

Pensione Firenze,
Via del Presto di San Martino, 7,
Firenze,
November 22nd, 1926.

Laurie Darling:

Here I am under the same roof with Eva, in her quaint & humble pensione on the unfashionable South side of the Arno. Moved over three days ago, although Mother is still at the Piccione. I didn't want to leave her, but I'd been booked for this place for a month past, (room vacated for me, etc.) and it seemed the only thing to do. We had expected, on Mrs. Perkins' arrival, to see them both wending their way Southward to warmer climes; but Mrs. P.'s daughter & son-in-law are in Munich, & to be there some time. So Mrs. P., after a couple of days here, decided she couldn't live another day without her darling Winnie, & dashed up to Munich leaving Mother somewhat in the lurch. Ah well, what can one expect? One's own family comes first, of course, & we've no right to bicker. Mrs. P. will be back after Christmas, she says, & then she & Mother will go off together. Meantime Mother seems quite content to be here, and

Eva sends all sorts of loving messages - We often talk of you -

of course I see her every day. Maybe it's better so, for we do appreciate each other more. I think, when we each live independently, & just get together to talk over our little experiences, or to shop or sightsee together.

I ought to be at work in the studio today, but I'm expecting hourly the advent of a piano, which I must see safely installed in the corner of my huge room. Eva herself has a tiny room, but insists that I have this one, so there'll be room enough for the piano to sound well, & she & her friend Miss McComas can come in, in the evenings, and hear some music.

I wish you could visualize this place, old dear. What wouldn't I give to be able to show it to you! I want you at every turn. It's a high, dingy building, with a hopeless-looking narrow entrance that leads to flight after flight of winding stairs. We're at the top (almost), so even the rooms which look onto the court (as mine does), have plenty of light & air. The pensione itself suddenly expands, once you get inside, and wanders over the upper floors of two adjacent houses. The corridors are wide & echoing, with their stone floors, and

most of the rooms large like mine. Mine has a red stone floor & red plaster walls (awful), and a terra-cotta stove near the bed, & a huge "french" window at least twelve feet high. There were one or two appalling pictures on the wall - an enlarged photo of a stout dame in tight black, with her hands clasped over her stomach; and an oil painting of a Pignore with a glassy stare and a huge black mustache.

But, as I (I hope, tactfully) explained to our nice landlady, I am so peculiarly constituted that I find it impossible to play unless I am looking at an absolutely bare wall; so the pictures have descended to oblivion behind the richety but comfortable old sofa!

Meals are strange things, judging by american standards, but somehow one gets used to them. Starch & meat, meat & starch in endless rotation, and for desert, an apple at most.

We ek out with tid-bits smuggled in from outside, or else treat ourselves to "specials" at our cozy tea in the studio.

It is nice having the contract of studio
& dwelling! Our home is in the thick of
the town, in the midst of funny, smelly shops,
and directly facing the delightful old church
of Santo Spirito. Near enough, too, to the
Arno, with its ever-beautiful bridges, and to
the shops, and the important places on the
other side — the Duomo, the Uffizzi Gallery,
the Bargello, Santa Maria Novella, the
Palazzo Vecchio (in the courtyard of which
is the adorable Verrochio Baby with a fish,
the most charming fountain that has ever been
designed, probably). Etc. etc. No end to
wonderful things to see, over there.

Whereas our studio is out beyond the
city walls. We approach it through a
wide avenue all leafy & dark with trees.
And the villino to which our small studio
is attached, has its own lovely tangled
garden of bamboo shrubs, wisteria & rose
vines, palm trees, ilex; & cypress, and one
gorgeous Japanese persimmon, heavy with
great yellow-orange balls that glow even
in the rain. Even, say I? Most especially.
And rain it can & does, practically every
day, so that all the walls are green with
moss, and things look more like mid-summer
than late fall. Makes me think of what Mr.

Hervey wrote me recently about the Plainfield "Jungalow" in the rain. He says: "You know how Laura's photographs look in the bath-tub? That's the way everything looks out here."

He's been a dear about writing. And so has dear Shirley, who sends me every few days detailed accounts of her stewardship of my multifarious small businesses at home. Aside from that, though, letters do seem awfully slow in coming! Maybe I'll be lucky enough to get one from you when I go over to American Express this afternoon. Who knows? Or, as my nice little Italian teacher would have me say "Chi lo sa?" She comes three times a week, and gives me a generous hour + a half lesson for 45¢!

I thought it better to have her than go to the Berlitz here, as there are so many unusual phrases I must acquire, pertaining to my job, which would be outside the scope of the well-regulated Berlitz method lessons.

Eva + I have arranged to have the carving instructor at the Art Institute come to us every Sunday morning, to give us lessons in stone-carving. She wants to do a relief of the Nativity - I want to get my hand in

for the Bauer bust, which ought to arrive in a few weeks. Meantime, I'm begining clay sketches for a new Forbes-Robertson to take the place of the one that was burnt. This time I shall not be silly or ignorant enough to put a 10th century hero in a 16th Century throne, but shall make an old "stone" throne, very massive & simple, with a bit of primitive Scandinavian carving on it. At least, I hope it will look like that. All I have to go by is Byzantine & Romanesque.

Eva is going to be a wonderful help to me. Not technically, as her work is still crude & tentative, but spiritually & artistically. She will help me to see things simply & interpret them in a big & ~~simple~~ massive way. All her work is intensely religious in feeling - which mine will never be. I think probably my irreligionsness shocks & pains her, but she's awfully decent about it. We have great talks -

----- Later -----

No - no word from you today. Must rest content with the wonderful "trip" letter. That's the latest I've had. But today, Nov 22nd, we got one from Dad dated Oct 29th, so what can you expect?

Meant to get a couple of nice post cards to tuck into this, but it's pouring cats & dogs, & I won't go out again. No piano today. I suppose they feared it would get "bagnato" - as there are no covered vans here. Well, here's hoping - for pianos & letters, n' everything! Will write soon again - Brendie