

Get Along Without You Now

by

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4 January

dear pa

this is from darleen. i am well. mrs jellinek help me with this.

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1 March

I can now write many words. Mrs Jellinek shows me how. I like to read and write. I go to her house every day to work on my reding. Then I help in the house and do other things. Mrs Jellinek has a dog. His name is Obama. It is a funny name but Obama seems happy. Mrs Jellinek is good to him. She says Obama is the name of our preshident and he is a good man. She is good to everywon. It is sad she has no kids. She wood be a good mom. She says it is okay.

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20 April

It is now one year ago that Mrs Jellinek came here. She live at the old farm where John Burrows was befor he died. You know his son Marty was at shool with me but he went to the city a long time back. Then the farm was empty. Mr and Mrs Jellinek come to start a erb farm. They come from the city. They dont know Marty. They are very nice. Mrs Jellinek goes to church. She said hi to me the very first time she was at church. The next week she sits next to me. She talks to me just like I was anyone. It felt good. She said to me that she needed someone to help her and that folk had said that I was in need of work. When she said that to me I sad that some folk dont talk so good about me but they was wrong. She smiled and said I hear your daddy was a one. He was I says.

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7 May

Today is my birthday. I am thirty seven years old. You know that but I think you don't remeber. Now I can write better Mrs Jellinek don't help me so much. So now this letter is just between us. PRIVATE. That's a good word that Mrs Jellinek puit down for me so I could copy. Now I can do numbers real well I think a lot about time. I have wrote a list of things with numbers. This list has birthdays and deathdays and other numbers that I want to keep safe. The list is getting long. I never knew but my life has had a lot of numbers in it. Mrs Jellinek helps me to work them out. She talks to me and asks me things. She helps me like we are taking a ball of messy wool and winding it up nice. So all the things in my head that were broke and dirty are now getting fixed and clean and I can see them like looking throuh a window at things that I knew were there but were hidding un till now. Some times thinking makes me want to cry. I like to be happy for Mrs Jellinek she is so nice. So some times I say to her that I down't know when I do know but saying about that thing would make me cry. Now I noe that I have been here alone for twenty one years. That is a long time for a person to get by when they have no reading and writing and numbers. After you left mom did try to tech me but she was so sick by then that I never could lern. She wanted to make sure I would be okay without her but God must have had other idears.

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29 May

Last week Mrs Jellinek took me into town and got me some spectacles. That is quite a word. SPECTACLES. I said last time about windows well now it is like every window into the whole world has been cleaned. I can see everything!!! Mrs Jellinek said that I have always needed spectacles so I should have had some when I was a kid. I didn't say anything

about that. If you had got me some then maybe I wouldn't have been so stupid like you always said I was. I don't know. When we was in town Mrs Jellinek took me to a doctor because she said I could do with a check up. It took a long time. The Doctor was very nice. He looked me all over and I had some things called X Rays which Mrs Jellinek said were good and that I shouldn't be afraid of them. We were there all afternnon. The Doctor said that I had broke bones in the past that should have been fixed. He asked how I got them but I didn't say nothing. Mrs Jellinek looked like she was crying when he told us but she said it was hay fever when I said not to be sad. I am glad that she wasn't sad. The good news is that the Doctor says that I am fine just now. I said it was all the herbs and salad that Mrs Jellinek makes me eat and she laghed. It is good to feel good. Mrs Jellinek said that an apple a day keeps the Doctor away. There are still plenty apple trees here and on the old Burrows farm.

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23 June

I can now read dates on a calendar. I never knew until now that such a thing exsted. The more I find out the moer I see that I was living in the dark until Mrs Jellinek came. You must know calendars. They have days and weeks and months. Every year you have a new one so it seems that every year you can start over your life. I like that. It is now June which is half way through the calendar. Mom died in June twenty one years ago. I know this now. I aksed Mrs Jellinek how I could find out when she passed because I wanted to write it on my list. She said there was a paper from the government that would tell us. She took me into town agin and she wrote up some forms and got me to write my name on to and then they gave us the paper. It has mom's name on. Myrleen Abigail Baker. It was the first time ever I read her name and seen the letters that made it up. When I saw that it made me cry even that I don't like to cry in front of Mrs Jellinek. She hugged me and said it was good to cry over your mom. I have told her a lot about mom and how she was never strong and how I was the only baby she ever had that never died on her. Eight dead babies. Poor mom. So now I'm looking out on a sunny June day and thinking about mom and hoping that mom is in heaven looking down on me and she will know that I can read and write now and do numbers and that I am well. I hope she will be pleased. I don't need to hope Mrs Jellinek says. We were talking about this after church last Sunday. Mrs Jellinek had asked me over for lunch with her and Mr Jellinek who is English and he said it would have been his Pa's birthday and he would have been 100 if he had lived. He died when he was 90 - a good innings he said. I had to ask him about innings. I thought he had meant innards. But actually I guess he had good innards if he lived until 90. This writing sure is tricky. Just when you think you got it you find more words. But those words let you grapple with even more things. They help make everything clear.

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31 October

Today is Halloween. I don't like Halloween. I don't know why people want to make life more scarey when it is already so bad. Halloween is always at a cruell time of year. It is dark and cold and a person knows it is going to be darker and colder for a very long time and probably they're going to be hungry too for quite a while before its spring. I told Mrs Jellinek I wouldn't go across to the farm today because I knew I was going to find it hard to play happy with all these memorys I have. My numbers list says you left us on Halloween the year I was fourteen. I know that because the school people had come by again and told mom that I had to keep going there until I was fifteen or they would put the cops on you. Mom said that she needed me to keep house and look after her and I think they would have been ok with that but then you came in and started kicking off and cussing and told them strait that they should clear off out. Just like always anyone who might have helped us somehow just made you madder than mad. So when they were gone you hit me and hit mom and broke up the kitchen

chairs and then when Digger wouldn't stop barking with the fuss of it all you dragged him out the yard and kicked him till he stopped. And then you got your gun and shot him dead anyway. That was it really, poor Digger and mom and me. It was none of us fault and yet you punished us over and over. Even then I still loved you because you were my daddy but any person would surely understand that it had to stop.

I don't think you're in heaven looking down which is why I'm writing this letter to you in case you can read it from somewhere else. After that Halloween I told everyone you'd upped and left us and they didn't seem surprised. No one knows I buried you under the old apple tree by the barn. I am going to put this letter out there for you now under the rock I roled right up over you back then. You will see how my writing has got real good since I first started this letter months ago. You will lern that although for a long time I missed you daddy, I'm gettin along just fine without you now.

Your daughter
Darleen