PENGUIN CLASSICS

JEAN WEBSTER

Daddy-Long-Legs

and Dear Enemy

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Edited with an Introduction and Notes by ELAINE SHOWALTER

PENGUIN BOOKS

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DADDY-LONG-LEGS *and* DEAR ENEMY

JEAN WEBSTER was born Alice Jane Chandler Webster in 1876 and grew up in Fredonia, New York, and in New York City. A grand-niece of Mark Twain, Webster attended Vassar College, where she developed an interest in orphanages and social welfare and began to pursue a literary career. Her interest in both continued after her graduation in 1901, especially when she moved to New York's Greenwich Village. She published stories and articles in newspapers and in magazines, including *McClure's.* Her first novel, *When Patty Went to College,* came out in 1903, and was followed by *The Wheat Princess* (1905), *Jerry Junior* (1907), *The Four Pools Mystery* (1908), *Much Ado About Peter* (1909), and *Just Patty* (1911). In 1912 Webster published *Daddy-Long-Legs,* the novel that brought her great popular acclaim as well as financial security when she adapted it into a stage play in 1914. It later became the basis for several movies. The novel's sequel, *Dear Enemy,* appeared in 1915. Also in 1915, Jean Webster married lawyer and Standard Oil Company heir Glenn Ford McKinney, some seven years after they began their affair (and a few months after his divorce was final). She died the following year, shortly after giving birth to their daughter, who survived.

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Introduction

Jean Webster's *Daddy-Long-Legs* (1912) and its sequel, *Dear Enemy* (1915), come from a literary era in which best-selling American woman writers like Kate Douglas Wiggin (*Rebecca of Sunnybrook Farm*), Eleanor H. Porter (*Pollyanna*), and Gene Stratton-Porter (*A Girl of the Limberlost*) created sentimental girl heroines. In contrast, one of the truly modern qualities of Webster's writing is its lack of sentimentality and preachiness. Although her heroines Judy and Sallie are idealistic reformers, they are also irreverent and irrepressible; although they are staunch feminists, they also take great pleasure in kid gloves, new dresses, and male company. The epistolary format of these two novels allows the liveliness of women's letter-writing to cloak the radical notions of women's limitless strength and capability.

In many respects, Webster's novels are in the great American tradition of Louisa May Alcott's fiction. Like Jo March in *Little Women,* which Judy mentions among the books she is reading in *Daddy-Long-Legs,* Judy aspires to be a writer, and must discard both the patriarchal models of her education and the sensational stories of her imagination before she realizes that her own experience is her best material, and finds her own voice. Like Jo in the sequels, *Little Men* and *Jo's Boys,* Sallie McBride in *Dear Enemy* discovers that running a model institution for children is more interesting than romance; "I see marriage as a man must," writes Sallie, "a good, sensible workaday institution; but awfully curbing to one's liberty."

Finally, like Jo, both Judy and Sallie find happiness with men who will accept and support their yearning to work. Although each novel ends with a predictable love scene, these seem almost an afterthought, for the action of these novels comes not from Judy Abbott's and Sallie McBride's search for a strong man, but from their discoveries of their own strength. They are unconventional New Women, as well as independent American girls; indeed, Sallie muses, "one man doesn't seem quite enough for me."

Daddy-Long-Legs, the most popular of Jean Webster's books, is both a love story and a Künstlerroman—an autobiographical account of an artist's development. Rescued from the dreary wasteland of the John Grier Home for orphans by an anonymous philanthropist, Jerusha Abbott (whose solemn name the director of the Home has selected from the phone book and the cemetery) is sent to college with her benefactor's express intent that she should be educated "to become a writer." A John Grier Trustee, he has read her essay "Blue Wednesday," describing the "Perfectly Awful Day" of the month, the first Wednesday, on which the trustees and their ladies come to hear reports and to inspect their charges. "Blue Wednesday" is satiric and "impertinent," but luckily the Trustee has a sense of humor and finds it original. We can judge it a bit ourselves, because "Blue Wednesday" is also the first chapter of the novel, and the only one written in the third person.

The trustee wishes to be anonymous, and insists only that Jerusha send him monthly letters of her progress, addressed to "Mr. John Smith," because "he thinks nothing so fosters facility in literary expression as letter-writing." But he will never reply, because he himself detests writing letters, and does not care for girls. Thereafter, the story is told through the lively letters of the heroine, and illustrated with her cartoons and drawings. She begins by renaming herself "Judy" and giving her benefactor the nickname "Daddy-Long-Legs" because she has caught a glimpse of his shadow, with "grotesquely elongated legs and arms." (Webster glosses over Judy's lack of initiative in figuring out who he is—surely the John Grier Home cannot have

anonymous trustees.) But by the novel's end, after her graduation from college, not only has Judy discovered Daddy-Long-Legs' identity and found her true love, but she has also sold her first novel. Finally, she reflects upon a Blue Wednesday from the vantage point of her last semester of college, and concludes that being an orphan was "a very unusual adventure" that has given her "a perspective on the world, that other people, who have been brought up in the thick of things, entirely lack."

Webster weaves Judy's road to authorship through her letters to Daddy-Long-Legs. She buys five hundred sheets of yellow manuscript paper with his first Christmas present, and regularly wins literary prizes and publications in college; a poem, "From My Tower," as a freshman; the short-story competition as a sophomore; another story and a scholarship for "marked proficiency in English" the same year. As a junior, she tries writing a novel based on her two-week holiday trip to New York, but it is rejected as "improbable" and "unnatural." She burns it, and dreams that she is holding a book called "The Life and Letters of Judy Abbott," with a picture of the John Grier Home on the cover. By her senior year, she realizes that her own life is her true subject. "I'm a realist now," she explains. "I've abandoned romanticism; I shall go back to it later though, when my own adventurous future begins." And when she decides to marry, she realizes that she can keep on being a writer: "the two professions are not necessarily exclusive."

How much of a realist was Jean Webster? Many of the themes and details of the two novels are autobiographical, but Webster's life was much more privileged and cosmopolitan. Born in 1876 to Charles Luther and Annie (Moffet) Webster, Alice Jane Chandler Webster enjoyed a comfortable childhood in Fredonia, New York. In 1884, her father became the business partner and publisher of Mark Twain, his wife's uncle, and moved the family to Manhattan, where he directed the Charles L. Webster Publishing Company. Publishing such best-sellers as *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* and General Ulysses S. Grant's overwhelmingly successful *Personal Memoirs,* Charles Webster met both great success and stressful responsibility. He developed severe headaches, a form of nervous breakdown, and had to move back to the country. After his recovery, Twain refused to take him back, charged him with poor management, and bought him out for less than his shares were worth. Charles Webster committed suicide in 1891, when his daughter was fifteen. According to Karen Alkalay-Gut, "the rest of [Jean Webster's] life, in many ways, exhibited a protest against patriarchal authority, authoritative systems, and authoritative individuals, and an examination of alternatives to destructive authoritative systems is her constant concern in almost every aspect of her life and writing."[1]

From 1894 to 1896, she attended a boarding school—The Lady Jane Grey School at Binghamton—where she renamed herself Jean because her roommate's name was Alice as well. But the education offered by a finishing school was not enough to satisfy her intellectual curiosity and her nascent spirit of social reform. In 1897, she entered Vassar College with the class of 1901 to study English and economics. She wrote a number of stories for the Vassar literary magazine, *Vassar Miscellany.* In her sophomore year, Webster roomed with the future poet Adelaide Crapsey (with whom she carried the socialist banner in a campus parade), and the class president, Margaret Jackson. She also spent a semester of her junior year abroad in Greece, England, and Italy, researching a paper on poverty in Italy. Meanwhile, she wrote a column for the *Poughkeepsie Sunday Courier,* for which she earned $3 per week. As the paper later noted, "Miss Webster was the correspondent for The Courier while a student at the college and her letters will be remembered by our readers for the atmosphere of cheerfulness that characterized them. No humorous incident at the college ever escaped Miss Webster's

attention. At the same time there was no lack of dignity when serious subjects were under consideration. In addition to her correspondence Miss Webster also contributed a series of articles to The Courier covering her experiences while travelling in Europe."[2]

There are many elements of her Vassar experience in *Daddy-Long-Legs.* During her four years as an undergraduate, Vassar was a college of six hundred women, predominantly Republican in their leanings, while Webster was already a socialist. The college did not support women's suffrage or allow the students to participate in suffrage activism. But Vassar was already becoming known as a literary center; Edna St. Vincent Millay chose it over Smith when she entered as a scholarship student in 1913 (with a monthly allowance of $20, compared to the munificent $35 Judy Abbott receives from her patron). In her English class, Judy is expected to comment on a poem by Emily Dickinson (she is baffled)—an indication of how sophisticated the syllabus was for the period. She also participates in the Field Day athletic competitions between the classes, instituted at Vassar in 1895; and she describes the construction of a new dormitory and the infirmary. Most important, she describes herself as a Fabian socialist, one who is willing to wait while "instituting industrial, educational and orphan asylum reforms." In 1898, Sidney and Beatrice Webb, two of the founders of the British Fabian Society, had spoken at Vassar about "The Scope of Democracy in England."[3]

After her 1901 graduation, Webster energetically pursued a literary career. She published her first piece, an article and photographs about Monte Carlo, in 1902 in the *Buffalo Express,* under the pseudonym "Carly Ward." For the next several years, Webster regularly submitted stories to various magazines, persisting despite frequent rejection, and within a few years she was selling to *McClure's* and other periodicals. Her first book, *When Patty Went to College,* came out in 1903. Mark Twain read it and congratulated her mother: "It is limpid, bright, sometimes brilliant; it is easy, flowing, effortless, and brimming with girlish spirits."[4] In November 1903, Webster took off again for Rome, where she visited the graves of Keats and Shelley, and stayed at a convent. She continued to publish stories and novels—*The Wheat Princess* (1905) and *Jerry Junior* (1907).

In November 1907, Webster embarked on a year-long journey around the world with her friends Ethelyn McKinney, daughter of the president of the Standard Oil Company of Pennsylvania, and Lena Weinstein, a New York art critic. They visited Egypt, India, China, Japan, Burma, and Ceylon; in a society clipping in her files, the reporter notes that "She is planning, evidently, for very warm weather, for the main portion of her wardrobe consists of twenty-five white dresses."[5] Such a trip and such a wardrobe were hardly the hallmarks of the bohemian, but Jean was much more daring than she may have appeared. In the summer of 1908, she fell in love with a married man—Ethelyn's brother, the lawyer and Standard Oil Company heir Glenn Ford McKinney. A graduate of Princeton, class of 1891, McKinney was married and had a son; his wife, Annette, had suffered periodic attacks of manic depression. In July 1908, Webster and McKinney began a long-term secret affair. According to Anne Bower, Webster's almost daily letters to him "were a study of good cheer, chattiness, and constancy as she encouraged him to fight alcoholism and the frustration of work he did not enjoy." In July 1913 she wrote to him: "Our salvation is work and work and *more* work. Fortunately we both have some ready to our hands. Set to work with all promptitude and cheerfulness at your farm and accomplish as much as possible against the time when I can look at it with you."[6] Louisa May Alcott could not have put the case for work and duty better.

But Webster was not just a workaholic stoic. On her return from Europe, she settled in Greenwich Village, on West 10th Street. The path from Vassar to the Village was well-trod by

feminists, including the suffragists Crystal Eastman and Inez Mulholland. Randolph Bourne aptly described the feminist bohemians of the period to a friend thinking of moving to Greenwich Village: "They are all social workers, or magazine writers in a small way. They are decidedly emancipated and advanced, and so thoroughly healthy and zestful, or at least so it seems to my unsophisticated masculine sense. They shock you constantly.... They have an amazing combination of wisdom and youthfulness, of humor and ability, and innocence and self-reliance, which absolutely belies everything you will read in the story-books or any other description of womankind. They are, of course, all self-supporting and independent; and they enjoy the adventure of life."[7]

Webster was part of this generation. While living in New York and writing, she also became more involved with aiding the unfortunate, continuing an interest that had begun in college when she visited institutions for the destitute and delinquent as part of an economics course. She served on committees for prison reform and worked with Sing-Sing convicts. She defined herself as a socialist and marched in the Women's Suffrage May Day parade, but her tactics were usually playful rather than militant. In the spring of 1909, for example, she received a notice demanding that "Jean Webster, Author" appear for jury duty. Of course, women were not allowed to serve on juries in New York or most states, a form of legal discrimination which elicited protest from feminist writers such as Susan Glaspell, in her story "A Jury of Her Peers." Suffragist friends urged Webster to try to be seated on a jury. Instead, she wrote back on her most feminine stationery ("pale tinted paper, scented with violets"):

> Dear Sir. If you really wish it I shall be delighted to serve on the jury. I have always thought that it would be an interesting experience, but I had never hoped to be invited. The opportunity is very apropos, as I am thinking of having a courtroom scene in my next story, and it will be an excellent opportunity to study local color. Thank you so much for asking me. I am going to the country in June, so that I should not be able to serve then, but any time in May would be convenient, except for Saturday, which is my day at home.
>
> Sincerely,
> Jean Webster
>
> P.S.—I am sure I shall make an intelligent juror. I never read the papers. J. W.

She received a letter in response reiterating that she had to appear for jury duty or face a $250 fine. After asking ten lawyers for legal advice, Webster went to court on the appointed day, and was excused.[8]

Meanwhile, her literary career continued, with the publication of *The Four Pools Mystery* (1908), *Much Ado About Peter* (1909), and *Just Patty* (1911). But *Daddy-Long-Legs,* published in 1912, became the major triumph of her career, an instant and overwhelming success both in the United States and abroad in translation. In one sense, it was about her affair with McKinney; dedicated "To You," it celebrates the epistolary romance. In another sense, one critic argues, it is "the ideal love story" of a feminist: "a girl is brought by a distinguished man to absolute independence and is then in a position to have an equal relationship with him."[9]

In 1914, Webster turned the novel into a stage play starring Ruth Chatterton. It was "the biggest dramatic hit in the country," and after an extensive run at New York's Gaiety Theatre, played in Minneapolis, Atlantic City, Chicago, and Washington, as well as touring California

and London.[10] In Chicago, it ran for twenty-five weeks to full houses, and it was performed at the Opera House in Poughkeepsie at the special request of Vassar students.

Webster's papers at Vassar College contain her descriptions of each act and her summaries of the main characters. Without the confines of the first-person epistolary mode, Webster is more explicit and didactic about her intentions. In particular, she stresses Judy's innate and perhaps genetic gifts. While the "orphans as a body represent a dead level of mediocrity, the result of bad environment and in some cases bad heredity ... Judy stands out in striking contrast." She "rises out of the mass, original, resourceful, courageous.... She emerges from her dark background, throws off the trammels that have bound her down and daringly faces life.... There is an element of revolt in her nature, a spirit of *fight* which makes her a fierce little rebel against injustice."[11]

Daddy-Long-Legs inspired much interest in the plight of orphans. In 1915 *Woman's World* reported,

> The book has aroused public interest in the lot of the lonely and homeless children of the asylums, and many well to do people, inspired by the example of Daddy Longlegs [sic] of the story, have come forward to adopt or bear the burden of the expense of educating one or more orphans. It is said a wealthy New York bachelor has thus adopted forty children. The New York State Charities Aid Society found so many requests for orphans for adoption coming in after the publication of the book that they appointed a special committee to look after the applications.

Webster encouraged this interest in orphans with the production of thousands of *Daddy-Long-Legs* dolls, each carrying a message about the needs of children in institutions, which were sold in 150 cities of forty states. Webster was among the most highly paid women writers in the United States. As the author of five best sellers in addition to *Daddy-Long-Legs,* she earned book royalties averaging more than $10,000 a year. Royalties from the productions of *Daddy-Long-Legs,* averaging almost $2,000 per week, vaulted her into a whole different league of earnings.

At the height of her celebrity, Webster published her sequel to *Daddy-Long-Legs,* another novel-in-letters called *Dear Enemy.* In her letters, Judy Abbott returns frequently to her dreams of an ideal orphan asylum: "Wait till you see the orphan asylum that I'm going to be the head of! It's my favorite play at night before I go to sleep. I plan it out to the littlest detail—the meals and clothes and study and amusements and punishments; for even my superior orphans are sometimes bad." Judy becomes a writer and a mother instead, but she persuades her college roommate Sallie McBride to take over the John Grier Home. Sallie brings her experience as a social and settlement worker to John Grier, and has to contend with the resident doctor Sandy MacRae, a dour Scot who believes in heredity defects and genetics above environment.

Dear Enemy shows the evolution in Webster's thinking about these issues, and addresses questions of heredity in a more sophisticated fashion than does *Daddy-Long-Legs,* with its tributes to Judy's uniqueness. MacRae and his cohorts are eugenicists who ask whether children's destinies have been set from birth by bad heredity. Could even those children, if brought up in a good, loving family, turn out all right in the end? What could be done about alcoholism, retardation, even crime? He makes Sallie read the studies of inbreeding popular in the period, horror tales of the degenerate and feeble-minded inbred Jukes and Kallikaks, and starts her thinking about weeding out defectives.

But Sallie has her own ideas about child care. As she declares, "Orphan-asylums have gone out of style. What I am going to develop is a boarding-school for the physical, moral, and

mental growth of children whose parents have not been able to provide for their care." She emphasizes environment—colorful surroundings, fresh air, appetizing food, pretty clothes for the girls, an Indian-style Adirondack camp for the boys, and self-esteem, private property, and vocational training for all. Sadie Kate Kilcoyne, a feisty orphan, emerges in *Dear Enemy* as a leader in the next generation of intelligent women. She is, like Judy and Sallie, imaginative, playful, and, perhaps most importantly, a good letter writer. With Sadie Kate's help, Sallie succeeds in converting the doctor, as well as the children and the Trustees to her methods.

There are elements of *Dear Enemy* that are also disguised autobiography. Dr. MacRae is married to a woman who "went insane" and had to be institutionalized, as did their little girl. His wife conveniently dies in time for him to court Sallie. Real life was harsher. In June 1915, McKinney's wife divorced him on the grounds of desertion. Although divorce was no scandal in Greenwich Village, Webster chose to keep the wedding modest and small. She asked her friend Mrs. Joseph W. Lewis of St. Louis to plan the small September 7, 1915, ceremony. Her only attendants were Lewis's little son and daughter. After the wedding the McKinneys lived in Manhattan, and at his farm in Dutchess County, New York, where they raised ducks and pheasants.

Tragically, this idyll did not last long. Webster died from complications of childbirth less than a year after her marriage, only a few hours after the birth of her daughter, Jean Webster McKinney, who survived. Uterine fibroids were cited as the cause in some reports; certainly having a first child at the age of forty carried more risk in 1916 than it does today. Webster's obituary and birth announcement for her daughter appeared side by side in the newspaper.

Following her death, Webster's reputation waned; but *Daddy-Long-Legs* has been made into three film versions. Despite Webster's emphasis on Judy's rebellious spirit, these films make her less central as a character and allow her less agency in changing people and institutions. In the popular 1919 silent film, starring Mary Pickford, more than half the time is given to Judy's childhood in the orphanage. According to *Variety,* "The punch of the picture is not in the love story of Judy growing up, falling in love with her guardian, and eventually marrying him, but in the pathos of the wistful little Judy, with her heart full of love, being constantly misunderstood—extracting joy through the instructive 'mothering' of the other little orphans."[12] The 1931 version, starring Janet Gaynor, is also more of a Cinderella story, with Judy as the poor orphan girl who marries a rich man. The best-known movie treatment is the 1955 musical, with Leslie Caron and Fred Astaire. Caron, as a sweet, passive French version of Judy named Julie André, seems bizarrely out of place at Walston, an American women's college of the 1950s with the students in beanies and tight-waisted dresses. Astaire is the rogue scion of the Pendleton family, who plays the drums when he is taking a break from advising the French government on its economy. In his New York mansion/family museum, we see his grandfather, Jervis Pendleton, painted by Whistler; his father, Jervis Pendleton II, painted by Sargent; and his own portrait by Picasso. Johnny Mercer wrote one of his best songs, "Something's Gotta Give," for the screen romance of Judy and Jervis; but the description of Judy as an "irresistible force" seems peculiar in light of Caron's kittenish and saccharine performance.

But Judy Abbott and Sallie McBride were indeed irresistible forces who bowled over both their suitors and their antagonists with their intelligence, imagination, high spirits, determination, and grit. They were part of a new wave of American heroines in the twentieth century, feisty and fast-talking dames whose refusal to kowtow to men marked their independence and charm rather than hostility or prudishness. This kind of heroine flourished particularly in the movies; as Karen Alkalay-Gut suggests, "the concept of playful, combative,

and productive partnerships between a man and a woman in American novels and film ... from Katharine Hepburn and Spencer Tracy to the present, ... was first ... fixed by Webster."[13] With their colloquial language, cartoon-like illustrations, and frank descriptions of their lives, problems, and feelings, Judy and Sallie can be seen as precursors of today's endearing singletons and bachelorettes, from Cathy Guisewaite's popular comic-strip heroine, to Helen Fielding's Bridget Jones, with her diary, and her hordes of scribbling sisters and imitators. Webster contributed a mixture of seriousness of purpose and playfulness of expression to the portrait of the New Woman that is as fresh and modern as it was a century ago, and should delight a new generation of readers.

NOTES TO INTRODUCTION

1. Karen Alkalay-Gut, "Jean Webster," http://karenalkalay-gut.com/web.html.
2. Jean Webster McKinney Papers, Vassar College, Box 25, Folder 1.
3. Elizabeth Daniels, "Vassar History," http://vassun,vassar.edu/~daniels/1891_1904.html.
4. Quoted in Karen Alkalay-Gut, *Alone in the Dawn: The Life of Adelaide Crapsey,* Athens and London: University of Georgia Press, 1988, 119.
5. Jean Webster McKinney Papers, Vassar College, Box 25, Folder 1; unidentified clipping from 1907.
6. Anne Bower, *Epistolary Responses: The Letter in 20th-Century American Fiction and Criticism,* Tuscaloosa and London: University of Alabama Press, 1987, 99.
7. Quoted in Christine Stansell, *American Moderns: Bohemian New York and the Creation of a New Century,* New York: Henry Holt, 2000, 231.
8. "Girl Writer as a Juror—Help," *New York Times,* May 11, 1909.
9. Alkalay-Gut, *Alone in the Dawn,* 249.
10. Alan Simpson, with Mary Simpson, *Jean Webster: Storyteller,* New York: Tymor Associates, 1984, 81.
11. Jean Webster McKinney Papers, Vassar College, Box 12, Folder 5.
12. *Variety,* May 16, 1919:54, quoted in Bower, 104-105.
13. Alkalay-Gut, "Jean Webster."

Suggestions for Further Reading

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ON *DADDY-LONG-LEGS*

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Stansell, Christine. *American Moderns: Bohemian New York and the Creation of a New Century.* New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2000.

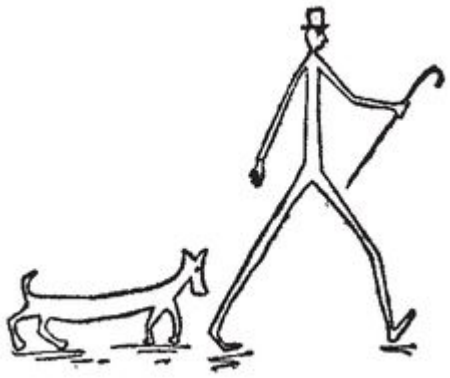
A Note on the Texts

The texts of *Daddy-Long-Legs* and *Dear Enemy* have been reset from the original editions, published by The Century Co. in 1912 and 1915 respectively. Jean Webster's drawings, which are integral to the novels, are reproduced here.

DADDY-LONG-LEGS

BY
JEAN WEBSTER

With Illustrations
by The Author



NEW YORK
THE CENTURY CO.
1912

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 ginghams; 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 didn’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 undiscommoded 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 affluential 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 waited 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 doesn'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 FERGUSSEN 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 isn'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 couldn'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 isn't a girl and who can't come here; I am sure the college you attended when you were a boy couldn'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 turned-up nose and is quite friendly; Julia comes from one of the first families in New York and hasn'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 didn'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?[1]

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, doesn'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,[2] 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'm learning?

I. *Latin: Second Punic war.*[3] Hannibal and his forces pitched camp at Lake Trasimenus last night. They prepared an ambuscade 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"[4] 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,