p. 6, 15 August 1920

Dear Boy Blue, do you remember that in my last letter I told you I wished you could be with me on my birthday? Well, I’ve spent the whole day with you whether you know it or not. I made up my mind that I wouldn’t do any work at all on this particular birthday, that I’d just rest and be lazy. So I haven’t done a stroke of work and instead I’ve made believe that you were here and that I could talk to my heart’s content, which I have. Tell me, do you sometimes swear at me under your breath and say “Damn it all why do you weary me with all this host of details?” Pal the reason is that it’s the first time in my life I’ve ever had a chance to talk as much as I wanted to about everything in my heart and while you last I’m surely going to enjoy you even if I talk you deaf, dumb, and blind. Until recently I used to make some effort to limit the length and number of my letters, but now since you’ve repeatedly asked me to write often, I’ve cast discretion and wisdom to the winds and settled down to scrumptious orgies of chatter. If I didn’t have a few other things to do like earning my living and keeping house etc., and if I didn’t still have occasional twinges of conscience about writing to you at all, I’d write every day, about twenty-five pages at a sitting. I think I could write as often as that for about twenty-five years before I had finished all I had to say, and then like as not I’d have an afterthought, a little trailer tagging on behind. You see Pal, I never had a wonderful chance like this before to chatter all the time, unreservedly, without keeping tabs on what tumbles out. I never had a real chum before. It didn’t seem to strange at the time as it does now that I should have had such a lonely, introspective childhood. No girl friends ever came to my home to spend an afternoon with me and I seldom went anywhere, only once during my whole childhood did I stay overnight at the home of a friend. I would play by myself for hours perfectly contentedly; I invented the most elaborate games and imagined playmates to play with me. I played checkers, dominoes, and other games with myself, making believe that I was two persons and that I didn’t know what moves the other person was going to make. And I used to punish myself when I did little things I shouldn’t have done. Even when the grown-ups didn’t catch me making childish mistakes I’d catch myself and administer the proper punishment. I do think that with a little loving guidance I could have managed to bring myself up quite well because I had a strongly developed conscience and I was rather severe with myself.

For instance, one day when I was eight or nine a neighbor asked me to go to the bakery some five blocks away and buy her a huckleberry pie, a large twenty-five cent one. I always liked to run errands for people and I trotted off gaily with the quarter she had given me, purchased the pie and started home slowly, carrying the pie with care. I was nearly home when I came to a building which was dear to the hearts of all the children in the neighborhood because it had broad stone balustrades which were simply lovely to slide down. I seldom passed that building without indulging in a slide, so when I came to it I thought I’d take a chance, pie and all. Of course, when I reached the bottom of the slide I dropped the pie with a thud on the sidewalk and the gooey huckleberries oozed out upon the sidewalk in a hopelessly irretrievable manner. It didn’t take me long to decide what to do. I scolded myself and said “You know you shouldn’t have slid down the balustrade with a pie in one hand and you got just what you deserved.” Straight away I thought out the fitting punishment. Instead of going to the neighbor and telling her what had happened and asking to be forgiven I flew home to my savings bank. I then had an allowance of five cents a week about which I was never questioned. I shook out a quarter and raced back the five blocks to the bakery, bought another pie and come back to the neighbor as fast as I could, delivering the pie safely. I never mentioned what had happened till years afterwards, but I had taught myself a lesson which I didn’t forget. Now how much better that was than to have told the grown ups and to have received some arbitrary punishment which would only have made me resentful because of its inapplicability.

You can see that as a child I lived a very full and active life all in my own thoughts. But there was always that distressing lack of social environment. Mother never forbade me to ask my friends but I as much too ashamed of the general conditions at home to let [begin p. 7] any outsider see them. How could I ask a friend to a meal when my father and mother didn’t speak? They sat opposite each other at the table and I sat on the side. It was “Marjorie, ask your mother to pass me the butter.” “Marjorie, ask your father if he wants another chop.” At breakfast father sat with his newspaper propped up against the sugar bowl, and mother sat with her newspaper propped up against the coffee-pot and silence reigned unless somebody wanted something. I thought, or talked to the cat. It was funny how father always referred to his wife as “your mother” and mother referred to her husband as “your father”, each seeming indirectly to be blaming me for having such a parent. Then after five years of that they made it up and father stopped talking to me. After that he referred to me as “the kid.” At table he’d say to mother “Tell the kid to pass me the butter” – that was after I was seventeen. Then he stopped eating at the table with us and I served him in his room. Home sweet home! Do you wonder I never had any intimate friends? I had far too much pride to let any outsider see how things were.

But isn’t this just like me to drop way back into ancient history right in the middle of a paragraph on current events! I was telling you what a good chum you make. I like you best of all because you are Marjorie Daw’s own discovery; she thinks she has put one over on the Doctor this time, because the Doctor never got acquainted with anyone half so charming. The Doctor’s friends are all right so far as they go but Marjorie Daw can’t talk to them; the great advantage about you is that both of us can talk to you. Just to prove that, I’ll let the Doctor have a short paragraph all to herself.

Honorable Curator and respected “boss”! I’ve been trying to get acquainted with the dinosaurs which you have collected and described so that I may be as wise about Saurolophus and Corythosaurus as you are about ammonites. Also I like to be able to keep my eyes open for things in current literature that will be of interest to you. This past week I received a paper from Prof. Parks of Toronto. I find that quite a number of vertebrate men have put my name on their mailing list and once in a while I receive a paper which isn’t all Greek to me. Such a one was that from Parks on his new species Kritosaurus incurvimanus from the Red Deer River locality. He referred to you quite a lot and inclined to the opinion that Lambe’s Gryposaurus was really the same as your Kritosaurus, as you have contended and as Gilmore has agreed, and so he places his species in your genus. His specimen is pretty complete except that recent erosion has cut off the end of the tail and front end of the head of the poor beastie. For details you may consult the paper. I also had a long letter from Wieland and a pile of papers on turtles and plants, and a pleasant letter from Moodie together with a number of papers on the evidences of disease in dinosaurs. Maybe after about five or ten years I’ll pick up enough miscellaneous information about reptiles to convince their curator that I’m not as green as grass. At present I’m just as green as I look, with little shamrocks sprinkled all over me.

Well Pal didn’t I tell you the Doctor could talk to you as easily as Marjorie Daw? I like your duality because it just matches up with mine. Marjorie Daw has such heaps of inconsequential chatter which she can’t reel off to anyone else. There is something about you – I don’t know just what it is – that always appeals to the youthful, childish part of me; you make me forget that I’m grown up – or that I’ve reached the age when I ought to be grown up; you make me feel like playing hooky, like skipping off to sunlit fields to chase butterflies. You yourself seem to have drunk of the spring of perpetual youth and it’s just that natural, jolly, small-boy side of you which so strongly appeals to Marjorie Daw. I do hope I won’t lose you very soon because I know I’ll never find another pal.

My birthday is drawing to a close and I must stop. I’ve been very happy and not at all lonely because I had my thoughts of you to keep me company. Dear, precious Pal, you’ve helped me through so many trying times.

I don’t know where to send this letter. I suppose I’m foolish to send it to Africa, Pal, but I’ll trust to luck that it will reach you sometime. I won’t write again until I hear from you and learn what your new address is. I feel lost when I can’t write to you. You’ve been gone four months. When you come back I’ll have to get acquainted all over again. Dear Boy Blue, good night.

Always your devoted Pal and affectionate Marmo,

Marjorie Daw

1. The Capitol Theatre, which showed films and had live music revues, was located where the Paramount Plaza stands today, directly across Broadway from the Winter Garden Theatre, at 1645 Broadway, just north of Times Square. It opened on October 24, 1919 and closed in 1968.