never dreamed there was such a place in the world. I 'm feeling sorry for everybody who is n't a girl and who can't come here; I am sure the college you attended when you were a boy could n't have been so nice.

My room is up in a tower that used to be the contagious ward before they built the new infirmary. There are three other girls on the same floor of the tower—a Senior who wears spectacles and is always asking us please to be a little more quiet, and two Freshmen named Sallie McBride and Julia Rutledge Pendleton. Sallie has red hair and a turn-up nose and is quite friendly; Julia comes from one of the first families in New York and has n't noticed me yet. They room together and the Senior and I have singles. Usually Freshmen can't get singles; they are very scarce, but I got one without even asking. I suppose the registrar did n't think it would be right to ask a properly brought-up girl to room with a foundling. You see there are advantages!

My room is on the northwest corner with two windows and a view. After you 've lived in a ward for eighteen years with twenty room-mates, it is restful to be alone. This is the first chance I 've ever had to get acquainted with Jerusha Abbott. I think I 'm going to like her.

Do you think you are?

Tuesday.

They are organizing the Freshman basket-ball team and there 's just a chance that I shall make it. I 'm little of course, but terribly quick and wiry and tough. While the others are hopping about in the air, I can dodge under their feet and grab the ball. It 's loads of fun practising—out in the athletic field in the afternoon with the trees all red and yellow and the air full of the smell of burning leaves, and everybody laughing and shouting. These are the happiest girls I ever saw—and I am the happiest of all!

I meant to write a long letter and tell you all the things I 'm learning (Mrs. Lippett said you wanted to know) but 7th hour has just rung, and in ten minutes I 'm due at the athletic field in gymnasium clothes. Don't you hope I 'll make the team?

*Yours always,
Jerusha Abbott.*

P. S. (9 o'clock.)

Sallie McBride just poked her head in at my door. This is what she said:

"I 'm so homesick that I simply can't stand it. Do you feel that way?"

I smiled a little and said no, I thought I could pull through. At least homesickness is one disease that I 've escaped! I never heard of anybody being asylumsick, did you?

October 10th.

Dear Daddy-Long-Legs,

Did you ever hear of Michael Angelo?

He was a famous artist who lived in Italy in the Middle Ages. Everybody in English Literature seemed to know about him and the whole class laughed because I thought he was an archangel. He sounds like an archangel, does n't he? The trouble with college is that you are expected to know such a lot of things you 've never learned. It 's very embarrassing at times. But now, when the girls talk about things that I never heard of, I just keep still and look them up in the encyclopedia.

I made an awful mistake the first day. Somebody mentioned Maurice Maeterlinck, and I asked if she was a Freshman. That joke has gone all over college. But anyway, I 'm just as bright in class as any of the others—and brighter than some of them!

Do you care to know how I've furnished my room? It's a symphony in brown and yellow. The wall was tinted buff, and I've bought yellow denim curtains and cushions and a mahogany desk (second hand for three dollars) and a rattan chair and a brown rug with an ink spot in the middle. I stand the chair over the spot.

The windows are up high; you can't look out from an ordinary seat. But I unscrewed the looking-glass from the back of the bureau, upholstered the top, and moved it up against the window. It's just the right height for a window seat. You pull out the drawers like steps and walk up. Very comfortable!

Sallie McBride helped me choose the things at the Senior auction. She has lived in a house all her life and knows about furnishing. You can't imagine what fun it is to shop and pay with a real five-dollar bill and get some change—when you've never had more than a nickel in your life. I assure you, Daddy dear, I do appreciate that allowance.

Sallie is the most entertaining person in the world—and Julia Rutledge Pendleton the least so. It's queer what a mixture the registrar can make in the matter of room-mates. Sallie thinks everything is funny—even flunking—and Julia is bored at everything. She never makes the slightest effort to be amiable. She believes that if you are a Pendleton, that fact alone admits you to heaven without any further examination. Julia and I were born to be enemies.

And now I suppose you've been waiting very impatiently to hear what I am learning?

I. *Latin*: Second Punic war. Hannibal and his forces pitched camp at Lake Trasimene last night. They prepared an ambush for the Romans, and a battle took place at the fourth watch this morning. Romans in retreat.

II. *French*: 24 pages of the "Three Musketeers" and third conjugation, irregular verbs.

III. *Geometry*: Finished cylinders; now doing cones.

IV. *English*: Studying exposition. My style improves daily in clearness and brevity.

V. *Physiology*: Reached the digestive system. Bile and the pancreas next time. Yours, on the way to being educated,

Jerusha Abbott.

P. S. I hope you never touch alcohol, Daddy?
It does dreadful things to your liver.

Wednesday.

Dear Daddy-Long-Legs,
I've changed my name.

I'm still "Jerusha" in the catalogue, but I'm "Judy" every place else. It's sort of too bad, isn't it, to have to give yourself the only pet name you ever had? I did n't quite make up the Judy though. That's what Freddie Perkins used to call me before he could talk plain.

I wish Mrs. Lippett would use a little more ingenuity about choosing babies' names. She gets the last names out of the telephone book—you'll find Abbott on the first page—and she picks the Christian names up anywhere; she got Jerusha from a tombstone. I've always hated it; but I rather like Judy. It's such a silly name. It belongs to the kind of girl I'm not—a sweet little blue-eyed thing, petted and spoiled by all the family, who romps her way through life without any cares. Would n't it be nice to be like that? Whatever faults I may have, no one can ever accuse me of having been spoiled by my family! But it's sort of fun to pretend I've been. In the future please always address me as Judy.

Do you want to know something? I have three pairs of kid gloves. I've had kid mittens before from the Christmas tree, but never real kid gloves with five fingers. I take them out and try them on every little while. It's all I can do not to wear them to classes.

(Dinner bell. Good-by.)



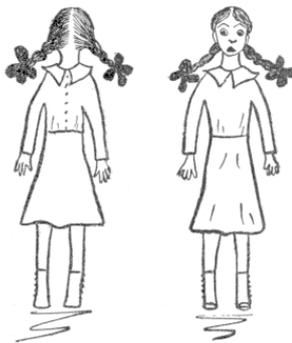
JUDY AND THE ORPHANS AT JOHN GRIER HOME.

Friday.

What do you think, Daddy? The English instructor said that my last paper shows an unusual amount of originality. She did, truly. Those were her words. It does n't seem possible, does it, considering the eighteen years of training that I've had? The aim of the John Grier Home (as you doubtless know and heartily approve of) is to turn the ninety-seven orphans into ninety-seven twins.

ANY ORPHAN

Rear Elevation Front Elevation



The unusual artistic ability which I exhibit, was developed at an early age through drawing chalk pictures of Mrs. Lippett on the woodshed door.

I hope that I don't hurt your feelings when I criticize the home of my youth? But you have the upper hand, you know, for if I become too impertinent, you can always stop payment on your checks. That is n't a very polite thing to say—but you can't expect me to have any manners; a foundling asylum is n't a young ladies' finishing school.

You know, Daddy, it is n't the work that is going to be hard in college. It's the play. Half the time I don't know what the girls are talking about; their jokes seem to relate to a past that every one but me has shared. I'm a foreigner in the world and I don't understand the language. It's a miserable feeling. I've had it all my life. At the high school the girls would stand in groups and just look at me. I was queer and different and everybody knew it. I could *feel* "John Grier Home" written on my face. And then a few charitable ones would make a point of coming up and saying something polite. *I hated every one of them*—the charitable ones most of all.

Nobody here knows that I was brought up in an asylum. I told Sallie McBride that my mother and father were dead, and that a kind old gentleman was sending me to college—which is entirely true so far as it goes. I don't want you to think I am a coward, but I do want to be like the other girls,

and that Dreadful Home looming over my childhood is the one great big difference. If I can turn my back on that and shut out the remembrance, I think I might be just as desirable as any other girl. I don't believe there 's any real, underneath difference, do you?

Anyway, Sallie McBride likes me!

*Yours ever,
Judy Abbott.
(Née Jerusha.)*

Saturday morning.

I 've just been reading this letter over and it sounds pretty un-cheerful. But can't you guess that I have a special topic due Monday morning and a review in geometry and a very sneezy cold?

Sunday.

I forgot to mail this yesterday so I will add an indignant postscript. We had a bishop this morning, and *what do you think he said?*

"The most beneficent promise made us in the Bible is this, "The poor ye have always with you." They were put here in order to keep us charitable."

The poor, please observe, being a sort of useful domestic animal. If I had n't grown into such a perfect lady, I should have gone up after service and told him what I thought.

October 25th.

Dear Daddy-Long-Legs,

I 've made the basket-ball team and you ought to see the bruise on my left shoulder. It 's blue and mahogany with little streaks of orange. Julia Pendleton tried for the team, but she did n't make it. Hooray!

You see what a mean disposition I have.

College gets nicer and nicer. I like the girls and the teachers and the classes and the campus and the things to eat. We have ice-cream twice a week and we never have corn-meal mush.

You only wanted to hear from me once a month, did n't you? And I 've been peppering you with letters every few days! But I 've been so excited about all these new adventures that I *must* talk to somebody; and you 're the only one I know. Please excuse my exuberance; I 'll settle pretty soon. If my letters bore you, you can always toss them into the waste-basket. I promise not to write another till the middle of November.

*Yours most loquaciously,
Judy Abbott.*



November 15th.

Dear Daddy-Long-Legs,

Listen to what I've learned to-day:

The area of the convex surface of the frustum of a regular pyramid is half the product of the sum of the perimeters of its bases by the altitude of either of its trapezoids.

It does n't sound true, but it is—I can prove it!

You've never heard about my clothes, have you, Daddy? Six dresses, all new and beautiful and bought for me—not handed down from somebody bigger. Perhaps you don't realize what a climax that marks in the career of an orphan? You gave them to me, and I am very, very, *very* much obliged. It's a fine thing to be educated—but nothing compared to the dizzying experience of owning six new dresses. Miss Pritchard who is on the visiting committee picked them out—not Mrs. Lippett, thank goodness. I have an evening dress, pink mull over silk (I'm perfectly beautiful in that), and a blue church dress, and a dinner dress of red veiling with Oriental trimming (makes me look like a Gipsy) and another of rose-colored challis, and a gray street suit, and an every-day dress for classes. That would n't be an awfully big wardrobe for Julia Rutledge Pendleton, perhaps, but for Jerusha Abbott—Oh, my!

I suppose you're thinking now what a frivolous, shallow, little beast she is, and what a waste of money to educate a girl?

But Daddy, if you'd been dressed in checked ginghams all your life, you'd appreciate how I feel. And when I started to the high school, I entered upon another period even worse than the checked ginghams.

The poor box.

You can't know how I dreaded appearing in school in those miserable poor-box dresses. I was perfectly sure to be put down in class next to the girl who first owned my dress, and she would whisper and giggle and point it out to the others. The bitterness of wearing your enemies' cast-off clothes eats into your soul. If I wore silk stockings for the rest of my life, I don't believe I could obliterate the scar.

LATEST WAR BULLETIN!

News from the Scene of Action

At the fourth watch on Thursday the 13th of November, Hannibal routed the advance guard of the Romans and led the Carthaginian forces over the mountains into the plains of Casilinum. A cohort of light armed Numidians engaged the infantry of Quintus Fabius Maximus. Two battles and light skirmishing. Romans repulsed with heavy losses.

I have the honor of being,

Your special correspondent from the front

J. Abbott.

P. S. I know I'm not to expect any letters in return, and I've been warned not to bother you with questions, but tell me, Daddy, just this once—are you awfully old or just a little old? And are you perfectly bald or just a little bald? It is very difficult thinking about you in the abstract like a theorem in geometry.

Given a tall rich man who hates girls, but is very generous to one quite impertinent girl, what does he look like?

R.S.V.P.

December 19th.

Dear Daddy-Long-Legs,
You never answered my question and it was very important.
ARE YOU BALD?



I have it planned exactly what you look like—very satisfactorily—until I reach the top of your head, and then I *am* stuck. I can't decide whether you have white hair or black hair or sort of sprinkly gray hair or maybe none at all.

Here is your portrait:

But the problem is, shall I add some hair?

Would you like to know what color your eyes are? They 're gray, and your eyebrows stick out like a porch roof (beetling, they 're called in novels) and your mouth is a straight line with a tendency to turn down at the corners. Oh, you see, I know! You 're a snappy old thing with a temper.

(Chapel bell.)

9.45 p. m.

I have a new unbreakable rule: never, never to study at night no matter how many written reviews are coming in the morning. Instead, I read just plain books—I have to, you know, because there are eighteen blank years behind me. You would n't believe, Daddy, what an abyss of ignorance my mind is; I am just realizing the depths myself. The things that most girls with a properly assorted family and a home and friends and a library know by absorption, I have never heard of. For example:

I never read "Mother Goose" or "David Copperfield" or "Ivanhoe" or "Cinderella" or "Blue Beard" or "Robinson Crusoe" or "Jane Eyre" or "Alice in Wonderland" or a word of Rudyard Kipling. I did n't know that Henry the Eighth was married more than once or that Shelley was a poet. I did n't know that people used to be monkeys and that the Garden of Eden was a beautiful myth. I did n't know that R.L.S. stood for Robert Louis Stevenson or that George Eliot was a lady. I had never seen a picture of the "Mona Lisa" and (it 's true but you won't believe it) I had never heard of Sherlock Holmes.

Now, I know all of these things and a lot of others besides, but you can see how much I need to catch up. And oh, but it 's fun! I look forward all day to evening, and then I put an "engaged" on the door and get into my nice red bath robe and furry slippers and pile all the cushions behind me on the couch and light the brass student lamp at my elbow, and read and read and read. One book is n't enough. I have four going at once. Just now, they 're Tennyson's poems and "Vanity Fair" and Kipling's "Plain Tales" and—don't laugh—"Little Women." I find that I am the only girl in college who was n't brought up on "Little Women." I have n't told anybody though (that *would* stamp me as queer). I just quietly went and bought it with \$1.12 of my last month's allowance; and the next time somebody mentions pickled limes, I 'll know what she is talking about!

(Ten o'clock bell. This is a very interrupted letter.)

Saturday.

Sir,

I have the honor to report fresh explorations in the field of geometry. On Friday last we abandoned our former works in parallelopipeds and proceeded to truncated prisms. We are finding the road rough and very uphill.

Sunday.

The Christmas holidays begin next week and the trunks are up. The corridors are so cluttered that you can hardly get through, and everybody is so bubbling over with excitement that studying is getting left out. I 'm going to have a beautiful time in vacation; there 's another Freshman who lives in Texas staying behind, and we are planning to take long walks and—if there 's any ice—learn to skate. Then there is still the whole library to be read—and three empty weeks to do it in!

Good-by, Daddy, I hope that you are feeling as happy as I am.

Yours ever,

Judy.

P. S. Don't forget to answer my question. If you don't want the trouble of writing, have your secretary telegraph. He can just say:

Mr. Smith is quite bald,
or
Mr. Smith is not bald,
or
Mr. Smith has white hair.

And you can deduct the twenty-five cents out of my allowance.
Good-by till January—and a merry Christmas!

*Toward the end of
the Christmas vacation.
Exact date unknown.*

Dear Daddy-Long-Legs,

Is it snowing where you are? All the world that I see from my tower is draped in white and the flakes are coming down as big as pop-corn. It 's late afternoon—the sun is just setting (a cold yellow color) behind some colder violet hills, and I am up in my window seat using the last light to write to you.

Your five gold pieces were a surprise! I 'm not used to receiving Christmas presents. You have already given me such lots of things—everything I have, you know—that I don't quite feel that I deserve extras. But I like them just the same. Do you want to know what I bought with my money?

I. A silver watch in a leather case to wear on my wrist and get me to recitations on time.

II. Matthew Arnold's poems.

III. A hot water bottle.

IV. A steamer rug. (My tower is cold.)

V. Five hundred sheets of yellow manuscript paper. (I 'm going to commence being an author pretty soon.)

VI. A dictionary of synonyms. (To enlarge the author's vocabulary.)

VII. (I don't much like to confess this last item, but I will.) A pair of silk stockings.

And now, Daddy, never say I don't tell all!

It was a very low motive, if you must know it, that prompted the silk stockings. Julia Pendleton comes into my room to do geometry, and she sits cross legged on the couch and wears silk stockings every night. But just wait—as soon as she gets back from vacation I shall go in and sit on her couch in my silk stockings. You see, Daddy, the miserable creature that I am—but at least I ’m honest; and you knew already, from my asylum record, that I was n’t perfect, did n’t you?

To recapitulate (that ’s the way the English instructor begins every other sentence), I am *very* much obliged for my seven presents. I ’m pretending to myself that they came in a box from my family in California. The watch is from father, the rug from mother, the hot water bottle from grandmother—who is always worrying for fear I shall catch cold in this climate—and the yellow paper from my little brother Harry. My sister Isobel gave me the silk stockings, and Aunt Susan the Matthew Arnold poems; Uncle Harry (little Harry is named for him) gave me the dictionary. He wanted to send chocolates, but I insisted on synonyms.

You don’t object do you, to playing the part of a composite family?

And now, shall I tell you about my vacation, or are you only interested in my education as such? I hope you appreciate the delicate shade of meaning in “as such.” It is the latest addition to my vocabulary.

The girl from Texas is named Leonora Fenton. (Almost as funny as Jerusha, is n’t it?) I like her, but not so much as Sallie McBride; I shall never like any one so much as Sallie—except you. I must always like you the best of all, because you ’re my whole family rolled into one. Leonora and I and two Sophomores have walked ’cross country every pleasant day and explored the whole neighborhood, dressed in short skirts and knit jackets and caps, and carrying shinny sticks to whack things with. Once we walked into town—four miles—and stopped at a restaurant where the college girls go for dinner. Broiled lobster (35 cents) and for dessert, buckwheat cakes and maple syrup (15 cents). Nourishing and cheap.

It was such a lark! Especially for me, because it was so awfully different from the asylum—I feel like an escaped convict every time I leave the campus. Before I thought, I started to tell the others what an experience I was having. The cat was almost out of the bag when I grabbed it by its tail and pulled it back. It ’s awfully hard for me not to tell everything I know. I ’m a very confiding soul by nature; if I did n’t have you to tell things to, I ’d burst.

We had a molasses candy pull last Friday evening, given by the house matron of Fergusson to the left-behinds in the other halls. There were twenty-two of us altogether, Freshmen and Sophomores and Juniors and Seniors all united in amicable accord. The kitchen is huge, with copper pots and kettles hanging in rows on the stone wall—the littlest casserole among them about the size of a wash boiler. Four hundred girls live in Fergusson. The chef, in a white cap and apron, fetched out twenty-two other white caps and aprons—I can’t imagine where he got so many—and we all turned ourselves into cooks.

It was great fun, though I have seen better candy. When it was finally finished, and ourselves and the kitchen and the door-knobs all thoroughly sticky, we organized a procession and still in our caps and aprons, each carrying a big fork or spoon or frying pan, we marched through the empty corridors to the officers’ parlor where half-a-dozen professors and instructors were passing a tranquil evening. We serenaded them with college songs and offered refreshments. They accepted politely but dubiously. We left them sucking chunks of molasses candy, sticky and speechless.

So you see, Daddy, my education progresses!



Don't you really think that I ought to be an artist instead of an author?

Vacation will be over in two days and I shall be glad to see the girls again. My tower is just a trifle lonely; when nine people occupy a house that was built for four hundred, they do rattle around a bit.

Eleven pages—poor Daddy, you must be tired! I meant this to be just a short little thank-you note—but when I get started I seem to have a ready pen.

Good-by, and thank you for thinking of me—I should be perfectly happy except for one little threatening cloud on the horizon. Examinations come in February.

*Yours with love,
Judy.*

P. S. Maybe it is n't proper to send love? If it is n't, please excuse. But I must love somebody and there 's only you and Mrs. Lippett to choose between, so you see—you 'll *have* to put up with it, Daddy dear, because I can't love her.

On the Eve.

Dear Daddy-Long-Legs,

You should see the way this college is studying! We 've forgotten we ever had a vacation. Fifty-seven irregular verbs have I introduced to my brain in the past four days—I 'm only hoping they 'll stay till after examinations.

Some of the girls sell their text-books when they 're through with them, but I intend to keep mine. Then after I 've graduated I shall have my whole education in a row in the bookcase, and when I need to use any detail, I can turn to it without the slightest hesitation. So much easier and more accurate than trying to keep it in your head.

Julia Pendleton dropped in this evening to pay a social call, and stayed a solid hour. She got started on the subject of family, and I *could n't* switch her off. She wanted to know what my mother's maiden name was—did you ever hear such an impertinent question to ask of a person from a foundling asylum? I did n't have the courage to say I did n't know, so I just miserably plumped on the first name I could think of, and that was Montgomery. Then she wanted to know whether I belonged to the Massachusetts Montgomerys or the Virginia Montgomerys.

Her mother was a Rutherford. The family came over in the ark, and were connected by marriage with Henry the VIII. On her father's side they date back further than Adam. On the topmost branches of her family tree there 's a superior breed of monkeys, with very fine silky hair and extra long tails.

I meant to write you a nice, cheerful, entertaining letter to-night, but I 'm too sleepy—and scared. The Freshman's lot is not a happy one.

*Yours, about to be examined,
Judy Abbott.*

Sunday.

Dearest Daddy-Long-Legs,

I have some awful, awful, awful news to tell you, but I won't begin with it; I 'll try to get you in a good humor first.

Jerusha Abbott has commenced to be an author. A poem entitled, "From my Tower," appears in the February *Monthly*—on the first page, which is a very great honor for a Freshman. My English instructor stopped me on the way out from chapel last night, and said it was a charming piece of work except for the sixth line, which had too many feet. I will send you a copy in case you care to read it.

Let me see if I can't think of something else pleasant—Oh, yes! I 'm learning to skate, and can glide about quite respectably all by myself. Also I 've learned how to slide down a rope from the roof of the gymnasium, and I can vault a bar three feet and six inches high—I hope shortly to pull up to four feet.

We had a very inspiring sermon this morning preached by the Bishop of Alabama. His text was: “Judge not that ye be not judged.” It was about the necessity of overlooking mistakes in others, and not discouraging people by harsh judgments. I wish you might have heard it.

This is the sunniest, most blinding winter afternoon, with icicles dripping from the fir trees and all the world bending under a weight of snow—except me, and I 'm bending under a weight of sorrow.

Now for the news—courage, Judy!—you must tell.

Are you *surely* in a good humor? I flunked mathematics and Latin prose. I am tutoring in them, and will take another examination next month. I 'm sorry if you 're disappointed, but otherwise I don't care a bit because I 've learned such a lot of things not mentioned in the catalogue. I 've read seventeen novels and *bushels* of poetry—really necessary novels like “Vanity Fair” and “Richard Feverel” and “Alice in Wonderland.” Also Emerson's “Essays” and Lockhart's “Life of Scott” and the first volume of Gibbon's “Roman Empire” and half of Benvenuto Cellini's “Life”—was n't he entertaining? He used to saunter out and casually kill a man before breakfast.

So you see, Daddy, I 'm much more intelligent than if I 'd just stuck to Latin. Will you forgive me this once if I promise never to flunk again?

Yours in sackcloth,
Judy.



Dear Daddy-Long-Legs,

This is an extra letter in the middle of the month because I 'm sort of lonely to-night. It 's awfully stormy; the snow is beating against my tower. All the lights are out on the campus, but I drank black coffee and I can't go to sleep.

I had a supper party this evening consisting of Sallie and Julia and Leonora Fenton—and sardines and toasted muffins and salad and fudge and coffee. Julia said she 'd had a good time, but Sallie stayed to help wash the dishes.

I might, very usefully, put some time on Latin to-night—but, there 's no doubt about it, I 'm a very languid Latin scholar. We 've finished Livy and De Senectute and are now engaged with De Amicitia (pronounced Damn Icitia).

Should you mind, just for a little while, pretending you are my grandmother? Sallie has one and Julia and Leonora each two, and they were all comparing them to-night. I can't think of anything I 'd rather have; it 's such a respectable relationship. So, if you really don't object—When I went into

town yesterday, I saw the sweetest cap of Cluny lace trimmed with lavender ribbon. I am going to make you a present of it on your eighty-third birthday.

!!!!!!!!!!!!

That 's the clock in the chapel tower striking twelve. I believe I am sleepy after all.

Good night, Granny.

I love you dearly.

Judy.

The Ides of March.

Dear D. L. L.,

I am studying Latin prose composition. I have been studying it. I shall be studying it. I shall be about to have been studying it. My reëxamination comes the 7th hour next Tuesday, and I am going to pass or BUST. So you may expect to hear from me next, whole and happy and free from conditions, or in fragments.

I will write a respectable letter when it 's over. To-night I have a pressing engagement with the Ablative Absolute.

Yours—in evident haste,

J. A.

March 26th.

Mr. D. L. L. Smith.

Sir: You never answer any questions; you never show the slightest interest in anything I do. You are probably the horriddest one of all those horrid Trustees, and the reason you are educating me is, not because you care a bit about me, but from a sense of Duty.

I don't know a single thing about you. I don't even know your name. It is very uninspiring writing to a Thing. I have n't a doubt but that you throw my letters into the waste-basket without reading them. Hereafter I shall write only about work.

My reëxaminations in Latin and geometry came last week. I passed them both and am now free from conditions.

Yours truly,

Jerusha Abbott.

April 2d.

Dear Daddy-Long-Legs,

I am a BEAST.

Please forget about that dreadful letter I sent you last week—I was feeling terribly lonely and miserable and sore-throaty the night I wrote. I did n't know it, but I was just coming down with tonsilitis and grippe and lots of things mixed. I 'm in the infirmary now, and have been here for six days; this is the first time they would let me sit up and have a pen and paper. The head nurse is *very bossy*. But I 've been thinking about it all the time and I shan't get well until you forgive me.

Here is a picture of the way I look, with a bandage tied around my head in rabbit 's ears.



Does n't that arouse your sympathy? I am having sublingual gland swelling. And I 've been studying physiology all the year without ever hearing of sublingual glands. How futile a thing is education!

I can't write any more; I get sort of shaky when I sit up too long. Please forgive me for being impertinent and ungrateful. I was badly brought up.

*Yours with love,
Judy Abbott.*

*The Infirmary.
April 4th.*

Dearest Daddy-Long-Legs,

Yesterday evening just toward dark, when I was sitting up in bed looking out at the rain and feeling awfully bored with life in a great institution, the nurse appeared with a long white box addressed to me, and filled with the *loveliest* pink rosebuds. And much nicer still, it contained a card with a very polite message written in a funny little uphill back hand (but one which shows a great deal of character). Thank you, Daddy, a thousand times. Your flowers make the first real, true present I ever received in my life. If you want to know what a baby I am, I lay down and cried because I was so happy.

Now that I am sure you read my letters, I 'll make them much more interesting, so they 'll be worth keeping in a safe with red tape around them—only please take out that dreadful one and burn it up. I 'd hate to think that you ever read it over.

Thank you for making a very sick, cross, miserable Freshman cheerful. Probably you have lots of loving family and friends, and you don't know what it feels like to be alone. But I do.

Good-by—I 'll promise never to be horrid again, because now I know you 're a real person; also I 'll promise never to bother you with any more questions.

Do you still hate girls?

*Yours forever,
Judy.*

8th hour, Monday.

Dear Daddy-Long-Legs,

I hope you are n't the Trustee who sat on the toad? It went off—I was told—with quite a pop, so probably he was a fatter Trustee.

Do you remember the little dugout places with gratings over them by the laundry windows in the John Grier Home? Every spring when the hoptoad season opened we used to form a collection of toads and keep them in those window holes; and occasionally they would spill over into the laundry, causing a very pleasurable commotion on wash days. We were severely punished for our activities in this direction, but in spite of all discouragement the toads would collect.

And one day—well, I won't bore you with particulars—but somehow, one of the fattest, biggest, *juiciest* toads got into one of those big leather arm chairs in the Trustees' room, and that afternoon at the Trustees' meeting— But I dare say you were there and recall the rest?

Looking back dispassionately after a period of time, I will say that punishment was merited, and—if I remember rightly—adequate.

I don't know why I am in such a reminiscent mood except that spring and the reappearance of toads always awakens the old acquisitive instinct. The only thing that keeps me from starting a collection is the fact that no rule exists against it.

After chapel, Thursday.

What do you think is my favorite book? Just now, I mean; I change every three days. "Wuthering Heights." Emily Brontë was quite young when she wrote it, and had never been outside of Haworth churchyard. She had never known any men in her life; how *could* she imagine a man like Heathcliffe?

I could n't do it, and I'm quite young and never outside the John Grier Asylum—I've had every chance in the world. Sometimes a dreadful fear comes over me that I'm not a genius. Will you be awfully disappointed, Daddy, if I don't turn out to be a great author? In the spring when everything is so beautiful and green and budding, I feel like turning my back on lessons, and running away to play with the weather. There are such lots of adventures out in the fields! It's much more entertaining to live books than to write them.

Ow ! ! ! ! !

That was a shriek which brought Sallie and Julia and (for a disgusted moment) the Senior from across the hall. It was caused by a centipede like this:



only worse. Just as I had finished the last sentence and was thinking what to say next—plump!—it fell off the ceiling and landed at my side. I tipped two cups off the tea table in trying to get away. Sallie whacked it with the back of my hair brush—which I shall never be able to use again—and killed the front end, but the rear fifty feet ran under the bureau and escaped.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

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